Phase Theory account of absolutive extraction in Tagalog

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In Tagalog, and other syntactically ergative languages, only absolutive DPs are able to undergo A’-movement. This paper proposes a mechanism which correlates this restriction with absolutive case-checking within the theory of Multiple Spell-Out. I propose that T checks absolutive case only in intransitive clauses like antipassives, while v does so in transitive clauses. v is also able to host an EPP feature only when it checks absolutive case. This ensures that an internal argument can move from VP only in transitive clauses, i.e. when it has absolutive status. An oblique object in an antipassive will not be able to move out of VP, since intransitive v does not check absolutive case and does not host an EPP feature.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to propose an analysis of the restriction on A’- extraction in Tagalog illustrated in (1). As in many Austronesian languages, Tagalog exhibits a correlation between wh-movement and the type of morphology on the verb. In (1a), a theme is extracted and the transitive infix -in- appears on the verb. In (1b), an external argument has been moved, and the verb is infixed with the intransitive marker -um-. (1c) shows that the internal argument cannot undergo wh-movement when the intransitive infix -um- appears on the verb.

(1) a. Ano ang b-in-asa ni Maria?
   what Comp -Tr.Perf-read Erg M
   ‘What did Maria read?’

   b. Sino ang b-um-asa ng libro?
   who Comp -Intr.Perf-read Obl book
   ‘Who read the book?’

   c. *Ano ang b-um-asa si Maria?
   what Comp -Intr.Perf-read Abs M
   ‘What did Maria read?’
It is frequently assumed by Austronesian linguists (Georgopoulous 1991, Chung 1998, Rackowski 2002, and others) that this correspondence is the reflex of an agreement relation in which the verbal morphology indicates the case of the moved DP.

(2) Case Agreement

- um- nominative
- in accusative

This paper takes a different view. I assume an ergative analysis of Tagalog syntax. I exploit the cross-linguistic observation that A’-movement in ergative languages is the privilege of absolutive DPs and propose that the ability of a DP to undergo A’-extraction is correlated with its ability to check absolutive case. As for the relationship between verbal morphology and A’-extracted DPs, I propose that in- and um- are markers of transitivity and intransitivity, respectively.

(3) Ergative Analysis

- um- intransitive
- in transitive

In transitive clauses in ergative languages, external arguments are marked with ergative case and an internal argument is given absolutive case. In intransitive clauses, including antipassives, it is the highest argument in the clause which checks absolutive case: the external argument in antipassives and the sole argument in simple intransitives. External arguments are able to undergo A’-movement only in antipassives. In transitive clauses, it is the absolutive case-marked internal argument which can be extracted.

The issue to be addressed in this paper is how it is guaranteed that the internal argument can move over the external argument precisely in transitive clauses but not in antipassives. The crux of the proposal is that transitive v checks absolutive case with an internal argument and hosts an EPP feature. This EPP feature attracts a VP-internal absolutive DP to the vP phase edge, from where it can undergo further movement to [Spec, CP]. Intransitive v does not have an EPP feature. Therefore, oblique objects in antipassives are be attracted to the vP phase edge and therefore will not be able to move to [Spec, C] without violating the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2000, 2001a, 2001b). In this case, it is only the external argument absolutive, which is merged in the specifier of v, which is eligible to move to [Spec, C].

2. Absolutive Case-checking

Aldridge (2004) proposes an analysis of case-checking in ergative languages in which absolutive case is checked by either v or T, depending on the transitivity
of the clause. Unlike accusative languages, in which two structural cases can be checked in a transitive clause, only one structural case is available in ergative languages: absolutive. Ergative case is inherent, assigned to the external argument by \( v \).

Which functional head checks absolutive case is determined by the transitivity of \( v \). Transitive \( v \) is merged with the absolutive case feature, just as transitive \( v \) in accusative language carries an accusative case feature. However, since only one structural case feature is available in an ergative language, \( T \) will not check case in transitive clauses. When \( v \) is intransitive, however, it does not carry a case feature, so the absolutive case feature will be merged with \( T \). The rest of this section examines case-checking in different clause types. Tagalog is a VSO language. This word order is derived by moving the verb to \( T \).

(4) shows a basic transitive clause. The uninterpretable absolutive case feature is merged on \( v \). This feature probes down into its c-command domain to establish an Agree relation and value the case feature of the closest DP, here the theme.

\[
(4) \quad TP \rightarrow V+v+T \rightarrow vP \rightarrow DP_{[Erg]} \rightarrow v' \rightarrow t_v \rightarrow V \rightarrow VP \rightarrow t\_v \rightarrow DP_{[Case:Abs]}
\]

In an intransitive clause, \( v \) does not carry a case feature. Rather, it is \( T \) which checks and values the case feature of the closest DP in its c-command domain. This will be the external argument in an antipassive or unergative clause.

\[
(5) \quad TP \rightarrow T' \rightarrow V+v+T_{[Case:Abs]} \rightarrow vP \rightarrow DP_{[Case:Abs]} \rightarrow VP
\]

In an unaccusative, this will be the internal argument. I assume with Chomsky (2000, 2001a, 2001b) that unaccusative \( vP \) is not a strong phase. Therefore, \( T \) and the VP-internal DP can enter into an Agree relation without violating the Phase Impenetrability Condition.
Tagalog has applicative constructions. These clauses are always transitive, absolutive case being licensed on the applied object. In the following example, the applicative *i*- licenses a benefactive or instrumental DP as the absolutive.

