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Grammatical Functions: The Challenge from Western Austronesian

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Introduction



- The grammatical function of **subject** is often taken as fundamental in typological and syntactic work
- However, it remains controversial whether subjects exist in Western Austronesian on account of their unusual systems of **verbal morphology** and the fact that **typical subject properties are split** in non-actor voices.
- This has led some to claim that **subject** is not a relevant notion; and others to argue over whether subject is best equated with the **actor** or the privileged argument

Introduction



- In this paper, I address address the debate in relation to empirical data from **Kelabit**, **Lun Bawang** and **Sa'ban**: three closely-related WAn languages spoken in Northern Sarawak, Malaysia.
- Using cross linguistic tests, I show that there are good arguments for considering the privileged argument to be the **subject**, rather than a **topic** or **absolute**.
- Moreover, there are arguments for treating the **actor** as an **object** (or core argument) in non-actor voice constructions.

Introduction



- Consequently, I argue that languages in Northern Sarawak do have a **subject** function, even if it is **different from other subjects cross-linguistically**.
- Therefore, the challenge from Western Austronesian is to refine what we think **subjects** are (and how we identify them) rather than to abandon the notion of **universal** grammatical functions altogether.

Roadmap



- Western Austronesian Verbal Morphology
- The Subject Debate in WAn
- Grammatical functions in Northern Sarawak
 - Privileged argument as subject (and not topic)
 - Non-privileged actor as object (and not subject)
- Implications and conclusion



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Western Austronesian Verbal Morphology



WAn Verbal Morphology (Tagalog)

(1a) **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) **b<in>ili-Ø** *ng lalaki* ang isda sa tindahan
 <PFV>buy-UV GEN man NOM fish OBL store
 'The man bought the fish at the store'

(1c) **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'

Actor = Red
Undergoer = Blue

Privileged Argument
 = underlined

Non-privileged Argument = italics



What does WAn Verbal Morphology do?

- WAn verbal morphology encodes **symmetrical voice**

Actor Voice

Undergoer Voice

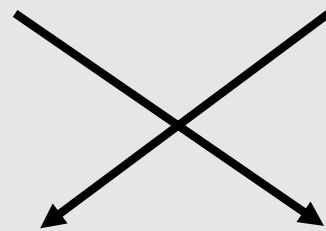
Semantic Roles

A

U

A

U



Syntactic Functions

SUBJ

CORE

SUBJ

CORE

Transitive

Transitive

controversial!

- Rare...
- Split subject properties



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The Subject Debate

Grammatical Functions



- Grammatical functions such as **subject** and **object** have played a long role in **syntax** and **typology**
- Some theoretical approaches (e.g. LFG, Dalrymple 2001) assume a **universally available** set of grammatical functions as primitives of the theory.
- In other approaches (e.g. broadly Chomskyan approaches, Chomsky 1965, 1981, Paul 2010), grammatical functions are **not primitives** but still play an **important role** (e.g. in Extended Projection Principle)



Grammatical Functions

- Grammatical functions are typically identified via **morphosyntactic properties** that distinguish them from other arguments (Keenan 1976, Falk 2006, Andrews 2007)

Coding	Behaviour
Unmarked Case	Imperative Addressee
Agreement	Reflexive Binding
	Switch Reference Systems
	Co-ordination
	Controlled Argument (PRO)
	Raising
	Extraction
	Obligatory Element
	Wide Scope
	Discourse Topic

**Subject
Properties**





Morphological Ergativity (Warlpiri)

- Mismatch between encoding & syntactic properties, e.g. in **morphological ergativity, quirky case & differential argument marking**.

