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Bribri media tantum verbs and the rise of labile syntax

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Abstract: In this article, we first show that the Bribri (Chibchan) middle voice suffix *-r* derives passive voice from active transitive and agentive intransitive verbs, as well as anticausative verbs from nominal and adjectival roots. Second, we focus on five media tantum verbs, i.e., forms that synchronically carry the *-r* suffix and have no counterpart without *-r*. Unlike most other verbs, these five forms are labile, i.e., they can occur in syntactically intransitive and transitive constructions with no (supra-)segmental change. After describing the valence patterns in which Bribri media tantum labile (MTL) verbs occur, we investigate whether: (i) their non-absolute arguments behave like ergative phrases; and whether (ii) MTL verb forms in two-argument constructions behave like active voice transitive verb stems. Third, we outline a hitherto unnoticed diachronic path for the rise of lability in a small subgroup of Bribri media tantum verbs.

Keywords: anticausative; Bribri (Chibchan); lability; media tantum; middle voice; morphosyntactic mismatches; passive

1 Introduction

Bribri [bzd] is a Chibchan language spoken in Costa Rica by approximately 13,000 people (Jara Murillo and García Segura 2013: 1). Within the Chibchan family, Bribri belongs to the Isthmic branch and along with Cabécar, it forms the Viceitic subbranch within Western Isthmic (Constenla Umaña 2008: 127). There are at least three dialectal varieties of Bribri: Amubre, Salitre, and Coroma. Data presented in this article come from the Coroma variety. In the Bribri of Coroma, the *-r* suffix

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(phonetically [r]) derives passive voice.¹ In (1), the syntactically transitive verb stem *yók* ‘drink’ appears in an active voice construction with an ergative and an absolutive argument. In (2), *yók* takes the *-r* suffix: the absolutive argument in (1), *balo*, appears preverbally in clause initial position, and the ergative argument in (1) can no longer be overtly expressed. The verbal suffix *-r* functions as an intransitivizer, producing an (obligatorily agentless) Passive construction in (2).

- (1) *ie’ tō balo’ ya’ tãĩ*
 3SG:PRX:H ERG chicha drink:PFV.REM much
 ‘He drank a lot of chicha.’²

1 The suffix *-r* (phonetically [r]) is described elsewhere in the literature as *-d*. We adopt here a new phonological analysis of this suffix proposed by Chevrier (2017: 72–89, 185).

2 First-hand data in this article are elicited. Elicited examples do not specify a source. These data were collected in the course of approximately 6 years by the first author while living in Costa Rica. Elicitation was carried out mainly with the native Bribri speaker and community leader Alí García Segura at the department of philology and linguistics at the Universidad de Costa Rica in San José. Alí García Segura has been working and publishing on Bribri language and culture for over 20 years. Second hand data come from published oral tradition texts and grammatical descriptions. An abbreviation in parentheses after the free translation of an example indicates the source from which the example was obtained. A number after the abbreviation, e.g., (ALB: 92) refers to the page number within that source. Abbreviations for second hand sources are as follows: ALB *Aprendemos la lengua bribri* (Jara Murillo and García Segura 2009), IHB: *Itté Historias Bribris* (Jara Murillo 1993), SOA: *Cargos tradicionales del pueblo bribri: Siõ’tãmĩ, Òkòm, Awà* (Jara Murillo and García Segura 2008). For full references, see bibliography. The glosses of all examples obtained from second hand sources are our own. The equivalences between Bribri orthography and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols are as follows: <ë> = /ɛ/, <ö> = /u/, <’> = /ʔ/, <y> = /ɕ/, <j> = /x/, <r> = /r/, <l> = /ɽ/, <ch> = /tʃ/, and <sh> = /ʃ/. The marking of nasality follows the conventions established in Constenla Umaña et al. (1998), not those of Jara Murillo and García Segura (2013). However, unlike Constenla Umaña et al. (1998), we use the symbol <ã>, not <ã̃>, to mark nasality. In our transcription, unlike others, falling tone is indicated as <â>, whereas high tone is indicated as <á>. Low tone is not marked in the orthography. The examples follow tonal transcriptions found in original sources other than own fieldwork wherever applicable, adapted to the tonal conventions set out above. In addition, elicited examples are transcribed differently from examples found in other sources. In elicited examples, we transcribe the reduced set of short personal pronouns (1SG [j]/[ɲ], 2SG [b]/[m], 3SG [i]/[j], 1PL [s]) as prefixes, the negation morpheme *kẽ* as a pro-clitic and the reflexive and reciprocal morphemes as unbound preverbal pronominal forms. We refer to Chevrier (2017: 124–134) for phonological arguments in favor of this categorization. Note that our transcription of Bribri data is mostly dictated by orthography and thus neither strictly phonemic nor phonetic. Abbreviations are as follows: 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; A = subject of a transitive verb; ADJ = adjective; ABS = absolutive; ACT = active voice; CC = complement clause; COMPL = complementizer; CPL = completive; DET = determinative; DIM = diminutive; DIR = directional; DST = distal; ERG = ergative postposition; EXCL = exclusive; H = human; INCL = inclusive; INF = infinitive; INT = intensifier; INTR = intransitive; IPFV = imperfective; IPFV II = additional imperfective suffix expressing habitual or near

- (2) *balo'* *ya-r* *tâĩ*
 chicha drink-MVC:IPFV much
 'A lot of chicha is drunk.'

The *-r* suffix can also verbalize nominal and adjectival roots yielding intransitive anticausative predicates, i.e., predicates describing a change of state conceptualized as occurring spontaneously, without the instigation of a semantic agent. This is illustrated in (3) with the adjectival root *bâ* 'hot' to which *-r* is added, yielding 'to become hot'. The *-r* suffix is realized as [r], orthographically <r>, when followed by a consonant or in word-final position, as in (2), and as [n] when followed by a nasal vowel, as in (3).

- (3) *tsuru'* *bâ-n-ẽ*
 chocolate hot-MVC-PFV
 'The chocolate (became hot and) is hot (now).'

In the available literature on Bribri, the terms “non-agent oriented verb forms” (Schlabach and Levinsohn 1982), “indefinite voice” (Constenla Umaña and Margery Peña 1979; Dickeman-Datz 1985, 1984; Margery Peña 2005), “middle voice” (Constenla Umaña et al. 1998; Jara Murillo 2013, 2018; Jara Murillo and Garcia Segura 2009, 2013; Quesada Pacheco 1999; Sánchez Avendaño 2009), and “medio-passive voice” (Constenla Umaña et al. 1998) have been used to refer to the form and functions of the *-r* suffix. However, the functions of this suffix illustrated in (2) and (3) respectively have neither been clearly identified nor distinguished. The first goal of this article is to fill in this gap. We use the term MIDDLE VOICE CLUSTER (MVC in example glosses), following Kulikov (2011: 393) and Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019), as a cover term to capture the intransitivizing functions of the *-r* suffix in (2) and (3). The MVC in Bribri does not have the same wide range of uses as middle voice morphemes in classical Indo-European languages such as Greek or Sanskrit (see, e.g., Kemmer 1993 for a general overview and discussion). Several functions commonly expressed by what Kemmer considers a canonical middle, such as reflexive or reciprocal, cannot

future meanings; LOC = locative; MC = matrix clause; MVC = middle voice cluster; MTL = media tantum labile (verb); N = noun; NON-ABS = non-absolute; NP = noun phrase; P = object of a transitive verb; PASS = passive voice; PFV = perfective; PL = plural; POSS = possessor; PPN = possessive pronoun; PP = postposition; PRX = proximal; REC = recent; RECP = reciprocal; REFL = reflexive; REM = remote; S = subject of an intransitive verb; SG = singular; TR = transitive; V = verb.

be expressed by the *-r* suffix.³ Nevertheless, given that this morphological category is far from monosemous and encompasses in Bribri a number of uses commonly associated with the middle, we decided to stick to this term and follow the traditional terminology adopted by several Bribri scholars (see references above).

The term “middle voice” or “middle diathesis” was coined in the grammatical traditions of classical Indo-European languages such as Ancient Greek and later expanded to several other (non-) Indo-European languages (see e.g., Andersen 1994a, 1994b; Kemmer 1993: 16). In this context, the term “is used to denote a verbal form which can be used both transitively and intransitively and which signals that the action is, in a sense, *concentrated* on the referent of the Grammatical Subject, so to speak, *geared* to it” (Mel’čuk 1993: 21, emphasis in the original). Thus, in Sanskrit, Greek, and other languages with a “canonical middle”, a verb marked for middle voice can function as a passive, reflexive, or autobenefactive. As we demonstrate in this article, this is not the case for the *-r* suffix in Bribri. The term “middle (voice)” is also widely adopted in Amerindian linguistics, where a phenomenon comparable to the Indo-European middle is found in numerous languages throughout North and Central America; cf. for instance, Creek (Hardy 1994), Bella Coola (Beck 2000), Otomí (Palancar 2004), Na-Dene (Thompson 2004), Pima Bajo (Estrada Fernández 2005), Okanagan (Dilts 2006), Dena’ina (Berez and Gries 2010), to name just a few relevant works.

The second goal of this article is to analyze the syntactic behavior of a small class of as few as five verbs in Bribri, where the verb stem carrying the *-r* suffix is not opposed to any corresponding verb root without this suffix. We refer to these five verbs as *MEDIA TANTUM VERBS* (Brugmann 1916: 683–686; Clafin 1927: 160, 164; Delbrück 1893: 417–425; Kemmer 1993: 251, footnote 19; Kurzová 1999, *inter alia*).⁴ These five verbs may appear in a two-argument construction ([NP V NP] or [NP NP V]) with a non-absolute argument displaying some subject properties typical of ergative arguments and an absolute P argument as in (4).

3 As an anonymous reviewer points out, it is unclear why certain functions of the middle such as expressing reflexive and reciprocal meanings should be canonical given that in many languages middle morphemes do not express these meanings.

4 The terms *media tantum* and *deponent* are used in Indo-European scholarship with very close meanings (Baerman 2007; Grestenberger 2016; Lehmann 1989). We refrain from using the term *deponent* because this term usually refers to verbs bearing intransitive morphology, but occurring exclusively in transitive constructions (see, e.g., Baerman 2007). As we show in this article, this is not quite the case in Bribri.

- (4) *ye' wã tt-é chê-r*
 1SG ERG/POSS story-DET know-MVC:IPFV
 'I know the story.'⁵

In (4), the verb takes the *-r* suffix, the non-absolutive argument is marked by the ergative/possessor marker *wã* and the preverbal absolutive is unmarked. We refer for convenience to the two-argument construction in (4) as [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] construction, even though the non-absolutive argument can occur either before or after the absolutive-verb sequence.

The verb form in (4) can also be used in a one-argument construction [NP V] with a single syntactic argument, S, as in (5).

- (5) *tt-é chê-r*
 story-DET know-MVC:IPFV
 'The story is known.'