(7) I-t-in-ali ni Maria ang tape sa kahon.
App-Perf-tie Erg M Abs tape Dat box
‘Maria tied up the box with the tape.’

Following Marantz (1993) and Pylkkänen (2002), I propose that the applicative heads a phrase ApplP and selects the applied DP as its argument. ApplP is merged directly below vP. A direct consequence of this is that the applied argument will always be the closest available goal for the probe on v and will always have absolutive status in the clause.

This section has proposed the mechanism for absolutive case-checking, in which this case is checked by either v or T, depending on the transitivity of the clause. The next section shows how this mechanism relates to the A’-extraction facts.
3. Account of the Extraction Facts

This section discusses how the absolutive case-checking mechanism introduced in the previous section accounts for the asymmetry between internal and external arguments in A'-extraction in Tagalog. As proposed in the previous section, transitive \( v \) is merged with a case feature which values absolutive case on an internal argument. I propose in this section that transitive \( v \) also carries an EPP feature, which attracts the closest DP to its outer specifier. It is this EPP feature which allows an internal argument to undergo A'-movement, since only when located in the vP phase edge, can a DP carrying a [wh] feature enter into an Agree relation with interrogative C and undergo movement to \([\text{Spec, C}]\). (9) shows an example of a basic transitive clause in which the theme \( \text{wh} \)-word is attracted to \([\text{Spec, C}]\).

\[
(9) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{Ano ang b-in-asa ni Maria?} \\
& \text{What did Maria read?'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{b. }
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CP} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{what} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{V+\text{v+T}} \\
\text{t_{what}} \\
\text{v'} \\
\text{Maria} \\
\text{v'} \\
\text{t_{V-v[EPP]}} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{t_{v}} \\
\text{t_{what}}
\end{array}
\]

In an antipassive, \( v \) is intransitive. It does not have an absolutive case feature, and therefore also does not have an EPP feature. The result is that an internal argument cannot be attracted to the vP phase edge. The external argument, on the other hand, which is merged in the specifier of \( v \) and therefore located in the vP phase edge in its base position, can be attracted to \([\text{Spec, C}]\).

\[
(10) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{Sino ang b-um-asa ng libro?} \\
& \text{Who is reading the book?'}
\end{align*}
\]
If an internal argument in an antipassive were to raise directly to [Spec, C], the Phase Impenetrability Condition would be violated, accounting for the ungrammaticality of sentences like (11).

(11) a. *Ano ang b-um-asa si Maria?
   what Abs -Intr.Perf-read Abs M
   ‘What did Maria read?’

b. *CP
   what TP
   V+V+T vP
   t_{who} v'
   t_{V+V} VP
   t_V book

In the case of unaccusatives, where the sole argument of the verb is merged in VP, I follow Chomsky (2000, 2001a, 2001b) in assuming that unaccusative vP is not a strong phase. The internal argument will be able to check case with T and also be attracted by C and undergo wh-movement.

(12) a. Sino ang d-um-ating?
   Who Abs -Intr.Perf-arrive
   ‘Who arrived?’
The above discussion has focused on interrogative constructions. Transitive v in declarative clauses also carries an EPP feature, meaning that internal argument absolutes must always move out of VP. There is robust evidence that this is the case. First, absolute DPs are always specific. According to Diesing’s (1992) Mapping Hypothesis, these DPs would have to be outside VP at LF in order to escape existential closure.

(13) B-in-ili ni Maria ang libro.
    -Tr.Perf-buy Erg M Abs book
    ‘Maria bought the/*a book.’

Quantifier scope facts also lead to the same conclusion. The following examples indicate that absolutes take scope over other nominals in the clause, indicating that they must be in a higher position at LF than the ergative in (14a) and oblique object in (14b). Since in the surface word order the absolute follows the ergative nominal in (14a), this example makes it particularly clear that the absolute must move in order to take scope over the ergative.

(14) a. B-in-asa ng [lahat ng bata]
    -Tr.Perf-readErg all Lk child
    ang [marami-ng libro]
    Abs many-Lk book
    ‘All the children read many books.’ (one set of books)
    ⇒ ABS ‘many’ > ERG ‘all’

b. Nag-basa ang [lahat ng bata]
    -Intr.Perf-read Abs all Lk child
    ng [marami-ng libro]
    Obl many-Lk book
    ‘All the children read many books.’ (different sets of books)
    ⇒ ABS ‘all’ > OBL ‘many’

Semantic properties such as these have long been observed by Philippine linguists. Schachter (1976) calls Tagalog absolutes “topics” and points out that these nominals are always definite and referential. Richards
(2000) demonstrates that Tagalog absolutes have many of the same characteristics as topics in Icelandic and proposes an analysis in which the absolute nominal moves obligatorily to an A’ topic position. For the purposes of this paper, I propose that absolutes in Tagalog obligatorily raise to the vP phase edge and need not move further in declarative clauses. Empirical evidence that this is the case comes from the fact that quantified absolutes in transitive clauses tend to take scope under negation, indicating that they should be located in a position between Neg and T at LF.

