

NI, PNI, AND QUASI PNI: TAGALOG AND THE TYPOLOGY OF INCORPORATION*

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We propose a preliminary typology of NI, PNI, Quasi PNI languages, re-examining data on pseudo noun incorporation (PNI) in Tagalog (Starr 2015; Barrie and Kim 2018). We show that nominals case-marked with *ng* have *some* typical PNI properties. In particular, these forms exhibit low scope and number neutrality; however, they are case marked and exhibit free movement. We suggest an analysis which we dub *internal restructuring*. Like (P)NI, functional material is removed from the nominal, but from the middle rather than from the top. We offer some tentative suggestions on the semantics of structural Case (or lack thereof) and how quasi PNI has the semantics of PNI without the syntactic properties of PNI.

1. Introduction

It has been noted that the genitive-marked object in Tagalog (hereafter, NG-marked) is by default non-specific while the nominative-marked object (hereafter ANG-marked) is, again by default, specific (Sabbagh 2016; Paul et al. 2015). These default specifications can be overridden by overt markers of specificity (such as ‘certain’ and the like). In addition to being non-specific, it has been noticed that NG-marked objects have other properties of pseudo noun incorporation (PNI), most notably number neutrality (Starr 2015; Barrie and Kim 2018). It lacks, however, other properties of PNI such as strict adjacency.

Most analyses of PNI posit a reduced structure in the nominal hierarchy to account for the effects of PNI (Massam 2001; Dayal 2011; López 2012; Clemens 2019; Baker 2014; Bliss 2018). Typically, the PNI object is argued to be either NP, *n*P, or NumP. What we will show for Tagalog is that the PNI object (or quasi PNI (QPNI) object in our terminology) has some of the properties of pseudo incorporation, but not all. Notably, the QPNI object is still case-marked and does not need to be adjacent to the verb. The QPNI object exhibits number neutrality, as mentioned above. Our proposal in a nutshell is that the QPNI object in Tagalog is the result of a process we call *internal restructuring*. While a full KP contains the full gamut of the extended nominal projection, a QPNI nominal in Tagalog is reduced, but in a way different from PNI in other languages. Based on a similar phenomenon in the verbal domain that Alboiu (2009) discusses, we propose that K selects *n*P directly. DP and NumP are missing. To be clear, here are the two structures we propose.

- (1) *Proposed Nominal Structures for Tagalog*
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. KP > DP > NumP > <i>n</i> P > NP | [regular nominal] |
| b. KP > <i>n</i> P > NP | [QPNI nominal] |

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The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 gives the background on PNI in general and on relevant aspects of Tagalog grammar. Section 3 reviews previous studies on PNI in Tagalog, including some of our own previous research. Section 4 is a discussion on the theoretical framework we propose for analyzing the data presented in section 3. Crucially, it is here where we present the idea of internal restructuring. Section 5 is a brief conclusion.

2. Background

We present some background information on PNI, along with relevant background on Tagalog.

2.1. Pseudo Noun Incorporation

PNI was first identified and analyzed in Massam (2001) while she was investigating Noun Incorporation in the Niuean language. PNI is where a noun is incorporated into the verb and certain morphology is dispensed with; note that the noun is a phrase rather than a head in the classical sense. Consider the following minimal pair.

(2) *PNI in Niuean*

- a. Kua fakahū he ekekafo e tohi.
PFV send ERG doctor ABS letter
'The doctor sent the letter.'
- b. Kua fakahū tohi e ekekafo.
PFV send letter ABS doctor
'The doctor sent the letter.'

While both (2a) and (2b) refer to the same situation, the object in (2b) has undergone PNI, attested to by the fact that there is no case on the PNI-ed object. PNI objects typically exhibit reduced morphology, e.g., lack of case-marking. Observe further that the subject is marked with absolutive, indicating reduced transitivity on the verb. Syntactic characteristics of PNI include reduced nominal structure (as just explained) and strict adjacency with the verb (Massam 2001; Clemens 2019; Baker 2014).

Semantic characteristics of PNI include number-neutrality, indefiniteness, non-referentiality, and obligatory low scope (Dayal 2011; van Geenhoven 1998). Number neutrality, also called general number, refers to the lack of a distinction between singular and plural. In such a case, an unmarked noun can receive either a singular or a plural interpretation.

