On Symmetrical Voice Alternations: The case of Kelabit

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Introduction

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- Introduction to Western Austronesian **voice systems**
- The case of **Kelabit** – a Western Austronesian language of N. Sarawak
- Arguments for treating Kelabit as having **symmetrical voice**
  a) Arguments for an alternation in grammatical functions
  b) Arguments for each voice being transitive
- Implications for the **cross-linguistic understanding of voice**

Aims

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(1) To demonstrate that symmetrical voice is the **best analysis of the Kelabit data**

(2) Consolidate the **definition of symmetrical voice**, refine the methodology for identifying symmetrical systems and thereby reinforce their place in voice typology

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Western Austronesian Voice

Voice

- Kulikov (2011) defines **voice** as follows:

The morphological encoding of the mapping from semantic arguments to syntactic functions

- It is an alternation in the means of expressing transitive events that allows for different mappings between **argument structure** and **functional structure**.

Active/Passive

- In addition, active/passive alternations typically involve **additional morphological marking** and **detransitivisation**

(2a) **Active**

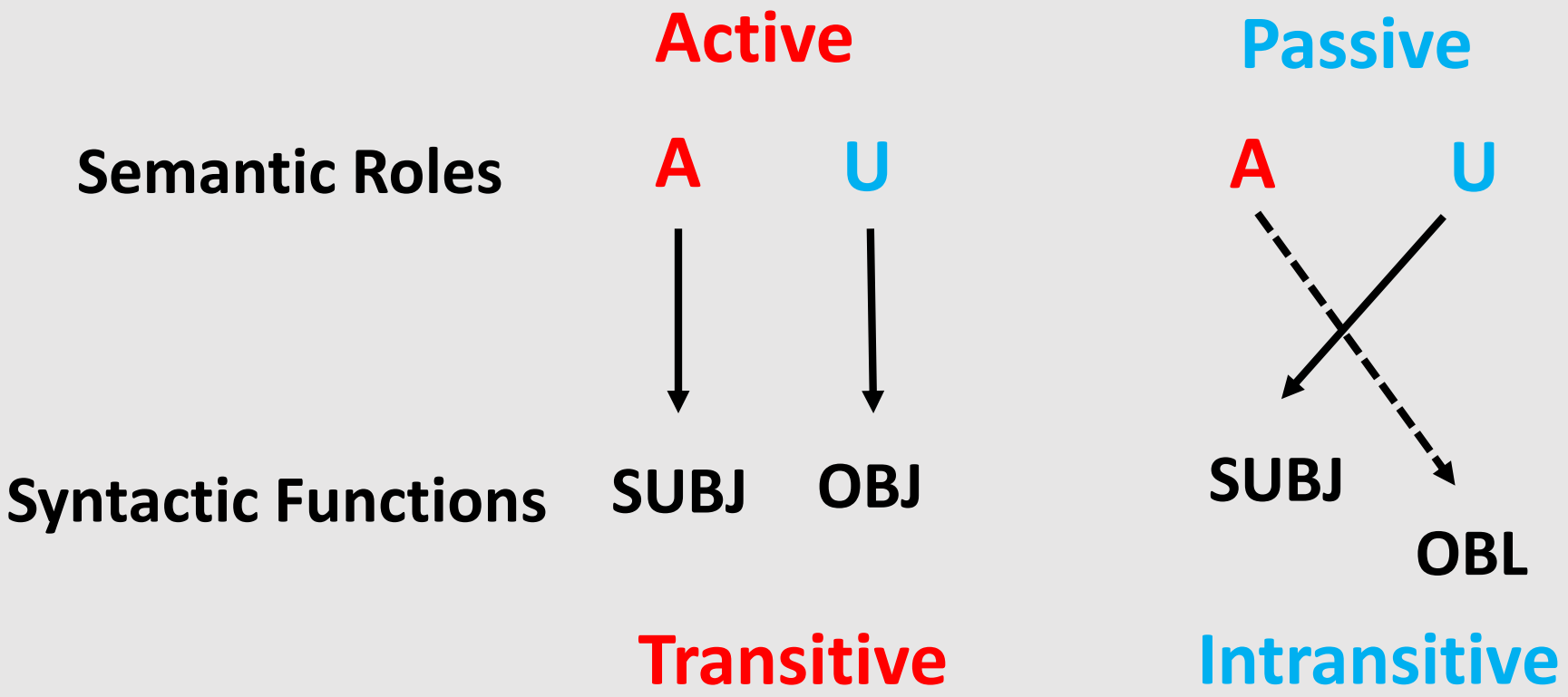
The man bought fish at the store

(2b) **Passive**

The fish was bought at the store (by the man)

