The inventory of functional categories in the verbal domain: Lessons from the antipassive

Maria Polinsky
polinsky@umd.edu

Many researchers adopt the conception that a verb phrase has articulated hierarchical structure, with separate projections for Voice and the functional head *v* (e.g., Kratzer 1996; Harley 2013, 2017, and others). Although the division of labor between Voice and *v* has been subject to extensive discussion, there are still a number of unanswered questions, including (i) the inventory and inherent characteristics of *v* and Voice; (ii) their selectional properties; (iii) the positions within a clause structure where the external argument can be introduced. To address these questions, we examine data from several languages with a split *v*P-VoiceP structure (as opposed to the ones where *v*P and Voice are bundled, see Pylkkänen 2008).

With respect to (i) and (ii), we argue that *v* and Voice are conceptually different functional categories: only *v* can introduce a new thematic relation, while the role of Voice is to manipulate the existing external argument role. Voice is only added when it is needed – on top of a transitive or causative *v*P, while unergative and unaccusative *v*Ps remain Voice-less. The proposed inventory of *v* and Voice heads is shown in (1). Regarding (ii), we follow Bruening (2013) in associating heads with selectional features that a head needs to check by combining with a particular category. For instance, [S: V, N] means that the head has to combine with a complement of category V and a specifier of category N.

(1)   *The inventory of v and Voice*

	v_{TV}	v_{ITV}	v_{Unacc}	v_{Caus}	Voice$_{TV}$	Voice$_{Pass}$	Voice$_{Refl}$
Syntax	S: V	S: V, N	S: V	S: V	S: V, N	S: V	S: V, N
Semantics	Agent(x)	Agent(x)	--	Causer(x)	--	$\exists$ ExtA	ExtA(x)=IntA(x)

Regarding (iii), we contend that external arguments are not structurally homogeneous; they are split across two VP-external projections, Spec,*v*P or Spec,VoiceP. In particular, unergative subjects are merged in Spec,*v*P, while transitive subjects are situated in the higher position, namely Spec,VoiceP. Ergative case is assigned by Voice under a spec-head relation; thus, only arguments in Spec,Voice (i.e. transitive Agents and Causers) are marked ergative. Unergative subjects (as well as most experiencer subjects) are low, merged in Spec,*v*, and ergative case is therefore unavailable to them (see Polinsky 2016; Tollan 2018; Tollan & Massam 2022). We present novel empirical evidence in support of the difference between the two external-argument positions.

The inventory in (1) includes passives and reflexives, but does not include another structure traditionally associated with the category [VOICE], namely, antipassive. Building on the proposed inventory of v and Voice in the split verbal domain, we argue against identifying antipassive with Voice. Instead, we propose that antipassives share the structure with Voice-less unergatives derived with v_{ITV}. The data come from several Mayan languages, Chukchi, and Polynesian languages.

In the antipassive constructions we consider, the logical object cannot be expressed as an argument, i.e., as direct object; it is either left unexpressed (absolutive antipassive) or is expressed as an optional adjunct (oblique antipassive). A core analytical question we address in this talk is whether or not the logical object of the antipassive is present in the structure. By comparing transitives with an implicit object and antipassives, we show that the logical object in the latter is not projected syntactically. We then discuss several existing analyses of antipassives: (i) the functional approach, which relies on several characteristic properties of the antipassive; (ii) the approach that adds an extra projection in the verbal spine (AspP or aP); (iii) the approach that manipulates the verbal theta-grid. Our core proposal is that antipassivization creates a verb whose external argument is licensed by *v*, and whose internal argument cannot be syntactically present because of the licensing restrictions. VoiceP is not projected at all in the antipassive; thus, antipassives emerge a subset of intransitive unergatives. This result confirms the conjecture by Wood & Tyler (in press): "While antipassive is a voice phenomenon in the typological sense, it is…very much an open question whether antipassive alternations involve alternations in the Voice head in any meaningful way." If the proposed analysis is on the right track, it raises several theoretical questions: the nature of what can be called the "inverse case filter" and its status in the current theory; the semantic composition of antipassive predicates and oblique adjuncts encoding the logical object, and the overall syntactic buildup of unergatives.

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