(2a) Ngarrka_i (S) ka wirnpirli-mi, [karli jarnti-rninja-karra]
 man PRES whistle-NONPAST boomerang trim-INF-SUBJCOMP

‘The man (S) is whistling while trimming the boomerang’

(2b) Ngarrka-ngku_i (A) ka purlapa (O) yunpa-rni, [karli jarnti-rninja-karra-rlu]
 man-ERG PRES corroboree sing-NONPAST boomerang trim-INF-SUBJCOMP-ERG

‘The man (A) is singing a corroboree (O) while trimming the boomerang’

Morphological Ergativity (Warlpiri)

(2c) Kala-nkulu-jana

USIT.2PLSUBJ.3PLOBJ

[rirrinyki-wapa-nja-**kurra**]

SCURRY-MOVE-INF-OBJCOMP

pu-ngu

hit-PAST

‘You killed them while they were out foraging’ (Simpson 1991: 310-315)

- Hence, we might assume that that grammatical functions should be identified on the basis of **syntactic rather encoding properties** (Dalrymple 2001, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011).

The WAn Challenge

- However, symmetrical voice languages present a different challenge...
- Behavioural properties are **split** between the privileged argument (i.e. actor in AV, undergoer in UV etc.) and the **actor** semantic role (cf. Schachter 1976)

Coding	Behaviour
Unmarked Case	Imperative Addressee
Agreement	Reflexive Binding
	Switch Reference Systems
	Co-ordination
	Controlled Argument (PRO)
	Raising
	Extraction
	Obligatory Element
	Wide Scope
	Discourse Topic

Tagalog Relativisation



- (3a) **AV** Matalino ang lalaki[=ng
NOM man=LNK bumasa *ng diyaryo*
Intelligent AV.read GEN newspaper
'The man who read a newspaper is intelligent'
- (3b) *Interesante *ng diyaryo*[=ng bumasa ang lalaki
Interesting GEN newspaper=LNK AV.read NOM man
- (3c) **UV** Interesante ang diyaryo[=ng binasa *ng lalaki*
Interesting NOM newspaper=LNK UV.read GEN man
'The newspaper that the man read is interesting'
- (3d) *Matalino *ng lalaki*[=ng binasa ang diyaryo
Intelligent GEN man=LNK UV-read NOM newspaper

Conclusion



Only the privileged argument can be **relativized on**

privileged argument = subject



Tagalog Reflexive Binding

(4a) **Actor Voice** (actor = *ang*-marked)

Nag-aalala ang lolo sa kaniyang sarili

AV-worry NOM grandfather DAT his self

‘Grandfather worries about himself’

(4b) **Undergoer Voice** (actor ≠ *ang*-marked)

Inaalala ng lolo ang kaniyang sarili

UV.worry GEN grandfather NOM his self

‘Grandfather worries about himself’ (Manning 1996: 13)

Conclusion



The actor controls **reflexive binding** regardless of whether it is privileged or not

actor = subject



Indonesian Relativisation

- (5a) **AV** Hasan [yang membeli *ikan*]
 Hasan REL AV.buy fish
 'It was Hasan who bought fish'
- (5b) **ikan* [yang mem-beli Hasan]
 fish REL AV-buy Hasan
- (5c) **UV** ikan [yang di-beli *Hasan*]
 fish REL UV-buy Hasan
 'It was fish that Hasan bought'
- (5d) **Hasan* [yang di-beli ikan]
 Hasan REL UV-buy fish

(adapted from Musgrave 2002: 59)



Indonesian Reflexive Binding

(6a) **Actor Voice**

<u>saya</u>	menyerah-kan	<i>diri</i>	<i>saya</i>	ke	polisi.
1SG	AV.surrender-APPL	self	1SG	to	police

'I surrendered myself to the police.'

(6b) **Undergoer Voice (pro=V)**

<u>diri</u>	<u>saya</u>	<u>saya</u>	serah-kan	ke	polisi.
self	1SG	1SG	UV.surrender-APPL	to	police

'I surrendered myself to the police.'

(6c) **Undergoer Voice (di-V-nya)**

<u>diri-nya</u>	di-serah-kan=	<u>nya</u>	ke	polisi.
self-3SG	UV-surrender-APPL=	3SG	to	police

'He/she surrendered himself to the police.' (Arka & Manning 1998)

Inuit Relativisation



(7a) Nanuq [*Piita-p* tuqu-ta-a]
polar.bear Peter-ERG kill-TR.PART.3SG

‘A polar bear that Peter killed.’

