

Title: The Symmetry of (Anti)passives

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Leonard H. Babby's work has dwelt on valency-changing morpholexical operations. Foremost among these is the passive. He argues that the cross-linguistic invariant of passives is the suppression of the external argument (rather than the promotion of the internal argument). In *The Syntax of Argument Structure* (2009:69), Babby devotes a paragraph to antipassives. We explore the idea that antipassives are to ergative-absolutive case systems as passives are to nominative-accusative systems. That is, in a passive the Actor is suppressed, entailing the syntactic detransitivization of the predicate, further causing the Undergoer to surface as nominative. Analogously, in an antipassive the Undergoer is suppressed, causing the Actor to surface in absolutive case. The hypothesis we wish to explore is whether in an antipassive the only cross-linguistic invariant is suppression of the Undergoer.

We look at one language, Kavalan (a moribund Austronesian language spoken on the Pacific coast of Taiwan), analyzed as having an ergative case-alignment system. Though the Undergoer in antipassives surfaces with unambiguous oblique case, the verb itself shows no antipassive morphology. The facts in Kavalan are then compared to other documented antipassives – and better-known passives in European languages as well.