(15) a. Hindi ko bi-bilh-in
    Neg 1sErg Red.Fut-buy-Tr
    ang [lahat ng libro]
    Abs all Lk book
    ‘I won’t buy all the books.’ (will buy some, but not all)
    ⇒ NEG > ABS ‘all’

b. Hindi b-in-asa ng babae
    Neg -Tr.Perf-read Erg woman
    ang [lahat ng libro]
    Abs all Lk book
    ‘The woman didn’t read all the books.’ (read some, but not all)
    ⇒ NEG > ABS ‘all’

Positing obligatory movement of absolutes out of VP also prevents a potential problem for the analysis of A’-movement proposed in this section. Ergative DPs, like oblique DPs, are ineligible for A’-extraction.

(16) a. Ano ang b-in-asa ni Maria?
    what Abs -Tr.Perf-read Erg M
    ‘What did Maria read?’

b. *Sino ang b-in-asa libro?
    who Abs -Tr.Perf-read Abs book
    ‘Who read the book?’

Obligatory movement of the absolute DP to the vP phase edge ensures that this nominal is closest to C, blocking attraction of an operator in the position of the external argument.
The issue of linear order must be clarified, however. While *wh*-words in Tagalog appear in clause-initial position, absolutes in declarative clauses remain in their base positions, following ergative DPs.

(18) a. Ano ang b-in-asa ni Maria?
    what Abs -Tr.Perf-read Erg M
    ‘What did Maria read?’

    b. B-in-asa ni Maria ang libro.
    -Tr.Perf-read Erg M Abs book
    ‘Maria read the book.’

Clearly, movement must be overt in the first case and covert in the second. Various analyses (Nunes 1999, Pesetsky 2000, and many others) have been proposed recently to ensure proper deletion of either the head or tail of a chain. To account for the difference in (18a) and (18b), I will tentatively adopt an approach by Richards (2001) which posits that some instances of covert movement can become overt in the case that further movement takes place. I propose that the relationship between v and a VP-internal absolute in Tagalog is typically covert, i.e. the head of the chain in the outer specifier of v must delete. However, if further movement takes place, to [Spec, C], movement will become overt, all but the head of the chain deleting.

This section has proposed an account of the absolutive restriction on A’-extraction in Tagalog. v carries an EPP feature only in transitive clauses, thereby ensuring that an internal argument can raise out of VP only when it checks absolutive case with a transitive verb. In an intransitive clause, v will not have an EPP feature. Crucially, in an antipassive, only the external argument will be located in the vP phase edge and can be attracted to [Spec, C].
4. Cross-linguistic Support for the Absolutive Case-checking Analysis

As presented in section 2, this paper proposes that absolutive case is checked by either v or T, depending on the transitivity of the verb. This is a clear departure from traditional approaches to syntactic ergativity like Murasugi (1992), Bittner and Hale (1996), and Ura (2000), under which absolutive case is equated with nominative. The position taken by this paper is that absolutive DPs do not necessarily have the properties of subjects. In section 4.1, I present data from a wide variety of ergative languages and demonstrate that, cross-linguistically, absolutes in transitive clauses, which check their case with v, function more like objects than subjects, while external arguments, regardless of whether they have absolutive or ergative case, behave more like subjects.

In section 4.2, I discuss the A’-extraction restriction and show that this is also a general characteristic of syntactically ergative languages, again demonstrating the cross-linguistic applicability of the proposal developed in this paper.

4.1 Surface position and case-checking possibilities of the absolutive DP

This subsection presents evidence from a broad range of syntactically ergative languages for the split-level absolutive case-checking system proposed in this paper. Specifically, I show that absolutive case-marking is not necessarily correlated with subject status. It is external arguments, regardless of whether they have absolutive and ergative status, which have the properties of subjects. I also point out difficulties raised by these facts for analyses of the type proposed by Murasugi (1992) and others.

In a transitive clause in an ergative language, the ergative DP is typically in a position where it c-commands the absolutive DP. The following examples show that external arguments can bind reflexives. In (19a), the ergative DP binds the absolutive. In (19b), the ergative DP binds an oblique.

(19)  a. x-0-u-kamsa-j  r-iib'
    Compl.3sAbs-3sErg-kill-Suff  3s-self
    lee  achih
    the  man
    ‘The man killed himself.’
    (Quiche; Larsen and Norman 1979:349)

    Junna-Erg  Kaali.Abs  self-Mod  tell-Ind-Tr-3sg
    ‘Junna, told Kaali about himself.’
    (W. Greenlandic; Manning 1996:136)
In Tagalog, an ergative DP can also bind an absolutive, as in (20a). (20b) shows an antipassive absolutive as the antecedent of an oblique reflexive.

