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SUBJECT AND PIVOT IN SYMMETRICAL VOICE: THE CASE OF LUN BAWANG

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Proposed diagnostics for subjecthood are examined in Lun Bawang, a reduced Philippine-type language of Borneo. Disentanglement of these properties reveals that "subjecthood" as understood by Keenan and Comrie (1977) is in fact a conflation of two clusters of properties that often characterize distinct nominals. The diagnostics examined herein reveal that phenomena sensitive to voice, including pronoun form, word order, and extraction restrictions, are independent of hierarchical prominence, exemplified through binding. With these two notions separated, the symmetrical-voice system of Lun Bawang can be characterized as one in which every voice has the same subject.[1]

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS. Austronesian symmetrical-voice languages are characterized by "multiple basic transitive constructions," commonly called "voices" (Himmelmann 2005). Each voice selects a single noun phrase (NP), which the language may indicate through prenominal particles or word order, and which has privileged, and often exclusive, availability for extraction. Privileged status for extraction, along with the verb agreement seen in many such languages, are traditionally regarded as characteristic of subjecthood (e.g., Keenan 1976; Keenan and Comrie 1977). However, this NP frequently fails to conform to expectations of subject-like behavior in its relations with other NPs, exemplified through binding. This failure has led to the use of a plethora of terms in the literature to describe the privileged NP, the more common of which include *subject* (e.g., remarks in Keenan 1976 on Malagasy), *focus* (e.g., Clayre 1988 *et seq.* on languages of Borneo), and *pivot* (e.g., Foley 2007 on Tagalog).

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of subjects in symmetrical-voice languages by presenting evidence from Lun Bawang (also called Lun Dayeh or Lundayeh; ISO: lnd), an Austronesian language of Borneo, belonging to the North Sarawak subgroup. Lun Bawang has the distinction of being—genetically and geographically—the only language of Borneo outside Sabah to retain a system with more than two voices and full voice-indicating verbal morphology. Data used herein are from the author's own field notes from work conducted in the summer of 2017 on the dialect of Long Semadoh, a group of seven villages along the headwaters of the Trusan River in Sarawak, Malaysia.

While not the first treatment of Lun Bawang syntax (see, e.g., Blust 1971; Clayre 1988, 1991), this study is the first attempt to delve into its voice system beyond surface descriptions, and it proceeds as follows: §2 defines the two key notions of "pivot" (after Foley 2007) and "subject" and gives a preliminary overview of the relevant pronoun distinctions and verbal voice morphology. §3 illustrates transitive clause structure, particularly word order and its correlation with the properties of pivot. §4 demonstrates the pivot NP's exclusive availability for extraction. §5 uses two different binding tests to examine hierarchical relations among NPs and concludes that subjecthood always characterizes the more agent-like argument in a transitive clause and is thus independent of voice. §6 concludes.

2. PRELIMINARIES

2.1 DEFINITIONS. When all arguments are overt, every clause in Lun Bawang contains one and only one NP that (a) is indicated by the verb's voice morphology, (b) takes a particular pronominal form (if applicable), (c) may licitly appear preverbally, and (d) has exclusive availability for extraction operations. This NP is here called *pivot*, after Foley and Valin 1984 and Foley 2007. In Lun Bawang, the pivot of

a clause may be its agent, patient, or instrument. These phenomena that indicate pivot selection may be collectively called "voice."

In order to define *subject*, relations between NPs are here described in terms of a hierarchy of *prominence*, which is observable in tests developed in Barss and Lasnik 1986 and Chen 2017. In particular, for NPs X and Y, X is more prominent than Y (hereinafter written *X > Y*) if X can serve as an antecedent for binding into Y and if asymmetries in scope interpretation, where present, favor a reading in which Y falls within the scope of X. This definition, and those that depend on it, can be translated into various theoretical frameworks, such as the relation of asymmetric c-command in mainstream generative syntax.

The term *subject*, then, shall be employed herein to mean the NP that occupies the most prominent position on this hierarchy. Put more precisely, NP X is the subject of a clause if and only if, for any NP Y, X > Y. The diagnostics to be considered demonstrate that the subject of a Lun Bawang transitive clause is invariably its agent.

