Transitivity in a Philippine Language

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1. *Introduction*

Yogad is a Philippine language spoken in Echague and several nearby towns in Isabela Province, which is located in the Cagayan Valley in central eastern Luzon. Cf. Figure 1. *Ethnologue,* citing a 1975 census, estimates the number of speakers at 14,000. Yogad is classified as belonging to the Ibanagic sub-group of the Northern Cordilleran languages, along with Gaddang, Itawit, Villaviciosa Agta, Ibanag, Atta, and Isnag. Cf. also Reid (1989:57). Previous treatments of Yogad include Healey (1958), an M.A. thesis by Galang (1974), and a grammar by Davis, Baker, Spitz & Baek (1997).[1]
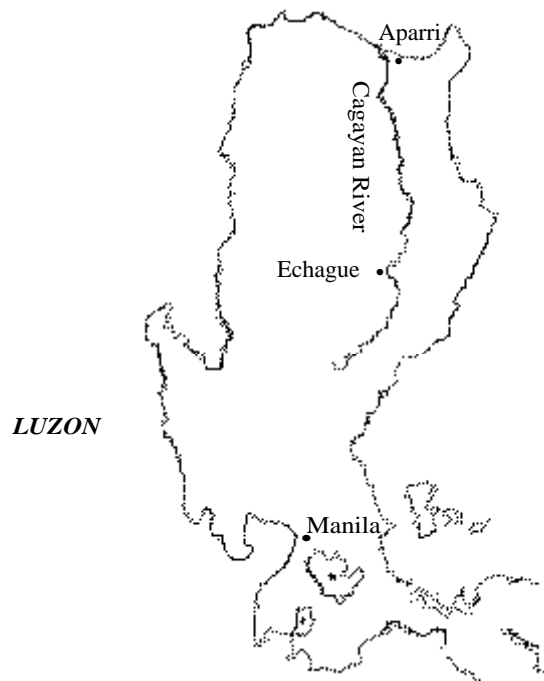


Figure 1: *Echague.*

2. *The problem*

There is in Yogad a pair of affixes, *mang-* and *nang-*, which are are especially interesting because initially they give the illusion that they manipulate grammatical transitivity by deriving transitive stems from intransitive ones. The

illusion is based on examples such as the following :

(1)  (a)  **Mag**-urú        si  Santos
          [MAG-treat                    ]
          'Santos is going to treat himself'
          *'Santos is going to treat someone'

     (b)  ***Mag**-urú      si  Santos tu  pasyénte
          [MAG-treat                    patient]

     (c)  **Mang**-urú si   Santos
          [MANG-treat                 ]
          *'Santos is going to treat himself'
          'Santos is going to treat someone'

     (d)  **Mang**-urú      si  Santos tu  pasyénte
          [MANG-treat                   patient]
          'Santos is going to treat a patient'

     (e)  **Nag**-urú        si  Santos
          [NAG-treat                 ]
          'Santos treated himself'
          *'Santos treated someone'

     (f)  ***Nag**-urú       si  Santos        tu  pasyénte
          [NAG-treat                           patient]

     (g)  **Nang**-urú        si  Santos
          [NANG-treat                    ]
          *'Santos treated himself'
          'Santos treated someone'

     (h)  **Nang**-urú        si  Santos tu  pasyénte
          [NANG-treat                    patient]
          'Santos treated a patient'

The members of the affixal pairs *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nag-* are each aspectually opposed: *mag-* to *nag-* and *mang-* to *nang-*. The *mag-* and *mang-* affixes are un-realized and the *nag-* and *nang-* forms are realized. The root *urú* 'treat [medically]' in (1a) and (1e) occurs in a grammatically intransitive environment, and the prefixes are *mag-* and *nag-*. In each of these uses, the EVENT described involves a single person, who is both the origin of the activity of 'treating' and its

