

# Antipassive and Specificity in Tagalog

Edith Aldridge  
SUNY, Stony Brook

## 1. Introduction

It is common knowledge in the field of Philippine linguistics that an *ang*-marked direct object in a non-actor focus clause must be definite or generic, while a *ng*-marked object in an actor focus clause typically receives a nonspecific interpretation.

- (1) a. **K-in-ain=ko**            **ang**    **isda.**  
      -Tr.Perf-eat=1sErg    Abs    fish  
      'I ate the/\*a fish.'
- b. **K-um-ain=ako**        **ng**     **isda.**  
      -Intr.Perf-eat=1sAbs    Obl    fish  
      'I ate (a) fish.'

However, in contexts like *wh*-questions, the oblique object in an antipassive may be interpreted as specific, as noted by Schachter & Otnes (1972), Maclachlan & Nakamura (1997), Rackowski (2002), and others.

- (2)    Sino    ang    k-um-ain    **ng**    **isda?**  
      who    Abs    -Intr.Perf-eat    Obl    fish  
      'Who ate a/the fish.'

In this paper, I propose to account for the specificity effects seen in (1) and (2) within the analysis of Tagalog syntax put forth by Aldridge (2004). I analyze Tagalog as an ergative language, which accounts straightforwardly for the alternation in interpretation shown in (1). (1a) is a transitive clause, in which the internal argument has absolutive status. (1b), on the other hand, is an antipassive. Cross linguistically, antipassive oblique objects receive a nonspecific interpretation, while absolutives are definite or generic. I show in this paper how the Tagalog facts can be subsumed under a general account of ergativity.

The difference between declarative antipassives like (1b) and *wh*-questions like (2), is accounted for by the structural characteristics of this clause type. Aldridge (2004) argues that *wh*-questions of this type take the form of pseudoclefts. The possibility of a specific reading for the oblique object is due to the fact that this object is contained within the headless relative in matrix subject position, which is the presupposed part of the utterance. The object, then, can also receive a presupposed interpretation.

## 2. Tagalog Ergativity

This paper assumes an ergative analysis of Tagalog, as argued extensively in Aldridge (2004). Non-actor focus clauses are taken to be active and transitive. Locative and benefactive focus markers are treated as applicatives. I take actor focus clauses to be intransitive. Those containing a direct object are considered to be antipassives.

(3)	<u>Traditional Analysis</u>	<u>Ergative Analysis</u>
	Non-actor focus (- <i>in-</i> )	Transitive
	Locative focus (- <i>an</i> )	Locative/dative applicative
	Benefactive focus (- <i>i-</i> )	Benefactive applicative
	Actor focus (- <i>um-/mag-</i> )	Intransitive

Given this, Tagalog can be seen to display an ergative case-marking pattern. Absolutes are marked with *ang*, while *ng* marks ergative external arguments and non-absolute themes and patients.

### Non-actor Focus (Transitive)

(4)	B- <i>in-ili</i>	<b>ng</b>	<i>babae</i>	<b>ang</b>	<i>isda.</i>
	-Tr.Perf-buy	Erg	woman	Abs	fish
	'The woman bought the fish.'				

### Actor Focus (Intransitive)

(5)	D- <i>um-ating</i>	<b>ang</b>	<i>babae.</i>
	-Intr.Perf-arrive	Abs	woman
	'The woman arrived.'		

### (6) Actor Focus (Antipassive)

K- <i>um-ain</i>	<b>ang</b>	<i>babae</i>	<b>ng</b>	<i>isda.</i>
-Intr.Perf-eat	Abs	woman	Obl	fish
'The woman ate (a) fish.'				

