

TRANSITIVITY AND ABSOLUTIVE EXTRACTION IN TAGALOG

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This paper proposes an account of the absolutive restriction on A'-movement in the Philippine language Tagalog. This restriction is shown in (1), in which only the absolutive of the clause is eligible for A' extraction. In the transitive clause in (1a), the theme *wh*-word can move to clause-initial position. In order to extract the agent, the clause must be antipassivized, as in (1b). But the theme can not be extracted from the antipassive, as shown in (1c).

- (1)a. **Ano** ang b-**in**-a-basa ni Maria?
 what COMP RED-TR.PERF-read ERG Maria
 'What is Maria reading?'
 b. **Sino** ang b-**um**-abasa ng libro?
 who COMP RED-INTR.PERF-read OBL book
 'Who is reading the book?'
 c. ***Ano** ang b-**um**-abasa si Maria?
 what COMP -INTR.PERF-read ABS Maria
 'What is Maria reading?'

This paper proposes an account of absolutive case-checking and movement that ensures that only absolutives can be *wh*-extracted. Under this proposal, absolutive case is checked by either T or v, depending on the transitivity of the clause. In intransitive clauses, including antipassives, absolutive case is checked by T. This is analogous to nominative case-checking in accusative languages, and the result will be that the sole argument of an intransitive verb or external argument of an antipassive verb will be given absolutive status. When the verb is transitive, it is v that checks absolutive case, and the absolutive DP now will be a VP-internal argument. When the verb is transitive, v also hosts an EPP feature, which attracts the VP-internal absolutive DP to its outer specifier. This DP will then be at the vP phase edge and can be attracted further to [Spec, C] in a *wh*-question, such as (2a). In intransitive clauses such as antipassives, v does not check absolutive case and does not have an EPP feature. It therefore cannot attract a VP-internal *wh*-word. However, the agent in an antipassive clause, which is merged in the vP phase edge, can be attracted to [Spec, C], as shown in (2b). In this way, the absolutive restriction on extraction is derived under the current proposal.

- (2)a. **Ano** ang b-**in**-a-basa [_{vP} *t_{what}*[_{v'} ni Maria [_{v'} *t_{what}*]]]
 what COMP RED-TR.PERF-read ERG Maria
 'What is Maria reading?'
 b. **Sino** ang b-**um**-abasa [_{vP} *t_{who}* ng libro]
 who COMP RED-INTR.PERF-read OBL book
 'Who is reading the book?'

The empirical evidence for this divided case-checking system described in the preceding paragraph comes from control structures like (3). PRO occurs in the position of the ergative agent and an overt absolutive DP appears inside VP.

- (3) Nag-ba-balak si Maria-ng [PRO tulung-an si Pedro]
 INTR.PERF-RED-plan ABS Maria-LK (ERG) help-APP ABS Pedro
 'Maria is planning to help Pedro.'

Traditional analyses of syntactic ergativity (Murasugi 1992, Bittner and Hale 1996, and others), which assume that absolutive Case checking always takes place with T, have difficulty accounting for the fact that PRO appears in the ergative position and that absolutive case is still available for checking in nonfinite complement clauses. In the current analysis, the VP-internal absolutive DP can check its Case with v, allowing absolutive Case checking in transitive clauses to take place independently of the finiteness of the clause. Ironically, the case-checking mechanism proposed in this paper bears more resemblance to those proposed for morphological ergativity by Levin and Massam 1985 and Bobaljik 1993 than to the Murasugi 1992 approach to syntactic ergativity. The current paper, however, adapts this system to account for the absolutive restriction on A' extraction, which is one of the defining characteristics of syntactic ergativity and not exhibited by morphologically ergative languages.

The analysis of *wh*-movement presented in this paper offers an elegant account of long-distance *wh*-movement in Tagalog. Regardless of whether the dislocated DP is an internal or external argument in its originating clause, all higher verbs along the path of movement must be transitive. For example, (4) shows movement of an embedded agent to [Spec, C] of the matrix clause. The embedded clause is intransitive to allow dislocation of the external argument. However, the matrix verb must be transitive. Extraction is blocked if the matrix verb is intransitive, as shown in (5). This is accounted for straightforwardly by the current approach. In order to avoid violating the Phase Impenetrability Condition, the DP moving from the embedded clause must pass through the matrix vP phase edge. This is possible only when the matrix v is transitive and has an EPP feature.

- (4) *Sino* ang s-**in**-abi [_{VP} *t_{who}* [_v' mo- ng [_{CP} p-um- munta sa Maynila]
[EPP]
who COMP -TR.PERF-say 2S.ERG-LK -INTR.PERF-go to Maynila
'Who did you say went to Manila?'
- (5) **Sino* ang **nag**-sabi [_{VP} *t_{who}* [_v' mo- ng [_{CP} p-um- munta sa Maynila]
who COMP -INTR.PERF-say 2S.ERG-LK -INTR.PERF-go to Maynila
'Who did you say went to Manila?'

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