(7b) **angut* [aallaat tigu-sima-sa-a]
man gun take-PERF.REL.TR.3SG

‘The man who took the gun.’ (Manning 1996)



Inuit Reflexive Binding

(8a) **Ataata-ni** **Juuna-p** tatig(i-v)aa
father-REFL.POSS Juuna-ERG trust-IND.TR.3SG.3SG
'Juuna trusts his father'

(8b) ***Anaana-mi** **Piita** nagligi-jana
mother-REFL.POSS.ERG Piita love-3SG.3SG
FOR: 'His mother loves Pitta' (Manning 1996)



Systematic Split (Falk 2006)

Type 1 Properties	Type 2 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



Privileged Argument



What does this mean for subjects?

- 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**

(2) Only **Type 1 properties** identify subjects (Aldridge 2004)

➤ The **actor is subject** – the privileged argument is a **topic/absolutive**

(3) Only **Type 2 properties** identify subjects (Manning 1996, Manning & Sag 1998)

➤ The privileged argument is **subject** - binding controlled by **actor**

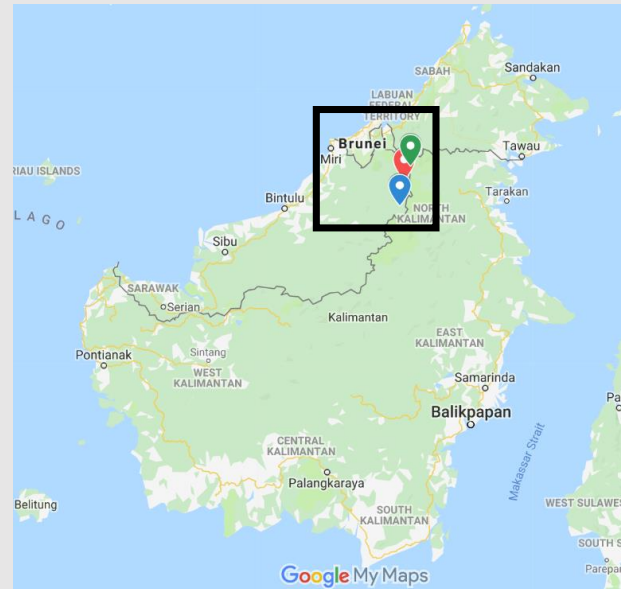


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Grammatical Functions in Northern Sarawak

Northern Sarawak

- Today, I am going to present data from **three WAn languages** spoken in Northern Sarawak, Malaysia: **Kelabit** (K), **Lun Bawang** (LB) and **Sa'ban** (S).
- They belong to the **Apad Uat** subgroup.
- Data is taken from fieldwork in **Bario** (K), **Ba Kelalan** (LB), and **Long Banga** (S)
- Like Tagalog, they have systems of **WAn verbal morphology** that could be analysed as symmetrical voice



Kelabit



(9a) **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'

(9b) **Undergoer Voice**
sikul lai'h sineh nuba' nedih ngen seduk
<UV.PFV>spoon man DEM rice 3SG.POSS with spoon
'That man spooned up his rice with a spoon'

(9c) **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'

Differences with Tagalog:

- Number of voices
- Semantic properties
- Word order
- Case marking

Sa'ban



(10a) Actor Voice (AV)

Súel nah maan *bii'*.
girl that AV.eat rice
'That girl ate/eats/is eating rice'

(10b) Undergoer Voice (UV)

bii' i-naan *súel nah*.
rice UV-eat girl that
'That girl ate rice'

Differences with Kelabit & Tagalog:

- 2-way system of alternations
- No case-marking (even in pronouns)

Kelabit Relativisation

- (11a) **AV** Seni'er kuh **la'ih** [suk ____ ne-nekul *nuba'* ngen seduk]
 UV.PFV.see 1SG man REL PFV-AV.spoon rice with spoon
 'I saw the man who spooned up rice with a spoon'
- (11b) *Seni'er kuh *nuba'* [suk nekul ____ **la'ih** **sineh**]
 UV.PFV.see 1SG rice REL AV.spoon man DEM
- (11c) **UV** Seni'er kuh **nuba'** [suk ____ sikul *la'ih sineh* ngen seduk]
 UV.PFV.see 1SG rice REL UV.PFV.spoon man DEM with spoon
 'I saw the rice that the man spooned up with a spoon'
- (11d) *Seni'er kuh *la'ih* [suk sikul ____ **nuba'**]
 UV.PFV.see 1SG man REL UV.PFV.spoon rice