2.2. Tagalog

Tagalog is known to have a complex Case system. Further, whether Tagalog has nominative Case alignment or ergative Case alignment is still debated. Reserving judgement on this debate, we opt for the terms nominative, genitive (accusative), and oblique case, which, on common nouns, are marked by *ang*, *ng*, and *sa* respectively.

- (3) K<um>ain ng mansanas ang babae sa kusina.
<PST.AV>eat NG apple ANG woman SA kitchen
'The woman ate an apple in the kitchen.'

As shown in (3), the verb is marked with the actor voice (AV), the agent is marked with nominative case, the theme with genitive, and the location with oblique case. Actor voice indicates that the actor (or agent) is the *ang*-marked nominal, typically considered the grammatical subject (Kroeger 1993). Consider now the following example with object voice. Here, the theme (or logical object) is marked with *ang*.

- (4) B<in>ili ng babae ang mansanas kahapon.
<PST.OV>buy NG woman ANG apple yesterday
'The apple was bought by a woman yesterday.'

In previous work on Tagalog, Starr (2015) analyzes *ng*-objects in Tagalog as having undergone PNI. *Ng*-marked objects can receive a general number reading, while *ang*-marked objects cannot. Furthermore, *ng*-marked objects with an adjective resist general number. However, in a subsequent study that replicated Starr's investigation, we found that *ng*-marked objects with an adjective can also exhibit number neutrality for some speakers. Finally, it has been observed that *ng*-marked arguments can be specific or unspecific in contrast to *sa*-marked arguments (Latrouite 2011; Sabbagh 2016).

3. "PNI" in Tagalog

Number neutrality of *ng*-objects and number-specificity of *ang*-marked arguments (Starr 2015) are confirmed in our previous study (Barrie and Kim 2018).

- (5) a. B<um>ili ang babae ng mansanas.
<PST.AV>buy ANG woman NG apple
'The woman bought an apple/some apples.'
- b. B<um>ili ang babae ng mga mansanas.
<PST.AV>buy ANG woman NG PL apple
'The woman bought some apples'
- c. B<in>ili ng babae ang mansanas kahapon.
<PST.OV>buy NG woman ANG apple yesterday
'The apple was bought by a woman yesterday.'

Our data on general number broadly aligns with Starr in that a *ng*-NP can have general number while an *ang*-NP cannot. Recall, however, that Starr reported that a *ng*-NP with an adjective is not number neutral. In our prior work we found that a *ng*-NP with an adjective is number neutral for some speakers. Here are some relevant examples.

- (6) a. B<um>ili ng libro ang babae.
 <PST.AV>bought NG book ANG woman
 ‘The woman bought a book/some books.’
- b. B<um>ili ng pula-ng libro ang babae.
 <PST.AV>bought NG red-LNK book ANG woman
 ‘The woman bought a red book/%some red books.’
- c. B<in>ili ang libro ng babae
 <PST.OV>bought ANG book NG woman
 ‘The woman bought a book/*some books.’

A *ng*-object can be specific or non-specific. A specific reading can be induced by modifiers such as ‘certain’ (Paul et al. 2015; Sabbagh 2016), and an *ang*-marked object is typically specific, but a non-specific reading can be forced in certain contexts (Paul et al. 2015). Note, though, that a *sa*-marked object is always specific (Latrouite 2011; Sabbagh 2016). Consider the following examples.

- (7) *Specificity*
- a. Si Maria ang k<um>ain ng mansanas.
 ANG.PR Maria ANG eat.PST.AV NG apple
 ‘Maria is the one who ate an apple.’
- b. Pero hindi ko alam kung alin.
 but NEG I know whether which
 ‘But I don’t know which one.’
- c. Si Maria ang k<um>ain sa mansanas.
 ANG.PR Maria ANG eat.PST.AV SA apple
 ‘Maria is the one who ate an apple.’
- d. #Pero hindi ko alam kung alin.
 But NEG I know whether which
 (‘But I don’t know which one.’)

In terms of scope, a *ng*-object scopes low (optionally high with negation, though) and *ang*- and *sa*-objects obligatorily scope high.