target. Roots in Yogad may be assigned to one of two sorts, based on their meaning when preceded by *mag-/nag-*. Figure 2 depicts the difference. In roots of the A-sort, the EVENT arises and fails to extend beyond the PARTICIPANT in which it arises; and in EVENTS of the B-sort, the EVENT will extend into a second PARTICIPANT. The root *urú* belongs to the A-type in Figure 2, and because of this, the attempted (b)- and
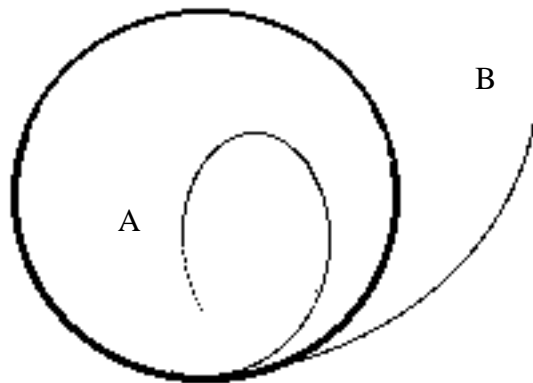


Figure 2: *A classification of roots in Yogad.*

(f)-utterances in (1) are not acceptable. They each try to use *urú* as a B-type EVENT, and they fail. In order to incorporate a second individual and to extend the course of the EVENT beyond its origin, an alternative prefix can be used: *mang-* or *nang-*.[2] Like *mag-* and *nag-*, *mang-* and *nang-* contrast aspectually, but unlike *mag-* and *nang-*, they must ... with *urú* ... occur in a transitive environment. Other roots that work like *urú* are *uláw* 'dizzy/confuse', *atawá* 'spouse/marry', *eksirsísyu* 'exer-cise', and *attátub* 'joke':

> (2)  (a)  **Mag**-uláw    kan
> [MAG-dizzy   I    ]
> 'I'm becoming dizzy'

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[2] The shapes of these prefixes vary. Before a vowel initial root (or stem) and before *y*, the final consonant is the velar nasal written *ng*. But before a obstruent initial root, the nasal (in one formulation) assimilates its position of articulation to that of the following consonant which is then lost. So for *pitík* 'thump', we find *mam-itík* and so forth:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (i) | táwad | 'trade' | man-áwad | (ii) | kulút | 'curly' | mang-ulút |
| (iii) | balín | 'finish' | mam-alín | (iv) | dalú | 'scold' | man-alú |
| (v) | guyú | 'move' | mang-uyú | (vi) | fefféd | 'fan' | mam-efféd |
| (vii) | sussúp | 'suck' | man-ussúp | | | | |

We have not found examples before roots/stems beginning with *h*, *m*, *n*, *ng*, *l*, *r*, or *w*. In writing these forms, we arbitrarily segment following the nasal.

                      *'I'll confuse someone'

(b)    ***Mag**-uláw       kan   tu  estudyánte
       [MAG-confuse    I         student]

(c)    **Mang**-uláw      kan
       [MANG-confuse  I    ]
       *'I'll get dizzy/confused'
       'I'll confuse someone'

(d)    **Mang**-uláw      kan   tu  estudyánte
       [MANG-confuse  I        student]
       *'I'll get dizzy/confused'
       'I'll confuse the student'

(3)    (a)    Nas-sekréto   sirá     ya     **nag**-atawá
              [NAG-secret   they          NAG-marry]
              'They got married secretly [to each other]'

       (b)    Nas-sekréto   sirá     ya     **nang**-atawá
              [NAG-secret   they          NANG-marry]
              'They married someone secretly [but not to each other]'

(4)    (a)    **Mag**-eksirsísyu    kan
              [MAG-exercise    I]
              'I'm going to do exercise'
              *'I'm going to exercise someone'

       (b)    ***Mag**-eksirsísyu  kan   tu  anák
              [MAG-exercise    I         child]

       (c)    **Mang**-eksirsísyu  kan
              [MANG-exercise  I]
              *'I'm going to do exercise'
              'I'm going to exercise someone'

       (d)    **Mang**-eksirsísyu kan   tu  anák
              [MANG-exercise  I        child]
              'I'm going to exercise a child'