(20) a. P-in-igil ng lalaki ang sarili niya.
    -Tr.Perf-control Erg man Abs self 3sPoss
    ‘The man controlled himself.’

b. Nag-pigil siya sa sarili niya.
    Intr.Perf-control 3s.Abs Dat self 3sPoss
    ‘He/she controlled herself.’

External arguments also function as hortative or imperative addressees. (21) shows this for Tagalog and (22) for Yup’ik Eskimo.

(21) a. Bigy-an mo siya ng kape.
    give-App 2sErg 3sAbs Obl coffee
    ‘Give him the coffee.’

b. K-um-ain na tayo.
    -Intr.Perf-eat now 1Pl.Abs
    ‘Let’s eat now!’

(22) a. Ner-ci-u!
    eat-2pl-3sg
    ‘You all eat it!’

b. Inar-ci!
    lie.down-2pl
    ‘You all lie down!’ (Payne 1982:90)

These facts can be accommodated in the current analysis, since the external arguments are merged in the outer specifier of v, the highest argument position in the clause. In particular, the reflexive binding facts are accounted for straightforwardly, since the antecedent external argument is located in a position c-commanding all other arguments in surface word order.
In a nonfinite complement clause, PRO is located in the external argument position. This position can correspond to either the ergative or intransitive absolutive case-checking position. (24) shows examples of transitive complement clauses, where PRO is in the ergative position, and an absolutive internal argument appears overtly. (25) shows intransitive examples, where PRO corresponds to the absolutive.


b. Nag-ba-balak si Maria-ng Intr.Perf-Red-plan Abs Maria-Lk [PRO tulung-an si Pedro] (Erg) help-App Abs Pedro ‘Maria is planning to help Pedro.’ (Tagalog)


b. Gusto ni Maria-ng want Erg Maria-Lk [PRO b-um-ili ng libro] (Abs) -Intr-buy Obl book ‘Maria wants to buy a book.’ (Tagalog)

Such data pose a challenge for standard Generative analyses of syntactic ergativity, such as Murasugi (1992), Bittner and Hale (1996), and Ura
These analyses equate absolutive case with nominative. Murasugi (1992), for instance, proposes that ergative DPs move overtly to [Spec, AgrO], typically the direct object case-checking position, to check case. Absolutive DPs, on the other hand, check case covertly with AgrS, the subject case-checking position. Since absolutive case-checking is always associated with AgrS, it is predicted that PRO always be associated with the absolutive position and that this case not be available for checking in a nonfinite clause. This prediction is contradicted by the data in (24).

(24) does not pose a problem for the current analysis, however. Absolutive case in a transitive clause is checked by v and not T, so it is still available in a nonfinite clause.

This subsection has given evidence from c-command relations and control structures to indicate that transitive absolutives are located in a position below the ergative DP and check case with a functional head lower than T. These facts can easily be accommodated in the case-checking system proposed
in this paper: transitive v checks absolutive case with an internal argument, while T checks case when the clause is intransitive.

4.2. Absolutive extraction restriction in ergative languages

The primary goal of this paper is to relate possibilities for A’-movement to absolutive case-checking. Specifically, this paper proposes that internal arguments can be A’-extracted when they check absolutive case with v and are attracted to the vP phase edge by the EPP feature on v. Internal arguments are prevented from moving in antipassives, because v is intransitive and therefore does check absolutive case or have an EPP feature to attract a VP-internal DP. In an antipassives, then, only the external argument is eligible for extraction.

This pattern holds not only for Tagalog but for ergative languages in general. In Dyirbal, for example, relative clauses can be formed only on absolutes. The sole argument of an intransitive verb can be relativized in (28a). In order to relativize a transitive agent, the clause has to antipassivize, as in (28b).

(28) a. nguma$_i$ [ $e_i$ banaga-ngu]  
father.Abs (ABS) return-Rel.Abs  
yabu-nggu bura-n  
mother-Érg see-Nonfut  
‘Mother saw father, who was returning.’  
(Dyirbal; Dixon 1994:169)

b. yabu$_i$ [ $e_i$ bural-nga-ngu nguma-gu]  
mother.Abs (ABS) see-AP-Rel.Abs father-Dat  
bana-nya return-Nonfut  
‘Mother, who saw father, was returning.’  
(Dyirbal; Dixon 1994:170)

Manning (1996:84) gives examples from West Greenlandic. In the transitive clauses below, only the absolutive internal argument can be relativized, not the external argument.