The sentence pair (4)–(5) shows that media tantum verbs such as *chê-r* 'be known, know' occur in different syntactic constructions with no change in form. Thus, such verbs can be qualified as LABILE, or ambitransitive (see, e.g., Kulikov 1999; Letuchiy 2010). One of the cross-linguistically most interesting types of lability, relevant to this article, is P(atient)-preserving lability (Dixon 1994; Kibrik et al. 1977). In this type, the sole NP in the one-argument construction is a semantic Patient (e.g., *The sun melted the ice ~ The ice melted*).

In constructions such as (4), two types of encoding for the non-absolutive argument can be found. In the first, the non-absolutive argument is marked by the ergative postposition *wã*, historically derived from the possessor marker *wã* (Pacchiarotti 2020). In the second, it is marked by a locative postposition lexically (i.e., idiosyncratically) determined for each verb. We will show that in both cases, non-absolutive arguments in these constructions show some but not all subject properties that are typical of ergative phrases. Since the media tantum labile verbs in constructions such as (4) do not fully behave as active transitive verbs, we do not

5 Since arguments such as *ye'* 'I' in (4) have only some syntactic features of A arguments and show a number of semantic features of Experiencers, we refer to such constituents as "non-absolutive" arguments. Throughout this article, by syntactic (core) arguments we mean syntactically required arguments of a verb in a main clause. In many languages, a core argument is assigned a specific grammatical relation, i.e., the set of morphosyntactic properties that relate an argument to the whole clause (Bickel 2011: 399). Whether S, A, P are ontologically syntactic notions, semantic notions or both varies from author to author (see Haspelmath 2011; Payne 2013 for a discussion). For purposes of this article, we adopt the approach advocated by Dixon (1994), among others, and use the label A for the subject of a transitive verb, P for the object of a transitive verb and S for the subject of an intransitive verb.

consider these verb forms as instances of deponency in the Latin sense of the term (see Baerman 2007).

In line with these goals, this article is organized as follows. Section 2 deals with the Bribri active voice system and the sensitivity of verb roots to transitivity. Section 3 deals with the Bribri middle voice cluster. In Section 3.1 we show that one of the functions of the Bribri *-r* suffix is to derive passive voice from a base form similar to the remote perfective form of active voice verbs; in Section 3.2 we show that a second function of the *-r* suffix is to verbalize adjectives and nouns to obtain intransitive anticausative predicates; Section 3.3 shows that morphology other than the *-r* suffix expresses reflexive and reciprocal functions in Bribri. In Section 4, we discuss the form and meaning of the restricted set of Bribri *media tantum* (*labile*) verbs. In Section 5, we illustrate the valence patterns of *MEDIA TANTUM LABILE* (*MTL*) verbs in one and two-argument constructions. In Section 6, we investigate whether Bribri *MTL* verbs behave as transitive verbs when found in *[NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}]* constructions, and whether their non-absolute arguments in these constructions display subject properties. In Section 7, we propose a diachronic path for the rise of a small island of lability within the class of Bribri *media tantum* verbs. Conclusions are in Section 8.

Throughout the article, the term *VOICE* is to be understood within the theoretical framework of the Leningrad Typology Group (see, e.g., Kulikov 2011; Mel'čuk 1993; Mel'čuk and Xolodovič 1970; among others). In this framework, voice options are determined on the basis of patterns “of mapping semantic arguments onto syntactic functions (grammatical relations)” (Kulikov 2011: 370), that is, on the basis of valence patterns.⁶ Voice is a regular (i.e., systematic) encoding of valence patterns by means of verbal morphology (Kulikov 2011: 371).⁷ Voice choices *sensu stricto* refer only to modifications in the mapping of semantic roles onto syntactic functions: this means that the number of semantic roles present in a given construction does not increase nor decrease. Even in the case of languages where the expression

⁶ Kulikov (2011) uses the term *diathesis* to refer to valence pattern, following the linguistic tradition of the Leningrad Typology Group. Kulikov notices, however, that the term *diathesis* is not widespread in the typological literature and can have different meanings depending on the linguistic tradition and framework in which it is found. For this reason, we will use the term *valence pattern* instead of *diathesis*. A valence (or valency) pattern is defined by Haspelmath and Müller-Bardey (2004: 1130) as “the configuration of arguments that are governed by a particular lexical item.” In this framework, valence encompasses the number of semantic roles a given verb licenses and their syntactic realization. The term *valence pattern* is synonymous with the terms *argument structure*, *predicate frame* and *government pattern* (Haspelmath and Müller-Bardey 2004: 1130).
⁷ This definition might be overly restrictive from a typological perspective, especially if one considers languages that do not employ verbal morphology to express a passive function (i.e., the demotion or suppression of an Agent argument).

of an Agent is not allowed in passive constructions, this approach assumes that the existence of an Agent is necessarily implied by the meaning of the clause.

2 Active voice and transitivity in Bribri

This section presents morphosyntactic features of Bribri that are immediately relevant to the discussion of passive voice and raising operations (see Sections 3.1 and 6). Bribri mostly shows an ergative-absolutive alignment, where the absolutive category (S/P) is unmarked (both on pronouns and lexical NPs) and appears obligatorily in preverbal position, while the ergative category (A) is marked by postpositions (*wã*, *tö*) and can appear before or after the absolutive + verb sequence.⁸ Since ergative phrases share this property with postpositional phrases in general, the position of a non-absolutive phrase relative to the absolutive + verb sequence is not a strong piece of evidence to assign subject properties to a given NP. In terms of case marking, the non-allomorphic ergative markers *tö* and *wã* do not convey oblique meanings such as instrument, source, or location. In order to claim subject status for a given postpositional phrase in Bribri, covert properties should be examined.

Bribri displays morphological ergativity, but a clear S/A pivot (i.e., the target of certain syntactic operations) in many areas of syntax (see, e.g., (49)–(51) in Section 6.1). Syntactic operations specifically targeting the S/A category (but not P) are control of co-reference of a third person anaphoric pronoun in a following possessive NP, control of co-reference under coordination (Pacchiarotti 2020), as well as NP equi-deletion in infinitival complement clauses, subject-to-object raising and passive voice derivation (Dickeman-Datz 1984 and Section 5).⁹ Languages like Bribri have been called “surface ergative” languages (Dixon 1994; Estival and Myhill 1988). This term indicates that Bribri is morphologically ergative in the coding of core overt syntactic arguments (i.e., the A category is the only one formally marked as can be seen by comparing (6) and (7) below), but syntactically

⁸ The presence of two non-allomorphic, historically unrelated ergative markers instantiates what is (often) called differential ergative marking (McGregor 2009). While *wã* originates in a possessive marker (Pacchiarotti 2020), *tö* likely comes from a locative postposition (Pache 2018: 142). Between the two, *wã* appears to be a construction-determined ergative marker and is more restricted in terms of usage than *tö*. In addition, Bribri also displays optional ergative marking (McGregor 2010; McGregor and Verstraete 2010): ergative marking (i.e., the “default” ergative postposition *tö*) tends to be absent when the ergative NP is less prominent or salient in discourse (Quesada Pacheco 1999: 36–40). Jara Murillo (2013: 104–106) finds that *irrealis* clauses also lack ergative marking. While *tö* can be omitted, thus being optional, *wã* can never be omitted.

⁹ Dickeman-Datz (1984) uses the term “indefinite voice derivation”.

accusative due to the presence of a pervasive S/A pivot in covert properties. This situation is common in a considerable number of (morphologically) ergative languages (see Anderson 1976; Comrie 1978; Trask 1979; to mention just a few).

Verb stems in the active voice do not carry any derivational valence-changing morphology, i.e., they always consist of simple roots plus inflectional morphology.¹⁰ From a typological perspective, Bribri can be classified as a language in which transitivity is highly lexicalized at the root level (Payne 2009: 13). In this type of language, transitivity is essentially set for nearly all verb roots; it can be signaled by derivational and/or inflectional morphology, or by restrictions on the clausal valence pattern in which a given stem/root can or cannot occur. Based on the list in Jara Murillo and García Segura (2009), there are more transitive underived verb roots than intransitive ones.

Bribri has two formal classes of verbs: oral and nasal (Constenla Umaña et al. 1998: 16). Oral verbs add the thematic vowel *-ö* after the root, while nasal verbs add the thematic vowel *-ũ* after the root. The infinitive ending *-k* is added after the thematic vowel, as in *shk-ô-k* ‘to walk’ and *sã-ũ-k* ‘to see’ (Jara Murillo and García Segura 2013: 98). In the imperfective aspect, intransitive oral and nasal verbs take the imperfective suffixes *-ô* or *-ũ* respectively, while transitive oral and nasal verbs take the imperfective suffixes *-é* or *-ẽ* respectively (Constenla Umaña et al. 1998: 82).¹¹ In the perfective aspect there are no specific inflectional suffixes depending on the transitivity of the root.

To illustrate the difference between imperfective and perfective aspect in terms of transitivity marking, consider the syntactically transitive verb *katôk* ‘to eat (hard things)’ and the syntactically intransitive verb *chakôk* ‘to eat’ (in their infinitive forms). The root of the former takes the imperfective transitive suffix *-é* and thus must occur in a clause with two core arguments (6), while the root of the latter takes the imperfective intransitive suffix *-ô* (identical to the thematic vowel *-ô ~ -ö*) and can never occur in a clause with two core arguments (7).

- (6) *sa’ tö kôchi chaká kat-é*
 1PL.EXCL ERG pig meat eat.hard.things-IPFV.TR
 ‘We eat pork meat.’

- (7) *sa’ chak-ô*
 1PL.EXCL eat-IPFV.INTR
 ‘We eat.’

¹⁰ Bribri does not have applicative or causative morphology. Causative verbs are formed by means of noun incorporation (see Section 3.2).

¹¹ Semantically ditransitive roots such as ‘give’, ‘bring’, ‘tell’ take the same morphology as transitive roots.

In the perfective aspect, whether remote or recent, both verb forms take identical perfective suffixes, i.e., *-ê* for the recent perfective in (8) and (9).

- (8) *sa'* *tö* *kóchi* *chaká* *kat-ê*
 1PL.EXCL ERG pig meat eat.hard.things-PFV.REC
 'We ate pork meat.'

- (9) *sa'* *chak-ê*
 1PL.EXCL eat-PFV.REC
 'We ate.'

The intransitive verb stem *chakók* can never appear in a transitive construction, even in the perfective aspect, cf. the ungrammaticality of (10).

- (10) **sa'* *tö* *kóchi* *chaká* *chak-ê*
 1PL.EXCL ERG pig meat eat-PFV.REC
 *'We ate pork meat.'

As far as we can tell, besides the five media tantum verbs discussed in this article, no underived verb root in Bribri can be used in both syntactically intransitive and transitive constructions without undergoing derivation or changes in the marking of core grammatical relations. Accordingly, the media tantum labile verbs discussed in Sections 4–6 represent a small “island of lability” within the system of a language where virtually all verb roots are lexically specified for their transitivity value.