The definitional independence of these two notions (that neither can be defined in terms of the other) predicts correctly that these notions may or may not overlap. As is to be demonstrated, the properties of subject and pivot coincide only in the actor voice (AV), wherein the agent (subject) is selected as pivot. They do not overlap in the other two voices.

2.2 INDICATORS OF VOICE. Voice in Lun Bawang is manifested in up to three ways simultaneously: by pronominal forms, by verbal morphology, and by word order. An overview of the first two follows. The last is treated in §3.1.

2.2.1 PRONOUNS. Lun Bawang pronouns come in three basic sets, shown in table 1. Only the singular forms are considered, as the dual and plural are nearly invariant.

TABLE 1. Lun Bawang singular pronouns

	Pivot	"Genitive"	"Oblique"
1SG	uih	=kuh	negkuh
2SG	iko	=muh	nemuh
3SG	ieh	=neh	neneh

The first set of pronouns is the set reserved for use when and only when indicating a clause's pivot (PVT). The second is the enclitic pronouns that will be glossed herein as "genitive" (GEN). The function of this set is, however, twofold: true genitives (enclitic on the possessed noun), or non-pivot agents (agents in the patient voice (PV) and instrumental voice (IV), enclitic on the verb). The third set of pronouns, glossed herein as "oblique" (OBL), likewise has two functions: a true oblique, including recipient in ditransitive constructions, and a non-pivot patient.[2] Neither the "genitive" nor "oblique" pronouns ever demonstrate any of the properties of pivot described in §2.1.

2.2.2 VOICE MORPHOLOGY. The voice morphology of Lun Bawang, which indicates actor voice (AV), patient voice (PV), and instrumental voice (IV), can be schematized as in table 2.

TABLE 2. Voice morphology

	Imperfective	Perfective
AV	N-	ne-N-
PV	-en/-in	<in>
IV	piN-	ne-piN-

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[2]Despite appearances, these pronouns are *not* synchronically derived from the genitive forms, as the first person singular displays a phonological irregularity.

The *N-* shown in the AV and IV prefixes represents homorganic nasal substitution, a widespread phenomenon in Malayo-Polynesian languages whereby, when the initial consonant of the following root is an obstruent, that consonant is replaced by a nasal at the same place of articulation; in contrast with many languages that exhibit this phenomenon (e.g., Malay), substitution in Lun Bawang occurs whether the obstruent is voiced or voiceless.

The voice system of Lun Bawang, as illustrated in table 2, is morphologically symmetrical, in that every voice is equally basic; no form of any voice is derived from any other.

3. TRANSITIVE CLAUSE STRUCTURE. The relevant portion of transitive clause structure may be schematized as follows:[3]

[PRE-CLAUSAL [NEG PVT$_1$ VERB NPVT PVT$_2$ ADJUNCTS]]

There are two main possibilities for word order: the pivot NP may appear either preverbally (PVT$_1$ above) or after all non-pivot core arguments (PVT$_2$ above). Since a transitive clause has only one pivot, both of these possibilities cannot be realized simultaneously. (1a–d) illustrate some of these possibilities. Particularly worthy of note are that non-pivot agents always follow the verb immediately and precede non-pivot patients (1b–d), and non-pivot instruments are realized as adjuncts (1b). Thus, an AV clause, whose pivot is the agent, may have the order AVP or VPA; a PV clause, whose pivot is the patient, may have PVA or VAP; and an IV clause, whose pivot is the instrument, may have IVAP or VAPI. It is not, however, clear whether pivot-initial or verb-initial order is more pragmatically neutral, as there are two asymmetries: elicited or isolated sentences are more likely to be pivot-initial, while those found in discourse or narrative are somewhat more likely to be verb-initial. Order can also vary with voice: AV sentences are much more likely to be pivot-initial than PV sentences. As IV is not often used unless elicited, its ordering preference remains to be ascertained.

(1)   a.   *AV sentence*

> *Uih   ng-abet kayuh.*
> 1SG.PVT AV-tie   tree
> 'I am tying a log.'

   b.   *PV sentence*

> *Bet-in=muh   kayuh inih ku   abet inih.*
> tie-PV=2SG.GEN tree   this INST rope this
> 'You are tying this tree with this rope.'

   c.   *Negative PV Sentence*

> *"Na até   kinih   in-uit=kuh!"*
> NEG liver 1SG.this PFV.PV-bring=1SG.GEN
> ' "I didn't bring my liver!" '

   d.   *IV sentence*

> *Abet inih ne-ping-abet=kuh   kayuh ineh.*
> rope this PFV-IV-tie=1SG.GEN   tree that
> 'I used this rope to tie that log.'