(29) a. nanuq Piita-p tuqu-ta-a  
polar.bear.Abs P -Erg kill-Tr.Part-3sg  
‘a polar bear killed by Piita’

b. *angut aalaat tigu-sima-sa-a  
man.Abs gun.Abs take-Perf-Rel.Tr-3sg  
‘the man who took the gun’  
(W. Greenlandic; Manning 1996:84)
Manning (1996:24-5) shows the same characteristic is also found in Mayan languages. Transitive patients, as in (30a), but not transitive agents, as in (30b), can be extracted in constituent questions. In order to extract a transitive agent, the clause must be antipassivized, as in (30c).

\[\begin{align*}
\text{(30) a. } & \text{ ma-a7 chi tzaj t-tzyu-7n} \\
& \text{Rec-Emph 3pAbs Dir 3sErg-grab-Ds} \\
& \text{Cheep kab’ xiinaq} \\
& \text{J two man} \\
& \text{‘Jose grabbed the men.’} \\
\text{b. } & \text{alkyee-qa x-hi tzaj t-tzyu-7n Cheep} \\
& \text{who-Pl Rec.Dep 3pAbs Dir 3sErg-grab-Ds J} \\
& \text{‘Whom did Jose grab?’} \\
\text{c. } & \text{*alkyee saj t-tzyu-7n} \\
& \text{who Rec.Dep 3sAbs.Dir 3sErg-grab-Ds} \\
& \text{kab’ xiinaq} \\
& \text{two man} \\
& \text{‘Who grabbed the men?’} \\
\text{d. } & \text{alkyee saj tzyuu-n} \\
& \text{who Rec.Dep 3sAbs.Dir grab-AP} \\
& \text{ky-e kab’ xiinaq} \\
& \text{3p-Rn two man} \\
& \text{‘Who grabbed the men?’ (Mam; Manning 1996:24-5)}
\end{align*}\]

The preceding examples indicate that the absolutive restriction on A’-movement is a general characteristic of syntactically ergative languages. This fact lends support to the analysis developed in this paper that correlates extraction from VP with the ability of v to check absolutive case.

5. Alternative Approach to the Austronesian Extraction Asymmetry - Case Agreement

As introduced in the beginning of this paper, other accounts of the extraction asymmetry in Austronesian languages assume an agreement relation between the verb and the case of the moved constituent. In this section, I introduce the case agreement analysis proposed by Rackowski (2002) for Tagalog.

Rackowski (2002) assumes Tagalog to be an accusative language. Nominals check or are assigned case in their base positions. Nominative case is checked by T and accusative by v. Inherent oblique case is assigned by applicative projections to DPs in their specifiers. The nominal I call absolutive is assumed by Rackowski to be the subject of the clause. In her analysis, the subject is the nominal which is located closest to T in the structure and enters
into an Agree relation with T. As the highest DP in TP, it is also the DP which will be attracted to [Spec, C] in A'-movement contexts, thereby deriving the A’-extraction restriction.

Under Rackowski’s proposal, determination of the subject of a clause is not the result of checking a specific case, for instance nominative. Subjects may bear nominative, accusative, or oblique case. Subject choice is determined rather by semantic properties of the DP. By exploiting the generalization that absolutes are always specific and antipassive direct objects generally nonspecific, Rackowski proposes (following Diesing 1992 and others) that specific VP-internal DPs undergo object shift and move to the outer specifier of v. The specific internal argument is then located in the position closest to T and will be the nominal to agree with T. When Agree obtains between T and the subject, the case feature of the subject is copied to T and is spelled out as an affix on the verb, what I have identified as transitive, intransitive, or applicative morphology. This means that the verbal morphology is not directly responsible for checking case in Rackowski’s analysis but is rather the reflex of case agreement.

For example, (31) shows a transitive clause, where the theme has absolutive status. For Rackowski, this is an example of accusative agreement. Under her analysis, accusative case is checked by v with the internal argument in its base position.

(31) a. Lu-lutu-in ng lalaki ang adobo.
Asp-cook-Acc Case man Ang adobo
‘The man will cook the adobo.’

   VoiceP

       man
          voice   vP
                 v_[CV]  VP
                         cook adobo_[ACC]

The direct object then shifts to the phase edge (because it is specific). When T is merged into the structure, it probes into its domain for a DP to check its uninterpretable features. The closest DP is the theme argument, located in the outer specifier of v. Agree takes place between this DP and T, and the accusative case feature of the theme is copied to the verb and spelled-out as the affix -in.
(32)  
\[ \text{TP} \]

\[ \text{cook} + v + T_{[\text{uCase}]} \]

\[ \text{VoiceP} \]

\[ \text{adobo}_{[\text{Acc}]} \]

\[ \text{Voice'} \]

\[ \text{man} \]

\[ \text{Voice'} \]

\[ \text{Voice} \]

\[ vP \]

\[ t_{V+V} \]

\[ \text{VP} \]

\[ t_{\text{cook}} \]

\[ t_{\text{adobo}} \]

(33) gives the derivation of the antipassive version of (31). In Rackowski’s terms, this is a case of nominative agreement. The internal argument is nonspecific and will not undergo object shift. When T probes for a DP, it will now agree with the external argument. The nominative case feature on this DP is then spelled out on the verb as a reflex of -um-.

