

## Active and passive voice in Bulungan Language

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### Abstract

Bulungan Language as one of the languages in North Kalimantan Province has scattered speakers in 8 sub-districts. As language with scattered speakers made Bulungan Language get less attention from language researcher dan linguist to describe it thoroughly. Bulungan language has active voice and passive voice as part of its grammar which has not been studied furtherly yet. Then, the researcher take this chance to discuss active voice and passive voice in the Bulungan language in this study. This research employed qualitative descriptive research. The data used in this study was oral data directly taken from the native Bulungan speakers. The data collection technique used in this study was by listening technique and the note-taking technique. This study revealed that the active and passive voice of the Bulungan language had different markers but same passive voice property across languages.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bulungan Language is one of the languages used by people in Bulungan area, North Kalimantan Province. The distribution of Bulungan language is found around the province of North and East Kalimantan. According to Cense and Uhlenbeck (2013), Bulungan language is the branch of Sulu language in the south reaching Balongan Kingdom. Bulungan language is a dialect of the Sulu language that developed on its own. Based on this, Bulungan language is declared as a language variant that is different from the surrounding languages. This is the initial hypothesis claiming that it has a different structure among the others.

On the other hand, the Bulungan language has a kinship tie with other languages originating from the Sulu dialect, both in the Philippines and Kalimantan, Malaysia. The truth of the kinship

must be proven by thorough research in the field of linguistics. If it is proven to be true based on the research, then what has been stated is true (Cense & Uhlenbeck, 2013).

Bulungan Language is a distinct dialect development of the southernmost Sulu Language. Although development of dialects as stated may have occurred, there is another possibility stating that Bulungan Language occurred from creole or a mixture of several languages with the core derived from the Malay Language. Because of its position at the center of the Bulungan kingdom, it developed into a language as a lingua franca for the entire Bulungan Kingdom in the past. The current Bulungan language is nothing but the remnants of past language developments, which later became the core for the further development of the Bulungan language (Cense & Uhlenbeck, 2013).

Speakers of Bulungan language, as long as the data obtained by Cense & Uhlenbeck (2010),

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are concentrated in Bulungan Regency, North Kalimantan. Among 13 sub-districts in Bulungan district, Bulungan Language speakers are found in 8 sub-districts: Malianau, Long Peso, Tanjung Palas, Tarakan, Sesayap, Semabakung, Mensalong, and Nunukan sub-districts. The speakers of Bulungan language are not evenly distributed in the eight sub-districts. There are villages where all the villagers speak Bulungan language. There are also villages that only have two or three families who speak the language. Bulungan speakers are usually the majority in the place where the district office is located. Three villages whose inhabitants all speak the Bulungan language are Tanjung Palas Ulu, Tanjung Palas Tengah, and Tanjung Palas Ilir in Tanjung Palas District. These three villages were the former centers of the past Bulungan Kingdom.

Based on the main information, there are also speakers of Bulungan language in North Kalimantan (East Malaysia), in the Tawao area of Sabah. This area and the past Bulungan Path have a close relationship because of social kinship and trade relations. Based on history, it is said that the first Bulungan king from the Kingdom of Brunei (North Kalimantan) came to Bulungan and then married a girl from Kayan village.

Adul et al (2010) said that the number of speakers of Bulungan language could not be accurately estimated. The Regional Government of Bulungan Regency has never conducted a census related to ethnicity and language in its area. In each sub-district, there is no data on population and language. The last population census was in 1981 and did not record population related to ethnicity and language.

Based on this fact, Bulungan language, which was once the royal language in the past, is one of the four languages with the largest number of speakers in Bulungan Regency. Most speakers of Bulungan language are found in Tanjung Palas District, which is spread over 36 villages, Sesayap District and Sembakung District. The smallest number of speakers of Bulungan language, around 75 to 100 people, was found in Long Peso District (Adul et al., 2010).

Based on the information obtained, there are at least 35,000 speakers of Bulungan language in all Bulungan Regency or about 22% of the entire population in Bulungan Regency. The population of the Bulungan Regency amounted to 176,302 people based on the available data at the Census and Statistics Office of Bulungan Regency Level II in 1981. This population occupies Bulungan Regency which covers an area of 64,000 square kilometers and divided into 13 sub-districts.

