

Revisiting case and voice in Tagalog

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1 Introduction

- Central contributions of Rackowski and Richards 2005:
 - An account of the link between Tagalog voice, case, and specificity.
 - A model of how agreement interacts with movement within phase theory.
- Background assumption: syntactic dependencies between a head and an XP (e.g., for agreement, movement, case assignment and so on) established by the relation Agree (version below from Chung 2014):

(1) Given a probe X and a goal Y, where:

- a. X c-commands Y,
- b. X lacks values for uninterpretable features that can be supplied by the values of matching features on Y,
- c. Y lacks values for uninterpretable features that can be supplied by X,
- d. No potential goal intervenes between X and Y,
- e. X and Y are in the same phase,

Agree supplies the values of each category's uninterpretable features from matching features of the other category.

- Rackowski and Richards focus on the constraint (d), proposing something along the lines of (2) (my paraphrase).
- (2) d. If a potential goal Z intervenes between X and Y, X must also agree with Z.
- Their argument is based on an intricate analysis of Tagalog morphosyntax, in particular the relationship between case and specificity.
 - I take a look again at the claims about Tagalog, and their arguments in general, and assess whether they can form a basis for a new way of looking at extraction.

2 Tagalog nominative as object shift

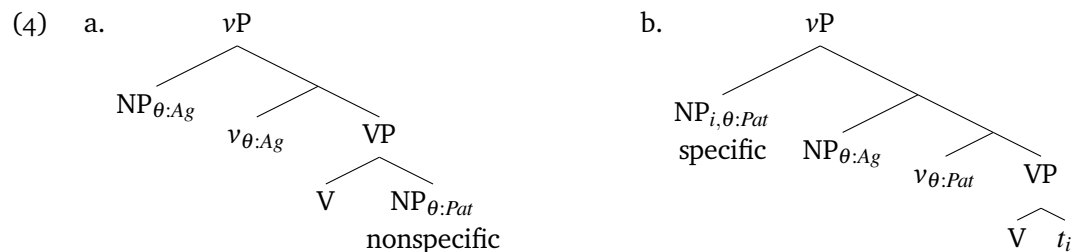
- Key data: In Tagalog, verbal morphology matches the thematic role of one NP.
- This NP gets nominative *ang*, other argumental get genitive *ng*.

- (3) a. *Bumili [ang bata] ng tela sa palengke para sa nanay*
 AV.buy NOM child GEN cloth OBL market for OBL mother
 The child bought cloth at the market for mother. Actor voice
- b. *Binili ng bata [ang tela] sa palengke para sa nanay*
 PV.buy GEN child NOM cloth OBL market for OBL mother
 The child bought the cloth at the market for mother. Patient voice
- c. *Binilhan ng bata ng tela [ang palengke] para sa nanay*
 LV.buy GEN child GEN cloth NOM market for OBL mother
 The child bought cloth at the market for mother. Locative voice
- d. *Ibinili ng bata ng tela sa palengke [ang nanay]*
 BV.buy NOM child GEN cloth OBL market NOM mother
 The child bought cloth at the market for mother. Benefactive voice

- The marking of the NP with nominative (and corresponding verbal morphology) is associated with a “specific” interpretation of the NP.

2.1 The analysis

- For R&R, specific NPs move to (an outer) Spec, ν P. This violates the principle of Tucking In (movement is always to the innermost specifier position).
- The movement determines the voice morphology, ν inherits the Case features of the moved NP.



- Moved NPs (e.g., the patient NP in (b)) Agree with ν . Thus, ν inherits the Case features of the NP.
- Why doesn't ν agree with nonspecific NPs? “Chomsky (2001) argues that object shift occurs as the result of an EPP-feature on ν that is present only when it has an effect on semantic outcome.”
- It's not explicit why actor voice is realized in (a), as no movement is supposed to take place. Presumably actor voice is realized by default if there is no other movement? Levin (2015) proposes that actor voice is a default in other Austronesian languages.
- The syntactically outermost NP gets nominative (marked by *ang*). Other argumental NPs get genitive (marked by *ng*).