(33)  
\[ \text{TP} \]

\[ \text{cook} + v + T_{[\text{CV, uCase}]} \]

\[ \text{VoiceP} \]

\[ \text{man}_{[\text{Nom}]} \]

\[ \text{Voice'} \]

\[ \text{Voice} \]

\[ vP \]

\[ t_{V+V} \]

\[ \text{VP} \]

\[ t_{\text{cook}} \]

\[ \text{adobo} \]

6. Problems with the Case Agreement Approach

By exploiting the different interpretive properties of absolutive and non-absolutive internal arguments, Rackowski’s analysis is able to straightforwardly identify the absolutive nominal and ensure that it is the DP eligible to undergo A’-movement in Tagalog. However, as I will discuss in this section, this proposal makes unusual typological statements about Tagalog and has doubtful applicability to parallel syntactic phenomena in Austronesian languages outside the Philippine subgroup. I will also point out a technical difficulty faced by the case-checking mechanism.
6.1 Function of subject

Rackowski claims that Tagalog patterns with accusative languages in its case marking system. Case is checked with or assigned to nominals in their base positions, as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Argument</th>
<th>Type of Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complement of verb</td>
<td>Accusative (from ( v ))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External argument</td>
<td>Nominative (from T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High applicative</td>
<td>Dative/Oblique (from Appl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low applicative</td>
<td>Dative (from Appl)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, this case assignment system is not made to correlate with the grammatical function of subject as observed in other accusative languages. Rackowski states that the subject of a clause is structurally the highest nominal and the one that agrees with T in case features. This nominal does not, however, necessarily function as subject. As discussed in section 4.1, it is the external argument and not necessarily the absolutive (or subject) DP, which has the subject properties of binding reflexives, serving as an imperative addressee, and functioning as controlled PRO in a nonfinite clause.

The sole property of absolutive DPs which might be understood to identify them as subjects is the A’-extraction privilege. Keenan and Comrie (1977) report that if a language allows only one grammatical relation to relativize, then this grammatical relation is the subject of the clause. It should be noted, however, that nine of the eleven languages cited by Keenan and Comrie as having the extraction restriction are Austronesian, many, if not most, of which are ergative. Additionally, Keenan and Comrie choose to account for the extraction restriction in Dyirbal by identifying the absolutive as a subject. Bearing in mind the discussion in section 4.2, in which I showed that the extraction restriction is a general property of syntactically ergative languages, Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) relativization hierarchy can then be understood to imply that if only one nominal can relativize in a given language, then this must be a subject or an absolutive. The extraction restriction in Tagalog therefore cannot necessarily be assumed to identify the absolutive as a subject.

6.2 Case-checking in applicative constructions

In addition to the conceptual problem pointed out above, Rackowski’s (2002) case agreement analysis also faces technical difficulties. Under Rackowski’s analysis, monotransitive verbs check accusative case with the internal argument. A specific direct object raises to the outer specifier of Voice where it agrees with T and copies its case feature to the verb, in this case \(-in\).
In applicative constructions, Rackowski follows Pylkkänen (2002) in merging an applied object directly into the specifier of an applicative projection, where it receives inherent oblique case. The applied DP then raises to the outer specifier of Voice to agree with T, and the case feature is spelled out as the applicative affix on the verb, either \(i\)- or \(-an\).

However, since applicatives appear on transitive verbs which should otherwise check accusative case, there remains a question as to the fate of the accusative case feature of this verb. The presence of the applicative projection should block agreement between \(v\) and the theme DP. Because of this, Rackowski claims that the theme is assigned inherent case in this situation. But the verb, which is the same verb as in the monotransitive example in (35), should still have an unchecked case feature, which should cause the derivation to crash.
Under the current proposal, applicative constructions do not pose this type of problem. As discussed in section 2, the applied argument is merged directly in the specifier of the applicative projection, following Marantz (1993) and Pylkkänen (2002). In this position, the applied DP checks absolutive case with v, while oblique objects are assigned inherent case, just as they are in antipassives.

(37)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{buy+T} \quad \text{vP} \\
\text{I} \quad \text{v} \quad \text{ApplP} \\
\text{Maria}_{\text{Abs}} \quad \text{Appl} \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{tV} \quad \text{book}_{\text{Obj}} 
\end{array}
\]

6.3 Applied objects as objects or subjects?

Under Rackowski’s (2002) case agreement analysis, the applied object in applicative constructions is merged directly in the specifier of Appl, where it is assigned inherent case.

(38)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{a. I-t-in-awa} \quad \text{ng} \quad \text{lalaki} \\
\text{App-Perf.laugh} \quad \text{Erg} \quad \text{man} \\
\text{ang} \quad \text{kanyang} \quad \text{asawa}. \\
\text{Abs} \quad \text{his} \quad \text{wife} \\
\text{‘The man laughed for his wife.’}
\end{array}
\]

b.  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{VoiceP} \\
\text{man} \quad \text{Voice} \quad \text{ApplP} \\
\text{wife}_{\text{Obj}} \quad \text{Appl} \quad \text{vP} \\
\text{v} \quad \text{VP} \\
\quad \text{laugh}
\end{array}
\]

When this DP raises in specificity shift, applicative morphology will be spelled out on T, and the applied object will be identified as the subject of the clause.
There is some doubt, however, as to whether the applied DP should be considered a subject. Cross-linguistically, applicatives are thought to license or create direct objects with accusative structural case (Marantz 1984, Baker 1988, and others), but Rackowski claims they have inherent oblique case.