Bulungan Language does not have a dialect. However, researchers cannot explore all the "variation" of the language because of the isolated areas to visit. To get information, the first and second key informants who have frequent contact with the area, can be trusted rather than headlines. In addition, based on the researcher's assumption, there are no Bulungan dialects because the development of the language is slow and it was found in the former center of the kingdom which still strongly influences or dominates the use of it in other regions (Adul et al., 1985).

Bulungan language is also one of the languages in North Kalimantan Province, which has not received much attention from either global or Indonesian linguists. As a result, studies about Bulungan language are still very limited. One of the linguistic studies that have not been fully discussed about Bulungan language is the construction of active and passive voice. It became one of the purposes of this research.

In the history of grammar, the study of voice dates back at least to the Sanskrit grammar of P (ca 500 BC). This work, entitled *Aṣṭaśākhī* ('Eight-Chaptered'), described the distinctions of inflectional paradigms and meanings associated with the opposition of active and middle in the Sanskrit verb. Voice analysis is thus one of the most ancient topics in the tradition of descriptive grammar. Nevertheless, many recent writers seem to invoke the concept of voice in an intuitive or pretheoretical sense, rarely offering clear-cut standards to determine whether specific behaviors are to be included in or excluded from the category (Klaiman, 1991).

Elson and Pickett (1983) said that diathesis could be categorized into (a) active, if the subject is

the actor of the action; (b) passive, when the subject is the object of the action; (c) reflexive, when the subject acts on him; (d) respiratory, if the plural subject acts in a reciprocal manner; (e) causative when the actor is exposed to circumstances or events; and (f) beneficial, when the actor acts for other people. Grammatical voice is manifested in the system in which alternations in the shapes of verbs signal alternations in the con durations of nominal statuses with which verbs are in relationships. Voice differs in this respect from case\*, a nominal category whereby the relationship of some particular nominal to some verb is signaled (Claim, 1991).

One of these voices is said to encode the doing of an action (Michael, 2010). This voice is called active\* because the action notionally devolves from the standpoint of the most dynamic or active party involved in the situation; it is typically the Agent. The second voice encodes action, which notionally devolves from a nondynamic, typically static participant in the situation such as: the patient of a transitive verb. This voice is called passive\* because verb is portrayed as "signifying the state of 'being acted upon' or 'suffering effects' of the action" (Lyons, 1968).

Traditional grammars also recognize a third or middle voice category. Originally, the middle seems to have been conceived as a compromise category displaying both the active and the passive characteristics. In a middle construction, the viewpoint is active in that the action notionally devolves from the standpoint of the most dynamic (or Agent-like) participant in the depicted situation. But the same participant has Patient-like characteristics as well; it sustains the action's principal effects (Claim, 1991).

Some examples of active and passive voice can be found in Balinese. In Balinese, the construction of a transitive verb clause can be seen as follows:

Actor-voice construction  
 (1)Tiang nyepak cicing-e. [N-kick] (N-verb form)  
 I AV.kick dog-DEF  
 'I kicked the dog.'

Undergoer-voice constructions

(2) Cicing-e sepak tiang.

[Ø-soccer] (Ø-verb form) dog-DEF UV. kick

I

'I kicked the dog.' (Shibatani & Artawa, 2007)

Based on the above examples, active and passive voice can be formed from transitive clauses involving subject and object. Besides Balinese, Indonesian also has an active voice and a passive voice. Purwo (1988) explained several things in his research about active and passive voice in Indonesian. They were markers which can be formed with agentless, di-markers with noun phrase agents, and markers combined. Another research result submitted by Purwo (1988) was the patient in the passive voice construction in Indonesian could have a different agent, either preverb or postverbal.

The subject is the most important grammatical function occupied by a noun or noun phrase (FN) in a sentence. In an intransitive clause, the subject is the only core argument contained in the structure. Meanwhile, in the transitive clause, FN is the argument that occupies the highest position in the hierarchy of grammatical functions (Blake, 2016). The object is the main grammatical function along with the subject occupied by a noun or noun phrase which also acts as the main argument. Traditionally, objects are divided into OBJ and OBJtheta (Trask, 2013). In a transitive clause, the object is a function or grammatical relation that must present and is implied by the predicate (verb). On the other hand, an intransitive clause does not require the presence of an object (Dixon, 1994).