Active/Passive

- Hence active/passive (and ergative/antipassive) alternations are **asymmetrical**



Tagalog Verbal Alternations

(1a) **Actor Voice**

B<um>ili *ang* lalaki ng isda sa tindahan.
<AV>buy NOM man GEN fish OBL store
'The man bought fish at the store.'

(1b) **Undergoer Voice**

B<in>ili ng lalaki *ang* isda sa tindahan.
<PFV.UV>buy GEN man NOM fish OBL store
'The man bought the fish at the store.'

(1c) **Locative Voice**

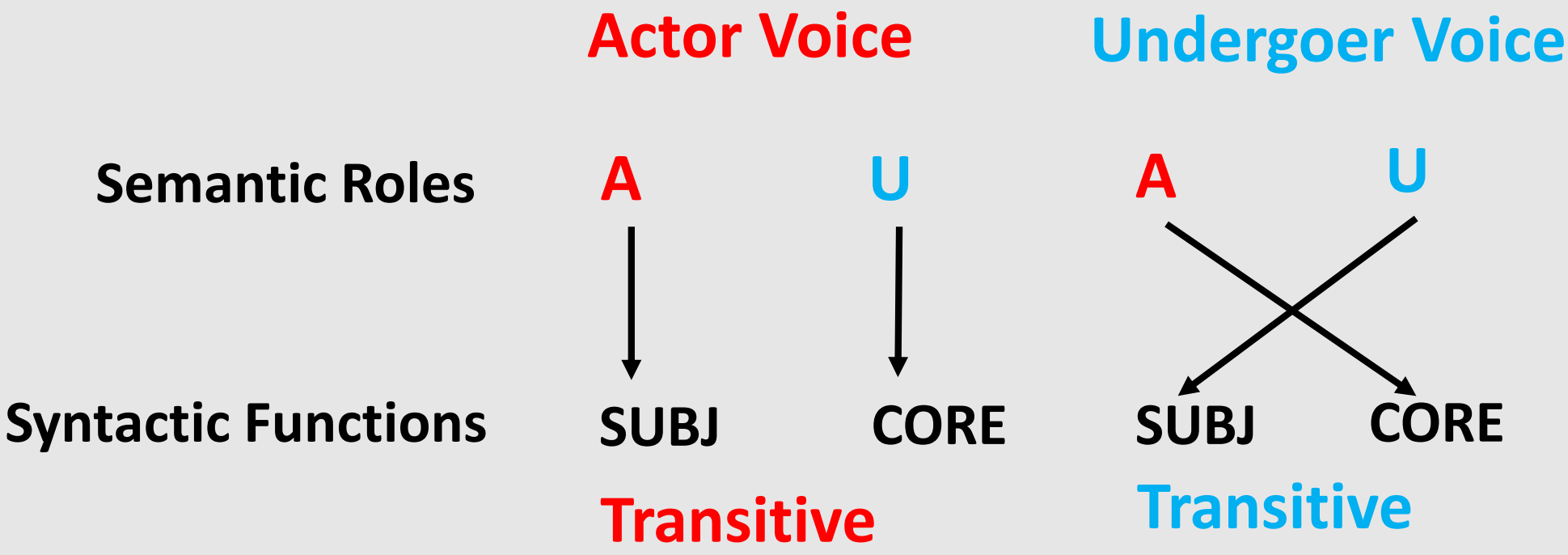
B<in>ilih-an ng lalaki ng isda *ang* tindahan.
<PFV>buy-LV GEN man GEN fish NOM store
'The man bought fish at the store.'