Sentences (1a) and (1d) display a syntactic ambiguity: In the absence of negation, it is not obvious whether the pivot is in the immediate preverbal position or in the pre-clausal position. In fact, the pivot may

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[3]These are other abbreviations are spelled out in the list following the paper's conclusion.

be dislocated to the pre-clausal position.[4] However, since *only* the pivot NP, dislocated or not, may appear preverbally, this distinction is largely tangential to the focus of this investigation.

The language generally lacks the overt (non-)pivot marking of NPs other than pronouns found in many Philippine and Formosan languages (see, e.g., Chen 2017). As a result, when all arguments are full NPs (as opposed to pronouns), word order is the only means by which to identify the pivot and, by extension, the role of each argument (Clayre 1988).

4. PIVOT-ONLY RESTRICTION ON EXTRACTION. The pivot in Lun Bawang is exclusively available for extraction to the pre-clausal position. One such operation is wh-extraction. Two *in situ* wh-questions are shown in (2a–b):

(2)   a.   In situ *wh-question*

     M-(b)aya' nidé   iko?
     AV-follow   who.OBL   2SG
     'Whom are you following?'

    b.   In situ *wh-question*

     Nge-rawé   enun?
     AV-think   what
     '[You are] thinking about what?'

When the wh-item is an adverbial adjunct, it may also be placed to the left of the pivot with no further syntactic consequences, as in (3):

(3)   *WH-adjunct*

     Iapeh iko   ne-keli'   berek ineh?
     where 2SG.PVT   PFV-know   pig   that
     'Where did you find that pig?'

If, however, the wh-item is an argument, it may be extracted to the pre-clausal position *only* if it is the clause's pivot.[5]

(4)   a.   *Extracted wh-patient (pivot)*

     Enun ru-en=muh?
     what   do-PV=2SG.GEN
     'What are you doing?'

    b.   **Extracted wh-patient (non-pivot)*

     *Enun n-(t)eu' iko?
     what   AV-do   2SG.PVT
     'What are you doing?'

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[4] This dislocation affects the scope of quantifiers relative to negation: a universal quantifier in PVT₁ or PVT₂ falls within the scope of negation; in the pre-clausal position, it takes scope over negation.

[5] A conclusive demonstration that this is extraction to the pre-clausal position and not merely preverbal placement is beyond the scope of this investigation. As only the pivot can appear preverbally, the point still stands even if this is not extraction. Two sentences from the Bala Luk Do' (Belcher 1982) provide preliminary evidence, as both begin *[**Idéké** rat arang emung pupu lun Israil]* ***na*** *necing...* '[**Who** from among all the tribes of Israel] hath **not** gone...' (Num. 21:5,8), in both of which the wh-NPs precede negation.

Sentence (4a), wherein *enun* is the clause's pivot, is permissible, but (4b), in which *enun* is not pivot, is ungrammatical, indicating that pivot status is a necessary precondition for an NP's wh-extraction in Lun Bawang.

The other extraction operation for which the pivot is exclusively available is relativization. In a relative clause, the relative pronoun *luk* must be the pivot, as indicated by verb agreement. Compare (5a) to (5b) and (5c) to (5d), where the first sentence in each pair selects the relative pronoun *luk* as the pivot, as indicated by its role (agent in AV and patient in PV), and the second does not, resulting in ungrammaticality. While the relative pronoun must be the pivot of the relative clause, the head noun need not be the pivot of the matrix clause, as shown in (5e), where the relative clause is headed by a (non-pivot) patient in AV.