Sa'ban Relativisation



(12a) **AV** Nai súel
girl [nok _____ mraai *wei'* *nyeh* ina]
DEM REL AV.give fruit to.3SG earlier
'This is the girl that gave fruit to her earlier.'

(12b) *Nai *wei'* [nok mraai _____ súel nah *nyeh* ina]
DEM fruit REL AV.give girl DEM to.3SG earlier

(12c) **UV** Nai wei'
fruit [nok _____ iraa*i* *súel* *nah* *nyeh* ina]
DEM REL UV.give girl DEM to.3SG earlier
'This is the fruit that the girl gave to her earlier.'

(12d) *Nai *súel* [nok iraa*i* _____ wei' *nyeh* ina]
DEM girl REL UV.give fruit to.3SG earlier

Kelabit Reflexive Binding



(13a) Actor Voice

Uih ne-mada' *burur kudih* ngedeh
1SG PFV-AV.show body 1SG.POSS to.3PL
'I surrendered myself to them.'

(13b) Undergoer Voice

Binada' kuh burur kudih ngedeh
UV.PFV.show 1SG body 1SG.POSS to.3PL
'I surrendered myself to them.'



Sa'ban Reflexive Binding

(14a) Actor Voice

Éek madei' *brúel éek* *ndeh*
 1SG AV.show body 1SG to.3PL

'I showed myself to them.'

(14b) Undergoer Voice

Yadei' éek *brúel éek* *ndeh*
 UV.show 1SG body 1SG to.3PL

'I showed myself to them.'

Split subject properties correlates
 with **WAn verbal morphology**
 regardless of other
 morphosyntactic properties...



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Privileged Argument as Subject



Privileged Argument as Subject?

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

	Lun Bawang	Kelabit	Sa'ban
Coding		✓	✓
Relativisation	✓	✓	✓
External position	✓	✓	✓
wh-questions	✓	✓	✓
Raising		✓	?
Control	✓	✓	? (just actor?)
Shared argument in co-ordination	?	? not limited to subjects	



Particles in Sa'ban

(15a) Actor Voice

Pi maan *wei'* nah
 alreadyAV.eat fruit DEM

[nah	<u>aka</u>	ai]
PT	wild.boar	PT

'The wild boar has already eaten the fruit'

Only privileged arguments can have pre-nominal particles

(15b) *pi maan [nah *wei'* ai] aka nah

(15c) Undergoer Voice

Pi inaan *aka* nah
 Already uv.eat wild.boar DEM

[nah	<u>wei'</u>	ai]
PT	fruit	PT

'The wild boar has already eaten the fruit'

(15d) *pi inaan [nah *aka* ai] wei' nah



External Position in Kelabit

(16a) **Actor Voice**
La'ih sineh nenekul *nuba'* ngen tekul ngimalem
 man DEM AV.PFV.spoon rice with spoon yesterday
 'The man spooned up rice with a spoon yesterday'

Only privileged arguments appear pre-verbally

(16b) **nuba'* nenekul la'ih sineh ngen tekul ngimalem

(16c) **Undergoer Voice**
Nuba' sikul *la'ih* *sineh* ngen tekul ngimalem
 rice UV.PFV.spoon man DEM with spoon yesterday
 'The man spooned up the rice with a spoon yesterday.'

(16d) **la'ih* *sineh* sikul nuba' ngen tekul ngimalem



wh-questions in Lun Bawang

(17a) Actor Voice

<u>Irey</u>	nemelih	<i>bera</i>	<i>nah?</i>
who	AV.PFV.eat	rice	DEM

‘Who bought that rice?’

(17b) **anun* nemelih delai dih?