- Linear effects of object shift cannot be detected due as “word order is very free in Tagalog”.
- Syntactic position is partly diagnosed by the interpretation of the patient NP.
- Inside the VP the patient is interpreted as “nonspecific”, and outside, the VP is interpreted as “specific”, following the general spirit of Diesing (1992) (though the interpretational distinction assumed is different from Diesing’s).

- (5) a. *Bumili [ang bata] ng tela*
 AV.buy NOM child GEN cloth
 The child bought cloth Actor voice
- b. *Binili ng bata [ang tela]*
 PV.buy GEN child NOM cloth
 The child bought the cloth. Patient voice

- The proposal links Tagalog with object shift languages such as Icelandic.
- In Icelandic, indefinite bare NPs are syntactically inside the VP. Definite DPs raise out of the VP (see Thráinsson 2001 for an overview).
- Below, *ekki* ‘not’ marks the VP-edge.

- (6) a. *Nemandinn [las bókina] ekki.*
 students.the.NOM read book.the.ACC not
 The students didn’t read the book.
- b. *Hann las ekki [bækur]*
 he read not books
 He didn’t read books.

- As for the actor voice (13a) : “The external argument ... occupies the highest specifier of vP and receives a specific interpretation. The internal argument *could have undergone object shift* but has not; it therefore receives a nonspecific interpretation.”

2.2 Some counterpoints

- We can formulate their proposed link between specificity and case as the following (assuming the structural positions for all arguments proposed are correct).

A For all NPs x , if x is in the highest Spec,vP, then x is nominative and specific.

B For all NPs x , if x is in not in the Spec,vP but the position is available (patients in actor voice), then x is genitive and nonspecific.

- Counterexamples are of the form:

A There is a NP y s.t. y is in the highest Spec,vP and ((i. y is not nominative) or (ii. y is not specific)).

B There is a NP y s.t. y is in not in the Spec,vP but the position is available and y is not genitive or y is specific.

2.2.1 NPs in highest Spec but not nominative

- Recent perfective *kaCV*- appear with both actor and patient in genitive. See Lopez Odango and Ostuka 2015.

(7) *Kabibili ng lalaki ng bigas*
REC-PERF.PV.buy GEN man GEN rice
The man just bought some rice.

- Certain semi-auxiliary verbs also appear with both actor (experiencer) and patient (stimulus) in genitive.

(8) *Gusto ng lalaki ng bigas*
want GEN man GEN rice
The man wants/likes some rice.

- These data are exceptions to the generalization that the highest Spec,vP gets nominative.
- Although, note that in both cases, the patient can get nominative (with a definite interpretation).

(9) a. *Kabibili ng lalaki ang bigas*
REC.PERF.PV.buy GEN man NOM rice
The man just bought the rice.
b. *Gusto ng lalaki ang bigas*
want GEN man NOM rice
The man wants/likes the rice.

- R&R would presumably claim that the patient moves to Spec,vP and gets nominative in (9a-b), but how they account for (7) and (8) is unclear.

2.2.2 NPs which are nominative but not specific

- For R&R, both nominative case and specific readings are associated with being in the highest Spec,vP. Thus we expect nominative NPs to be specific.
- However, nominative NPs may be nonspecific, if they contain nonspecific determiners.

(10) a. *Nadiskubre ni Karlos ang buwan*
PV.discover GEN Karlos NOM moon
Karlos discovered the moon. no DET, nom = definite
b. *Nadiskubre ni Karlos ang isang buwan*
PV.discover GEN Karlos NOM one moon
Karlos discovered a moon. indef DET, nom = indefinite
c. *Hindi ko sinisi ang sinuman* (from google)
not GEN.1SG PV.blame NOM who.even
I don't blame anyone. indef DET, nom = indefinite (NPI reading)

- Although R&R don't give a precise characterization of what they consider (non)specific, I take indefinites which scope under entailment cancelling operators like negation and conditionals to be nonspecific (as they are nonreferential).