## 3. Information Structure in Antipassives

Several ergative analyses of Tagalog have been proposed in the literature (Payne 1982, De Guzman 1988, Aldridge 2004, and others). It is also fairly uncontroversial among Philippine linguists in general that non-actor focus clauses are active and transitive (Schachter 1976 and 1994, Kroeger 1993, Maclachlan & Nakamura 1997, among others). However, the question of whether Tagalog has an antipassive construction is still controversial. This section presents evidence that Tagalog actor focus clauses with a direct object are antipassives. In particular, I show that the object must receive an indefinite, nonspecific, or otherwise non-presuppositional interpretation, as is observed to be the case for antipassive constructions cross-linguistically (Cooreman 1994, Bittner 1994, Basilico 2003, and others).



- b. Nagmamadaling I-um-abas **ng silid.**  
 quickly -Perf.Intr-leave Obl room  
 ‘(She) quickly left the room.’
- c. Nag-taas **ng mukha** si Trini.  
 Perf.Intr-lift Obl face Abs Trini  
 ‘Trini lifted her face.’
- d. Saan ba ako puwede-ng mag-palipas **ng gabi** rito?  
 where Q IsAbs may-Lk Intr.spend Obl night here  
 ‘Where can I spend the night here?’

However, I suggest that the definiteness in these cases is not discursively determined. In (10a), for instance, *bola* “ball” could be considered to be definite, but not because it has been introduced in the preceding discourse. Rather this is due to some type of pragmatic inference, due to the fact that the sentence is describing a scene from a basketball game, which always involves a ball (though not a specific ball). This type of definiteness has been analyzed as bridging by Asher and Lascarides (1998) and need not be assumed to involve specificity. Therefore, all of the 65 antipassive sentences examined above contained nonspecific objects and therefore pattern with antipassives in other languages.

#### 4. Analysis of Specificity Effects in Declarative Clauses

In this paper, I propose an account of the above specificity effects, based on the ergative analysis of Tagalog syntax proposed by Aldridge (2004). The analysis takes as its theoretical foundation the theory of Multiple Spell-Out as proposed by Chomsky (2000, 2001a, 2001b). The status of  $vP$  as a phase and the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2001b:5) play crucial roles in this account.

(11) Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC)

The domain of a phase head is not accessible to operations, but only the edge is.

The PIC dictates that movement of VP-internal material must first pass through the edge of  $vP$ , i.e. the outer specifier. In the case of object *wh*-movement, for example,  $v$  must have an EPP (or occurrence) feature to first draw this DP into its outer specifier. From this position in the edge of  $vP$ , the object is accessible to the [wh] feature on C and can undergo further movement to [Spec, C]. Direct movement from within VP to [Spec, C] would violate the PIC.

(12) What did you [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>what</sub> [<sub>v'</sub> t<sub>you</sub> [<sub>v[EPP]</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> eat t<sub>what</sub> ]]]]?

##### 4.1. Ergative Languages

It is assumed for English that EPP features are generated on  $v$  when needed. What I propose for ergative languages is that the appearance of EPP features on  $v$  is restricted.

Transitivity and EPP

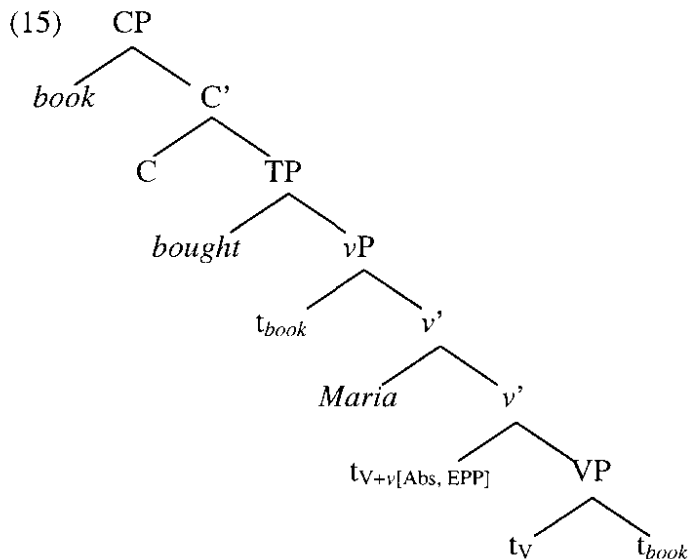
- (13) a. Transitive  $v$  checks absolutive case and has an EPP feature, drawing the absolutive DP to its outer specifier.  
 b. Intransitive  $v$  has no EPP feature; the direct object in an antipassive does not raise out of VP.