(17c) Undergoer Voice

<u>Anun</u>	bilih	<i>delai</i>	<i>dih?</i>
what	UV.eat	2SG	DEM

‘What are you eating?’

(17d) **irey* bilih bera dih?

Only privileged arguments can be questioned via wh-fronting

Raising in Kelabit



(18a) **Actor Voice**

Uih	ngelinuh	<u>ieh</u>	nekuman	<i>nuba'</i>	ngimalem
1SG	AV.think	3SG	AV.PFV.eat	rice	yesterday

'I thought him to have eaten his rice yesterday'

(18b) *Uih ngelinuh *nuba'* nekuman ieh ngimalem

(18c) **Undergoer Voice**

Uih	ngelinuh	<u>nuba'</u>	kinan	<i>neh</i>	ngimalem
1SG	AV.PFV.think	rice	UV.PFV.eat	3SG	yesterday

'I thought the rice to have been eaten by him yesterday'

(18d) *Uih ngelinuh *ieh* kinan nuba' ngimalem



Raising in Kelabit

(19a) Actor Voice

Uih	ngelinuh	ieh	tu'uh-tu'uh	[nekuman	<i>nuba'</i>	ngimalem]
1SG	AV.think	3SG	real-REDUP	AV.PFV.eat	rice	yesterday

'I thought him truly to have eaten his rice yesterday'

(19b) Undergoer Voice

Uih	ngelinuh	nuba'	tu'uh-tu'uh	[kinan	<i>neh</i>	ngimalem]
1SG	AV.PFV.think	rice	real-REDUP	UV.PFV.eat	3SG	yesterday

'I thought the rice truly to have been eaten by him yesterday'

(19c) ***ieh** tu'uh-tu'uh nekuman *nuba'* ngimalem



Raising in Kelabit

(20a) leh leninuh kuh **tu'uh-tu'uh** [____ nekuman *nuba' dih*]
 3SG UV.PFV.think 1SG real-REDUP AV.PFV.eat rice DEM
 'I truly thought him to have eaten the rice'

(20b) Nuba' leninuh kuh **tu'uh-tu'uh** [____ kinan *la'ih sineh*]
 rice UV.PFV.think 1SG real-REDUP UV.PFV.eat man DEM
 'I truly thought rice to have been eaten by him'

Only privileged arguments can be raised



Control in Lun Bawang

(21a) **Actor Voice**

Merey uih
 AV.give 1SG.NOM
 'I let her eat rice'

keneh
 3SG.OBL

[kuman *nuba'*]
 AV.eat rice

Only privileged arguments can be the controllee

(21b) *Merey

uih

keneh

[kenen nuba']

(21c) **Undergoer Voice**

Merey uih
 AV.give 1SG.NOM
 'I give her rice to eat'

nuba'
 rice

[kenen *ieh*]
 [UV.IRR.eat 3SG.NOM]

(21d) *Merey

uih

nuba'

[kuman ieh]

Summary



The privileged argument has the **Type 2 properties**
expected of subjects

Binding



- The main challenge against treating the privileged argument as subject is the binding data.
- However, this would be expected if – following Manning (1996) and Manning and Sag (1998) – we assume that **Type 1 properties** actually identify the **highest semantic role** at the level of argument structure with core status
- Moreover, studies of binding have revealed that there is **variation** cross-linguistically in terms of the **nature of the binding domain** and constraints on **potential antecedents** (Bresnan et al. 2016, Dalrymple 2001)

Binding



- There are languages for which it is necessary to refer to the **thematic hierarchy** in order to correctly state the **binding conditions**
 - Albanian (Sells 1988)
 - Norwegian (Hellan 1988, Dalrymple & Zaenan 1991)
 - Balinese (Arka & Wechsler 1996)
- Consequently, the binding data doesn't necessarily argue against the **privileged argument = subject** account in the way that e.g. Schachter assumed!



Privileged Argument as Topic



Privileged Argument as Topic?

- The main alternative to treating the privileged argument as subject is to treat it as a **topic**.
- Topics have been defined in the literature in a number of different ways. Two particularly prominent notions are:
 - **Discourse Topics** – central referents with high topic continuity (Cooreman, Fox and Givon 1984)
 - **Information Structure Topics** – identifiable/aboutness (Lambrecht 1994)
- The **UV undergoer** does not (necessarily) fit either of these definitions!