In many languages with applicative constructions, the applied object takes on the properties of direct object (Chichewa; Baker 1988:247-8). In (40a) the benefactive applied argument controls object agreement. In (40b), this argument becomes the subject of a passive.

(40) a. Amayi a-ku-\textit{mu}-umb-ir-a \textit{mtsuko} mwana.
   woman SP-Pres-OP-mold-for-Asp waterpot child
   ‘The woman is molding the waterpot for the child.’

   b. Mbizdi zi-na-gul-ir-idw-a nsapato (ndi kalulu).
   zebras SP-Past-buy-for-Pass-Asp shoes by hare
   ‘The zebras were bought shoes by the hare.’

   These functions of accusative DPs in these constructions are unavailable to the theme argument, i.e. the underlying direct object.

(41) a. *Amayi a-na-u-umb-ir-a \textit{mtsuko} mwana.
   Woman SP-Past-OP-mold-for-Asp child waterpot
   ‘The woman is molding the waterpot for the child.’

   shoes SP-Past-buy-for-Pass-Asp zebras by hare
   ‘Shoes were bought for the zebras by the hare.’

   Rackowski’s treatment of applied objects as subjects in Tagalog would be difficult to reconcile with the clear object properties of applied DPs in other languages. The current proposal does not, however, suffer from this lack of
cross-linguistic applicability. Applied objects check absolutive case with v and therefore should have the grammatical properties of absolutes, the canonical case of direct objects in ergative languages. The object properties of applied objects are therefore accounted for automatically.

\[\text{TP} \quad \text{laugh}^+v^+T \quad \text{vP} \]

\[\text{man} \quad \text{V}^+v^\text{(Abs)} \quad \text{ApplP} \]

\[\text{wife}^\text{(Abs)} \quad \text{Appl} \quad \text{VP} \]

6.4 Extension to other Austronesian languages

Rackowski’s case-agreement analysis may have limited applicability to Tagalog syntax. However, it would face difficulty accounting for the same phenomenon in certain other Austronesian languages. Indonesian is such a language.

Unlike Tagalog, Indonesian is essentially an accusative language. Morphologically, Indonesian verbs are inflected as active meng- or passive di-.

Subjects move to preverbal position to check nominative case. (43a) and (43b) show examples of an active agent and a passive goal in a ditransitive.

\[(43) \quad \text{a. Ali mem-beli buku.} \quad \text{A Act-buy book} \]

\[\text{‘Ali bought a book.’} \]

\[\text{b. Buku-nya di-beli Ali.} \quad \text{book-Def Pass-buy A} \]

\[\text{‘This book was bought by Ali.’} \]

Like other accusative languages with applicative constructions, applicative morphology can appear on both active and passive verbs. In Tagalog, only transitive verbs can host applicatives, since the applied object will have the status of absolutive. In the active clause in (44a), the applied object remains in the VP, while the external argument is licensed as the subject. In the passive clause in (44b), the applied object raises to subject position to check nominative case. It should be noted that this is the same behavior just observed for applied objects in Chichewa.

\[(44) \quad \text{a. Ali mem-beli-kan Nuri buku.} \quad \text{A Act-buy-App N book} \]

\[\text{‘Ali bought Nuri a book.’} \]

22
   ‘Nuri was bought a book by Ali.’

Indonesian does share an important syntactic feature with Tagalog. In the case of A’-extraction, only the subject is eligible to move. This is essentially parallel to the absolutive restriction on A’-movement in Tagalog. In an active clause, only the external argument subject can be extracted. Not even the applied object is eligible.

(45) a. Siapa yang mem-beli buku-nya?
   who Comp Act-buy book-Def
   ‘Who bought the book?’

b. *Apa yang Ali mem-beli?
   what Comp A Act-buy
   ‘What did Ali buy?’

c. *Siapa yang Ali mem-beli-kan buku?
   who Comp A Act-buy-App book
   ‘Who did Ali buy a book?’

Internal arguments can only be extracted from passive clauses. The applied argument will be extracted in the case of a passive applicative construction.

(46) a. Apa yang di-beli Ali?
   what Comp Pass-buy A
   ‘What did Ali buy?’

b. Siapa yang di-beli-kan buku oleh Ali?
   who Comp Pass-buy-App book by A
   ‘Who was bought a book by Ali?’

c. *Siapa yang di-beli buku?
   who Comp Pass-buy book
   ‘Who bought a book?’

The similarities and differences between Tagalog and Indonesian can be accounted for straightforwardly with one parameter added to the analysis so far developed in this paper. Case in Indonesian is checked as in other typical nominative-accusative languages: nominative by T and accusative by v.
(47) **Indonesian Case-checking**
T = Nominative
v = Accusative

For comparison, I repeat the Tagalog case-checking system below.

