Another Look at the Clause Structure in Philippine Languages

Most, if not all, Austronesian languages spoken in the Philippines are commonly described as having a complex "(verbal) focus" or "voice" system with four or more "foci" or "voices": (1) "Actor Focus (AF)"/ "actor voice (AV)", (2) "Goal/Patient focus (GF)/ "Patient Voice (PV)", (3) "Locative Focus (LF)"/ "Locative Voice (LV)", and (4) "Theme Focus (TF), Instrumental Focus (IF), and Benefactive Focus (BF)" or "Conveyance/ Circumstantial Voice (CV)". (2) ~ (4) are often referred to as "Non-Actor Focus (NAF)", "Non-Actor Voice (NAV)", or "Undergoer Voice (UV)". Morphologically, AF/AV verbs and NAF/NAV verbs differ in that the former typically contain reflexes of PAn *<um>, PMP *maR-, and PMP *maN-, whereas the latter typically contain reflexes of PAn *-ən, *-an, and *Si- (PMP *hi-). Syntactically, AF/AV constructions and NAF/NAV constructions differ in the choice of an actor or a non-actor as the 'focused NP' or 'grammatical subject'. However, such an analysis is not free of problems.

First, AF/AV morphology can be found in not only verbs that take an actor argument, but also verbs that do NOT take any actor at all, e.g. meteorological verbs (as in Tagalog *b**um**agyó* 'It stormed; there's a typhoon'; Ilokano ***nag**bagió* 'It stormed' (*nag-* is the perfective aspect of *ag-*)).

Second, although reflexes of PAn *<um>, PMP *maR-, and PMP *maN- are all considered AV markers, they usually cannot be used interchangeably. More specifically, not all bases can take all three forms of AV markers. For those that can combine with more than one of them, the choice of different AV markers typically results in differences in interpretation (e.g. Tagalog *k**um**ain* 'to eat' vs. ***mag**kaín/ **mag**kakaín* 'to eat frequently' vs. ***mang**ain* 'to eat small things or pieces of things one after another'; *b**um**asa* 'to read, to peruse' vs. ***mag**basá* 'to study; to read much or intently' (Pittman 1966:13; English 1987); *b**um**ilí* 'to buy; to purchase' vs. ***mam**ilí* 'to go shopping; to make various purchases' (English 1987), etc.).

Third, two of these AV markers can occur on the same base simultaneously (e.g. Tagalog ***mag**h**um**iyaw* 'to shout at the top of one's voice', ***mag-um**unat* 'to stretch one's self to the limit', ***mag-um**iyak* 'to cry at the top of one's voice' (Pittman 1966:20)).

Fourth, AV markers and NAV markers can occur on the same base simultaneously (e.g. Kankanaey ***man-i-**dawat* 'give (s.t.)' (Allen 2014:120)).

To solve the above problems, I propose that the difference between so-called "AF/AV" constructions and "NAF/NAV" constructions is in "event primacy" vs. "participant primacy". Moreover, reflexes of PAn *<um>, PMP *maR-, and PMP *maN- are used for signaling various types of event properties, whereas reflexes of PAn *-ən, *-an, and *Si- (PMP *hi-) are for signaling which participant is primarily affected by the action expressed by the predicate. The proposed analysis can solve not only the above-mentioned problems but also explain why meteorological verbs with reflexes of PAn *<um> or PMP *maR- can only occur in a zero-place predicate construction, whereas meteorological verbs with reflexes of PAn *-ən, *<in>, and *-an can occur in a one-place predicate construction.