Kelabit UV in Discourse

(22) 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'

Cooreman, Fox & Givón (1984) suggest that a discourse topic has **high topic continuity** in the sense that it has low **referential distance** (=is easy to identify in context) and high **topical persistence** (=remains important).

In this (fairly typical) stretch of discourse it is the **actor** that has high topic continuity (and not the **undergoer**)

Referential Distance



		Actor Voice (AV)		Undergoer Voice (UV)	
		1-3 (High)	>3 (Low)	1-3 (High)	>3 (Low)
Lun Bawang	Actor	98%	2%	89%	11%
	Undergoer	62%	38%	89%	11%
Kelabit	Actor	89%	11%	92%	8%
	Undergoer	64%	36%	68%	32%
Sa'ban	Actor	94%	6%	95%	5%
	Undergoer	50%	50%	80%	20%

Topical Persistence



		Actor Voice (AV)		Undergoer Voice (UV)	
		>2 (High)	0-2 (Low)	>2 (High)	0-2 (Low)
Lun Bawang	Actor	76%	24%	75%	25%
	Undergoer	36%	64%	56%	44%
Kelabit	Actor	74%	26%	77%	23%
	Undergoer	54%	46%	43%	57%
Sa'ban	Actor	67%	33%	85%	15%
	Undergoer	33%	67%	52%	48%

Summary



The privileged undergoer does not appear to be the **discourse topic**
Is it the **information structure topic**?

Information Structure Topics



- The information structure topic is defined in terms of identifiability and aboutness (Lambrecht 1994).
- Often the privileged argument is the **topic** in this sense (which is expected given the cross-linguistic link between subjects & topics)
- However, this need not be the case...
 - Non-privileged actors can also be the information structure topic
 - Privileged roles can also convey focus information



Non-Privileged Actor as Topic (Kelabit)

- The **aboutness test** (creating an overt hanging topic) suggests that the non-privileged UV actor can be the information structure topic:

(23) Paul kediah, kinan *neh* bua' ebpuk
Paul 3SG.EMPH UV.PFV.eat 3SG.GEN passionfruit
'As for Paul, he ate the passion fruit'



Non-Privileged Actor as Topic (Sa'ban)

6. Cats are so aggressive. They chase squirrely. They chase birds. Some even chase dogs. I also heard that cats were seen chasing a small kangaroo in Australia. They also chase rats, of course. But that is good.

(24) Enap *deh* tah abieu
UV.PFV.catch 3PL PT rats
'They catch rats'

The non-privileged
actor is **topic**



Privileged Argument as Focus (Kelabit)

- Question-answer pairs show that the privileged argument can have the role of **focus**:

(25a) Undergoer Voice

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

A. Edteh wayang seni'er *kuh* na'ah
 one video UV.PFV.see 1SG before
 'I just saw a video...'

(25b) Actor Voice

Q. lih suk kuman *buah' kabere sineh*?
 who REL AV.eat fruit pineapple DEM
 'Who is eating that pineapple?'

A. Peter suk kuman *buah' kabere sineh*
 Peter REL AV.eat fruit pineapple DEM
 'Peter is eating that pineapple.'



Privileged Argument as Focus (Lun Bawang)

- The **contrast test** also suggests that privileged arguments can be in **focus/contrast**:

Context: Did Yudan hit Bulan? No he didn't hit her...

(26a) iamo' **i=Gituen** luk nemefet *keneh*
 but **NOM=Gituen** REL AV.PFV.hit 3SG.OBL
 'It was Gituen who hit her'

The privileged argument can have **non-topic** functions

(26b) iamo' **uih** (luk) bifet *ieh*
 but **1SG.NOM** (REL) UV.PFV.hit 3SG.NOM
 'He hit me'

Summary



The privileged appears to be underspecified for its **information structure** role
voice interacts with word order, case-marking & prosody to express this!