(1d) **Benefactive Voice**

I-b<in>ili ng lalaki ng isda *ang* bata.
BV<PFV>buy GEN man GEN fish NOM child
'The man bought fish for the child.' (Arka 2002)

Western Austronesian

- Western Austronesian (WAn) voice alternations are **symmetrical**



Possible Analyses

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- The analysis of WAn verbal morphology remains **controversial** (Adelaar 2013)
- There is a far greater number of alternations than typical voice systems – is this better described as focus (Clayre 1991) or pivot (Foley & Van Valin 1984) or nominalisation (Kaufman 2009)?
- It is not clear that WAn languages have grammatical functions like subject (Schachter 1976, Kroeger 1993)
- Semantic differences between AV and UV have prompted analyses that differ in transitivity (Aldridge 2004, Rackowski & Richards 2005)

Symmetrical Voice

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- Riesberg (2014: 10): a language is **symmetrical** if:

  (1) It has more than one basic transitive construction
  (2) The corresponding arguments behave equally in all different voices, and
  (3) The verb is morphologically equally marked in all different voices

- Hence **to identify symmetrical voice** it is necessary to show:

  (1) that there is an alternation in grammatical functions, and
  (2) that all clauses are transitive

Summary

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- Western Austronesian **verbal alternations** differ in important ways from other voice systems:
  - The number of alternations
  - The apparent symmetrical nature

- One possible analysis is that they represent **symmetrical voice**.
  - This is equivalent to stating that the voices represent an alternation in the mapping of arguments to functions
  - And… that each voice is transitive

- Let's see whether this can be upheld in **Kelabit**.

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Kelabit Verbal Alternations

Kelabit

- Kelabit is a WAn language spoken mainly in the Fourth and Fifth divisions of Sarawak, Malaysia (Martin 1996).
- It is part of the Kelabitic or Apad Uat subgroup of Northern Sarawak which also includes Lun Bawang/Lundayeh, Tring and Sa'ban (Kroeger 1998).
- Data is based on my own fieldwork in Bario during 2013 and 2014

Kelabit Voice Alternations

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(3a) **Actor Voice**

La'ih	**sineh**	ne-nekul	*nuba'*	*nedih*	ngen	seduk
man	DEM	PFV-AV.spoon	rice	3SG.POSS	with	spoon

'That man spooned up his rice with a spoon'

(3b) **Undergoer Voice**

sikul	*lai'h*	*sineh*	**nuba'**	**nedih**	ngen	seduk
<UV.PFV>spoon	man	DEM	rice	3SG.POSS	with	spoon

'That man ate his rice with a spoon'

(3c) **Instrumental Voice**

seduk	penekul	*la'ih*	*sineh*	*nuba'*	*nedih*
spoon	IV-spoon	man	DEM	rice	3SG.POSS

'That man used a spoon to spoon up his rice'

(1) is there an alternation in the mapping of arguments to functions?

(2) are all the voices transitive?

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An alternation in Grammatical Functions

Alternation in Grammatical Functions

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- Grammatical functions in Western Austronesian are controversial – especially **subject**

- This is because the **typical subject properties are split** between the actor semantic role and the argument privileged in verbal morphology (see Schachter 1976, Kroeger 1993ab)

- This is true of Western Austronesian – including **Kelabit** – as well as syntactically ergative languages and can be seen in the patterns of relativisation and reflexive binding.

Relativisation

- Only the privileged argument can be relativised on:

(4a) **Actor Voice**

Seni'er	kuh	la'ih	[suk	ne-nekul	nuba']
UV.PFV.see	1SG	man	REL	PFV-AV.spoon	rice

'I saw the man who spooned up rice'

(4b) *Seni'er kuh nuba' [suk nekul la'ih sineh]

(4c) **Undergoer Voice**

Seni'er	kuh	nuba'	[suk	sikul	la'ih sineh]
UV.PFV.see	1SG	rice	REL	UV.PFV.spoon	man DEM

'I saw the rice that the man spooned up with a spoon'

(4d) *Seni'er kuh la'ih [suk sikul nuba']

Reflexive binding

- Only the actor role can bind reflexives

(5a) **Actor Voice** (actor = privileged)

Uih	ne-mada’	burur	kudih	ngedeh
1SG	PFV-AV.show	body	1SG.POSS	to.3PL

‘I surrendered myself to them’

(5b) **Undergoer Voice** (actor = non-privileged)