- (10c) is an example, as well as (11)

(11) *Maiinis si Mary [kung ipapatugtog ni John [ang isang rekord]]*
 annoyed NOM Mary if PV.play GEN John NOM one record
 'Mary will be annoyed if John plays a record.' (Comment: Any record in general.)

- As in R&R's model, nominatives are in the highest Spec,vP, a position associated with specificity, it's unclear how nonspecific nominatives fall out of their theory.

- Some options

- Abandon the link between NP-interpretation and position relative to the VP
- Assume certain NPs (with indefinite determiners) receive nominative inside the VP
- Scale back the generalization and claim that the position-specificity relationship only holds for bare NPs.

2.2.3 Specific uses of genitive NPs

- For R&R, genitive patients (e.g., of actor voice verbs) are VP-internal, and get nonspecific readings.
- Bare NP genitive patients in V1 sentences are always indefinite.

(12) *Nakadiskubre si Karlos [ng buwan]*
 AV.discover NOM Karlos GEN moon
 Karlos discovered a/*the moon.

no DET, gen = indefinite

- However, they can be referential indefinites, suggesting that nonspecific isn't the right characterization. The label "indefinite" includes specific indefinites like *ng babae* in (13).

(13) *nakilala ako ng babae, at saka, siya ay si Jennifer*
 AV.meet NOM.1SG GEN woman, and also, NOM.3SG TOP NOM Jennifer
 'I've met a woman, and what's more, it's Jennifer.'

- Sabbagh (2016) gives examples that show with possessors and demonstratives, genitive patients can be specific.

(14) a. *pagkaraa'y isa-isang nagbasa [ng kanilang tula] ang aking mga estudyante*
 then one-one AV.read GEN their poem NOM my PL student
 The one by one my students read out their poem.
 b. *kung nagbabasa sila [nitong blog ko] ...*
 if AV.read NOM.they GEN.this blog my
 If they are reading my blog...

- Interestingly, later in the paper, R&R give the following example pair, showing that the actor asymmetrically c-commands the patient.

- (15) a. *Nagmamahal ang bawat ama [ng kanyang anak]*
 AV.love NOM every father GEN his child
 Every father loves his child. (R&R(23a))
- b. **Nagmamahal ang kanyang ama [ng bawat anak]*
 AV.love NOM his father GEN every child
 His father loves every child. (R&R(23b))

- I have two issues with this example

- (15b) is ungrammatical on any binding relationship, because universal quantifiers like *bawat* ‘every’ are banned from the genitive patient position.
- (15a) is a counterexample to their generalization that genitive patients are nonspecific.
- This latter point is problematic because of other examples from the paper like (16)

- (16) *Minamahal ng bawat ama [ang kanyang anak]*
 PV.love GEN every father NOM his child
 Every father loves his child. (R&R(26))

- By their own examples (15a,16), *kanyang anak* is an NP which is able to be genitive or nominative, without an interpretational difference.
- How does this cohere with the specific-nominative/nonspecific-genitive generalization?
- Therefore, I’m uncertain that (15) shows what they want it to show. But it may show that possessive pronouns like *kanyang* influence the specificity/definiteness of the patient.

- Again, it seems like the interpretational effect of case applies to bare NPs but not non-bare NPs.
- Also, it again appears like (non)specific isn’t the right characterization, but (in)definite does better.
- However, non-bare genitive NPs appear to be compatible with referential readings.
- Genitive patients are not unconstrained, however. R&R correctly point out that pronouns and proper names are banned from the genitive patient position.