(48) **Tagalog Case-checking**
T = Absolutive (intransitive verb)
v = Absolutive (transitive verb)

Though the case-checking mechanisms differ slightly, the extraction restriction can be analyzed in essentially the same way in the two languages. I propose that in active clauses in Indonesian, like intransitives in Tagalog, v cannot host an EPP feature. Only passive v in Indonesian (analogous to transitive in Tagalog) will carry an EPP feature and allow extraction of an internal argument.

The extraction facts are accounted for in the following way. In an active clause, the external argument wh-phrase in [Spec, v] is attracted by C. v checks accusative case with the highest VP-internal DP. But no DP can raise out of VP, since there is no EPP feature on v.

(49) a. Siapa yang mem-beli buku-nya?
   who Comp Act-buy book-Def
   ‘Who bought the book?’

   b. CP
      who
      TP
      vP
      t
      meN-
      v’
      VP
      V
      book

Internal arguments can be extracted only in passive clauses, when v has an EPP feature.

(50) a. Apa yang di-beli Ali?
   what Comp Pass-buy A
   ‘What did Ali buy?’
As in Tagalog, applied objects are merged in the specifier of ApplP between vP and VP. Applied objects check accusative case with v in active clauses. Again, since there is no EPP feature on v, they are not eligible to undergo A'-movement.

(51) a. *Siapa yang Ali mem-beli-kan buku?
   who Comp A Act-buy-App book
   ‘Who did Ali buy a book?’

b. *CP

Internal arguments can be extracted only in passive clauses, when v has an EPP feature. The applied object will be the one to move in a passive applicative construction.
To summarize, I have shown how the extraction restriction in Indonesian can be accounted for in parallel fashion to the related language Tagalog.\(^1\) The passive prefix \textit{di-} has an EPP feature, which allows an internal argument to move out of VP. Internal arguments cannot be \textit{A’}-extracted in active clauses prefixed with \textit{meng-}.

The Indonesian extraction facts cited above pose a challenge for a case agreement analysis. It might be possible to claim that \textit{meng-} is the reflex of nominative case agreement and \textit{di-} of accusative, since the external argument can be extracted in a \textit{meng-} clause and an underlying direct object in a \textit{di-} clause.

\[\text{(52) a. } \text{Siapa yang di-belik\-an \ buku oleh Ali?} \]
\[\text{who Comp Pass-buy-App book by A} \]
\[\text{‘Who was bought a book for by Ali?’} \]

\[\text{b. } \]
\[\text{CP} \]
\[\text{who TP} \]
\[\text{di-V-kan+v vP} \]
\[\text{t\text{\textsubscript{w\text{\textsubscript{ho}}}}} v’} \]
\[\text{v’ Ali} \]
\[\text{t\text{\textsubscript{V-kan+v}[EPP]} ApplP} \]
\[\text{t\text{\textsubscript{w\text{\textsubscript{ho}}}}} Appl’} \]
\[\text{t\text{\textsubscript{V-kan}} VP} \]
\[\text{t\text{\textsubscript{V}} book} \]

\[\text{(53) a. } \text{Siapa yang mem-belih \ buku-nya?} \]
\[\text{who Comp Act-buy book-Def} \]
\[\text{‘Who bought the book?’} \]

\[\text{b. } \text{Apa yang di-beli \ Ali?} \]
\[\text{what Comp Pass-buy A} \]
\[\text{‘What did Ali buy?’} \]

However, case agreement cannot account for applicative constructions. If the applicative affix is taken to be an instanciation of oblique case agreement,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1} Though Indonesian is now an accusative language, I assume the extraction restriction to be a remnant feature of earlier ergative syntax. For reasons of space, I will not debate this issue here.}\]
as it is in Tagalog, then it is a mystery as to why extraction (and agreement) is possible only when the applicative cooccurs with the passive prefix and not with the active prefix.

(54) a. *Siapa yang Ali mem-beli-kan buku?
   who Comp A Act-buy-App book
   ‘Who did Ali buy a book?’

   b. Siapa yang di-beli-kan buku oleh Ali?
   who Comp Pass-buy-App book by A
   ‘Who was bought a book for by Ali?’

The case agreement analysis therefore cannot be extended as is to Indonesian. Naturally, Rackowski (2002) makes no claim that it can. However, her proposal is made much less attractive by its lack of exportability, since the A’-extraction restriction is a pervasive phenomenon among Austronesian languages. Rather than stipulating mechanisms for individual languages, it is preferable to develop analyses with general applicability and broad typological implications.

8. Conclusion

The primary purpose of this paper has been to propose an account of the absolutive restriction on A’-extraction in Tagalog. This goal was accomplished by positing an ergative analysis of Tagalog syntax in which absolutive case is checked by either v or T, depending on the transitivity of the clause. The extraction asymmetry is accounted for by allowing an EPP feature to appear on v only when the verb is transitive, thereby ensuring that internal arguments can move to the vP phase edge only when they have absolutive status.

Additionally, I have shown in this paper how my account of the A’-extraction restriction in Tagalog can be extended to Indonesian, which suggests that it may have general applicability in accounting for this common characteristic of Austronesian languages.

References