Binada’	kuh	burur	kudih	ngedeh
UV.PFV.show	1SG	body	1SG.POSS	to.3PL

‘I surrendered myself to them’

Systematic Split (Falk 2006)

Type 1 Subject Properties	Type 2 Subject Properties
Agent argument in active voice	Shared argument in co-ordinated clauses
Most likely covert argument	Raising
The addressee of an imperative	Extraction
Anaphoric prominence	Obligatory element
Switch reference systems	“External” structural position
Controlled argument (PRO) for some languages	Controlled argument (PRO) for some languages
Discourse topic	Definiteness/wide scope

Actor Semantic Role

Syntactic Pivot

What does this mean for subjects?

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- There have been three main approaches to the **split:**

(1) Western Austronesian languages do not have subjects (Schachter 1976)
  - There is no subject - the privileged argument is a **topic**
  - There is **no alternation** in the mapping of arguments to functions

(2) Only role-related properties like reflexive binding identify subjects (Aldridge 2004)
  - The **actor is subject** – the privileged argument is a **topic/absolutive**
  - There is **no alternation** in the mapping of arguments to functions

(3) Only reference-related properties like relativisation identify subjects (Manning 1996, Manning & Sag 1998)
  - The privileged argument is **subject**
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✓

What does this mean for subjects?

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- I will argue for the **Manning & Sag** (1998) approach:

  (1) Privileged arguments have many reference-related subject properties
  (2) They do not necessarily behave like topics
  (3) Actors in UV behave like objects

- If we treat the **actor** as subject in AV and the **undergoer** as subject in UV then – by definition – the alternations involve different mappings of arguments to functions…

Privileged Argument as Subject?

- In addition to extraction (relativisation, cleft constructions, wh-questions) there are a number of **subject properties** unique to privileged arguments

Coding	Behaviour
Optionally preceded by *neh* and *teh*	Extraction
	Shared argument under co-ordination
	Controlled argument (PRO)
	External structural position

Coding: *neh* and *teh* particles

(6a) **Actor Voice**

Kuman	**teh**	Peter	bua' kaber	nedih	keneh
AV.eat	PT	Peter	pineapple	3SG.POSS	he.said

'Peter does eat his pineapple he said'

(6b) *Kuman Peter **teh** bua' kaber nedih keneh

(6c) **Undergoer Voice**

Kenen	Peter	**teh**	bua' kaber	nedih	keneh
UV.eat	Peter	PT	pineapple	3SG.POSS	he.said

'Peter will eat his pineapple he said'

(6d) *Kenen **teh** Peter bua' kaber nedih keneh

Behaviour: control constructions

(7a) **Actor Voice**

Uih	ne-nuru’	ieh$_i$	[PRO$_i$	nge-laak	ngen	tauh]
1SG	PFV-AV.order	3SG		AV-cook	for	1PL.INCL

‘I asked him to cook for us’

(7b)

*Ieh	merey	padey$_i$	[PRO$_i$	nibu	uih]
3SG	AV.give	rice		AV.plant	1SG

For: ‘He allows me to plant rice’

(7c) **Undergoer Voice**

Ieh	merey	padey$_i$	[PRO$_i$	sebuwen	kuh]
3SG.1	AV.give	rice		plant.UV.IRR	1SG

‘He allows rice to be planted by me’

Privileged Argument as Subject?

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The privileged argument has the
reference-related properties expected of subjects

Privileged Argument as Topic?

- Although the AV actor is often a topic, the UV undergoer is not a **discourse topic** with high topic continuity…

(8)

Nalap	neh	pupu’	
UV.PFV.fetch	3SG	hitting.implement	
‘She fetched something to hit with’			
Nukab	neh	bubpu’	daan
UV.PFV.open	3SG	door	hut
‘Opened the door to the hut’			
Nalap	neh	edteh	kayuh
UV.PFV.fetch	3SG	one	stick
‘Picked up a piece of wood’ (Narrative)			

It is the actor that has high discourse continuity and is expressed as a pronoun!

Privileged Argument as Topic?