- (17) a. *Sinampal ako ng mandrurukot*
 PV.slap NOM.me GEN pickpocket
 The pickpocket slapped me.
- b. **Sumampal ko ang mandrurukot*
 AV.slap GEN.me NOM pickpocket
 The pickpocket slapped me.
- c. **Sumampal ang mandrurukot ni Juan*
 AV.slap NOM pickpocket GEN Juan
 The pickpocket slapped Juan.

2.3 Interim summary

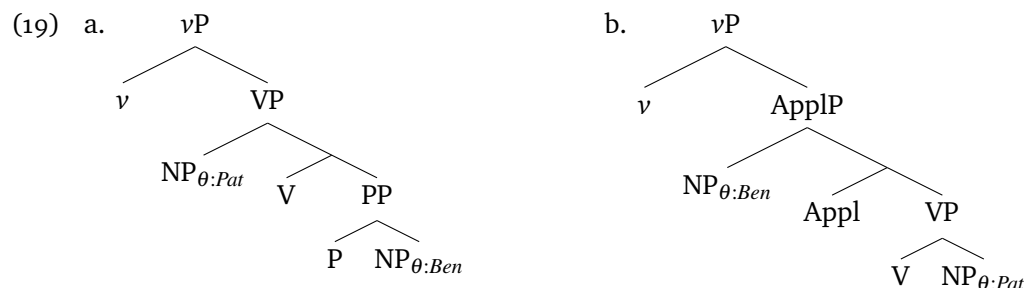
- R&R claim that:
 - Nominative assigned in highest Spec,vP.
 - The NP in that position gets nominative and a specific interpretation. (“...all “subjects” [*nominatives*] are obligatorily specific in Tagalog.”, “Whatever argument occupies the highest specifier of vP (either a shifted object, or the external argument when no object shift takes place) is given a specific interpretation.”)
 - The NP complement of V (the patient) gets a nonspecific reading, as it does not move to the specific VP-external position.
- Some complicating data:
 - Certain constructions lack nominative altogether.
 - Nominative and genitive bare NP patients do demonstrate an interpretational distinction, but it is definiteness, not specificity.
 - Nominative patients can be nonspecific (indefinites) with certain determiners.
 - Genitive patients can be referential with particular modifiers (demonstratives, possessives).

3 Circumstantial voices

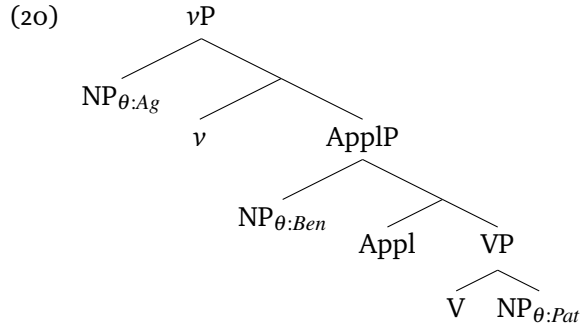
- R&R also give a treatment of voices besides AV and PV (usually called circumstantial voices in Austronesian literature).

- (18) a. *Bumili ang bata ng tela [para sa nanay]*
 AV.buy NOM child GEN cloth for OBL mother
 The child bought cloth for mother. Actor voice
- b. *Ibinili ng bata ng tela [ang nanay]*
 BV.buy NOM child GEN cloth NOM mother
 The child bought cloth for mother. Benefactive voice

- If the benefactive is an oblique, is it a PP complement of V (19a). Open question: what if there are multiple obliques (e.g., “I bought cloth at the market for mother” (ex. from paper))? Are they all PP complements of V?
- If the benefactive is the subject, it is merged in Spec,AppIP (Pylkkänen 2008), and then moves to Spec,vP to get nominative (19b).



- R&R claim that if ApplP is present (as in (19b)), the benefactive *must* take nominative.
- We can construct the tree in (20) under their theory. Thus ν should be able to agree with the agent, generating actor voice, as we saw in non-circumstantial voices.



- In this hypothetical structure, the applicativized benefactive should take genitive.
- However, as R&R acknowledge, this is impossible in Tagalog. Non-subject benefactives must be oblique PPs, never arguments.

