Tagalog gerunds are antipassive

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Overview. Nominalizations have been claimed to be ergative-like in that they lack external arguments (Grimshaw 1990; Alexiadou 2001). Gerunds, however, do contain external arguments (Reuland 1983). We show that gerunds in Tagalog share many characteristics with antipassives: they have similar verbal morphology and word order, they both project external arguments, and their themes are subject to differential object marking (DOM). Strikingly, gerunds lack the typical 'voice' system, suggesting that they have a defective structure. Thus Tagalog gerunds support a defective VoiceP view of nominalizations and gerunds (Coon & Salanova 2009; Alexiadou 2017).

AV and PV. Tagalog 'voice' morphology tracks what is often referred to as the pivot argument, which is always marked with nominative case and can freely undergo extraction. Agent Voice (AV) marking appears on the verb when the pivot is the agent of the clause (1); Patient Voice (PV) is used when the pivot is a theme or patient (3). AV themes are generally interpreted as non-specific and cannot be extracted, while PV themes are specific and may be extracted. Because of the specificity restriction on AV themes, proper nouns are ungrammatical in this position. However, this restriction is relaxed when the agent is extracted: proper nouns are permitted but undergo DOM (2). These interpretation and extraction properties have led scholars to liken AV and PV clauses to antipassive and ergative clauses, respectively (Aldridge 2004, 2012). Case marking on possessors and PV agents is furthermore syncretic in Tagalog, like in many ergative languages.

(1) Nag-imbita   ako   {**ng** mga kaibigan / *****ni**   Kiko}.
     AV.PFV-invite 1SG.NOM GEN PL   friend   GEN.PN Kiko

     'I invited {friends/Kiko}'   AV

(2) Sino   ang nag-imbita   {**ng** mga kaibigan / **kay**   Kiko}?
     who.NOM NOM AV.PFV-invite GEN PL   friend   GEN.PN Kiko

     'Who invited {friends/Kiko}?'   AV with DOM

(3) In-imbita   ko   {**ang** mga kaibigan / **si**   Kiko}.
     PFV-invite(.PV) 1SG.GEN NOM PL   friend   NOM.PN Kiko

     'I invited {specific friends/Kiko}'   PV

Following Hsieh (in prep), we assume that nominals are assigned nominative pivot marking through agreement with an Agr head that merges above Voice[+D] (Kratzer 1996), which introduces external arguments and is spelled out as *pag-/paN-*. Non-pivot nominals are assigned inherent genitive case from their thematic introducing head. The hierarchy of functional heads along the extended projection of the verb is demonstrated in the AV verb in (4).

(4) m-   pag-   pa-   pa-   sulat   = 'will make write'
     AV- Voice[+D]- RED(IPFV)- CAUS-   write
     [Agr [Voice   [Aspect   [Causative [Root]]]]]

Tagalog gerunds. Tagalog gerunds are complex event nominalizations and allow the same arguments as their fully verbal counterparts (5). Gerunds appear to have all of the verbal morphology associated with finite clauses, except 'voice' markers hosted on Agr (6); nominative pivot marking is similarly unavailable.

(5) Ikinatuwa ni   Alex [ang pag-imbita ko   {**ng** mga kaibigan / **kay** Kiko}].
     pleased   GEN.PN Alex NOM pag-invite 1SG.GEN GEN PL   friend   OBL Kiko

     'My inviting of {friends/Kiko} pleased Alex.'

(6) pag- pa- pa- sulat = 'making write'
    Voice[+D]- RED(IPFV)- CAUS- write
    [Voice   [Aspect   [Causative [Root]]]]

Apart from their lack of overt 'voice' marking and corresponding lack of nominative case, gerunds internally have all of the characteristics of AV clauses previously seen in (2): themes are generally interpreted as non-specific, and proper nouns must undergo DOM, as shown in (5). This indicates that gerunds are antipassive in Tagalog rather than ergative, and that the agent of the gerund is a syntactic agent; DOM should otherwise not be possible.

    Word order also shows that gerunds have agents, rather than possessors. Clausal word order in Tagalog is flexible, so that the agent and the theme can appear in either order postverbally. Word order appears to be more rigid in DPs, where the head noun and its complement must be adjacent; possessors in nominals thus cannot occur in between the head noun and its complement (8). In gerunds, however, the agent can appear in between the gerund and its complement (7), suggesting that it is indeed an external argument introduced by Voice[+D].

(7) Nakakaaliw [ang pangongolekta {ni Sisa} ng bulaklak {ni Sisa}].
    entertaining NOM paN-RED-collect GEN Sisa GEN flower GEN Sisa

    'Sisa's collecting flowers is entertaining.'

(8) Malaki [ang koleksyon {*ni Sisa} ng bulaklak {ni Sisa}].
    big NOM collection GEN Sisa GEN flower GEN Sisa

    'Sisa's collection of flowers is big.'

We conclude that Tagalog gerunds have the structure [D [VoiceP]] without Agr, which derives the full argument structure of the gerund and its lack of 'voice' and pivot marking.

Defective VoiceP. The proposed truncated structure is consistent with previous claims that VoiceP is defective in gerunds and nominalizations, either because of the Voice head itself or its interaction with an Agr/T projection (Coon & Salanova 2009; Alexiadou 2017). Agr is required for the assignment of nominative case on the theme found in ergative clauses. Agr thus reflects transitivity, and Agr-less structures are detransitivized. Such defective, detransitivized structures are found elsewhere in Tagalog, such as in the so-called recent perfective form (10), where, as in gerunds, we find neither nominative case nor voice marking, and themes are subject to DOM.

(9) Nagpapasalamat ako [sa pagbili ng babae ng tsokolate].
    AV.IPFV-thank 1SG.NOM OBL pag-buy GEN woman GEN chocolate

    'I'm thankful for the woman's buying chocolate.'   Gerund

(10) Kaiimbita ko lang {**ng** mga kaibigan / **kay** Kiko}.
    RPFV-invite 1SG.GEN only GEN PL friend OBL.PN Kiko

    'I have just invited {friends/Kiko}.'   Recent Perfective (with DOM)

A truncated VoiceP structure is also found in causatives of transitives, which embed a VoiceP without Agr, giving rise to antipassive characteristics (Nie to appear). Thus gerunds reflect a more general strategy of detransitivization in non-finite structures via antipassive in Tagalog.

Implications. The antipassive nature of complex event nominalizations in Tagalog contrasts with previous work arguing that ergativity can arise from nominalized clauses (Johns 1992), suggesting another potential pathway for language change.