(5)    (a)    **Mag**-attátub  ka      lammún
              [MAG-joke    you   just]
              'You're just joking'

*'You're just joking someone'

(b)     ***Mag**-attátub tu  búlun  na
        [MAG-joke          friend  his/her]

(c)     **Mang**-attátub ka        lammún
        [MANG-joke  you     just]
        *'You're just joking'
        'You're just joking someone'

(d)     **Mang**-attátub tu  búlun  na
        [MANG-joke          friend  his/her]
        'S/he's joking her/his friends'

In these examples, the contrast between the two sorts of affixes seems to be clearly involved with grammatical transitivity. In each, the form prefixed by *mag-/nag-* does not permit a following patient; and to express that notion the alternate forms *mang-/nang-* are used. Conversely, the *mang-/nang-* prefixes always imply the presence of a patient. For Proto-Austronesian, Dahl (1996:174) characterizes the contrast between *mang-* and *mag-* in the following way: "PAn *$maŋ$- (mostly transitive)" and "PAn *$maɣ$- (mostly intransitive)". The problem we address here for one language are the implications of the qualification "mostly".

### 3. *"Mostly" transitive*
      The confidence with which we may attribute the functions of *mang-/nang-* to the manipulation of transitivity is lessened when we add roots such as *usíp*:

(6)     (a)     **Nag**-usíp          kan
                [NAG-haircut     I   ]
                'I got a haircut'

        (b)     **Nag**-usíp          kan    tu bók    ku
                [NAG-haircut     I              hair    my]
                'I cut my hair'

        (c)     **Nang**-usíp      kan
                [NANG-haircut    I    ]
                *'I got a haircut'
                'I cut someone's hair'

        (d)     ***Nang**-usíp          kan    tu bók    ku
                [NANG-haircut    I              hair    my]

       (e)      **Nang**-usíp    kan    tu  bok   nu  anák
              [NANG-haircut  I         hair     child]
              'I cut a child's hair'

In (6a), it is always my hair that is cut, whether by the speaker or by someone else. The root *usíp* 'haircut' seems to be an A-type EVENT like *eksirsísyu* 'exercise' is. Yet in (6b), *usíp* appears to be grammatically transitive since it is followed by *tu bok ku* 'my hair'. The use of *nang-* in (6c) is necessarily grammatically transitive as it was in the earlier examples, yet the more explicitly transitive expression of (6d) fails. The utterance of (6e) succeeds, and the difference between (6d) and (6e) lies in whose hair is being cut. Although grammatically transitive, (6d) fails because the EVENT arises and expires in the same PARTICIPANT. It succeeds in (6e) because the EVENT first appears with *kan* 'I' and then is exhausted in another, *anák* 'a child'. The choice between *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-* seems to reflect the contrast between the A- and B-types of EVENTS in Figure 2; comparison of (6b) with (6e) shows that the contrast between A- and B-types of EVENTS is **independent** of grammatical transitivity. This 'semantic transitivity' appears to be confirmed by *arí* 'remove':

  (7)    (a)      **Mag**-arí       ka
              [MAG-remove     you]
              'Take it off!'

         (b)      **Mag**-arí       ka    tu  burási   m
              [MAG-remove     you        clothes    your]
              'Take off your clothes!'

         (c)      *__Mag__-arí      ka    tu  burási   nu     pasyénte
              [MAG-remove     you        clothes          patient]
              'Take off the patient's clothes!'

         (d)      *__Mang__-arí    ka    tu  burási   m
              [MANG-remove  you        clothes    your]
              'Take off your clothes!'

         (e)      **Mang**-arí      ka    tu  burási   nu     pasyénte
              [MANG-remove  you        clothes          patient]
              'Take off the patient's clothes!'

Like *usíp* 'haircut', *arí* 'remove' is also a A-type. In (7a), it is always the case the the act of removing arises with *ka* 'you', and expires there; (7a) never has the

sense of 'Take off something other than from yourself' nor 'You will be removed'. *Usíp* and *arí* share a behavior with *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-*. With *mag-/nag-*, the removed object is always on the PARTICIPANT which initiates the activity, while with *mang-/nang-*, it never can be. It is on another.