(21) **Nagluto ng adobo ng babae si Romeo*
 AV.cook GEN adobo GEN woman NOM Romeo
 Romeo cooked adobo for a woman.

- R&R don't explain why (21) is wrong, but compare it to English cases where an NP cannot remain in-situ. They also claim that something similar happens in Malagasy (a language with the same kind of voice system as Tagalog). No explanation is offered for this pattern however.

(22) a. *John wagered Mary to have won the race.
 b. Mary_i was wagered t_i to have won the race.
 c. Mary_i, who John wagered t_i to have won the race, ...

- Given (20), R&R claim that the patient NP cannot raise to Spec,νP, because it is blocked by the intervening benefactive.
- Thus, how do we expect the patient to be interpreted? Their argument goes as follows:

- Patients are blocked from fronting to Spec,νP in benefactive constructions.
- In Danish, pronouns generally move VP-externally.

(23) a. *Peter købte den ikke*
 Peter bought it not
 Peter didn't buy it.

b. **Peter købte ikke den*
 Peter bought not it
 Peter didn't buy it.

- However, if the pronoun is blocked from moving (e.g., if the verb is a participle), pronouns also stay in the VP.

(24) *Peter har ikke købt den*
 Peter has not bought it
 Peter hasn't bought it.

- Thus, if NPs are blocked from moving VP-externally, they are allowed to remain VP-internal while being definite.
- Thus, in Tagalog, we can expect definite NPs to remain VP-internal in benefactive constructions (where they are blocked from moving).
- Thus, genitive patients in benefactive constructions are able to get definite readings.

(25) *Ibinili ng bata ng tela [ang nanay]*
 BV.buy NOM child GEN cloth NOM mother
 The child bought (the) cloth for mother. Benefactive voice

- Recall, R&R propose that proper names/pronouns raise to Spec,vP.
- However, this discussion of Danish vs. Tagalog appears to predict that pronouns/proper names can remain VP-internally (getting genitive case) if they are blocked from moving out of the VP.
- This predicts patients can be proper names/pronouns in benefactive constructions.
- However, this is not borne out. Such constructions are ungrammatical.

(26) a. **Ibinili ng bata ni Felix [ang nanay]*
 BV.buy NOM child GEN Felix NOM mother
 The child bought Felix (the cat) for mother. Benefactive voice

b. **Ibinili ko ng bata [ang nanay]*
 BV.buy GEN.me NOM child NOM mother
 (Felix the cat is talking:) The child bought me for mother. Benefactive voice

- A side note, in order to show that the patient c-commands the oblique benefactive, they give the following example.

(27) *Bumantay ako [ng bawat anak] [para sa kanyang magulang]*
 AV.watch NOM.I GEN every child for OBL his/her parent
 I watched every child for their parent.

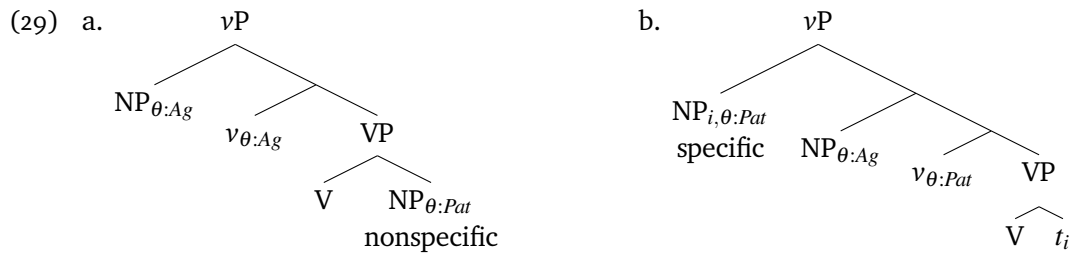
- However, this example has a proportional quantifier *bawat anak* 'every child' in the genitive patient position, which is not possible. The example was rejected by a native speaker I consulted.