In addition to the research on the two languages above, this research also relates to several other studies in voice construction. One of these studies is Siwi (2021) entitled Diathesis in Siladang Language. In a study conducted by Siwi (2021), the Siladang diathesis had two types of diathesis: active and passive diathesis. The results of the study stated that Siladang language was an accusative language that has a medial diathesis. The research is relevant to this study because it has the same topic about diathesis. The basic difference

between the two studies is in the language object. Another research relevant to this research is Asrul (2021) entitled Diathesis in Mandailing Language South Tapanuli. In a study conducted by Asrul (2021), Mandailing diathesis had four types of diathesis: active, passive, reflexive, and reciprocal. It was a type of research that used descriptive qualitative research methods. This study has the same object with the present study.

The next relevant research is the research conducted by Malihah (2018). In a study conducted by Malihah (2018), passive diathesis in Javanese was formed with the marker *di-*. Javanese passive diathesis produced the form of "abbreviated agentive passive". This study had relevance to research conducted by Malihah (2018) because the similarities on studying passive diathesis. The difference between this study and Malihah's (2018) research is only the language being studied.

## METHODS

The method in this research is descriptive qualitative. The data were taken from native Bulungan speakers. The data collection techniques used are the recording and recording method. The purpose of this study is to describe the form of active and passive voice in Bulungan language. The data in this study are in the form of speech.

The method used in data collection is the technique of listening meaning it is free to engage in conversation. This technique is used to obtain full data of speech in Bulungan language which is then combined with the recording technique. Then the elitist technique is used to check the grammatical nature and acceptability of the data. In addition, this study also used data taken from books. While the data analysis techniques used in this research are the direct element and vanishing technique.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher finds some active voice and passive voice and active voice passive voice construction in Bulungan language.

### Active Voice

Active voice is a construction that involves at least one grammatical function, that is the subject, in its formation. The characteristic of active voice is the position of the constituent function of the subject and acts as an agent at the beginning of the clause.

Elson and Pickett (1983) said that diathesis *ACTOR* was a construct indicating that the pivot and controller semantics were *ACTOR*, Agent, or initiating action. Diathesis *ACTOR* is known as active diathesis (DA). The opinion above is supported by the statement of Sugono (1995) that diathesis was active as a diathesis *ACTOR*. Furthermore, Sugono (1995) added that DA had the main characteristic that the subject of the sentence was the ACTOR of the actions stated by PRED. This diathesis was also known as an agentive diathesis (Subiyanto, 2013). DA can be called agentive diathesis because the sentence structure with active markers in PRED places the Agent as SUBJ. The agent comes before the verb and the patient comes after the verb.

These characteristics are found in various languages in the world as well as in Bulungan Language. The examples of active voice construction in the Bulungan language are as follow.

(3) *Sina betepos baju*  
Mom washing clothes  
'Mom washes clothes'

(4) *Tama tebong batang de'hutan*  
Father cut down tree Prep Forest  
'Father cut down a tree in the forest.'

(5) *Sida bekince kenas de dapur*  
They cook fish Prep Kitchen  
'They cook fish in the kitchen.'

Based on the examples above, the active voice construction is minimally formed from the function of the subject. In the clause above, the active voice construction uses a transitive verb predicate.

Transitive verbs require the presence of a function other than the subject to complete the needs of the predicate. The function presented in

the transitive verb predicate is the objective function. In addition to transitive verb construction, active voice construction in Bulungan language can be formed using intransitive verb predicate. The examples of the active voice construction which can be formed using intransitive predicates in Bulungan language are as follow.

(6) *Sida sedong ngempanaw*  
They Asp Prog walk  
'They are walking.'

(7) *Tama matun sumpur-sumpur*  
Father wake up early  
'Father wakes up early'

The data above is an active voice construction with intransitive verbs. Intransitive verbs are verbs that require a clause construction to present a grammatical function. The only existed grammatical function above is the subject at the beginning of the clause.

### Passive Voice

Passive voice is a construction that involves at least one grammatical function, the subject, in its formation. Passive voice can be pinpointed by the position of the constituent function of the subject and the fuction as an agent in the same position.