(5) a. *Agent relativized in AV*

   Lemulun [luk   [ne-m-(b)eré apuh   ineh negkuh]] m-udeng   dei'   Lawas.
   man$_{PVT}$ [REL$_{PVT}$ PFV-AV-give broom that 1SG.OBL] STAT-stay there Lawas
   'The man who gave me the broom lives in Lawas.'

   b. **Agent relativized in PV*

   *Lemulun [luk   [apuh ineh b<i>ré   negkuh]] m-udeng   dei'   Lawas.
   man$_{PVT}$ [REL$_{NPVT}$ broom that <PFV.PV>give 1SG.OBL] STAT-stay there Lawas
   'The man who gave me the broom lives in Lawas.'

   c. *Patient relativized in PV*

   Lemulun [luk   [b<i>da'=neh   negkuh]] m-udeng   dei'   Lawas.
   man$_{PVT}$ [REL$_{PVT}$ <PFV.PV>show=3SG.GEN 1SG.OBL] STAT-stay there Lawas
   'The man whom he showed to me lives in Lawas.'

   d. **Patient relativized in AV*

   *Lemulun [luk   [ieh   ne-m-(b)ada' negkuh]] m-udeng   dei'   Lawas.
   man$_{PVT}$ [REL$_{NPVT}$ 3SG.PVT PFV-AV-show 1SG.OBL] STAT-stay there Lawas
   'The man whom he showed me lives in Lawas.'

   e. *Relative Clause Headed by Non-Pivot Argument*

   Ieh   ne-m-(b)ada' lemulun [luk   [m-udeng dei' Lawas]] ineh negkuh.
   3SG.PVT PFV-AV-show man$_{NPVT}$ [REL$_{PVT}$ STAT-stay there Lawas] that 1SG.OBL
   'He showed me that man who lives in Lawas.'

The foregoing examples are sufficient to demonstrate that Lun Bawang does not permit the separation of extraction from the other definitional characteristics of *pivot* given in §2. Only that NP which can appear in one of the two aforementioned positions, takes a dedicated pronominal form (if pronominal), and is indicated by the verb's voice morphology is available for extraction. The conclusion therefore follows that availability for extraction is a characteristic exclusive to pivot in Lun Bawang.

5. SYNTACTIC SYMMETRY: SUBJECTHOOD TESTS. If interpreted in view of Keenan and Comrie (1977), the exclusive availability of the pivot for extraction would suggest that the pivot is also the clausal subject. The examination of relative prominence of NPs across voices in this section, however, indicates otherwise. The properties of subjecthood given in §2.2, namely those associated with binding and with scope asymmetries under variable binding, are here shown to pertain not to the pivot, but to the agent. The conclusion follows that the agent is always the subject of a transitive clause, irrespective of voice. In addition to the morphological symmetry of voices shown in §2.2.2, the voices of Lun Bawang can thus be said to exhibit symmetry in a syntactic sense: voice alternations do not affect the relations of prominence between NPs.

5.1 SIMPLE ANAPHORIC BINDING. The first of these diagnostics, that of simple anaphoric binding, illustrates that a change in voice does not displace the agent from its position atop the prominence hierarchy. Binding is best detected using the third-person genitive clitic pronoun, which, in its true genitive function, is an anaphor and must be bound whenever a possible antecedent is present. (6) demonstrates:[6]

(6) a. neh *must be bound; agent binds genitive in patient in AV*

    Lemulun ineh_i maman kerubau=neh_{i/*j}.
    man   that   feed.AV buffalo=3SG.GEN
    'That man$_i$ is feeding his$_{i/*j}$ buffalo.'

  b. nineh *may not be bound*

    Lemulun ineh_i maman kerubau nineh_{*i/j}.
    man   that   feed.AV buffalo 3SG.GEN
    'That man$_i$ is feeding his$_{*i/j}$ buffalo.'

With *neh* established as an anaphor, an investigation of binding may begin. The AV sentence in (6a) has the PV counterpart given in (7):

(7) *PV: agent binds genitive in patient*

    Kerubau=neh_{i/*j} pinan   lemulun ineh_i.
    buffalo=3SG.GEN feed.PFV.PV man   that
    'That man$_i$ fed his$_{i/*j}$ buffalo.'

The alternation illustrated in (6a) and (7) differs quite strikingly from the English active-passive alternation. Given the English equivalent of (6a), 'That man is feeding his buffalo,' the direct passivization 'His buffalo is being fed by that man' lacks the coreferential reading available in the active voice. In Lun Bawang, however, this change in voice in (7) preserves not just the availability but in fact the necessity of a coreferential reading, indicating preservation of the binding relation. (8a–c) illustrate the same relations when an instrument is involved in the action, demonstrating that the agent remains atop the hierarchy.