This accounts for the hallmark characteristic of syntactic ergativity, i.e. only absolutive DPs can undergo A'-movement. (cf S/O Pivot (Dixon 1979, 1994)) For example, a relative clause can be formed on a direct object in a transitive clause, as in (13a), but not on the oblique object in an antipassive.

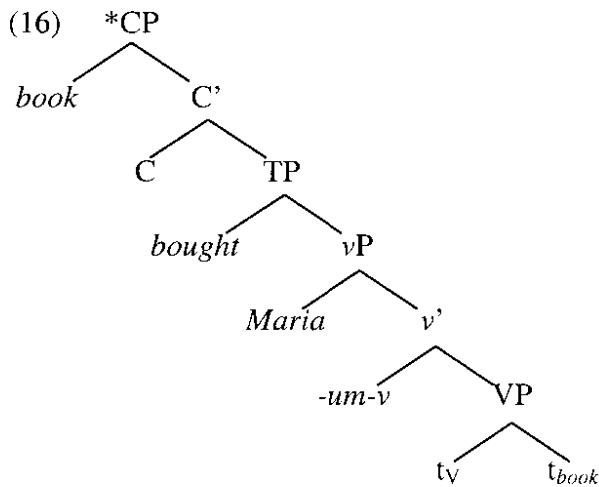
Relativization

- (14) a. **libro-ng** b-**in**-ili ni Mara?  
 book-Lk -Tr.Perf-buy Erg Maria  
 'book which Maria bought'  
 b. \***libro-ng** b-**um**-ili si Mara?  
 book-Lk -Intr.Perf-buy Abs Maria  
 'book which Maria bought'

In (14a),  $v$  is transitive and therefore has an EPP feature, which attracts the absolutive (the null operator coindexed with the head of the relative clause) to its outer specifier. From there, it can be further attracted to the specifier of CP.



Since antipassive verbs are intransitive,  $v$  in (14b) has no EPP feature. Direct extraction of the operator from object position within VP violates the PIC, thereby accounting for the ungrammaticality of (14b).

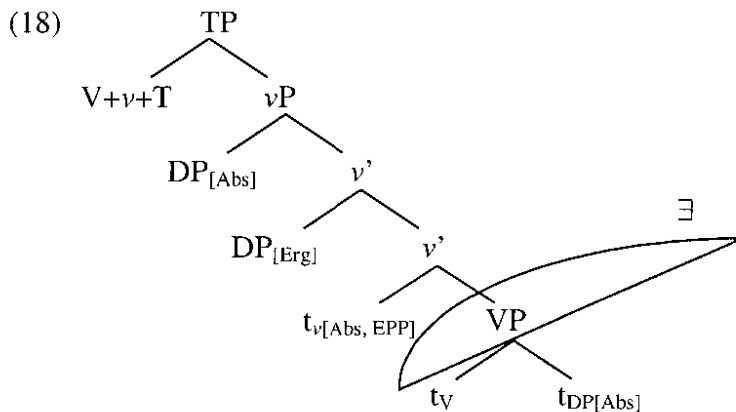


The difference in interpretation between absolutive and oblique direct objects is also accounted for the presence or absence of an EPP feature on  $v$ .