3 The Bribri middle voice cluster

The following subsections describe morphology involved in valence-decreasing and/or intransitivizing functions in Bribri. The *-r* suffix in Bribri is used to derive passive voice from active voice verbs and intransitive anticausative verbs from adjectival and nominal roots. This suffix has neither reflexive nor reciprocal functions (see Section 3.3). It is a reflex of Proto-Chibchan **-de*, which Constenla Umaña (2008: 131) reconstructs as a marker of middle voice. Altogether, the range of functions of the *-r* suffix is narrower than the domain covered by middle voice in languages such as Greek, Sanskrit (both Indo-European), or Georgian (Kartvelian), which typically include all or most of reflexive, passive, anticausative, antipassive, reciprocal, and autobenefactive functions (see, e.g., Kemmer 1993; Kulikov 2013). As will be discussed in Section 3.1, all Bribri passive constructions are instances of voice *sensu stricto*, because the modification in the mapping of semantic roles onto grammatical relations does not affect the inventory of semantic roles of the

construction. Even when the Agent of the underlying verb is not overtly expressed, the presence of an Agent is implied by the meaning of the construction (i.e., ‘X has been done’ = ‘X has been done by someone’). By contrast, the intransitive anticausative function conveyed by the *-r* suffix (see Section 3.2), is not an instance of voice *sensu stricto*, because this derivation creates a new, P-like argument (Undergoer).

3.1 The *-r* suffix as a passive voice marker

In Bribri, passive voice is expressed by the *-r* suffix, which demotes the A argument when applied to transitive verbs (e.g., *chók* ‘to say’, *ppók* ‘to hit’) and the S argument when applied to agentive intransitive verbs (e.g., *tsók* ‘to sing’, *ĩnúk* ‘to play’). Non-agentive intransitive verbs such as ‘to sleep’ or ‘to die’ cannot take this suffix (cf. Dickeman-Datz 1984: 118).

Passive voice is derived by adding the *-r* suffix to the same base as the remote perfective form of active voice verbs but with the loss of any final glottal stop (Constenla Umaña et al. 1998: 26; Margery Peña 2005: lxiv); see Table 1. To form the passive perfective, a low toned *-ě* suffix is added after *-r*.¹² The passive imperfective has no special additional ending, and *-r* surfaces simply as [r]. The infinitive ending of a passive voice stem is always *-ũk*, which consists of the low toned thematic vowel *-ũ* plus the infinitive ending *-k*. Table 1 also includes some examples of strong stem suppletion between infinitival and perfective forms (cf. *chók* ‘to say’ and *ppók* ‘to hit’).¹³ In Table 1, the roots for ‘sing’ and ‘play’ are agentive intransitive, while ‘say’ and ‘hit’ are transitive.

The suffix *-r* is used in three types of passive constructions: (i) Agentless Passive, (ii) Impersonal Passive, and (iii) Potential Passive. In (11) the transitive verb *yók* ‘to drink’ occurs in an active voice construction. The use of the *-r* suffix to suppress the most Agent-like argument of a transitive verb stem is shown in (12).

¹² Constenla Umaña et al. (1998: 46) and Margery Peña (2005: lxx) report the existence of the suffix *-ã* added after *-r* to express the recent perfective of what they call middle voice. Alí García Segura (p.c.), who is a native speaker of the Coroma dialect of Bribri, does not recognize this distinction and claims that *-ě* after the suffix *-r* is used to express perfective in general, whether remote or recent. According to him, the *-ã* ending is a dialectal variation of the perfective ending *-ě*, found especially in southern varieties of Bribri. For this reason, the *-ã* ending is not included in Table 1.

¹³ See Constenla Umaña et al. (1998: 26) and Margery Peña (2005: lxiv) for a detailed morpho-phonemic explanation of cases where the active verb stem ends in a consonant. See Jara Murillo and García Segura (2013: 155) for a list of verbs with suppletive remote perfective forms.

Table 1: Passive derivation from active voice verbs.

ACT INF	ACT REM PFV	PASS STEM	PASS INF	PASS IPFV (-Ø)	PASS PFV (-ē)
<i>tsók</i> 'to sing'	<i>tsë'</i> 'sang'	/tsë-r/	<i>tsë-n-ūk</i> 'to be sung'	<i>tsë-r</i> 'is sung'	<i>tsë-n-ē</i> 'was sung'
<i>ĩnūk</i> 'to play'	<i>ĩn'</i> 'played'	/ĩn-r/	<i>ĩn-n-ūk</i> 'to be played'	<i>ĩn-r</i> 'is played'	<i>ĩn-n-ē</i> 'was played'
<i>chók</i> 'to say'	<i>yë'</i> 'said'	/yë-r/	<i>yë-n-ūk</i> 'to be said'	<i>yë-r</i> 'is said'	<i>yë-n-ē</i> 'was said'
<i>ppók</i> 'to hit'	<i>būk</i> 'hit'	/buk-r/	<i>bú-n-ūk</i> 'to be hit'	<i>bú-r</i> 'is hit'	<i>bú-n-ē</i> 'was hit'

(11) *ie'* *tö* *balo'* *ya'* *tãĩ*
 3SG.PRX.H ERG chicha drink.PFV.REM much
 'He drank a lot of chicha.'

(12) *balo'* *ya-r* *tãĩ*
 chicha drink-MVC.IPFV much
 'A lot of chicha is drunk.'

Example (12) is an example of the Agentless Passive Construction. The structural modifications of this construction compared to (11) are the obligatory omission of an overtly expressed Agent phrase, and the presence of the suffix *-r* on the verb. However, (12) does not appear to be an instance of a true promotional passive, i.e., *balo'* in (12) does not become a true subject. If the absolutive argument *balo'* in (12) were a true subject, we would expect it to be able to undergo subject-to-object raising in the same way as can S arguments of intransitive verb stems and A arguments of transitive verb stems. In Bribri, active voice transitive matrix verbs (i.e., *tsók* 'to hear' in (13) and (14) and *sãũk* 'to see' in (15)) allow the raising of S/A arguments from complement clauses (CC) into the object of the matrix clause (see Dickeman-Datz 1984 and Section 6 for a detailed discussion).

(13) *ye'* *tö* *i-tsë'* [*tö* *Juan* *ts-õ*]_{CC}
 1SG ERG 3SG-hear.PFV.REM COMPL J. sings-IPFV.INTR
 'I heard that Juan sings.' (lit: 'I heard it that Juan sings')

(14) *ye'* *tö* *Juan* *tsë'* [\emptyset *tsók*]_{CC}
 1SG ERG J. hear.PFV.REM \emptyset sing.INF
 'I heard Juan singing.'

In (13), the complement clause 'Juan sings' is indexed in the matrix clause by the 3SG dummy absolutive verbal agreement prefix *i-*. In (14), the S argument (i.e., 'Juan') of

the intransitive verb stem *tsók* ‘sing’ in the complement clause is raised to object position in the matrix clause and leaves a zero in the complement clause from which it was raised. The intransitive verb stem of the complement clause must now appear in its infinitive form. By contrast, the single argument of a passivized verb form does not show the same subject properties of the single argument of an intransitive verb stem such as *Juan* in (14), judging by the ungrammaticality of (15).

- (15) **ye’ tö balo’ sãw-ě [yá-n-ũk tãĩ]_{CC}*
 1SG ERG chicha see-IPFV.TR drink-MVC-INF much
 *(intended meaning: ‘I see a lot of chicha being drunk.’)¹⁴

The second type of passive construction involving the *-r* suffix is the Impersonal Passive. Compare (16) and (17).

- (16) *ie’ tsě’ tãĩ*
 3SG.PRX.H sing.PFV.REM much
 ‘He sang a lot.’

- (17) *tsě-n-ě tãĩ*
 sing-MVC-PFV much
 ‘There was a lot of singing/It was sung a lot.’

We consider (17) to be what is often called impersonal passive (see Kulikov 2011: 376–379; Mal’chukov and Siewierska 2011: 37; Siewierska 1984: 93, 1988: 269; among others), in which the argument of an agentive intransitive verb is suppressed, and the resulting construction contains only the verb with the *-r* suffix, plus possible modifiers.¹⁵

Another function covered by the *-r* suffix in Bribri is the expression of potentiality. In the Potential Passive construction, the verb appears with the *-r* suffix, and the argument that is able to perform the action described by the verb is encoded as an oblique, by the postposition *ã* ‘in, inside of, for, to, from’, as in (18).

¹⁴ According to our data, the only argument of a passivized verb form cannot undergo incomplete raising either. In incomplete raising, *balo* ‘chicha’ would still appear in absolutive position within the matrix clause, but it would be indexed by a pronoun in the complement clause and the verb of the complement clause would appear in a finite, conjugated form just like in (13) (cf. Section 6.1 for a detailed discussion).

¹⁵ The construction in (17) is akin to constructions in several Indo-European languages where impersonal passives of intransitive verbs contain a dummy subject, as in the Dutch impersonal *er* passive: *Er wordt gedanst* it PASS.AUX.PRES.3SG dance.PASS.PART ‘There is dancing/They dance.’ (Kulikov 2011: 378). According to some authors, these constructions should be regarded as a variety of indefinite subject construction (see Mal’chukov and Siewierska 2011: 36 for a brief discussion).

- (18) *Ye' ã ñĩ-r bola i' wa*
 1SG for play-MVC.IPFV ball this.PRX with
 'I can play with this ball.' (lit: 'For me it is played with this ball.')

Crucial to the passive analysis of the *-r* suffix is the fact that when this suffix is added to transitive verbs (such as *chók* 'say', *tsók* 'sing', *ppók* 'hit' *kímūk* 'help', *tók* 'cut', see Jara Murillo and García Segura 2009: 68–71 for a list), it does not convey the meaning of an event that occurs spontaneously, i.e., without the instigation of an agent. In (19), the transitive verb stem *tsakók* 'to break' appears in the active voice form with an ergative and an absolutive argument.

- (19) *ye' tō ũ tsaki'*
 1SG ERG pot break.PFV.REM
 'I broke the pot.'

When *tsakók* takes the *-r* suffix, as in (20), no spontaneous occurrence can be assigned to the event. Even though the Agent cannot be overtly expressed in the construction, it is nevertheless implied that someone broke the pot.

- (20) *ũ tsakí-n-ẽ*
 pot break-MVC-PFV
 'The pot was broken (by someone).'