(8) a. *AV: agent binds genitive in instrument*

    Lemulun ineh_i ne-ng-(k)eteb kayuh ineh ku   kepak=neh_{i/*j}.
    man   that   PFV-AV-cut   tree   that INST axe=3SG.GEN
    'That man$_i$ cut down that tree with his$_{i/*j}$ axe.'

  b. *PV: agent binds genitive in instrument*

    Kayuh ineh k<i>teb   lemulun ineh_i ku   kepak=neh_{i/*j}.
    tree   that   <PFV.PV>cut man   that INST axe=3SG.GEN
    'That man$_i$ cut down that tree with his$_{i/*j}$ axe.'

  c. *IV: agent binds genitive in instrument*

    Kepak=neh_{i/*j} ne-ping-(k)eteb lemulun ineh_i kayuh ineh.
    axe=3SG.GEN PFV-IV-cut   man   that   tree   that
    'That man$_i$ cut down that tree with his$_{i/*j}$ axe.'

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[6]The speaker who supplied these data rejected a non-coreferential reading as impossible except, marginally, if one were to point at another person and emphasize *neh* quite heavily. In order to obtain a non-coreferential reading, one must use a different pronoun, such as the genitive deictic *nineh* or focused *dieh*, neither of which can be bound if no clause boundary intervenes between the pronoun and the antecedent.

The above facts are sufficient to establish that where simple binding is concerned, the previously defined hierarchy is followed which places agent above patient and instrument, and this hierarchy remains unchanged, with the agent as subject, regardless of voice.[7]

5.2 VARIABLE BINDING. The other diagnostic for symmetry of voice considered here involves variable binding, which builds on the previous test by having a universally quantified NP as the anaphor's intended antecedent. Although the test is parallel in many respects to the simple anaphoric binding test, the addition of the quantifier to the antecedent is nonetheless significant for its effects on interpretation: If the anaphor is bound by the quantified antecedent, it falls within the scope of that antecedent and thus functions as a variable, thereby producing a distributed (one-to-one) reading of the sentence. The availability of such a reading further confirms that the antecedent is more prominent than the argument that includes the anaphor. As demonstrated herein, the results are the same as in §5.1: agent is more prominent than patient and instrument and is therefore the clausal subject, irrespective of voice alternations.

(9) illustrates an AV sentence with variable binding:

(9) *AV: universally quantified agent binds genitive in patient*

    Emung anak$_i$ ne-n-(s)ier kerubau=neh$_{i/*j}$.
    all   child PFV-AV-see buffalo=3SG.GEN
    'Every child$_i$ saw his$_{i/*j}$ buffalo.'

A crucial difference from English is that in (9), *only* the distributed reading is available, wherein each child sees his own buffalo; the English sentence 'Every child saw his buffalo' may have the same reading, or a non-distributed (many-to-one) reading wherein the children see a single buffalo that belongs to some third party. The reason for this is that, as shown in (6a–b) in §5.1, possibility of binding *neh* entails necessity of binding *neh*.

The PV equivalent of (9) is given in (10):

(10) *PV: universally quantified agent binds genitive in patient*

    Kerubau=neh$_{i/*j}$ s<in>ier   emung anak$_i$.
    buffalo=3SG.GEN <PV.PFV>see all   child
    'Every child$_i$ saw his$_{i/*j}$ buffalo.'

(10) preserves the distributed reading of (9), wherein each child sees his own buffalo, indicating that the change of voice has not altered the hierarchical relations between agent and patient. This pattern, too, is strikingly different from English; while English 'Every child saw his buffalo' can have a bound/distributed and an unbound/non-distributed reading, its passive 'His buffalo was seen by every child' can have only the unbound/non-distributed reading. Just as with the binding test in §5.1, this evidence demonstrates that Lun Bawang PV is of an altogether different nature from that of the English passive; only the latter rearranges the hierarchical relations between arguments.

When the associations of the quantifier and anaphor are reversed, such that the universal quantifier is in the patient and the anaphor is in the agent, only a non-distributed reading is available in both AV and PV. No other reading is available because, in both cases, the agent and its associated anaphor fall outside the scope of the quantifier, indicating once again that the agent is more prominent than the patient.