   It may appear that even though the use of *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-* is independent of grammatical transitivity, it continues the 'spirit' of grammatical transitivity by manipulating the movement of EVENTS from the A-type to the B-type. But that seems not to be the case either. The root *turút* 'leak' belongs to the A-type; it can combine with the *mang-/nang-* prefixes, yet when it does the result seems neither to yield a grammatically transitive result, nor does it appear to move the EVENT *turút* to the B-type:

(8)   (a)   **Mat**-túrut       yu  atáp
            [MAG-leak            roof]
            'The roof is leaking'

      (b)   **Man**-urút       yu  atáp
            MANG-leak            roof]
            'The roof leaks'

The root *turút* in (8b) is as much an A-type root as it is in (8a). The difference between (8a) and (8b) is that the first can be said during a rainstorm as the water is coming through the ceiling, while the latter can be said while the sky is clear and the ceiling is dry. Thus, *mat-turút* is compatible with *da* 'now', and *man-urút* is not:

(8)   (c)   **Mat**-túrut       da        yu  atáp
            [MAG-leak      now           roof]
            'The roof is leaking now'

      (d)   *\**Man**-urút      da        yu  atáp
            MANG-leak   now           roof]

Other places in which *mang-/nang-* are **not** grammatically transitive are

(9)   (a)   **Mag**-útta
            [MAG-deer]
            'He'll become a deer'

      (b)   In       tám      **mang**-útta
            [go       we       MANG-deer]
            'Let's go deer hunting'

The former is sensible only for a context "like in a program you become an imaginary deer".

As a final indication of the independence of these affixes from 'transitivity', we note that the already transitive-appearing B-type EVENTS may occur with either *mag-/nag-* or *mang-/nang-* with no change in the syntax, no increase nor decrease in transitivity. Considering such pairs as (10) and (11) will help in understanding the contrast between *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-* :

(10)  (a)  **Mag**-arádu      kan    tu  lutá
           [MAG-plow          I          land]
           'I'm plowing the land'

      (b)  **Mang**-arádu        kan    tu  lutá
           [MANG-plow         I          land]
           'I'm plowing the land'

(11)  (a)  **Mak**-kolékta      kitám  tu  kwártu      pará
           [MAG-collect         we         money      for
\              ta  ku  danú   makáwag
                              needy]
           'Let's collect money for the needy'

      (b)  **Mang**-olékta      kitám  tu  kwártu      pará
           [MANG-collect        we         money      for
              ta  ku  danú   makáwag
                              needy]
           'Let's collect money for the needy'

The root *arádu* 'plow' is a B-type EVENT, and the difference between the choice of affix is commented upon by the speaker as follows:

> *Mag-arádu kan tu lutá*, I will plow my land, then *Mang-arádu kan tu lutá* like you have some purpose, motive ... if you qualify both of them, then you have already ... perhaps you have other motives ... not only food, but selling ... *Mag-arádu kan tu lutá* ... I will plow my land for planting corn and you just plant corn, while if you say *Mang-arádu* ... you're implying your motive for food or for profiting ... another motive.

Sentence (11a)
> ... is more ... like ... a letter had already been sent to the houses and you just pick it up ... [whereas in (11b)] there is more ... sincerity. There is a ... like a charitable work or a kind of purpose.

In these examples, one is not just plowing land for its own sake nor just going through the motions of collecting money. An ulterior motive is involved in each. Such examples are common.

The root *ufút* 'consume/exhaust' behaves as both an A- and a B-type EVENT, in (12a) and (12b), respectively:

(12)  (a)    **Mag**-ufút           yu  gasolína
             [MAG-consume        gasoline'
             'The gasoline is evaporating'

      (b)    **Mag**-ufút         kan    tu  kwártu    ku
             [MAG-consume  I              money    my]
             'I'm using up my money'

      (c)    **Mang**-ufút    kan    tu kwártu    ku
             'I'm using up my money'

The selection of *mang-* in (12c) in place of *mag-* in (12b) prompts these remarks:

> Like there is a very, very subtle difference there ... [*mag-ufút*] is like you are out and out saying ... you will spend your money without ... thinking ... without control ... It's being spent uselessly without any real return for the value.