According to our consultant, the only way to conceptualize the event of pot breaking as occurring spontaneously is as in (21), where the verb takes the *-r* suffix and the resultative-completive suffix *-wã*.¹⁶

- (21) *ũ tsakí-n-ẽ-wã*
 pot break-MVC-PFV-CPL
 'The pot broke.' (i.e., no human agent is implied, it fell and broke)

¹⁶ The verbal suffix *-wã* has many functions, several of which are still unclear. It is usually called "completivo" (completive) in the relevant literature and is described as conveying the aspectual meaning of "punctual" (Constenla Umaña et al. 1998: 27), or of "emphasis on the ending point or completeness of an action or process" (Jara Murillo and García Segura 2009). At least in some contexts, it seems that *-wã* can function as a resultative suffix. This is particularly clear in a verb pair such as *dawók* 'to be sick' and *dawókwã* 'to die', where the latter is one of the possible results of being sick. If the resultative function were to be confirmed, then the anticausative, spontaneous reading conveyed by *-wã* in (21) might be explained as arising from its original resultative usage/meaning. Constenla Umaña et al. (1998: 27) also report a suffix *-wa*, without nasality, denoting a 'movement of penetration' or, more often, the 'complete affectedness of the absolutive argument'. Jara Murillo and García Segura (2013: 119) only report the suffix *-wã* in the Coroma dialect of Bribri, with the meanings of 'movement inwards, downwards' and 'completion'.

It is likely that the resultative meaning of the *-wã* suffix facilitates a spontaneous (anticausative) interpretation (the state of being broken is the result of a change of state conceived as spontaneous), as is often the case cross-linguistically (see Nedjalkov 1988).

The absence of a spontaneous interpretation for the *-r* suffix alone is observed also with other lexical verb stems. For instance, when the transitive verb stem *diâũk* ‘melt’¹⁷ in (22) combines with *-r* suffix, the event is not interpreted as occurring spontaneously, without the instigation of an external force. The parentheses around the directional suffix *-ãñ* ‘downwards, falling movement’ mean that this element can be omitted from the construction.

- (22) *kiõ diâ-n-(ãñ)-ẽ*
 butter melt-MVC-DIR.DOWN-PFV
 ‘The butter was melted (by someone).’

As happens with *tsakók* ‘break’, *diâũk* ‘melt’ must combine with the *-r* suffix and the resultative-completive suffix *-wã* in order to convey the interpretation of a spontaneous melting as in (23).

- (23) *kiõ diâ-n-ẽ-wã*
 butter melt-MVC-PFV-CPL
 ‘The butter melted (e.g., because it was left under the sun).’

3.2 The *-r* suffix as an intransitive anticausative verbalizer

Another function of the *-r* suffix in Bribri is that of a verbalizer which derives intransitive anticausative verbs from adjectives and nouns. Examples (24) and (3), reproduced as (25), show that the adjectival root *bâ* ‘hot’ combines with the verbalizer *-r*, yielding ‘to become hot’. Example (26) shows that the nominal root *nũ* ‘corpse’ combines with *-r*, yielding ‘to rot’.

- (24) *tsuru’ bâ-r*
 chocolate hot-MVC.IPFV
 ‘The chocolate (always) becomes hot.’

¹⁷ Some verbs with infinitives in *-ũk~-ũk* such as *diâũk* ‘melt’ and *sãũk* ‘see’ are likely to be fossilized causative verbs, originating from compounds of the type N, N + N, N + Adj, or Adj plus the verb *ũk* ‘make’. The nominal or adjectival part of the compound is synchronically irretrievable. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that such verbs display the same inflectional patterns as synchronically decomposable causative verbs formed by noun and adjective incorporation.

- (25) *tsuru* *bâ-n-ẽ*
 chocolate hot-MVC-PFV
 ‘The chocolate (became hot and) is hot (now).’¹⁸
- (26) *mango* *nũ-r-ke-wã*
 mango corpse-MVC.IPFV-IPFII-CPL
 ‘The mango is rotting.’

The adjectival and nominal roots verbalized by *-r* always have their infinitive ending in *-ũk*. Table 2 offers some examples of this highly productive derivation (see Jara Murillo 1995: 18; Sánchez Avendaño 2009: 63 for additional examples). The first column in Table 2 indicates the syntactic category to which the root belongs. The second column illustrates the infinitive formation of derived intransitive anticausative verbs, where the verbalizer *-r* on a non-verbal stem is followed by the infinitive ending *-ũk*. Adjectival stems can undergo haplology during derivation (cf. *chabáchabâ* ‘muddy’ or *sẽssẽ* ‘cold’).

Table 2: Examples of intransitive anticausative verbs formed by the verbalizer *-r*.

ROOT	DERIVED ANTICAUSATIVE VERB ({-r-ũk} > -n-ũk)
<i>akẽ</i> ‘ripe’ (Adj)	<i>akẽ-n-ũk</i> ‘to become ripe’, ‘to become old’
<i>ãlĩ</i> ‘craziness’ (N)	<i>ãlĩ-n-ũk</i> ‘to become crazy’, ‘to become lost’
<i>apá+tõtõtõ</i> ‘body + soft’ (N + Adj)	<i>apáto-n-ũk</i> ‘to become soft with water’
<i>bã</i> ‘hot’ (Adj)	<i>bã-n-ũk</i> ‘to become hot’
<i>bilo’ulã</i> ‘throat + hand’ (N + N)	<i>bilo’ulã-n-ũk</i> ‘to snore’
<i>chabáchabâ</i> ‘muddy’ (Adj)	<i>chabá-n-ũk</i> ‘to become muddy’
<i>dukuã</i> ‘flower’ (N)	<i>duká-n-ũk</i> ‘to blossom’
<i>sawãr</i> ‘fear’ (N)	<i>sawã-n-ũk</i> ‘to feel fear’
<i>sẽssẽ</i> ‘cold’ (Adj)	<i>sẽ-n-ũk</i> ‘to become cold’
<i>shakõshakõ</i> ‘acid’ (Adj)	<i>shakõ-n-ũk</i> ‘to become fermented’
<i>sichõ</i> ‘white moth’ (bad omen) (N)	<i>sichõ-n-ũk</i> ‘to become a widow, to miscarry after 4 months’
<i>tõ</i> ‘cough’ (N)	<i>tõ-n-ũk</i> ‘to cough’
<i>wõ + aẽ</i> ‘face + color’ (N + N)	<i>wõaẽ-n-ũk</i> ‘to feel shame’
<i>nũ</i> ‘corpse’ (N)	<i>nũ-n-ũk</i> ‘to become rotten, spoiled’

¹⁸ With derived intransitive anticausative verbs, the perfective ending *-ẽ* is not by itself sufficient to convey a past meaning. In order to place the proposition in the past, a past time adverb would be necessary in (25); otherwise, the perfective ending *-ẽ* has present time reference, indicating the resultant state of a prior event. On the other hand, with anticausative verbs, the imperfective ending *-r* conveys the idea of ‘always’ or ‘constantly’ as in (24).

The peculiar status of the anticausative formation in Bribri requires a short diachronic excursus. In Bribri, causative verbs can be formed by creating a compound which features the verb *úk* ‘to make’, and, to its left side, one of the following elements: [N], [Adj], [N + N], or [N + Adj], as in *bâúk* ‘to heat sth.’, formed by *bâ* ‘hot’ plus *úk* ‘to make’ (see Table 2). All such verbs have an anticausative counterpart, where the *-r* suffix is added before *-úk* as in *bâ-n-úk* ‘to become hot’, yielding causative-anticausative pairs. However, synchronically, the causative stem *úk* ‘make’ has been reanalyzed as an infinitive ending and disappears when the anticausative verb is conjugated, leaving no trace of causative morphology. For this reason, forms such as *bâ-n-úk* are analyzed in this article as cases where the *-r* functions as an intransitive anticausative verbalizer for adjectival and nominal roots (or a combination of these) and *-úk* as the infinitive ending of the verbalized form.

In Table 2, all infinitives of derived intransitive verbs end in *-n-úk* (morphophonologically */-r-úk/*). As shown in (24)–(25), a verb such as *bânúk* ‘to become hot’, as all other verbs in Table 2, has two forms: *bâ-r* for the imperfective (no extra suffix) and *bâ-n-ē* for the remote perfective (*-ē* suffix). These two aspectual forms are pivotal in determining whether a verb is a derived anticausative. For instance, a verb like *apáinúk* ‘to shake from fear or cold’ might be taken, formally and semantically, as a derived anticausative verb if we only take into account its infinitive form. However, the [n] in the infinitive *apáinúk* must be part of the root, i.e., [apáin-úk] (*/apáir-úk/*), and not a surface manifestation of the *-r* suffix. This can be seen by looking at the imperfective and remote perfective forms of this verb, which are [apain-ú] (with the imperfective intransitive suffix *-ú* of active voice verbs) and [apáin-ēʔ] (with the glottal stop found in the perfective of the active voice conjugation) respectively. If *apáinúk* were morphologically derived by means of the *-r* suffix, i.e., [apái-n-úk] (*/apái-r-úk/*), then its imperfective and perfective forms would be *[apái-r] and *[apái-n-ē] (without a glottal stop), respectively.

3.3 Morphemes coding reflexive and reciprocal functions

Bribri uses unbound pronominal forms to express reflexive and reciprocal functions: *ēʔ* and (*ā*)*ní* respectively.¹⁹ The reflexive and reciprocal are valence-decreasing syntactic constructions in Bribri. Usually, only syntactically transitive verb roots can occur in reflexive and reciprocal constructions: when they do, the transitivity value of their root must change to intransitive. To see this, consider the

¹⁹ For arguments in favor of the phonotactic status of the Bribri reflexive and reciprocal as independent pronouns, see Chevrier (2017: 124–134, 197).

active voice verb stems *yawók* ‘to do’ and *ppók* ‘to hit with a long object’. Both of these take the transitive imperfective suffix *-é* in non-reflexive constructions, as shown in (27) and (28).

(27) *ye’ tö balo’ yaw-é*
 1SG ERG chicha do-IPFV.TR
 ‘I prepare chicha.’

(28) *mē pp-é-ke nāmū rö ñīmĩkã*
 gourd hit-IPFV.TR-IPFVII tiger ERG one.against.the.other
 ‘The tiger was hitting the gourds one against the other.’ (adapted from ALB: 156)

When these transitive verb stems appear in a reflexive (29) or reciprocal (30) construction they change their imperfective suffix from *-é* (transitive) to *-ó* (intransitive).

(29) *se’ ē’ yaw-ó bríbri wa*
 1PL.INCL REFL do-IPFV.INTR Bribri with
 ‘We learn Bribri.’ (lit: ‘We do ourselves with Bribri’)

(30) *ie’pa ñĩ pp-ó*
 3PL RECP hit-IPFV.INTR
 ‘They are fighting.’ (lit: ‘They are hitting each other’)

4 Form and meaning of Bribri media tantum verbs

Next to the bulk of passive and anticausative verb stems carrying the *-r* suffix, functionally opposed to an active counterpart without this suffix (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2), there are twelve *-r* stems which are not opposed to any active counterpart without this suffix and thus should be considered media tantum verbs. These are in Table 3. A dash means the absence of a meaning construction. Because the meanings of the imperfective and perfective forms as well as their aspectual interpretations depend heavily on the type of construction in which they are found, glosses are given only for the infinitive forms.²⁰ The column “meaning 1” is the

²⁰ As previously mentioned for derived anticausative verbs, with verbs in Table 3 the imperfective suffix *-r* also conveys the idea of ‘habitually’ or ‘always’; while the perfective suffix *-ē* yields a ‘present’ resultant state interpretation if no past time adverbial is present in the clause.

meaning that the verb form has when employed in a one-argument construction, and “meaning 2” is the meaning that the same verb form has when used in a two-argument construction. Semantically, most verbs in Table 3 refer to non-agentive processes.