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- Neither is it necessarily an **information structure** topic, as both AV actors and UV undergoers can express **focus information**:

(9a) **Undergoer Voice**

Q. Enun seni'er muh?
what UV.PFV.see 2SG
'What did you see?'

A. Edteh wayang sen'ier kuh na'ah
one video UV.PFV.see 1SG before
'I just saw a video…'

(9b) **Actor Voice**

Q. Iih suk kuman bua' kaber sineh?
who REL AV.eat fruit pineapple DEM
'Who is eating that pineapple?'

A. Peter suk kuman bua' kaber sineh?
Peter REL AV.eat fruit pineapple DEM
'Peter is eating that pineapple.'

Privileged Argument as Topic?

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The privileged argument does not correspond to a topic in any sense!

Summary

- There are many reference-related subject properties that support the idea that the privileged argument is **subject** in Kelabit and arguments against treating it as **topic.**

- The only argument for the **actor** as subject is reflexive binding and on the Manning & Sag (1998) approach this could be handled at **argument structure.**

- Hence, we can conclude that the privileged argument is subject and consequently that the verbal morphology represents an alternation in the mapping of arguments to functions…. the definition of **voice**!

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All Voices are Transitive

Transitive

- The next piece of the puzzle is showing not only that WAn morphology encodes voice but that the alternations are **symmetrical**.

- In other words, we not only need to show that the AV actor and the UV undergoer are **subjects**, but also that the AV undergoer and UV actor are both core arguments (unlike passive actors and antipassive undergoers)

- There are a number of **syntactic phenomena** that support this position – these also serve to show that the UV actor is more like an object than a subject.

AV Undergoer and UV Actor Core Properties

- The AV Undergoer and UV Actor share the following properties which distinguish them both from **subjects** and clear cut **obliques**

Coding	Behaviour
NP rather than PP	Immediately-post verbal position
	No subject properties – e.g. extraction
	No adjunct-fronting

Immediately post-verbal position

- Non-privileged actors/undergoers occur in **post-verbal position**:

(10a) **Actor Voice**

La'ih	sineh	[ne-kuman	bua'	kaber]	**ngimalem**
man	DEM	PFV-AV.eat	fruit	pineapple	yesterday

'I ate pineapple yesterday'

(10b) *La'ih sineh ne-kuman **ngimalem** bua' kaber

(10c) **Undergoer Voice**

[Kinan	la'ih	sineh]	**ngimalem**	neh	bua'	kaber	ih
UV.PFV.eat	man	DEM	yesterday	PT	fruit	pineapple	PT

'I ate the pineapple yesterday'

(10d) *Kinan **ngimalem** la'ih sineh neh bua' kaber

Immediately post-verbal position

- The same is not true of **subjects** and **obliques**:

(11a) Tenganak **ngimalem** *keduih*
INTR.birth yesterday 1SG.EMPH
'I was born yesterday (=yesterday was my birthday)'

(11b) Nitun kuh *tieh* **ngimalem** ngen idih meto'
UV.PFV.question 1SG PT=3SG yesterday to DEM PT
'I asked her about that yesterday as well'

Adjunct-Fronting

- Unlike subjects, the AV undergoer and UV actor cannot be fronted:

(12a) **AV Undergoer**

*Bua’	kaber	ne-kuman	*uih*
fruit	pineapple	PFV-AV.eat	1SG.NOM

For: ‘I ate pineapple’

(12b) **UV Actor**

*Uih	kinan	*bua’*	*kaber*
1SG.NOM	UV.PFV.eat	fruit	pineapple

For: ‘I ate pineapple’

Adjunct-Fronting

- But at least some obliques can be fronted:

(13) **Actor Voice Oblique/Adjunct**

[Ngi	bawang	lun	beken]	kuman	*lemulun*	deley	kinih
at	place	people	other	AV.eat	people	corn	now

'In other places, people eat corn today'