4 Verb-initial vs. actor-initial sentences

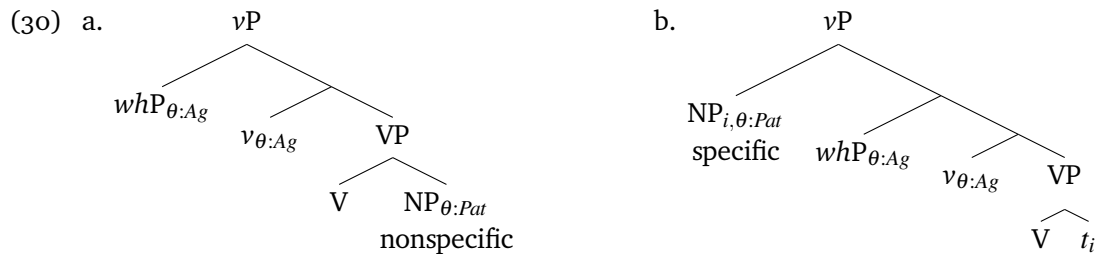
- A paradigm in Tagalog:
 - (Bare) genitive patients are obligatorily indefinite in V1 sentences
 - But they can take on definite readings in sentences where the actor is extracted to a preverbal position (e.g., wh-questions, relative clauses, topicalization, etc.).

- (28) a. *Nakadiskubre si Karlos [ng buwan]*
 AV.discover NOM Karlos GEN moon
 Karlos discovered a/*the moon.
- b. [*sino_i*] [*ang nakadiskubre* ____i *ng buwan*]
 NOM.who NOM PERF.AV-discover GEN moon
 Who discovered the/a moon?

- R&R are committed to the interpretation of an NP being conventionally encoded by its syntactic position. (29) is a reminder of how it works in their system.



- Based on this commitment, definite readings of genitives (28b) suggest the genitive is in Spec,vP.
- Their solution:
 - In ordinary cases (i.e., V₁ sentences), *v* agrees with the moving NP.
 - However, *wh*-marked NPs (e.g., NPs which will be *wh*-moved, relativized, topicalized) override this generalization: *v* agrees with a *wh*-marked NP, even in cases where another NP moves.
 - In (30), the actors are *wh*-phrases. *v* will agree with it (yielding actor voice morphology), regardless of whether the patient moves (29a) or not (29b).



- Although the analysis doesn't appeal to OT constraints, the phrasing "natural account if we assume that Tagalog verbs agree preferentially with *wh*-phrases" suggests an assumption of violable constraints.
 - Compare Gärtner 2004, who provides an OT account of the same phenomenon.
 - For him, marking *wh*-phrases as nominative is the highest ranked constraint.
 - It outranks another constraint which demands that definites are marked nominative.
 - So the presence of a *wh*-phrase allows a genitive to take a definite interpretation.
- For R&R, the interpretational ambiguity of genitive patients reduces to a syntactic ambiguity.

- Question: does the syntactic ambiguity manifest itself in other ways besides definiteness? e.g., adverbial placement?
 - NB: we cannot test the predicted c-command distinction with reflexives/quantifier binding, as these generally aren't borne out by R&R's analysis (which they acknowledge).
 - Repeating earlier examples, (31), quantifier-pronoun binding suggests that the actor always c-commands the patient, regardless of case.
 - Thus, even though R&R claim that the actor and patient swap positions in terms of c-command, this isn't reflected by the quantifier-pronoun binding diagnostic.

- (31) a. *Nagmamahal ang bawat ama [ng kanyang anak]*
 AV.love NOM every father GEN his child
 Every father loves his child. (R&R(23a))
- b. *Minamahal ng bawat ama [ang kanyang anak]*
 PV.love GEN every father NOM his child
 Every father loves his child. (R&R(26))

- Some counterpoints to the structural ambiguity theory of genitives.