Table 3: Verb morphology of Bribri media tantum verbs.

INF	IPFV	PFV	Meaning 1 (NP V)	Meaning 2 (NP NP V)	
<i>chĕ-n-ūk</i>	<i>chĕ-r</i>	<i>chĕ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to be known’	‘to know’	L
<i>ô-n-ūk</i>	<i>ô-r</i>	<i>ô-n-ĕ</i>	‘to fall, to scream’	‘to understand’	A
<i>kiâ-n-ūk</i>	<i>kiâ-r</i>	<i>kiâ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to be wanted/needed’	‘to want, need’	B
<i>mî-n-ūk</i>	<i>mî-r</i>	<i>mî-n-ĕ</i>	‘to go’	‘to take (to/with)’	I
<i>dalĕ-n-ūk</i>	<i>dalĕ-r</i>	<i>dalĕ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to feel pain’	‘to respect, love, exert oneself’	L E
<i>sĕ-n-ūk</i>	<i>sĕ-r</i>	<i>sĕ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to live’	–	
<i>tsĕ-n-ūk</i>	<i>tsĕ-r</i>	<i>tsĕ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to feel’	–	
<i>olô-n-ūk</i>	<i>olô-r</i>	<i>olô-n-ĕ</i>	‘to finish’	–	
<i>ĕ-n-ūk</i>	<i>ĕ-r</i>	<i>ĕ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to finish’	–	
<i>tû-n-ūk</i>	<i>tû-r</i>	<i>tû-n-ĕ</i>	‘to run’ ^a	–	
<i>ĕ̃-n-ūk</i>	<i>ĕ̃-r</i>	<i>ĕ̃-n-ĕ</i>	‘to rest’	–	
<i>ũ-n-ūk</i>	<i>ũ-r</i>	<i>ũ-n-ĕ</i>	‘to fly’	–	

^aVerb forms such as *tûnūk* ‘to run’, *ũnūk* ‘to fly’ and *ĕ̃nūk* ‘to rest’ illustrate an ongoing process of reanalysis. Alongside their imperfective forms, *tû-r*, *ũ-r*, and *ĕ̃-r* respectively, the forms *tû-n-ĕ*, *ũ-n-ĕ*, and *ĕ̃-n-ĕ* in Table 3 are perfective *recent* forms. These three verbs also developed perfective remote forms *tûnĕ̃*, *ũnĕ̃*, and *ĕ̃nĕ̃*. The presence of the glottal stop, typical of transitive and intransitive active voice verbs whose infinitives end in *-ūk*, suggests that these media tantum verbs developed remote perfective forms identical to those of active voice nasal verb stems ending in *-ūk* (e.g., *kîn-ūk* ‘to wait’ > *kînĕ̃* ‘wait.PFV:REM’). By analogy with active voice verbs such as *kînūk* ‘to wait’, the [n] in stems such as *tûnūk* ‘to run’ and *ũnūk* ‘to fly’ and *ĕ̃nūk* ‘to rest’ is being reinterpreted as part of the verb root.

Only the first five verbs in Table 3 can be used both in one-argument and two-argument constructions despite the presence of the intransitivizing *-r* suffix on the verb stem, thus being (P-)labile. We refer to these five verbs as media tantum labile (MTL) verbs. To the best of our knowledge, there are no other labile verbs in Bribri besides the five listed in Table 3. As for the seven media tantum verbs which do not occur in a two-argument construction, we can only speculate that they may have lost their active counterpart due to some (historically non-documented) process of lexicalization and may eventually join the verbs of the first subclass by analogy, based on the diachronic scenario set forth in Section 7. We now turn to the different argument structures in which the first five verbs in Table 3 can participate.

5 Valence patterns of Bribri media tantum labile verbs

Bribri MTL verbs display non-canonical subject marking.²¹ Their non-absolutive arguments can be marked by the ergative postposition *wã* (Section 5.1), by a locative postposition (Section 5.2), or both (Section 5.3). Cross-linguistically, verbs with non-canonical argument marking typically include verbs of possession, perception, cognition, necessity, and wanting, as well as verbs of physiological and psychological states (Aikhenvald et al. 2001; Barðdal et al. 2012; Shibatani 1999; among others). Bribri MTL verbs refer to processes or states such as ‘to feel pain’, ‘to want’, ‘to remember’, ‘to understand’, ‘to love’, and ‘to miss’ and thus fit well within this semantic domain. As we argue in this section, when they appear in a one-argument construction, all MTL verbs in Table 3 with the exception of *mĩnũk* ‘to go, to take’ are non-agentive, i.e., the sole NP in a one-argument construction bears the semantic role of Patient.

5.1 [NON-ABS]wã [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}]

Two out of five MTL verbs, *chẽ-n-ũk* ‘to be known, to know’ and *mĩ-n-ũk* ‘to go, to take’, have their non-absolutive argument marked by means of the postposition *wã*. As explained in Section 2, this postposition encodes both possessors and ergative arguments in Bribri and as such represents a cross-linguistically common case of genitive/ergative polysemy known, for instance, from the pre-history of the Proto-Indo-European case system (Baerman et al. 2002; Schmalstieg 1981; Vaillant 1936; among others). The verb *chẽ-n-ũk* means ‘to be known’ when used in a construction with a single core argument such as (5), reproduced as (31).

- (31) *tt-é* *chẽ-r*
 story-DET know-MVC.IPFV
 ‘The story is known (by someone).’

The verb *chẽ-n-ũk* can also appear in two-argument constructions, as in (4), reproduced as (32).

- (32) *ie’* *wã* *tt-é* *chẽ-r*
 3SG.PRX.H ERG/POSS story-DET know-MVC.IPFV
 ‘He knows the story.’

²¹ This phenomenon is also referred to as ‘oblique subjects’ (Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003), ‘quirky subjects’ (Fanselow 2002; Rögnvaldsson 1991), or non-nominative subjects (Bayer 2004).

One might wonder, given that the verb bears intransitivizing morphology in both the transitive and intransitive frames, whether the ergative postposition in (32) introduces an oblique phrase instead of a syntactic argument, i.e., whether the free translation of (32) is rather something like ‘The story is known of/by him’. This analysis is at least synchronically impossible for (32): Bribri does not allow the expression of an oblique Agent phrase with verbs taking the *-r* suffix with passive function, hence the ungrammaticality of (34) as opposed to (33). The substitution of *wã* with the other ergative marker *tö* to express the Agent phrase also leads to ungrammaticality, see (35).

(33) *balo'* *ya-r* *tãĩ*
 chicha drink-MVC.IPFV much
 ‘A lot of chicha is drunk.’

(34) * *bribri-pa* *wã* *balo'* *ya-r* *tãĩ*
 Bribri-PL ERG chicha drink-MVC.IPFV much
 *(intended meaning: ‘A lot of chicha is drunk by the Bribri people.’)

(35) * *bribri-pa* *tö balo'* *ya-r* *tãĩ*
 Bribri-PL ERG chicha drink-MVC.IPFV much
 *(intended meaning: ‘A lot of chicha is drunk by the Bribri people.’)

Another labile verb which takes a non-absolute argument marked by *wã* is *mĩnũk*.²² This verb means ‘to go’ when used in an intransitive construction with an unmarked absolute as in (36).

(36) *i-nõũyö-la* *mĩ-r*
 3SG-nephew-DIM go-MVC.IPFV
 ‘His nephew was going (after him).’ (IHB:59)

The same verb means ‘to take (to/with)’ when employed in two-argument constructions such as (37).²³

(37) *ĩ-mĩ* *wã* *ie'* *mĩ-n-ẽ-tse* *kõ* *aiẽ*
 3SG-mother ERG 3SG.PRX.H go-MVC-PFV-DIR place up:there
 ‘His mother took him to a place up there.’ (IHB: 90)

²² This verb shows two alternating infinitive forms: *mĩnũk* and *mĩk*. Its remote perfective form is always *mĩnẽ*, but there is variation in the imperfective forms: the expected *mĩr* alternates with *mĩ* and *mĩã*.

²³ Intransitive active verbs such as *dõk* ‘to arrive’ and *bitũk* ‘to come’ can occur in a valence pattern construction identical to (37). When they do, they mean ‘to bring’.

As in the case of *chĕnũk* ‘to be known, to know’ in (32), one wonders if the free translation of (37) should be ‘He went to a place up there by his mother’. This analysis is again ruled out by the lack of passives with overtly expressed Agents in Bribri. Additionally, NPs marked by *wã* in constructions such as (37) are capable of controlling the reference of an anaphoric pronoun in a following postpositional phrase (see Section 6.3). If the phrase marked by *wã* in (37) were an oblique, it would not have this ability.

5.2 [NON-ABS]_{LOC PP} [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}]

The MTL verb *kiánũk* means ‘to be wanted/needed’ when in a construction with a single core argument as in (38).

- (38) *kápi kiá-n-ẽ*
 coffee be.wanted-MVC-PFV
 ‘Coffee is wanted/needed (by someone).’

The only possible interpretation of (38) is that someone wants or needs coffee, even though the Experiencer of this desire cannot be overtly expressed in the construction. This verb, and possibly *chĕnũk* ‘to be known, to know’, likely go back to a morphological passive derived stem, but the corresponding active voice verb no longer exists. When the verb *kiánũk* occurs in a two-argument construction, it means ‘to want, to need, to desire’. The non-absolutive argument in (39) is marked by a locative postposition which elsewhere means ‘upon, on’ and implies contact with a surface.

- (39) *ye’ kĩ kápi kiá-n-ẽ*
 1SG on coffee be.wanted-MVC-PFV
 ‘I want coffee.’ (lit: ‘On/upon me coffee is wanted’)

The verb *õnũk* means ‘to fall’ or ‘to scream’ depending on the context, when found in a construction with one syntactic argument, as in (40).²⁴

- (40) *ye’ aké õ-n-ẽ-wã di’ ã*
 1SG brother fall-MVC-PFV water in
 ‘My brother (of a male) fell into the water/river.’

In (41), the non-absolutive argument of the verb *õnũk* is marked by the locative postposition *ã* preceded by *ẽr* ‘liver’, yielding the complex postpositional phrase *ẽn*

²⁴ These two meanings (i.e., ‘to fall’ and ‘to scream’) can be distinguished by the presence of certain suffixes. When combined with the completive suffix *-wã* (i.e., *on-ẽ-wã*), *õnũk* means ‘to fall’. When combined with the directional suffix *-kã* (i.e., *on-ẽ-kã*), *õnũk* means ‘to scream’.