Loos (2004) revealed that passive diathesis (DP) was a diathesis that stated the subject as P and the recipient of the action expressed by the verb. Siewiersika (1984) said that DP had characteristics, such as: (1) it was the opposite of DA construction, (2) DP construction SUBJ was OBJ of active construction, (3) had special markers on verbs, and (4) active construction SUBJ did not correspond to SUBJ passive construction or not openly expressed. In the construction of passive diathesis, the patient's role occupied the SUBJ function, while the Agent's role occupied the oblique function.

Dixon(1994) formulated the same thing about DP as conveyed by Siewierska (1984). Dixon(1994) said that the DP had the following criteria: (1) transitive clause intransitive, (2) active clause FN OBJ became passive clause FN SUBJ,

(3) FN *ACTOR* turned into peripheral functions marked by the nominative case, preposition, and FN could be removed, (4) In a passive clause, there was an explicit formal marker and generally a verb prefix or with peripheral elements. Alsina(1993) added that the semantic role in DP did not change because only the syntactic function changed. The examples of passive voice construction in Bulungan language are as follows.

(8) *Baju tenepos sina*  
Mom's laundry  
'Mom's washing clothes'

(9) *Bateng tenebong tamaku de'hutan*  
Tree cut down Father POSS Prep Forest  
'The tree felled by father in the forest'

(10) *Kenas kenince Sida de dapur*  
Fish cooked they Prep Kitchen  
'Fish cooked by them in the kitchen'

Based on the example above, the passive voice pattern in Bulungan language can be made by placing the subject position in the active voice to be oblique. The subject's position in the form of passive voice is filled with the function of the subject that has increased. The position of the object that is the subject of the passive voice construction is said to increase because, based on the order of the core grammatical functions, the subject function occupies the top position and followed by the objective function. When the objective function changes to the subject function in passive voice construction, it is called an increment function.

### Discussion

Based on the results, several things can be further discussed in detail. They are the order of active voice words and markers in forming passive voice. The discussion is as follows:

### Active Voice Word Order

The presence of other functions other than the subject in the construction of active voice predicated as a transitive verb is very important. It is decribed as follows.

(11) *Sa nengol bakas pedo*

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He saw the pig yesterday  
'He saw the pig yesterday.'

\*(12) *Sa nengol pedo*  
He saw yesterday  
'He saw yesterday.'

In data (11), it can be seen that the construction of active voice predicated on transitive verbs has two grammatical functions. The first grammatical function is the subject which is filled by the constituent *sa* and the second grammatical function is *bakas*. The constituent *sa* in the active voice construction is at the beginning of the clause or preverb, while *bakas* as an objective function is in the position after the verb or post verb.

In data (12), the construction of active voice is predicated on a transitive verb. It is not acceptable grammatically. In the data, the only grammatical function is the subject function. At the same time, the transitive verb requires the presence of an object to complete the grammatical construction of the verb.

But on the other hand, the presence of an object can be unimportant if the active voice construction uses an intransitive verb as the predicate. It can be seen from the excerpt below.

(13) *Sina masi bekuat*  
Mom is still working  
'Mom is still working.'

Based on data (13), it can be seen that the active voice construction can still be accepted if the predicate uses an intransitive verb. The intransitive verb in construction (13) only requires one function to grammatically complete the clause. The grammatical function needed in active voice construction with intransitive verb predicate is the subject at the beginning of the clause.

In addition to the function of the object in the construction of active voice, predicate on transitive verbs and the subject as the only function presents in the construction of active voice predicated on intransitive verbs, the role filled by grammatical functions in the construction of active voice is also an important part of the construction.

In active voice construction, the subject has a different role from the function of the object. The function of the subject in the active voice construction is as an agent. Subjects which act as agent are constituents carry out activities based on the predicates that bind them. Different roles are obtained by the object such as: the role of the patient, which means that the constituent subjected to work or activity according to the transitive verb that binds it.

The uniqueness of Bulungan language in the construction of active voice is the presence of a marker *be-* which is attached directly to the predicate. The *be-* marker is referred to as an active voice marker because it is only found in active voice construction. The use of *be-* markers in construction other than active voice will not be grammatically acceptable. It can be seen from data (3) and (5).

In both data, the use of *being* markers are attached to *tepos* and *since* predicates. Both of these verbs are transitive verbs that can be attached to the affix *be-* as an active voice marker. The two verbs will not be able to form an active voice construction if the attached affix is not (*be-*).