With roots such as *urú* 'treat', *uláw* 'dizzy/confuse', *eksirsísyu* 'exercise', *attátub* 'joke', *usíp* 'cut hair', and *arí* 'remove', there is concern with a PARTICIPANT **other** than the one in which the EVENT arose; hence, the **appearance** of 'transitivity'. With roots like *arádu* 'plow', *kolékta* 'collect', *ufút* 'consume/ exhaust', and the like, one has one's eye on some subsequent relevance. Although the physical circumstance and the historical events may be the same in (10) - (12) ... including a constant degree of 'volition' ... the interpretation suggested by *mang-/nang-* is that the speaker is looking **beyond** what is happening immediately. In (8b) above, the distancing of *mang-/nang-* puts the leaking roof at some time **other** than the present. **Remoteness** of the same sort as in (8b) surfaces again in such examples as (13) and (14):

(13)  (a)    **Nag**-ufút           yu      natáy      tu medisína
             [NAG-consume            deceased       medicine]
             'The deceased took the medicine'

      (b)    **Nang**-ufút yu natáy tu medisína
             'The deceased took the medicine'

(14)    (a)      Wará   **nag**-ukág
                 [exist   NAG-search]
                 'There was a search'

        (b)      Wará   **nang**-ukág
                 'There was a search'

The comment of (13a) might be something investigators at a crime scene say before it has been cleared and the deceased removed:

> Not yet buried. If the dead is still there ... perhaps he just died ... but if everything is already cleaned up you say *Nang-ufút*.

And the description of (14a) is appropriate to a circumstance when the police arrive with a search warrant and are/were observed in the execution of their search, while (14b) is comfortable with the circumstance of arriving home and discovering evidence of a search in our absence. It is not relevant to the choice between *nag-* and *nang-* that anything was discovered (or not).

In (10b) and (11b), that remote focus may be a purpose, goal, or a return on one's effort, a profit. Concern with factors beyond the performance of the EVENT for its own sake occurs with *palitud* 'kneel'. In a narrative text provided by the speaker, sentence (15)

(15)    Atanán     ay       nad-dasál     áwstru     nad-dasál     annu
        [all                NAG-pray      and        NAG-pray      and

        **nam**-alitúd     ay   [ya   ... ] yu dyaw     tu nonó-da
        NANG-kneel                          be.there         mind-their

        ay  yu dyos    talagá
              god     really]
        'Everyone prayed and prayed and knelt, and what was in their minds
        was really God'

contains the form *nam-alitúd*, with the *nang-* prefix. In the context of the earthquake being described there, kneeling is not performed as an end in itself.[3] There is a purpose; namely, people are kneeling in order to pray for their safety.

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3 The form *man-untúru* (from *tuntúru* 'teach') occurs twice in the same narrative text; and it is again clear from the context that a purpose exists: to promulgate the Yogad language.

And note that *palitúd* 'kneel' is an intransitive A-type EVENT, as is *turút* 'drip/leak'. Again, grammatical transitivity is not what holds the uses of *mang-/nang-* together. In (9b), in which 'deer hunting' is involved, the purpose is inherent in deer-as-game. There is a reason to hunt deer. So (16a) succeeds where (16b) is suspicious:

(16)  (a)    In    tám    **mam**-abúy    nu    talún
             [go    we    MANG-pig            forest]
             'Let's go wild-pig-hunting'

      (b)    ?In    tám    **mang**-iráw
             [go    we    MANG-snake]

      (c)    **Mang**-attúd        kitám
             [MANG-stump    we]
             'Let's hunt for stumps'

There is some sense to hunting wild pigs (*babúy nu talún*), but it is difficult to conjure up a reason for hunting *iráw* 'snake'. In (16c), an ulterior motive for searching for stumps finally comes to mind, and the sentence succeeds:

> It sounds good but for practical purposes ... what useful purpose would you do with a stump? ... Perhaps you do it for firewood. Nowadays, firewood is scarce.