ã which means literally ‘in (one’s) liver’. In this context, the meaning of the verb is ‘to understand’, as in (41).²⁵

- (41) *be’ ên ã tté ô-n-ē?*
 2_{SG} liver in story fall-MVC-PFV
 ‘Do you understand the story?’ (lit: ‘Did the story fall into your liver?’)

The semantic shift of a verb of motion directed downwards to a verb of cognition is not uncommon, cf. Sanskrit *ava-gam* ‘understand’ formed by *ava* ‘down’ + *gam* ‘go’. When used in two-argument constructions with an animate absolutive argument, *ôñũk* changes its meaning to ‘to remember’, as in (42).

- (42) *ye’ ên ã ie’ ô-n-ē*
 1_{SG} liver in 3_{SG,PRX.H} fall-MVC-PFV
 ‘I remembered him.’ (lit: ‘He fell into my liver’)

5.3 [NON-ABS] *wã*/LOC PP [ABS] [*v*_{MEDIA TANTUM}]

The verb *dalêñũk* ‘to feel pain, to respect, to love, to exert oneself’ can take a non-absolutive argument marked by either the ergative postposition/ possessor marker *wã* or a lexically determined locative postposition, with a concomitant change in the meaning of the construction.²⁶ The derivational history of this verb form can conceivably be traced back to the noun *dalêr* ‘pain’.²⁷ The verb *dalêñũk* means ‘to feel pain’, when used in a construction with one argument, as in (43).

- (43) *ye’ ulá dalê-n-ē*
 1_{SG} hand hurt-MVC-PFV
 ‘My hand hurts.’

²⁵ For the Bribri people, the liver is the part of the body that contains both rationality and feelings. The process of understanding is thus construed as if the object of understanding falls into one’s liver and, once in that container, is considered apprehended.

²⁶ Locative-marked postpositional phrases in Bribri are not syntactic arguments. Like ergative phrases, they can occur either before or after the inseparable absolutive-verb sequence (see Section 2), they cannot be optionally indexed on the verb, nor be passivized.

²⁷ An anonymous reviewer asks whether *dalêr* ‘pain’ is a borrowing from Spanish *dolor* ‘pain’. While the similarity between the two forms is striking, borrowings from Spanish usually do not undergo drastic vowel changes. This makes it unlikely that *dalêr* is a phonologically adapted borrowing of *dolor*. On the other hand, *kápi* in (39) is a nativized borrowing from Spanish *café* (see Jara Murillo 2015).

A meaning propositionally identical to (43) can be expressed by constructions such as (44).

- (44) *ye' ěn ã ulá dalĕ-n-ĕ*
 1SG liver in hand hurt-MVC-PFV
 'My hand hurts me.' (lit: 'The hand hurts in my liver')

This verb can be used in two types of two-argument constructions. In the first, the verb appears with a non-absolutive argument marked by the complex postposition *ěn ã* 'in (one's) liver' and an animate absolutive argument and means 'to love, to miss', as in (45).

- (45) *ye' ěn ã be' dalĕ-n-ĕ*
 1SG liver in 2SG hurt-MVC-PFV
 'I love/miss you.' (lit: 'You hurt in my liver')

Second, when employed with a non-absolutive argument marked by *wã* and an animate absolutive, *dalĕnĭk* means 'to respect'. In (46), the speaker is being interviewed about the process of becoming *awã*, the shaman of the community. He describes how people show great respect to an *awã* and dwell on finding the best food and hammock for him to sit or sleep in. In the first line, the distal demonstrative *e'* refers to the *awã*, and the pronoun *i-* in the second and third lines is co-referential with *e'*.

- (46) *e'tã e' dátsĩ-ke tã,*
 SO that:DST come.IPFV-IPFVII then
se' wã i-dalĕ-r tãĩ-ĕ
 1PL.INCL ERG 3SG-hurt-MVC-IPFV much-INT
se' wã i-dalĕ-n-ĕ
 1PL.INCL ERG 3SG-hurt-MVC-PFV
 'So, when that one (the *awã*) is about to come, we always respect him a lot, we respect him.' (SOA: 134)²⁸

In the second and third clauses, the verb *dalĕnĭk* appears with a pre-verbal absolutive coded by *i-* and a non-absolutive argument marked by the ergative postposition *wã*. It is noteworthy that *dalĕnĭk* can combine with the reciprocal and reflexive pronouns *añĩ* (47) and *ẽ'* (48).

²⁸ Alí García Segura (p.c.) states that the construction expressing the meaning 'to respect' in the second and third lines of (46) is an instance of formal language. In less formal language, the verb *dalõiök* is usually used to mean 'to respect'. This verb is formed by means of noun incorporation from the noun stem *dalõ* 'fear' plus the verb *iök* 'to fill'.

- (47) *kêkë-pa* *ańĩ* *dələ-r* *tãĩ* *iõiõ=tã*
 elder-PL RECP feel.pain-MVC.IPFV much before=then
 ‘Much before, the elders respected each other a lot.’ (SOA: 76)²⁹
- (48) *kêchike-pa* *bãk* *iõiõ* *êkapë*
 ancestor-PL exist.PFV.REM before that.way
i-ẽ *dalë-r* *tãĩ-ẽ*
 3PL-REFL feel.pain-MVC.IPFV much-INT
 ‘The ancestors were like that, they exerted themselves a lot.’ (SOA: 100)

The fact that *dalëñũk* can be used in reflexive and reciprocal constructions arguably provides evidence in favor of the syntactic transitivity of the form *dalë-r* in (47)–(48). If the verb form *dalë-r* ‘to feel pain’ were not transitive (at least syntactically), it should not be able to occur in reflexive and reciprocal constructions that are syntactically intransitivizing in Bribri (see discussion in Section 3.3). However, because *dalëñũk* exists only in combination with *-r* morphology, there is no overt formal change in the suffixes that the verb takes when found in a reflexive or a reciprocal construction versus the transitive construction, i.e., there is no analogous change from the imperfective transitive suffix *-é* to the imperfective intransitive suffix *-õ*, as shown in Section 3.3. Data from oral tradition texts show that *kiánũk* ‘to be wanted’ and *õñũk* ‘to fall, to scream’ can also occur in reciprocal and reflexive constructions (see Jara Murillo 1993).

In this section, we showed how non-absolutive arguments in [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] constructions are formally marked in main clauses. In the next section, we focus on the behavioral properties of MTL verbs and their non-absolutive arguments.

6 Behavioral properties of Bribri [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] constructions

The purpose of this section is to show that: (a) some MTL verbs in Table 3 behave syntactically as active transitive verb (Section 6.2); and (b) non-absolutive arguments in [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] constructions display at least some behavioral (covert) properties of ergative-marked subjects of transitive active voice verbs (Section 6.3). By behavioral properties we mean syntactic operations “whose behavior is most likely to be governed by the grammatical relation of subject and/

²⁹ Note that in (44), the form *dalër* found in (43) appears as *dələr*: /a/ assimilates fully to /ɪ/ (<ẽ>). This type of optional vowel harmony in noun and verb forms is very common in Bribri.

or direct-object” (quoted from Givón 2001: 177 who uses the term “behavior-and-control” properties in this sense). These syntactic operations include passivization, raising and anaphoric co-reference in chained clauses, among others. To demonstrate (a) and (b), we test the behavior of the first five verb forms in Table 3 (i.e., the *MTL* verbs) and their non-absolutive arguments against three syntactic tests commonly used to establish behavioral properties of grammatical relations: (i) whether a given *MTL* verb allows subject-to-object raising (whether “complete” or “incomplete”, see Section 6.1) when the *MTL* verb is in a two-argument matrix clause. This is to determine whether any given *MTL* verb behaves like matrix clause transitive verbs, which do allow raising; (ii) whether non-absolutive arguments of *MTL* verbs can undergo subject-to-object raising when found in the complement clause. This is to determine whether they behave like verbs having S and A arguments, which do undergo raising; (iii) whether non-absolutive arguments of *MTL* verbs can control the co-reference of anaphoric possessive pronouns in following possessive NPs or postpositional phrases to see if they behave like ergative phrases that show this property. Since subject-to-object raising is a crucial behavioral property in the following subsections, for the sake of clarity in Section 6.1 we briefly illustrate the types of raising available in Bribri and their structural features.

6.1 “Complete” and “incomplete” subject-to-object raising in Bribri

Dickeman-Datz (1984: 122) shows that in Bribri only transitive and “indefinite voice” (*media tantum* in our terms) matrix verbs (i.e., verbs with the *-r* suffix in a two-argument construction) allow subject-to-object raising.³⁰ By contrast, non-derived intransitive verb stems in the matrix clause never allow raising in this language. In Bribri, an embedded complement clause in absolutive position is usually terminated by the anaphoric/distal demonstrative pronoun *e'* as in (49).

- (49) *ye' tō [Trini tō ali' ñ-ê e']_{CC} sãw-ê*
 1SG ERG T. ERG manioc eat-IPFV.TR that.DST see-IPFV.TR
 ‘I see that Trini eats manioc.’ (lit: ‘I [Trini eats manioc that] see’)

If the matrix clause verb is transitive, as *sãũk* ‘to see’ in (50), the embedded complement clause can be extraposed and replaced by the ‘dummy’ absolutive *i-* in the matrix clause. Note that the complementizer *tō* introducing the extraposed complement clause is homophonous with the ergative marker *tō*.

³⁰ Dickeman-Datz (1984: 131) gives only one example of raising with an *MTL* verb, namely *kiãũk* ‘to be wanted, to want’.

- (50) *ye' tō i-sāw-ě [tō Trini tō ali' ñ-ě]_{CC}*
 1SG ERG 3SG-see-IPFV.TR COMPL T. ERG manioc eat-IPFV.TR
 'I see that Trini eats manioc.' (lit: 'I see it [that Trini eats manioc]')³¹

In the analysis of Dickeman-Datz (1984), after extraposition takes place, the A argument of the complement clause, e.g., 'Trini' in (51) can be raised to become the object within the matrix clause.

- (51) *ye' tō Trini sāw-ě [∅ ali' ñ-ūk]_{CC}*
 1SG ERG T. see-IPFV.TR manioc eat-INF
 'I see Trini eating manioc.'

As shown in (51), when the A argument of the complement clause 'Trini' is raised to the object position in the matrix clause, it leaves a zero in the complement clause and the verb 'eat' appears in its infinitive form. This type of raising has been called "complete" raising (Dickeman-Datz 1984: 123). Complete raising can only occur when the verb stem in the matrix clause is syntactically transitive. The fact that A arguments and S arguments (cf. (14)) in complement clauses can undergo complete subject-to-object raising points to the existence of a nominative pivot in Bribri. This is further corroborated by the fact that P arguments cannot undergo ("complete") raising. In (52), the absolutive argument *ali'* 'manioc' of the transitive verb stem *ñūk* 'eat' in the complement clause is unsuccessfully raised to object position in the matrix clause, and the sentence is ungrammatical.

