

Tagalog and the syntax of wh-extraction

Background: Rackowski (2002) offers a new interpretation of the infamous Philippine “voice” system, exemplified in (1). Her approach makes use of Chomsky’s (1998, 1999) suggestion that the derivation of the syntactic tree is to be broken down into *phases*, including vP and CP, which are the landing sites for successive-cyclic movement (and are also, perhaps relatedly, the syntactic objects which can undergo movement themselves). Rackowski claims that the Tagalog “topic” (the boldfaced DP in (1)) is the highest DP at the edge of the vP phase. Examples like (1b-c) involve movement of DPs other than the subject to this position, via a type of movement that (as she convincingly demonstrates) bears a strong resemblance to Germanic object shift. If she is right, then languages like Tagalog have morphology which is sensitive to a stage of the derivation which is quite difficult to observe in languages like English; the properties of this morphology are therefore of considerable interest.

“Wh-agreement”: Tagalog has a famous condition on A-bar extraction, exemplified by the relative clauses in (2); in order to be extracted, a DP must be made into the topic (if the predicate is one which allows topicalization). On Rackowski’s proposal about the significance of “voice” morphology, this is simply a consequence of successive-cyclic movement; in order to be extracted, the DP must stop at the edge of the vP phase, and while this step of movement is quite difficult to detect in English, in Tagalog it is signalled by the “voice” morphology on the verb.

Long-distance extraction: Long-distance extraction in Tagalog also has effects on the topicalization morphology of the verbs in the sentence. The verb of the clause containing the extraction site must topicalize the extracted argument, as before, for reasons we have already seen (3a-b). All higher verbs must bear whatever kind of morphology would topicalize their complement clauses. Verbs like *sabi* ‘say’, for example, topicalize their complement clauses with “theme-voice” morphology, and this is the morphology used in long-distance extraction (3a vs. 4). Verbs like *paniwala* ‘believe’, by contrast, use “locative-voice” morphology to topicalize their complement clauses, and this morphology appears also in long-distance extraction contexts (5). On Rackowski’s approach, the Tagalog facts shed important light on the nature of successive-cyclicality and locality.

Successive-cyclicality and locality: It seems to be a general fact about extraction that phrases which have previously undergone Agree with a given head are treated by the syntax as though they are absent, for purposes of further Agree relations with that head (Richards 1998, Hiraiwa 2002). Shortest Attract bans attraction of one wh-phrase over another, for example (6a), but attraction of the lower wh-phrase becomes possible once the higher wh-phrase has been attracted first (6b). We might expect to find a similar situation with the A-over-A condition, hopefully also an instance of Shortest Attract: a phrase contained in a larger phrase might become available for Agree once the larger phrase had undergone Agree. The Tagalog data in (4-5) can be analyzed as an instance of this; in order for v of the matrix clause to attract the wh-phrase out of the embedded CP, this CP must itself Agree with v first, and it is this Agree relation which is registered in the morphology on the matrix verb. The approach has consequences for our theories of islandhood more generally; the prediction is that phrases which cannot undergo Agree with v or C should be opaque for extraction, and we thus derive a version of the CED.

In accounts of Tagalog “voice” which equate the “topic” with subjects in other languages, the extraction facts appear extremely peculiar; the facts in (4-5), in particular, seem to involve deliberate creation of CED islands. On Rackowski’s reinterpretation of the significance of the “voice” morphology, however, Tagalog is simply a particularly clear instance of the conditions on extraction which are predicted to exist on independent grounds.

- (1) a. Nagbigay **ako** ng pera sa babae
AV-gave T-I Unm money Dat woman
'I gave money to the woman'
- b. Ibinigay ko **ang pera** sa babae
IV-gave Unm-I T money Dat woman
'I gave the money to the woman'
- c. Binigyan ko ng pera **ang babae**
LV-gave Unm-I Unm money T woman
'I gave money to the woman'
- (2) a. ang babae-ng **binigyan** ko ng pera
the woman that LV-gave Unm-I Unm money
'the woman that I gave the money to'
- b. * ang babae-ng **ibinigay** ko ang pera
the woman that IV-gave Unm-I T money
- c. * ang babae -ng **nagbigay** ako ng pera
the woman that AT-gave T-I Unm money
- (3) a. ang babae -ng [sinabi ni Juan [na **binigyan** niya ng pera]]
the woman that TV-said Unm Juan that LV-gave Unm-he Unm money
'the woman that Juan said he gave the money to'
- b. * ang babae -ng [sinabi ni Juan [na **ibinigay** niya ang pera]]
the woman that TV-said Unm Juan that IV-gave Unm-he T money
- (4) * ang babae -ng [**nagsabi** si Juan [na binigyan niya ng pera]]
the woman that AV-said T Juan that LV-gave Unm-he Unm money
- (5) a. ang babae -ng [**pinaniwalaan** ni Juan [na binigyan niya ng pera]]
the woman that LV-believed Unm Juan that LV-gave Unm-he Unm money
'the woman that Juan believed that he gave the money to'
- b. * ang babae -ng [**naniwala** si Juan [na binigyan niya ng pera]]
the woman that AV-believed T Juan that LV-gave Unm-he Unm money
- (6) a. * What did who buy ___?
b. Who ___ bought what?

Abbreviations

AV= "actor-voice"	T= "topic"
IV= "instrumental-voice"	Unm= Unmarked case
LV= "locative-voice"	Dat= Dative
TV= "theme-voice"	

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