Concern with remote events may give the appearance that some additional occurrence is necessary. And while such may be present (e.g. the profit from plowing or the return of value for the money spent), in (17b), it is the **avoidance** of consequence/implication that is the foremost concern:

(17)  (a)    **Mag**-áyag    ka    ámbit tu polís
             [MAG-call    you            police]
             'First call the police!'

      (b)    **Mang**-áyag ka ámbit tu polís
             'Call the police, please!'

> Here [(17a)], it [*ámbit*] doesn't seem to say 'please'. It does say 'You call first' ... Call first a policeman. The *ámbit* there doesn't translate ... to please. It doesn't mean 'please' ... but if you say *mang-áyag* ... 'Please call a policeman'. In a situation like that they may place the blame on you. You might be implicated if it's a crime of violence. So you are anticipating something ... You just want to free yourself ... if it's a crime you don't want to ... like it might incriminate you.

In (17b), one looks **forward** to **avoiding** some (unwanted) outcome. We also see in (17b) that the distancing perspective of *mang-/nang-* is appropriate to the expression of **politeness**. In the context of *mang-* in (17), *ámbit*, which can mean either 'still, yet' or 'please', has only the second sense. Compare the alternatives in (18), one with *mag-* and the other with *mang-*:

(18)  (a)  **Mag**-ámpat  ka
           [MAG-get     you]
           'Pick it up!'

      (b)  **Mang**-ámpat  ka
           'Pick it up!'

You can say it [*Mag-ámpat*] too ... maybe if you want to stress it ... a command ... It's harsher if you say *Mag-ámpat* ... it's ruder. If you say *Mang-ámpat*, it's lighter.

## 4.  *An answer to the problem*

Returning to (1) - (7), we can now see that the appearance of transitivity, both grammatical and semantic, is **not** what is at play there. The essential in choosing between *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-* seems to be the manipulation of 'distancing'.4 The prefixes *mang-/nang-* evoke the following senses:

(i)    Extension of the EVENT outside the PARTICIPANT in which it originates (e.g. [1] - [7]),
(ii)   A concern with subsequent relevance/consequences (e.g. profit [10], charity [11], return for value [12], uses for deer, pigs, and stumps [9] & [16], avoiding involvement [17]),
(iii)  Distanced occurrences (e.g. leaking roofs [8], remote past [13], unwitnessed occurrences [14]),
(iv)   Politeness (e.g. [18]).

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4 The function of the contrast between *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-* that we have suggested here allows for some indeterminacy. How for example would one know which of the senses is present in using *mang-/nang-*? First, such indeterminacy is possible:

(i)    Nang-ummá      sirá      tu    anák
       [NANG-kiss     they           child]
       'They were kissing babies'

More distant past ... like those candidates when passing the road, kiss the babies ... a replay [on television] ... you could say he has some motive.

Here, without a real context to fix the utterance more exactly, both the distancing from the event itself ("distant past") and the distancing of ulterior purpose ("he has some motive") emerge.

Transitivity, both grammatical and semantic, clearly is **not** what is at play in the choice between *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-*. In place of relating to some grammati-cal category, choosing between *mag-/nag-* and *mang-/nang-* seems to directly reflect contrasting ways of understanding life experience. We may first organize some happening by constraining our purview, as if looking at our feet and having no interest in any relation beyond what is narrowly included. If we do this, the relevant concerns will be limited to the immediate environment. Such is the effect of *mag-/nag-*. But, we may also raise our eyes. And then the same physical event becomes connected to more remote concerns of various kinds, such as those summarized in (i) -(iv). In each case, the choice of *mang-/nang-* allows incorporation of an interest which lies away from the emergence of the EVENT; and the way to accomplish such distancing (with some roots) is to manipulate what seems, from a European perspective, to be transitivity. But in Yogad, it is in fact the manipulation of distanc-ing: IMMEDIATE — REMOTE.

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