Hence, there are good arguments for treating it as a **subject** and against
treating it as a **topic**



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Non-privileged Actor as Object

Actor as Object?



- The final piece of the puzzle is showing that the **UV actor** is an **object** (or non-subject core argument) rather than a subject and behaves the same way as the non-privileged **AV undergoer**
- This argues against the **actor as subject** approach.
- It also argues against an ergative analysis in which AV is an **intransitive antipassive** construction – since both AV and UV can be shown to have two **core arguments**.



AV Undergoer and UV Actor Core Properties

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

	Lun Bawang	Kelabit	Sa'ban
NP rather than PP	? (OBL case for pronominal AV undergoer)	✓	✓
Post-verbal position	✓	✓	✓
No subject properties	✓	✓	✓
No fronting	✓	✓	✓



NP rather than PP in Sa'ban

- Obliques and adjuncts are typically **prepositional phrases**, whilst both non-privileged actors and undergoers are **NPs**:

(27a) Actor Voice

Súel nah mraai brée [ngaan anaak yeh]_{PP}
 girl DEM AV.give rice to child 3SG
 'The girl gave rice to her child'

AV undergoers and UV actors are not coded like obliques

(27b) Undergoer Voice

Brée iraa súel nah [ngaan anaak yeh]_{PP}
 rice UV.give girl DEM to child 3SG
 'The girl gave rice to her child'



Post-verbal Position in Kelabit

(28a) Actor Voice

La'ih sineh

man DEM

ne-kuman

PFV-AV.eat

buah *kaber*

fruit pineapple

ngimalem

yesterday

'I ate pineapple yesterday'

(28b) Undergoer Voice

Kinan

UV.PFV.eat

la'ih *sineh*

man DEM

buah *kaber*

fruit pineapple

ngimalem

'The man ate that pineapple yesterday.'



Post-verbal Position in Kelabit

(29a) Actor Voice

* <u>La'ih</u>	<u>sineh</u>	ne-kuman	ngimalem	<i>buah'</i>	<i>kaber</i>
man	DEM	PFV-AV.eat	yesterday	fruit	pineapple

'I ate pineapple yesterday'

(29b) Undergoer Voice

*Kinan	ngimalem	<i>la'ih</i>	<i>sineh</i>	<u><i>buah'</i></u>	<u><i>kaber</i></u>
UV.PFV.eat	yesterday	man	DEM	fruit	pineapple

'The man ate that pineapple yesterday.'



Post-verbal Position in Kelabit

(29c) Actor Voice

La'ih sineh nenekul *nuba'* ngimalem ngen tekul
 man DEM AV.PFV.spoon rice yesterday with spoon

'The man spooned up rice yesterday with a spoon'

(29d) Undergoer Voice

Nuba' sikul *la'ih* *sineh* ngimalem ngen tekul
 rice UV.PFV.spoon man DEM yesterday with spoon

'The man spooned up the rice yesterday with a spoon'

The AV undergoer
 and UV actor
 cannot be
 separated from
 the verb with
 adjuncts of time
 – obliques can!



Post-verbal Position in Kelabit

(30a) *La'ih sineh nemerey ngen anak nedih *nuba'*
rice

man DEM AV.PFV.give to child 3SG.POSS

For: 'The man gave rice to his child'

(30b) *Nuba' birey ngen anak nedih *la'ih sineh*
man DEM

rice UV.PFV.give to child 3SG.POSS

For: 'The man gave RICE to his child'

The AV undergoer and UV actor come closer to the verb than obliques



Adjunct Fronting in Lun Bawang

(31a) **nuba' dih*, *delai sineh* nemare *nan* *anak* *ieh* *dih*
 rice DEM man DEM AV.PFV.give to child 3SG.NOM DEM

For: 'Rice, the man gave to his child'

(31b) **delai dih*, *nuba'* bire *nan* *anak* *ieh* *dih*
 man DEM rice UV.PFV.spoon to child 3SG.NOM DEM

For: 'By the man, rice was spooned up with a spoon'