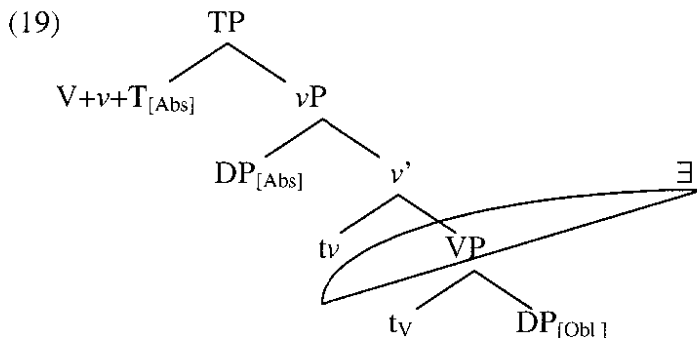
- (17)
- |    |                                 |     |       |     |       |
|----|---------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| a. | B- <b>in</b> -ili               | ng  | babae | ang | isda. |
|    | -Tr.Past-buy                    | Erg | woman | Abs | fish  |
|    | 'The woman bought the/*a fish.' |     |       |     |       |
| b. | B- <b>um</b> -ili               | ang | babae | ng  | isda. |
|    | -Intr.Perf-buy                  | Abs | woman | Obl | fish  |
|    | 'The woman bought a/*the fish.' |     |       |     |       |

According to Diesing's (1992) Mapping Hypothesis, a clause is divided into two parts at LF. Material inside VP is mapped to the nuclear scope, where it undergoes existential closure and receives a non-quantificational, existential interpretation. Material outside VP, on the other hand, is mapped to the restrictive clause and receives a quantificational or presuppositional reading.

In ergative languages, I have proposed that absolutive DPs raise out of VP to the outer specifier of  $vP$ , with the result that they will be mapped to the restrictive clause at LF. Therefore, absolutives must receive a presuppositional interpretation.



The oblique object in an antipassive, on the other hand, remains inside VP, since *v* is intransitive in antipassives and does not have an EPP feature. Consequently, the object will be mapped to the nuclear scope and undergo existential closure at LF to receive a nonpresuppositional reading.



The proposal presented in this section accounts for the asymmetry between declarative transitive and antipassive clauses. I will return to the question of pseudoclefts in section 5.

#### 4.2. Objections?

Though most Austronesian linguistics accept the fact that non-actor focus clauses in Philippine languages are active and transitive and therefore possibly ergative, many continue to reject the ergative analysis, claiming that these languages do not have a true antipassive construction (Shibatani 1988, Kroeger 1993, Schachter 1994, Paul & Travis 2003).

For example, Kroeger (1993) objects to the analysis of Tagalog actor focus as antipassive, because the object can control a gap in a participial clause. He claims that this shows that the object in question is a term, i.e. argument, and not an oblique.

- (20) Nanghuli      **ng**      **magnanakaw**<sub>i</sub> ang      polis<sub>j</sub>  
 AV.Perf.catch Gen      thief      Nom      police  
                  [nang PRO<sub>i/j</sub>] pumapasok      sa      bangko]  
                  Adv      AV.Imperf.enter      Dat      bank  
 ‘The police caught a/the thief when entering the bank.’  
 (Kroeger 1993:47)

Kroeger substantiates his distinction between terms and obliques by showing that the latter can undergo focus movement, while the former cannot.

- (21) a. Mag-bi-bigay=akong      bulaklak      kay      Maria.  
 Intr.Perf-Red-give Obl      flower      to      Maria.  
 ‘I will give flowers to Maria.’

- b. **Kay**        **Maria=ako**    mag-bi-bigay        ng        bulaklak.  
to                Maria=1sAbs    Intr.Perf-Red-give    Obl        flower  
‘I will give flowers *to Maria.*’
- c. \***Ng**        **bulaklak=ako** mag-bi-bigay        kay        Maria.  
Obl                flower=1sAbs    Intr.Perf-Red-give    to        Maria  
‘I will give *flowers* to Maria.’