4.1 Scope and negation

- In V1 sentences, genitive patients are *narrow scope indefinites*. They must scope under negation. This explains why (32) is a contradiction.
- R&R explain this kind of data by positing that the indefiniteness of genitives is encoded by their VP-internal position.

- (32) *Hindi nakapanuod si Karlos [ng pelikula], #pero napanuod niya ang Star Wars*
 not AV.see NOM Karlos GEN film but PV.see he NOM Star Wars
 Karlos didn't see a film, but he saw Star Wars. (*Comment: You have to put ibang* ['other'], *Hindi nakapanuod si Karlos ng ibang pelikula* [Karlos didn't see any other films].)

- Comparing the PV variant of (32), nominative patients don't create such a contradiction. This makes sense if the nominative patient *ang pelikula* is a (referential) definite, referring to a film other than Star Wars.

- (33) *Hindi napanuod ni Karlos [ang pelikula], pero napanuod niya ang Star Wars*
 not PV.see GEN Karlos NOM film but PV.see he NOM Star Wars
 Karlos didn't see the film, but he saw Star Wars.

- Under the R&R account, in actor-initial sentences, definite genitives occupy the structural position of definite nominatives in verb-initial sentences.
- Therefore, we can think of these genitives as “*ang*-phrases in disguise”.
- We therefore predict they should behave like *ang*-phrases under negation, as in (33).
- (34) shows this prediction isn't borne out.

(34) *Si Karlos ay hindi nakapanuod [ng pelikula], #pero napanuod niya Star Wars*
 NOM Karlos TOP not AV.see GEN film but PV.see he Star Wars
 Karlos didn't see any film, but he saw Star Wars. (*Comment: You were saying he didn't see a movie, but you also were saying he watched a film. You need ibang 'other'.*)

- Regardless of whether the sentence is verb-initial or actor-initial, genitives are interpreted as scoping under negation.
- R&R predict (34) should allow a parse in which the genitive moves to Spec,vP (not morphologically apparent because of the topicalization), and gets a definite interpretation.
- This predicts the continuation should be non-contradictory.
- An alternate characterization: genitives are narrow scope indefinites. If there is no higher scoping operator (like negation), they can take on definite readings.

4.2 Pronouns

- Recall, R&R provide an explanation of why pronouns/proper names cannot be genitive patients.

(35) a. **Sumampal [ko] ang mandrururkot*
 AV.slap GEN.me NOM pickpocket
 The pickpocket slapped me.
 b. **Sumampal ang mandrururkot [ni Juan]*
 AV.slap NOM pickpocket GEN Juan
 The pickpocket slapped Juan.

- Under their account, pronouns/proper names *have to* move to Spec,vP, due to their inherently specific semantics.
- Thus, in V1 sentences, this movement triggers *patient voice* on the verb, and ensures the pronoun/proper name is marked nominative, ruling out (35a,b).
- In actor-initial sentences, patients can move to Spec,vP, get a definite interpretation, but remain marked with genitive.
- Thus, in actor-initial sentences, we should find genitive pronouns and proper names.
- However, such sentences (36) are ungrammatical just like the verb-initial variants (35)

(36) a. **ang mandrururkot ay sumampal [ko]*
 NOM pickpocket TOP AV.slap GEN.me
 The pickpocket slapped me.
 b. **ang mandrururkot ay sumampal [ni Juan]*
 NOM pickpocket TOP AV.slap GEN Juan
 The pickpocket slapped Juan.

- The hypothesis is that definite genitives in actor-initial sentences are structurally like definite nominatives. This hypothesis makes some wrong predictions:
 - Genitive patients in actor-initial sentences always scope under negation (unlike nominatives)
 - Genitive patients can never be pronouns/proper names (unlike nominatives).

5 Conclusion

- R&R claim that “The theory presented here accounts for the Tagalog morphological and specificity requirements on extraction”.
- Here I’ve raised some questions for this account that any theory of Tagalog NP-interpretation and case should address.

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