In clause (8), the verb *tepos* is attached with the infix *-en-*. The verb *tepos* becomes *tenepos* when the infix *-en-* is inserted so that the meaning of the verb changes as well. The insertion of the infix *-en-* changes the meaning and construction of the active voice into a passive. This is clear that the marker *be-* is a marker that can only be attached to the active voice construction.

The last thing that can be studied in the construction of active voice is the order of words in the construction. In the active voice construction, the subject function is at the beginning of the clause, followed by the predicate either transitive or intransitive verbs, then the objective function as the last grammatical function. In Bulungan language, the active voice has an SVO pattern if it is a transitive verb and an SV-(Ket) pattern if it is an intransitive verb.

#### ***-en-* marker**

Typologically, passive is a category of diathesis which is generally associated with verbal forms. The term diathesis refers to an oppositional

system in which there is a change in the semantic role associated with the relation of the subject (Kroeger, 2004). This type of passive is usually characterized by certain affixes attached to the verb and is commonly referred to as morphological passive or also known as canonical passive (Chung, 1989).

This morphological feature has been used as the most central basis in determining passive construction across languages. There are even linguists who firmly reject the passive beyond the morphological passive. That is a construction cannot be called passive construction if it is not characterized morphologically.

Haspelmath (2013) claimed that morphologically verbs associated with passive construction are the essential part. It is further said that there is no passive construction without morphological passive. Based on Haspelmath's view (2013), the above is true considering from the empirical facts of linguistics rich in morphological markers, especially affixation. However, other empirical facts also show that not all languages in the world have morphological markers. It is morphologically recognized that in addition to agglutinating languages that have affixation, there are also isolated languages: languages that do not have morphological markers (affixation). Thus, morphological characteristics as a marker of passive construction are only one strategy in determining passive construction. It is because there are other strategies that can accommodate passive constructions across languages, especially isolation languages; that is called syntactic strategies. This syntactic strategy is used in determining the passive construction because it is considered suitable for the type of language being studied.

Based on the syntactic strategy used, it can be seen that a number of isolated languages in eastern Indonesia, especially on the island of Flores, do not have passive constructions. Some languages have passive construction, and some do not. Languages with passive construction (in this case syntactic passive) are Manggarai and Rongga in West Flores, Lio and Sikka in Central Flores, Lamaholot in East Flores (Artawa, 2000).

Cross-language, passive has the following properties: (a) the subject of the passive sentence is the direct object of the corresponding active sentence; (b) the subject of the active sentence is expressed in the form of an 'agentive adjunct' in the passive sentence or omitted; (c) the subject of the active sentence is expressed in the form of Agent without prepositions in the passive voice and is not omitted; and (d) the verb can be passively marked or not (Siewierska, 1984).

In active voice construction, the marker *be-* is a forming affix that can only be attached to an intransitive or transitive verb in its formation. In that case, the passive voice construction has a different marker. In the construction of passive voice, special markers can only be attached to the verb in the formation of the passive voice. The marker in the *-en-* infix is a special infix that forms the passive voice. The example is as follows.

(14) *Using inon kuman kenas sadiqku*  
The cat eats fish sister POSS  
'The cat ate my sister's fish'

(15) *Kenas sadiqku kenuman using inon*  
Sister fishPoss eats the cat  
'My sister's fish was eaten by the cat.'

In data (14), the construction of active voice has a transitive verb predicate. It consists of the function of the subject, which is filled by the constituent *using*, the predicate *kuman*, and the function of the object, which is occupied by the constituent of the noun phrase *kenas sadiqku*. The function of the subject *using* acts as an agent and the object's function acts as a *kenas sadiqku*.

Data (15) shows a different construction from clause (14). Clause (15) has a passive voice construction. The infix indicates this *-en-* attached to the predicate of *kuman* verb category. Furthermore, changes occur in the predicate and the position of the subject and object. This is following the passive property of cross-language conveyed (Siewierska, 1984).

In clause (15), it can be seen that the function of the subject of the active voice construction has a different position from the function of the subject of the passive voice. The function of the subject of the active voice

construction is *using*, but the subject's function in constructing the passive voice is *kenas adiqku*. The function of *using* in active voice construction becomes oblique in passive voice construction. Oblique is a non-core argument. Arka (2002) explained that oblique was a verb argument that was not syntactically the subject or object.