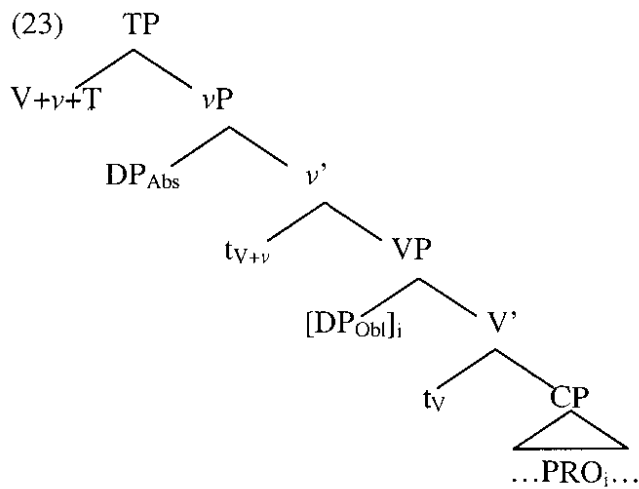
Kroeger’s distinction is actually between DPs and non-DPs, rather than between arguments and adjuncts. In terms of control, Kroeger’s analysis breaks down when confronted with examples of the following type. In (22), it is clear that PPs (obliques on Kroeger’s analysis) can be controllers.

- (22) a. Nag-utos        ang        nanay sa        [anak=niya]<sub>i</sub>-ng  
Intr.Perf-order    Abs        mother Dat    child=3sGen-Lk  
                          [PRO<sub>i</sub> mag-bantay    ng        bahay]  
                          Intr-watch        Obl        house  
                          ‘The mother ordered her child to watch the house.’
- b. Na-ka-tingin        si        Maria<sub>i</sub> sa        [kaibigan=niya]<sub>j</sub>  
Perf-Intr-see        Abs        Maria Dat        friend=3sGen  
                          [nang PRO<sub>i/j</sub> p-um-apasok        sa        bangko]  
                          C                -Intr.Perf-enterto        bank  
                          ‘Maria saw her friend entering the bank.’

The difference between PPs and oblique DPs is therefore one of category. Assuming that an EPP feature is realized as a strong [D] feature, the lack of such a feature on  $\nu$  is what prevents oblique DPs from fronting. Movement of PPs should not be relevant to the presence or absence of an EPP feature.

As to the question of how it is that oblique objects can be controllers, under my analysis of ergativity, this is not at all surprising. What distinguishes antipassive from transitive clauses is whether  $\nu$  checks absolutive case and has an EPP feature. In both cases, the verb still has an internal theta-role to assign, i.e. the object in both clause types is merged in argument position inside VP and is therefore in a position to c-command inside a complement clause.





### 5. Specificity of Embedded Obliques

As we have seen in section 1, oblique objects in antipassives can receive a specific interpretation in *wh*-questions.

- (24) Sino ang k-um-ain ng isda?  
 who Abs -Intr.Perf-eat Obl fish  
 'Who ate a/the fish.'

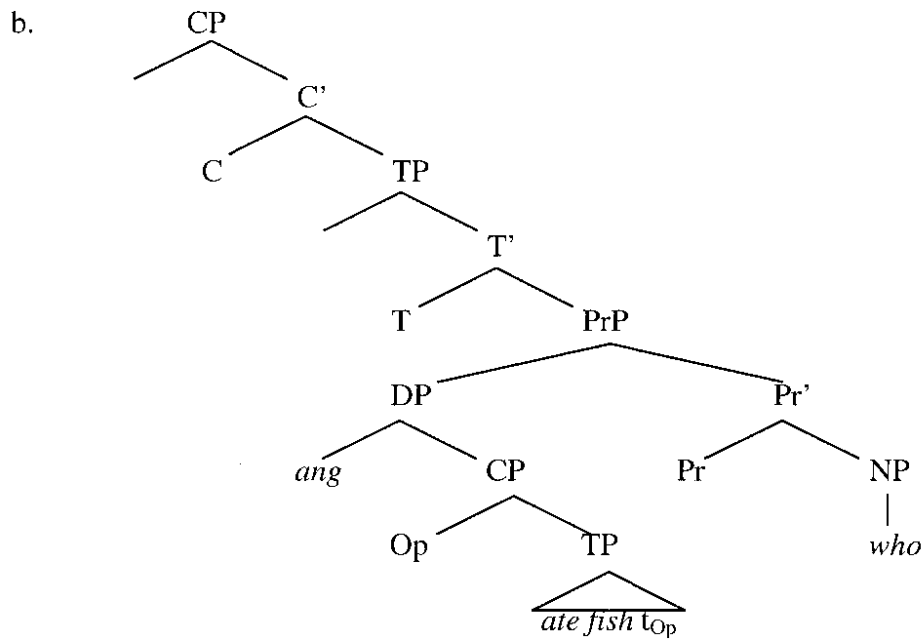
The analysis I proposed in section 4 does not predict this possibility, since intransitive *v* has no EPP feature and the oblique object is not forced to raise out of VP. Therefore, it should be in the nuclear scope at LF.