- (52) **ye' tō ali' sāw-ě [Trini tō ñ-ūk]_{CC}*
 1SG ERG manioc see-IPFV.TR T. ERG eat-INF
 *(intended meaning: 'I see the manioc Trini (is) eating.')

Dickeman-Datz (1984: 123) describes another kind of raising in Bribri, which she calls "incomplete" raising. She argues that S arguments of stative and indefinite voice verbs (i.e., verbs with the *-r* suffix and presumably one single syntactic argument) in complement clauses can only undergo incomplete raising. Further, she argues that S arguments of non-stative underived intransitive verb stems and A arguments of transitive verb stems in a complement clause can undergo incomplete raising where a semantic distinction exists between completely and incompletely raised forms. This is illustrated with the transitive verb stem *tōk* 'to kill' in the complement clauses in (53)–(54).³²

³¹ The functional difference and diachronic origin(s) of the complementation strategies exemplified in (50) and (51) are largely unexplored and require a special study.

³² See Dickeman-Datz (1984: 124) for a parallel example with a non-derived intransitive verb in the complement clause.

COMPLETE RAISING

- (53) *ye' tö síkua tsë' [Ø nãĩ' tt-ók]CC*
 1SG ERG white.man hear.PFV.REM tapir kill-INF
 'I heard the white man kill a tapir.' (lit: 'I heard the white man [kill a tapir]')

INCOMPLETE RAISING

- (54) *ye' tö síkua tsë'*
 1SG ERG white.man hear.PFV.REM
[tö ie' tö nãĩ' kôť]CC
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H ERG tapir kill.PFV.REM
 'I heard that the white man killed a tapir.' (lit: 'I heard the white man_i [that he_i killed a tapir]')

In (53) the A argument *síkua* 'white man' of the transitive verb stem *ttók* in the complement clause undergoes complete raising and becomes the object (i.e., absolutive) of the transitive verb stem *tsók* 'hear' in the matrix clause. In (54), incomplete raising occurs. The A argument (subject) *síkua* 'white man' of the complement clause, raised to the object of the matrix clause, receives a pronominal "copy" in the complement clause (i.e., *ie'*), and the verb in the complement clause appears in its conjugated remote perfective form, not in the infinitive as in (53). In terms of meaning difference, in (53), where the raising of the A argument is complete, the speaker did hear first-hand the shooting of the tapir. But in (54), where the raising of the A argument ('white man') is incomplete, the speaker did not hear himself the event of tapir killing; rather, he might have heard the white man talking about it. This possibly points to the existence of grammatical evidentiality in Bribri, manifested through the opposition between complete (directive) versus incomplete (inferential/indirective) raising with verbs of perception. This topic goes beyond the scope of the present article. While further research is needed to substantiate this claim, a distinction between firsthand and non-firsthand evidentiality is reported in other Chibchan languages such as Ika (Bergqvist 2012: 172; Frank 1990: 77).

According to our data, P arguments in Bribri can also undergo incomplete raising, as shown in (55).

- (55) *ye' tö nãĩ' tsë'*
 1SG ERG tapir hear.PFV.REM
[tö síkua' tö i-kôť]CC
 COMPL white.man ERG 3SG-kill.PFV.REM
 'I heard the tapir that the white man killed.' (lit: 'I heard the tapir_i [that the white man_i killed it]')

- (57) *ye' kī Trini kiá-n-ē [∅ ali' ñ-ũk]_{CC}*
 1SG on T. be.wanted-MVC-PFV manioc eat-INF
 'I want Trini to eat manioc.' (lit: 'I want Trini [(to) eat manioc]')³⁴

The verb *ñũk* 'to fall, to scream, to understand, to remember' allows only incomplete subject-to-object raising. In (58), the complement clause in absolutive position is extraposed and replaced by the dummy absolutive *i-*.

- (58) *ye' éñ ã i-õ-n-ē-wã [tö síkua tö*
 1SG liver in 3SG-fall-MVC-PFV-CPL COMPL white.man ERG
ali' ñã']_{CC}
 manioc eat:PFV.REM
 'I remember that the white man ate manioc.' (lit: 'I remember it [that the white man ate manioc]')

In (59), the raising is incomplete because the A argument (i.e., 'white man') which has been raised to become the object of the matrix clause must be pronominalized with a co-referential pronoun in the complement clause.

- (59) *ye' éñ ã síkua õ-n-ē-wã*
 1SG liver in white.man fall-MVC-PFV-CPL
[tö ie' tö ali' ñã']_{CC}
 COMPL 3SG:PRX:H ERG manioc eat:PFV.REM
 'I remember that the white man ate the manioc.' (lit: 'I remember the white man_i [that he_i ate the manioc]')

Incomplete subject-to-object raising is also the only option when *chẽñũk* 'to be known, to know' is the matrix clause verb. In this case too, it is possible to extrapose the complement clause and replace it with the dummy absolutive *i-*, as in (60).

- (60) *ye' wã i-chẽ-r [tö Trini tö ali' ñã']_{CC}*
 1SG ERG 3SG-be.known-MVC.IPFV COMPL T. ERG manioc eat.PFV.REM
 'I know that Trini ate manioc.' (lit: 'I know it [that the Trini ate manioc]')

The A argument of the complement clause, i.e., 'Trini' in (60), can then undergo incomplete subject-to-object raising in (61).

³⁴ Cf. Dickeman-Datz (1984: 131) for a parallel example to (57) which shows that *kiánũk* allows complete subject-to-object raising.

- (61) *ye'* *wã* *Trini* *chê-r*
 1SG ERG T. be.known-MVC.IPFV
[tö *ie'* *tö* *ali'* *ñã']_{CC}*
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H ERG manioc eat.PFV.REM
 'I know that Trini ate manioc.' (lit: 'I know Trini_i [that she_i ate manioc]')

Recall that one of the requirements for either complete or incomplete raising to occur in Bribri is that the matrix verb be transitive (Dickeman-Datz 1984: 122). Examples (57), (59), and (61) show that *kiánũk* 'to be wanted, to want', *õnũk* 'to fall, to understand', and *chẽnũk* 'to be known, to know' in a [NON-ABS] [ABS] [_{V_{MEDIA} TANTUM}] construction pattern like transitive verb stems in a matrix clause in that they allow complete and/or incomplete raising of A arguments of transitive verb stems found in a complement clause. This evidence corroborates preliminary data and similar claims made by Dickeman-Datz (1984, 1985). However, only *kiánũk* 'to be wanted, to want' behaves entirely like a transitive verb stem in a matrix clause in that it allows complete raising of an A argument found in a complement clause (cf. (57)). In all examples in this section, the complement clause contains the same transitive verb stem *ñũk* 'eat soft things' which must occur with two syntactic arguments, just like *katók* 'eat hard things' (see (6)). If *chẽnũk* 'to be known, to know' and *õnũk* 'to fall, to scream, to understand' behaved entirely as transitive verb stems, they would allow complete raising of the A argument of the complement clause, just like *kiánũk* 'to be wanted, to want'.

6.3 Behavioral properties of [NON-ABS] in [NON-ABS] [ABS] [_{V_{MEDIA} TANTUM}] constructions

In this section, we investigate whether non-absolutive arguments of MTL verbs can undergo complete subject-to-object raising when they appear with an absolutive and a non-absolutive argument in a complement clause. We do so to determine whether they show the same behavior as ergative phrases. We also determine whether non-absolutive arguments of MTL verbs can control the co-reference of an anaphoric possessive pronoun in a following possessive NP or postpositional phrase. This property is shared by the S/A category in Bribri.

Recall from Section 6.1 that, according to Dickeman-Datz (1984: 124), if the verb in the embedded complement clause is stative or in the indefinite voice (i.e., the verb has the *-r* suffix and presumably only a single syntactic argument), only incomplete raising of the S argument of such a verb can apply. Non-absolutive arguments in a [NON-ABS] [ABS] [_{V_{MEDIA} TANTUM}] construction within a complement clause behave like S arguments in that they can undergo only incomplete raising. The fact

that non-absolutive arguments of MTL verbs can undergo incomplete raising does not tell anything about their grammatical relation/syntactic behavior. This is because incomplete raising does not target a specific subset of grammatical relations in Bribri, but rather appears to be available to S, A, and P arguments indiscriminately (see Section 6.1).

For reasons of space, in (62) and (64)–(67) we only show the raising of the non-absolutive argument of each MTL verb from the complement clause into the object position within a matrix clause containing the transitive verb stem *sāw-ê* ‘to see’. For the same reason, we limit ourselves to showing that non-absolutive arguments cannot undergo complete raising only with the verb *mínük* ‘to go’ in (63). All other MTL verbs do not differ from *mínük* ‘to go’ in this respect.

- (62) *ye’ tö Alí sāw-ê*
 1SG ERG A. see-IPFV.TR
[tö ie’ wã alâköl mî-n-ê]_{CC}
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H ERG woman go-MVC-PFV
 ‘I see that Alí took the woman (away).’ (lit: ‘I see Alí_i [that he_i took the woman (away)]’)
- (63) **ye’ tö Alí sāw-ê [∅ alâköl mî-n-ük]_{CC}*
 1SG ERG A. see-IPFV.TR woman go-MVC-INF
 (*intended meaning: ‘I see Alí taking the woman (away).’)
- (64) *ye’ tö Alí sāw-ê*
 1SG ERG A. see-IPFV.TR
[tö ie’ wã tt-é chê-r]_{CC}
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H ERG story-DET be.known- MVC-IPFV
 ‘I see that Alí knows the story.’ (lit: ‘I see Alí_i [that he_i knows the story]’)
- (65) *ye’ tö Alí sāw-ê*
 1SG ERG A. see-IPFV.TR
[tö ie’ kî alâköl e’ kiá-n-ê]_{CC}
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H on woman that.DST be.wanted-MVC-PFV
 ‘I see that Alí_i wants that woman.’ (lit: ‘I see Alí_i [that he_i wants that woman]’)
- (66) *ye’ tö Alí sāw-ê*
 1SG ERG A. see-IPFV.TR
[tö ie’ ên ã Severiano ô-n-ê]_{CC}
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H liver in S. fall-MVC-PFV
 ‘I see that Alí remembers Severiano.’ (lit: ‘I see Alí_i [that he_i remembers S.]’)

- (67) *ye'* *tö* *Alí* *sãw-ẽ*
 1SG ERG A. see-IPFV.TR
[tö *ie'* *wã* *awã* *dalẽ-n-ẽ]*_{CC}
 COMPL 3SG.PRX.H ERG shaman feel.pain-MVC-PFV
 I see that Alí respects the shaman.' (lit: 'I see Alí_i [that he_i respects the shaman]')³⁵

The second behavioral property to be tested is the ability of the non-absolutive argument of MTL verbs to control co-reference of an anaphoric possessive pronoun in a following possessive NP or postpositional phrase. Only the S/A category has this property in Bribri. This is shown in (68) with the ergative marked A argument 'Alí', which is the only argument that can control co-reference of the anaphoric possessive pronoun *ie'* in the postpositional phrase *ie' kipó ã*. Notice that gender is not expressed in Bribri pronominal forms, so that *i-* in the examples below can refer either to a male or female referent.

