The Morphosyntax and Pragmatics
of Antipassives in Ilokano

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Although anti-passives have been mentioned by Rubino (1997) and Gerdts (1988) in their analysis of Ilokano verbs, and also de Guzman (1988) for Tagalog, I believe that their existence as a meaningful construct remains controversial. While Rubino defines an antipassive construction as one with two arguments, it is not so clear why he considers this construction as semantically transitive but grammatically intransitive. He points to the non-identifiability of the patient in this type of construction in accounting for its oblique status. On the other hand, Gerdts in her anti-passive analysis recognizes this construction but she was more focused on the placement of the anti-passive clause in the sentence.

In this paper I propose that anti-passives do exist in Ilokano. Anti-passives are detransitivized versions of transitive verbs. Transitive verbs in Ilokano are marked by the verbal affixes *–en*, *-an*, and *i-*. Their corresponding detransitivized or anti-passive versions are marked by the use of the voice affixes *–um-*, *ag-*, and *mang-*. The presence of the *i-* affix in the corresponding intransitive as exemplified in so called *agi-* and *mangi-* verbs shows compelling evidence of the detransitivization process which can extend to *mang-* and *–um-* anti-passives as well. The use of these anti-passive constructions is motivated by semantic and pragmatic factors as suggested by Hopper and Thompson (1980) and as reformulated by Nolasco (2003) to suit some language-specific conditions in Ilokano. But I single out the definiteness (or specificity) and urgency of the action as crucial determinants for choosing the anti-passive over the transitive construction.

This paper supports the ergative-absolutive analysis of the grammatical structures in Ilokano. The theoretical basis includes the universal syntactic relations S, A, and O and describing systems of morphological system and syntactic operations in terms of them. Arguments are classified as either core or oblique. The cases in the core arguments are referred to as S, A or P where it is always marked as *ti* (or its derivatives *ni*, *dagiti*, *da*) in Ilokano. The oblique is marked *iti* (or its derivatives).

Sources of data will be discourse as used in narratives found in some Ilokano magazines like *Bannawag*, but pragmatic interpretation will be mainly from the author being a native speaker of Ilokano as spoken in San Fernando, La Union.

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