However, it is generally accepted that, in a great many Austronesian languages, *wh*-questions formed on DPs take the form of pseudoclefts (Aldridge 2002a, 2002b; Paul 2000; and many others). This fact suggests a natural account for (24). The direct object is contained inside the headless relative which provides the presupposition of the clause and is located in the matrix subject position, outside of the domain of existential closure. As part of the presupposition, then, the embedded direct object can also receive a specific interpretation.

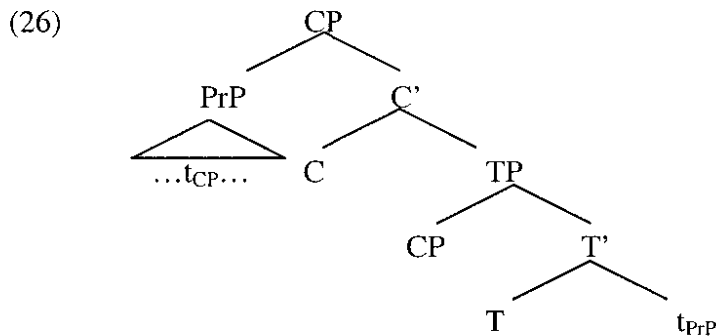
#### 5.1. *Wh*-questions as Pseudoclefts

In Aldridge (2004), I propose the following structure for Tagalog *wh*-questions formed on pseudoclefts. The *wh*-phrase forms the matrix predicate. The rest of the clause is contained in a headless relative, which is located in the matrix subject position.

- (25) a. Sino ang k-um-ain ng isda?  
 who Abs -Intr.Perf-eat Obl fish  
 'Who ate a/the fish.'



In order to obtain predicate-initial word order, the headless relative raises to matrix subject position, and PrP fronts to its left.



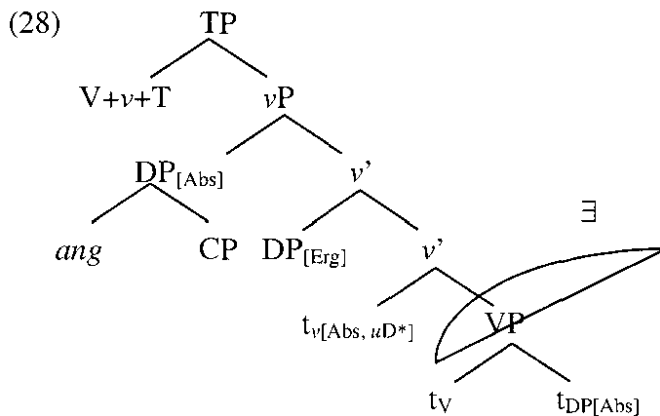
What is important for the discussion at hand is how the interpretation is derived. The headless relative, located in the [Spec, T] subject position, is mapped to the matrix restrictive clause. The embedded object, which is contained within the subject phrase, may also receive a definite or specific reading by virtue of the fact that it is part of the presupposition of the clause.