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[7]This test and the variable binding test also show that agent and patient are uniformly more prominent than recipient. Recipients are omitted here, however, because they do not substantially contribute to the argument that pivot selection does not affect subjecthood, as no voice can select a recipient as pivot without the use of a periphrastic construction that falls beyond the scope of this investigation.

(11) a. *AV: universally quantified patient fails to bind genitive in agent*

    Taman=neh$_{*i/j}$ ne-n-(t)ulong anid taman$_i$.
    father=3SG.GEN PFV-AV-help each father
    'His$_{*i/j}$ father helped each child$_i$.'

  b. *PV: universally quantified patient fails to bind genitive in agent*

    Anid anak$_i$ t<in>ulong   taman=neh$_{*i/j}$.
    each child <PFV.PV>help father=3SG.GEN
    'His$_{*i/j}$ father helped each child$_i$.'

Alternations including the instrumental voice, too, do not alter the grammaticality or the meaning of the sentence, as in (12a–c):

(12) a. *IV: universally quantified agent binds genitive in instrument*

    Emung lemulun$_i$ ne-ng-abet kayuh ineh ku   abet=neh$_{i/*j}$.
    all   person   PFV-AV-tie tree that INST rope=3SG.GEN
    'Every man$_i$ tied that log with his$_{i/*j}$ rope.'

  b. *PV: universally quantified agent binds genitive in instrument*

    Kayuh ineh in-abet emung lemulun$_i$ ku   abet=neh$_{i/*j}$.
    tree   that PFV.PV all   person   INST rope=3SG.GEN
    'Every man$_i$ tied that log with his $_{i/*j}$ rope.'

  c. *IV: universally quantified agent binds genitive in instrument*

    Abet=neh$_{i/*j}$ ne-ping-abet emung lemulun$_i$ kayuh ineh.
    rope=3SG.GEN PFV-IV-tie   all   person   tree that
    'Every man$_i$ tied that log with his$_{i/*j}$ rope.'

Perhaps the closest English approximation to the instrumental voice would result in a sentence such as 'His rope was used by every man to tie that log', but this meaning differs from that of (13c), which, unlike the unbound, non-distributed English sentence, must have a bound, distributed reading.

    The evidence found from variable binding is consistent with that from simple binding. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the three voices of Lun Bawang always display the same hierarchical relations among agent, patient, and instrument. These three voices therefore exhibit syntactic symmetry, and, regardless of pivot selection, the agent remains the subject.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS. The extraction and binding diagnostics applied herein have unearthed a binary division of labor: those properties associated with voice—namely verbal morphology, dedicated pronominal form, word order position, and availability for extraction—form a single cluster that characterizes the NP here called *pivot*, of which, when all NPs are overt, every clause has one and only one. Separately, those properties associated with hierarchical prominence form a second cluster, characterizing the subject, which in Lun Bawang is invariably the agent.

    From these facts follows the conclusion that because the definitions of *subject* and *pivot* are independent, their properties may overlap, as they do in AV, when a single NP bears the characteristics of both, but they are otherwise distinct. From this independence further follows the necessity of maintaining this conceptual distinction in treating the syntax of this and similar languages.

    Many questions remain on this matter. From a cross-linguistic standpoint, it must be asked how widespread this division of labor is in the Austronesian family and, where variation is found, how these properties cluster

together in other sorts of symmetrical-voice languages, especially the more innovative languages of Western Indonesia. From a theoretical perspective, it will be necessary to explore the underpinnings of the subject-pivot distinction in search of an explanatory account of why the properties of subject and pivot cluster together as they do and of why such a system is possible or—if that should prove to be the wrong angle from which to consider the matter—why such a system is virtually unknown outside the Austronesian family.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	agent	NEG	negation	PVT	pivot
AV	actor voice	NPVT	non-pivot argument	REL	relativizer
GEN	genitive/non-pivot agent	OBL	oblique/non-pivot patient	SG	singular
I	instrument NP	PFV	perfective aspect	STAT	stative
INST	instrumental marker	P	patient	V	verb
IV	instrumental voice	PV	patient voice		

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