Summary

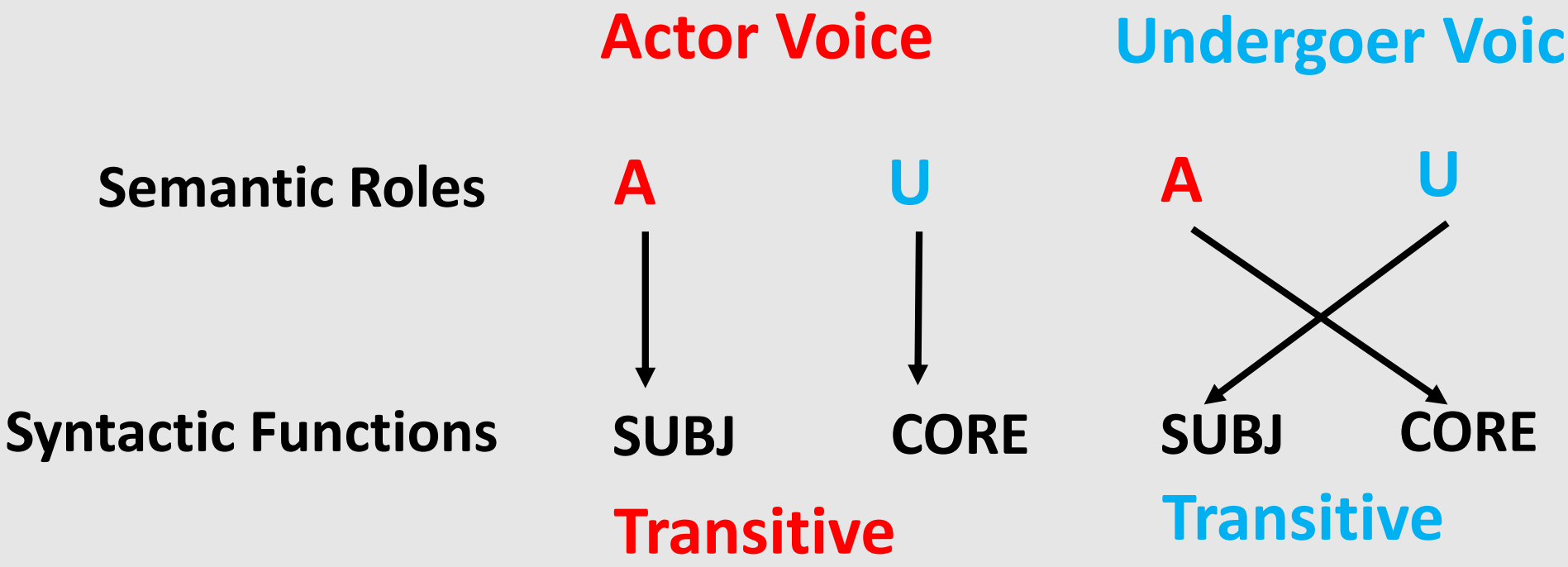
- Consequently, the AV undergoer and the UV actor both have **core argument properties** and differ in their coding and behaviour from both **subjects** and obliques

- This suggests that both AV and UV are indeed transitive clauses with two core arguments and consequently that the alternations are **symmetrical**

- It also further provides further support for treating the UV undergoer as subject rather than the actor, since this has many **typical properties of objects**.

Summary

- Hence, we have motivated the following analysis of **argument to function mappings** in the different voice constructions in Kelabit:



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Implications

Implications

- This has several important **implications for voice typology**:

  (1) It is possible to have **alternations** in the mappings of arguments to functions (i.e. voice) without detransitivisation and demotion
  (2) Voice alternations to not necessarily have to be **derived** from one another – suggesting that there isn't always a default mapping of arguments to functions
  (3) It is possible to find languages in which **actors are core** but not mapped to subject

- And implications for the notion of **subject**:

  (1) WAn languages do not necessarily cause us to reject the notion of universal subjects
  (2) Subjects may be identified by reference-related pivot properties

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Conclusion

Conclusion

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- I have presented a number of syntactic properties that support the identification of the privileged argument as **subject** and non-privileged actors and undergoers as **core arguments** in Kelabit

- These support the idea that **verbal morphology** encodes an alternation in the mapping of arguments to functions and results in multiple transitive clauses

- Hence, it suggests that the best analysis of the data is **symmetrical voice**

Conclusion

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- This reinforces the need to include symmetrical voice in the cross-linguistic **typology of voice systems**

- It also gives us a clear **methodology** for how to identify these in other languages:

  (1) Demonstrate an alternation in the mapping of arguments to functions
  (2) Demonstrate that each alternation is equally transitive

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Many Thanks!