Adjunct Fronting in Lun Bawang

- (31c) Nan anak ieh dih, delai dih nemare *nuba' dih*
 to child 3SG.NOM DEM man DEM AV.PFV.give rice DEM
 'To his child, the man gave rice'

- (31d) Nan anak ieh dih, nuba' dih bire *delai dih*
 to child 3SG.NOM DEM rice DEM UV.PFV.give man DEM
 'To his child, the man gave rice'

The AV undergoer and UV actor
cannot be fronted
– unlike obliques

Summary



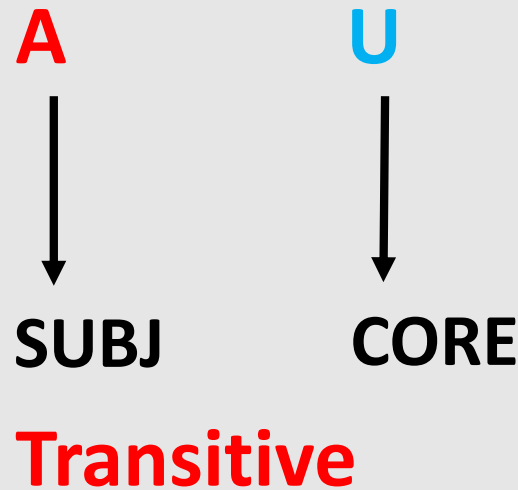
The UV actor looks more like an **object** (non-subject core argument) than a **subject!** (against actor = subject)

The AV undergoer looks like an **object** rather than an **oblique** (against the ergative analysis)

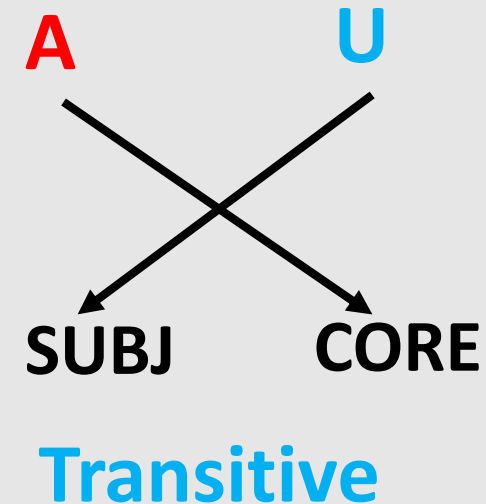
Summary

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

Actor Voice



Undergoer Voice



Semantic Roles

Syntactic Functions

A = OBJ

- Norwegian existentials (Lødrup 2000)
- Mapudungan inverse (Arnold 1997)



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Implications & Conclusion

Conclusion

- In this paper, I have presented three main arguments for treating the privileged argument as **subject** in the languages of Northern Sarawak:
 1. It has a range of cross-linguistic **subject properties** that distinguish it from other arguments in the clause
 2. It does not appear to have the cross-linguistic properties expected of **discourse or information structure topics**
 3. The non-privileged actor behaves like an *object* than subject.

Conclusion

- This has several **important implications**
- It supports 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**
- It also demonstrates the **importance of identifying grammatical functions** in Western Austronesian languages as a necessary precursor to understanding the true nature of the verbal morphology

Conclusion



- As for the question of subjects, it suggests that a **subject** can be identified in **Kelabit**, **Lun Bawang** and **Sa'ban** and that the split in subject properties may be linked to the mapping of actor to object.
- It further suggests that Western Austronesian languages and the split in subject properties need not (necessarily) refute the notion of subject being a **universal grammatical function**.
- Rather, it implies the need to **refine the definition** (and criteria for identification) on the basis of a more typologically varied set of languages (following the Manning/Kroeger approach).

Conclusion



- Finally, it suggests that **actors can be mapped to objects** which has implications for theoretical approaches to linking.
- Importantly, it suggests that default linking of actors to non-object function, does not necessarily apply for all languages and cannot be assumed to be universal
- Hence, this work makes an important contribution to our understanding of grammatical functions and Austronesian voice systems and highlights the importance of developing theoretical models that can account for the **typological facts**.



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Many Thanks!

Not least of all to the speakers of Kelabit, Lun Bawang and Sa'ban