### 5.2. Relative Clauses in Argument Position

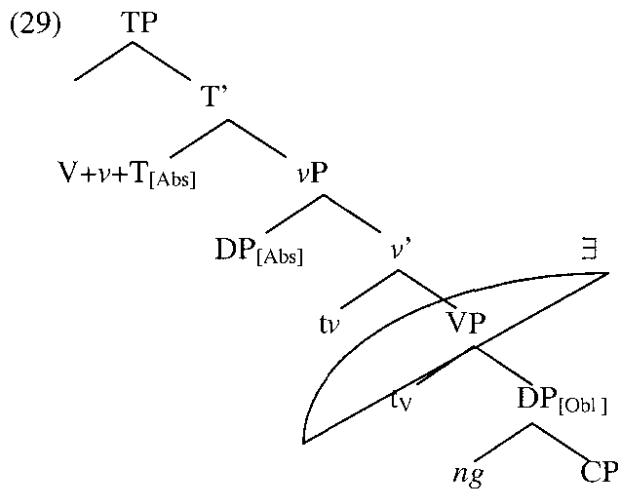
This account is further supported by examples in which an antipassive appears inside a relative clause in argument position. (27a) shows that an oblique object contained in a relative clause which itself has absolutive status in the matrix clause, may receive a specific or definite interpretation. On the other hand, if the relative clause is itself an oblique in an antipassive matrix clause, as in (27b), then the embedded object must be interpreted as nonspecific.

- (27) a. B-in-ili=ko  
 -Tr.Perf-buy=1sErg  
**ang** [pusa-ng k-um-ain ng daga].  
 Abs cat-Lk -Intr.Perf-eat Obl rat  
 ‘I bought the cat which ate a/the rat.’
- b. B-um-ili=ako  
 -Intr.Perf-buy=1sAbs  
**ng** [pusa-ng k-um-ain ng daga].  
 Obl cat-Lk -Intr.Perf-eat Obl rat  
 ‘I bought a cat which ate a/\*the rat.’

This is accounted for in the following way. If the relative clause has absolutive status, it moves to the outer specifier of  $v$  in the matrix clause. The clause itself is mapped to the presupposition at LF, and material contained inside it may also be presupposed, yielding the possibility of a specific interpretation for the embedded object.



On the other hand, if the relative clause has oblique status in the matrix clause, then it will not move out of VP and will undergo Existential Closure at LF. Material inside the clause will also be interpreted as nonspecific.



The key point of the analysis here is that the possibility of a specific interpretation for an embedded oblique object is dependent on mapping in the matrix clause. For lack of space, I am unable to introduce the analyses themselves, but there are proposals by Rackowski (2002) and Maclachlan and Nakamura (1997) which tie the specific interpretation of the oblique object to extraction of the external argument. However, the above examples clearly show that the specificity of the embedded oblique object cannot be tied to extraction of the agent. This is because the agent is extracted in the relative clauses in both (27a) and (27b), but only the object in (27a) can receive a specific interpretation. Aldridge (to appear) presents Rackowski's (2002) analysis and arguments against this approach.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has proposed an analysis of two types of specificity effect in Tagalog. As an ergative language, absolutes in Tagalog always receive a definite or generic interpretation, while oblique objects in antipassives are typically nonspecific. This alternation is accounted for by restricting the appearance of an EPP feature on *v* to transitive contexts only. The effect of this is that *v*'s EPP feature attracts the absolute DP to its outer specifier, where they will be mapped to the restrictive clause at LF and receive a generic or specific interpretation. Intransitive *v*, on the other hand, does not have an EPP feature. Oblique objects in antipassives typically remain inside VP and undergo Existential Closure at LF.

As we have seen, however, oblique objects may be specific when contained in a relative clause. However, the possibility of a specific interpretation for the embedded object is again dependent on the Mapping to LF in the matrix clause. When the containing relative is mapped to the restrictive clause, the embedded object is also allowed a specific interpretation. However, if the containing relative is mapped to the matrix nuclear scope, then the embedded object will also receive an existential, non-presuppositional interpretation.