- (68) *Alí* *tö* *alâköl* *wöalátsë'* *i-kipó* *ã*
 A. ERG woman kiss.PFV.REM 3SG-hammock on
 'Alí_i kissed the woman on his_i hammock.'

In (68), if the hammock belongs to the woman, the possessor in the postpositional phrase would be expressed in one of two ways: either (i) by repeating the noun *alâköl* 'woman' before the noun *kipó* 'hammock'; or (ii) by means of the demonstrative pronoun *e'* 'that'. In (68), the possibility that the possessive pronoun *ie'* is co-referential with a third person referent other than 'Alí' present somewhere else in discourse is ruled out. Example (69) shows that another third person referent in a postpositional phrase, i.e., 'Hernán', is not a possible antecedent for the possessive pronoun *ie'*.

- (69) *Alí* *tö* *alâköl* *wöalátsë'* *Hernán* *ômik*
 A. ERG woman kiss.PFV.REM H. next.to
 i-kipó *ã*
 3SG-hammock in
 'Alí_i kissed the woman_j next to Hernán_y on his_i/*her_j/*his_y hammock.'

If the hammock belongs to Hernán, this proper noun must be repeated before the noun *kipó*.

³⁵ Recall that the verb *dalénük* 'to feel pain' can occur in a construction with an absolutive and a non-absolutive argument marked by the postpositional phrase *ên ã*, just like the verb *ônük* in (66). As happens with the verb *ônük*, the locative-marked A argument of *dalénük* also undergoes incomplete subject-to-object raising when found in a complement clause.

Non-absolutive arguments of Bribri MTL verbs marked by the ergative postposition/possessor marker *wã* show the same ability to control co-reference of the following anaphoric possessive pronoun (i.e., *i-* or *ie'*) in a postpositional phrase ((70) and (71)) or in a possessive NP (72).

(70) *Trini wã ttô ulitãnê chê-r i-yêjkuö ã*
 T. ERG story all know-MVC.IPFV 3SG-book in
 ‘Trini_i knows all the stories in her_i book.’

(71) *Alí wã Severiano mĩ-n-ẽ ie' ú ã*
 A. ERG S. go-MVC-PFV 3SG.PRX.H house in
 ‘Alí_i took Severiano_j to his_i/*his_j house.’³⁶

(72) *Trini wã i-ditsêwö kêkê-pa dalê-r*
 T. ERG 3SG-clan elder-PL feel.pain-MVC.IPFV
 ‘Trini_i respects the elders of her_i clan.’

Non-absolutive arguments of MTL verbs marked by means of a locative postposition display the same ability to control co-reference as ergative-marked A arguments (and S arguments) have, see (73) and (74). This suggests that non-absolutive arguments of MTL verbs display yet another subject property.

(73) *Alí kĩ alâköl kiá-n-ẽ ie' ú ã*
 A. over woman want-MVC-PFV 3SG.PRX.H house in
 ‘Alí_i wants the woman_j in his_i/*her_j house.’

(74) *Alí ên ã Severiano ô-n-ẽ ie' ú ã*
 A. in liver S. fall-MVC-PFV 3SG.PRX.H house in
 ‘Alí_i remembered Severiano_j in his_i/*his_j house.’

Table 4 summarizes the coding and behavioral properties of Bribri [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] constructions. In Table 4, the symbol “–” means that the corresponding property cannot be tested for some verb forms.

The verb *kiánũk* ‘to be wanted’ behaves the most like transitive active voice verbs in that it allows complete subject-to-object raising when found in matrix clauses. Non-absolutive arguments of MTL verbs can control the reference of a third person possessive pronoun in a following possessive NP or postpositional phrase but unlike S/A arguments they cannot undergo complete raising when found in a complement clause.

³⁶ If the house belongs to Severiano, this proper name needs to precede the noun ‘house’ or the distal demonstrative *e'* can be used after the noun ‘house’.

Table 4: Overt and covert properties of [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] constructions.

	OVERT PROPERTIES [NON-ABS] CODING	BEHAVIORAL PROPERTIES		
		MTL VERBS IN MC ALLOW COMPLETE S-TO-O RAISING	[NON-ABS] OF MTL VERBS IN CC UNDERGO COMPLETE S-TO-O RAISING	[NON-ABS] OF MTL VERBS CONTROL CO-REFERENCE OF PPN IN POSS/LOC PP
<i>chê-n-ũk</i> 'to be known'	ERG/POSS	no	no	yes
<i>ô-n-ũk</i> 'to fall, scream'	LOC	no	no	yes
<i>kiã-n-ũk</i> 'to be wanted'	LOC	yes	no	yes
<i>mĩ-n-ũk</i> 'to go'	ERG/POSS	–	no	yes
<i>dalê-n-ũk</i> 'to feel pain'	ERG/POSS and LOC	–	no	yes

7 Remarks on the diachrony of transitivity in Bribri

In this section we hypothesize diachronic developments to account for the synchronic Bribri data presented in this article. These diachronic paths provide novel insights into how transitivity systems might evolve through time, in particular, the domains of causative oppositions and lability.

7.1 Possible origins of causative-anticausative oppositions

Recall from Section 3.2 that Bribri causative verbs are formed by placing a noun, an adjective, two nouns or a noun plus an adjective before the verb *ũk* 'to make' (see Table 2 for some examples). All causative verbs formed this way have an anticausative counterpart, where the *-r* suffix is added before *ũk*. However, synchronically, there is no trace of causative morphology in the conjugated forms of the anticausative counterparts. Given that the causative derivational stem *ũk* going back to the verb *ũk* 'make' is identical (homophonous) with the infinitive suffix *-ũk* one may posit the following diachronic scenario for the emergence of Bribri *-r* anticausatives. Once the verb *ũk* 'make' began being reanalyzed as an infinitive ending, speakers started to add *-r* after what they considered to be the root, i.e., the stem without *-ũk*, by analogy with active voice verbs ending in *-ũk* and *-øk* that do

not participate in causative-anticausative alternations.³⁷ Subsequently, this *-r* suffix was extended to all transitive verbs, to form passives. In support of this diachronic scenario, there is literature indicating that cross-linguistically anticausative morphemes may commonly develop passive and other intransitive functions (Haspelmath 1987: 35), eventually becoming middle voice markers. Although frequently the anticausative-to-passive (and anticausative-to-middle) path is only part of a larger diachronic pathway starting with the reflexive function (Haspelmath 1990), cases of direct development from anticausative to passive/middle are not unknown.³⁸

7.2 The rise of labile verbs

The syntax of Bribri *MTL* verbs is of special interest for a diachronic typology of (P-)lability. In Bribri, we only find a small class of labile verbs (a subclass of media tantum verbs – see Table 3) within the mass of non-labile verbs. This small island of lability suggests a diachronic scenario for the rise of labile verbs which, to the best of our knowledge, has been hitherto unnoticed in the typological literature. The core of this mechanism can be described as follows. The morphologically marked intransitive *-r* verbs started to be used in active transitive constructions to make up for the lack of a corresponding verb form without the *-r* suffix which would normally be used in an active transitive construction. In this scenario, some *MTL* verbs expanded their syntactic uses by analogy with the active voice paradigm. This is illustrated in Table 5, where “–” means lack of a form/function pairing.

Table 5: Media tantum transitive expansion.

	Transitive verbs	Media tantum verbs
Active	root	–
Passive/anticausative	root plus <i>-r</i> suffix	stem always has <i>-r</i> suffix
↓		
	Transitive verbs	Media tantum labile verbs
Active	root	stem always has <i>-r</i> suffix
Passive/anticausative	root plus <i>-r</i> suffix	

³⁷ Because the *-r* suffix is the only extant derivational suffix in Bribri we cannot show that its position immediately after the verb root and before the infinitive ending in non-finite verb forms and before inflectional suffixes in finite verb forms is shared by other derivational morphemes.

³⁸ Such a scenario may be instantiated by the history of middle morphology in Hittite according to Inglese (2020, Chapter 3). See also Robbeets (2015: 318, 498) and Bahrt (2020: 250–252).

The two-argument (quasi-transitive) use of *MTL* verbs (which, originally, presumably were only used in one-argument constructions) emerges by analogy with the productive system found with transitive verbs, which can participate in a passive (syntactically intransitive) construction by adding the *-r* suffix. This two-way system very likely prompted the expansion of some media tantum labile *-r* forms into the transitive domain to fill in the gap in their defective syntactic paradigm. We call this mechanism *MEDIA TANTUM TRANSITIVE EXPANSION*, for lack of a better term. However, *MTL* two-argument constructions have not reached full transitivity (yet), as evidenced by the lack of some subject properties of non-absolute arguments in two argument constructions (see Table 4). The development outlined in Table 5 is quite different from the case of Latin deponent verbs, a lexically specified set of verbs whose morphologically passive forms are used in active but not passive constructions. In this sense, their syntactic paradigm remains defective. Unlike Latin deponent verbs that left an empty slot in the passive paradigm, Bribri *MTL* verbs have developed a two-argument (quasi-transitive) use.

8 Conclusions

In this article, we argued that the Bribri intransitivizing *-r* suffix is a *MIDDLE VOICE CLUSTER* morpheme, serving more than one intransitivizing function within Bribri's verbal system. It derives passives from active transitive and agentive intransitive verbs, as well as intransitive anticausative verbs from nominal and adjectival roots or a combination thereof. We showed that Bribri has a very restricted class of media tantum verbs, that is, verbs always carrying the intransitivizing *-r* suffix and synchronically lacking a counterpart without this suffix. Unlike the vast majority of verb stems in the language, five out of the twelve media tantum verbs in Bribri are labile in the sense that they can occur in a one ([ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}]) or two-argument ([NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}]) construction without undergoing any (supra-) segmental change. When these media tantum verbs appear in [NON-ABS] [ABS] [V_{MEDIA TANTUM}] constructions, the morphological marking of their non-absolute argument is lexically determined for each verb. We also demonstrated that, when used in two-argument constructions, *MTL* verbs in Bribri only partially behave as transitive verbs, and their non-absolute arguments only partially behave as ergative-marked A arguments of transitive verb stems.

The Bribri data presented here are of particular interest for the diachrony of (anti)causatives and middle voice. They provide valuable evidence in support of the hypothesis that perception and knowledge verbs are one of the loci for the rise of media tantum verbs. As for the evolution of lability, Bribri data suggest that the rise of P-lability may operate even in those languages where this kind of lability is

virtually lacking and/or has a marginal status. Bribri MTL verbs can be considered an “island of lability” within the morphosyntactic system of a language with a dichotomous marking of transitivity oppositions.

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