In the passive voice, there are unique things found. First, the construction of passive voice in Bulungan language can be agentless. It means the agents can be eliminated. The use of agents in the passive voice can be seen in the following clause.

- (16) *Kenas sadiqku kenuman*  
Fish sisterPoss eat  
'My sister's fish was eaten'

In clause (16), the agent in the construction of passive voice can be removed. The absorption can still be grammatically acceptable; it is just that the meaning of the speech has changed. It means a patient who is assigned a job does not know the agent doing the work. Such construction usually presents if the speaker does not know the agent who is doing the work for the patient.

The *-en-* marker of passive voice in Bulungan Language has variations in its formation. The variations are in the form of *ne-* and *n-*. Variations of *ne-* generally presents in words with prefixes /l/, /r/ and /w/, while variations of *n-* presents in words starting with vowels. The example of variation is as follows.

- (16) *Sadiqku nerapos*  
BrotherPoss hit  
'My brother was beaten.'
- (17) *Laweng inon nelungkap*  
The door is open  
'The door was opened.'
- (18) *Manuqku nibit ke lepaw*  
AyamPoss bring it to the cottage  
'My chicken was brought to the hut.'
- (19) *Kunyatku ninggot de rumah*  
My monkey tied the house prep  
'My monkey tied up at home'

Based on the data above, the *-en-* infix undergoes a process of change that is adapted to

the verb as the predicate in the clause. Data (16) has the function of the subject which also acts as a patient with an oblique function undergoing obliteration. The subject function is occupied by *sadiqku* constituent and the *nerapos* predicate. The infix *-en-* changes to the prefix *ne-* when it meets a word with the initial /r/ sound like the word *rapos*.

Data (17) has the function of the subject which also acts as a patient with oblique function undergoing obliteration. The function of the subject is occupied by *laweng* constituents, and the predicate is revealed. The infix *-en-* changes to the prefix *ne-* when it meets a word with the initial sound /l/ like the word *lungkap*. Furthermore, there is also *inon* as a demonstrative element.

Data (18) has the function of the subject which also acts as a patient with an oblique function undergoing the process of obliteration. The subject function is occupied by the constituent *manuqku* and the predicate *nibit*. The infix *-en-* changes to the prefix *n-* when it meets a word with the initial sound /i/ like the word *ibit*. There is also a description of the constituent *de lepaw* in its construction.

Data (19) has the function of the subject which also acts as a patient with an oblique function undergoing the process of obliteration. Moreover, the function of the subject is occupied by the constituent *kunyatku* and the predicate *ninggot*. The infix *-en-* changes to the prefix *n-* when it meets a word with the initial sound /i/ like the word *inggot*. In (19), there is also a description of the constituents of the house in its construction.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and the discussion in this study, several conclusions were drawn. First, in the active voice construction of the Bulungan language, the subject function was the only function that must be in its construction. The object's presence in the active voice construction was adjusted to the form of the verb as a predicate in a clause. Active voice had an affix *be-* in its formation attached to transitive verbs in the Bulungan language. In addition, the function of the subject in the active voice construction of the Bulungan language acted as an agent who did the

work while the function of the object was as a patient who was a subject to work. Moreover, passive voice in Bulungan language had the infix -en-. The infix -en- had variations into the prefixes ne- and n-. The infix -en- changed into the prefix ne- in the passive voice construction when it met a word with the initial sound /l/, /r/, and /w/ while the infix -en- changed into the prefix n- in the construction of the passive voice when it met the initial sound vowels in Bulungan words. Second, Bulungan Language also had similarities in passive voice properties across languages. Cross-language, passive voice had the following properties: (a) the subject of the passive sentence was the direct object of the corresponding active sentence; (b) the subject of the active sentence was expressed in the form of an 'agentive adjunct' in the passive sentence or omitted; (c) the subject of the active sentence was expressed in the form of Agent without prepositions in the passive voice and is not omitted; and (d) the verb could be passively marked or not. Lastly, the construction of passive voice in Bulungan language could also be formed by removing the Agent or not. The use of agents in the construction of passive voice in the Bulungan language could still be grammatically acceptable though the oblique function was removed.

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