## References

- Asher, Nicholas. and Alex. Lascarides. 1998. Bridging. *Journal of Semantics*. 15, 1.83-113.
- Aldridge, Edith. 2002a. Nominalization and Wh-movement in Seediq and Tagalog. *Language and Linguistics* 3, 2.393-426.
- Aldridge, Edith. 2002b. Wh-movement in Seediq and Tagalog. *Proceedings of AFLA 8: the Eighth Meeting of the Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association*, ed. by A. Rackowski & N. Richards, 1-15. MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 44.
- Aldridge, Edith. 2004. Ergativity and Word Order in Austronesian Languages. Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University.
- Aldridge, Edith. to appear. Antipassive, Clefting, and Specificity. *Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics* 11.1: Proceedings of the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual PLC.
- Basilico, David. 2003. The Antipassive: Low Transitivity Objects, Syntactic Intertness, and Strong Phases. Paper presented at the North American Syntax Conference. Montreal: Concordia University.
- Bittner, Maria. 1994. Case, Scope, and Binding. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Boskovic, Željko. 1997. Pseudoclefts. *Studia Linguistica* 51, 3.235-277.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist Inquiries. *Step by Step: Essays in Minimalist Syntax in Honor of Howard Lasnik*, ed. by R. Martin et al., 89-155. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001a. Derivation by Phase. *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*, ed. by M. Kenstowicz, 1-52. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001b. Beyond Explanatory Adequacy. *MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistics* 20.
- Collins, Peter. 1991. Pseudocleft and Cleft Constructions: A Thematic and Informational Interpretation. *Linguistics* 29.481-519.
- Cooreman, Ann. 1994. A Functional Typology of Antipassive. *Voice: Form and Function*, ed. by B. Fox and P. Hopper, 49-86. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- De Guzman, Videia P. 1988. Ergative Analysis for Philippine Languages: An Analysis. *Studies in Austronesian Linguistics*, ed. by R. McGinn, 323-345. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies
- Diesing, Molly. 1992. *Indefinites*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1979. Ergativity. *Language* 55.59-138
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1994. *Ergativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerdts, Donna B. 1988. Antipassives and Causatives in Ilokana: Evidence for an Ergative Analysis. *Studies in Austronesian Linguistics*, ed. by R. McGinn, 295-321. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Kalmar, I. 1979. The Antipassive and Grammatical Relations in Eskimo. *Ergativity*, ed. by Franz Plank, 117-143. New York: Academic Press.
- Knowles, John. 1986. The Cleft Sentence. *Lingua* 69.295-317.

- Kroeger, Paul. 1993. *Phrase Structure and Grammatical Relations in Tagalog*. Stanford: Center for the Study of Language and Information.
- Maclachlan, Anna and Masanori Nakamura. 1997. Case-checking and Specificity in Tagalog. *The Linguistic Review* 14.307-333.
- Paul, Ileana. 2000. *Malagasy Clause Structure*. Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University.
- Paul, Ileana and Lisa Travis. 2003. Ergativity in Austronesian Languages: What it can do, what it can't, but not why. Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Austronesian Formal Linguistic Association (AFLA), University of Hawaii.
- Payne, Thomas E. 1982. Role and Reference Related Subject Properties and Ergativity in Yup'ip Eskimo and Tagalog. *Studies in Language* 6, 1.75-106.
- Prince, Ellen. 1978. A Comparison of Wh-clefts and It-clefts in Discourse. *Language* 54, 4.883-906.
- Rackowski, Andrea. 2002. *The Structure of Tagalog: Specificity, Voice, and the Distribution of Arguments*. Ph.D. dissertation, MIT.
- Schachter, Paul. 1976. The Subject in Philippine Languages: Topic, actor, actor-topic, or none of the above. *Subject and Topic*, ed. by Charles Li, 491-518. New York: Academic Press.
- Schachter, Paul. 1994. The Subject in Tagalog: Still None of the Above. *UCLA Occasional Papers in Linguistics* 15.
- Schachter, P. and Fe T. Otnes. 1972. *Tagalog Reference Grammar*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Shibatani, Masayoshi. 1988. Voice in Philippine Languages. *Passive and Voice*, ed. by M. Shibatani, 85-142. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

### **Primary Source**

- Caliente, Kayla. *Ngayong Mahal na Kita*. Manila: Bookware Publishing Corporation.