- (8) *Scope under Negation*
- a. Hindi k<um>ain si Juan ng mansanas dahil wala nito.
 NEG <AV>eat ANG Juan NG apple because nothing this
 ‘Juan didn’t eat an apple because there aren’t any.’
- b. Hindi k<um>ain si Juan ng mansanas ...Sige. Ako na lang ang
 NEG <AV>eat ANG Juan NG apple ...Ok. 1SG.ANG now only ANG
 ka~kain n-ito.
 CONT.AV~eat NG-this
 ‘Juan didn’t eat the apple ...Ok. I’ll eat it then.’

- c. *Hindi k<in>ain ni Juan ang mansanas dahil wala nito.
 NEG <OV>eat NG Juan ANG apple because nothing this
 ('Juan didn't eat the apple because it doesn't exist.')
- d. Hindi k<in>ain ni Juan ang mansanas ...Sige. Ako na lang ang
 NEG <OV>eat NG Juan ANG apple ...Ok. 1SG.ANG now only ANG
 ka~kain n-ito.
 CONT.AV~eat NG-this
 'Juan didn't eat the apple ...Ok. I'll eat it then.'

(9) *Scope under Modal dapat 'should'*

- a. Dapat k<um>ain si Juan ng mansanas.
 MOD <AV>eat ANG Juan NG apple
 'Juan needs to eat an apple.' (speaker: any apple)
- b. Dapat kain-in ni Juan ang mansanas.
 MOD eat-OV NG Juan ANG apple
 'Juan needs to eat an apple.' (speaker: a specific apple)

PNI in Niuean requires strict adjacency between the verb and the PNI object (Massam 2001; Baker 2014; Clemens 2019). Such strict adjacency is typically considered a hallmark property of PNI (but see Baker 2014). What we are dubbing quasi PNI in Tagalog, here, does not exhibit this adjacency requirement. The following examples show some of the word order possibilities.¹

(10) *Word Order with Quasi-PNI*

- a. B<um>ili ng libro ang babae.
 <PST.AV>bought NG book ANG woman
 'The woman bought a book/some books.'
- b. B<um>ili ng pula-ng libro ang babae.
 <PST.AV>bought NG red-LNK book ANG woman
 'The woman bought a red book/%some red books.'
- c. B<in>ili ang libro ng babae
 <PST.OV>bought ANG book NG woman
 'The woman bought a book/*some books.'

As shown above, Tagalog purported PNI objects differ from typical PNI objects in that they are marked with case and further can move out of VP, which should be impossible given the fact that the noun should be incorporated into the VP to be termed "(P)NI." This suggests that a previous PNI-based analysis on Tagalog does not suffice to describe Tagalog data.

¹ Note that for object voice there is a strong tendency for the subject to be immediately post-verbal (Sabbagh 2016, fn.24). Thanks to the participants at AFLA 25 for pointing this issue out. In our own fieldwork and in discussions with other Tagalog-speaking linguists, a small minority did accept VOS order with object voice.

4. Discussion

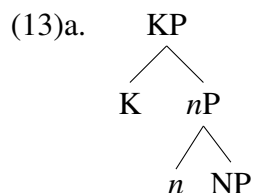
Restructuring typically chips away from the highest functional projection. For clausal restructuring, the verb selects a CP, TP, *v*P, or VP. For nominal restructuring, the verb selects a KP, DP, NumP, *n*P, or NP. In other words, the extended verbal or nominal projection projects up to a certain height, and is then selected by the superordinate verb. Consider, however, Alboiu (2009) where she argues, based on data from Avram (2003), that C can select AspP directly with no intervening TP in certain constructions in Romanian. She argues that there is no evidence for TP as there is no expression of tense of any kind. She does note that epistemic adverbs (such as *probably*) and topicalized phrases are possible, suggesting a CP layer. The initial gerund clause (GER) in the first example shows these properties, and is adjoined to the matrix clause. The second example shows a gerund clause selected by the matrix verb.

- (11)a. Ea fiind încă supărată, am decis să plecăm singuri.
 3SG.F.NOM be-GER yet upset.3SG.F, AUX.1PL decided SBJ leave.1PL alone.1PL
 ‘What with her still being upset, we decided to leave by ourselves.’ (Alboiu 2009, ex.5)
- b. L-am auzit venind spre casă.
 him-have heard come.GER towards home
 ‘I heard him coming home.’ (Avram 2003, ex.2a)

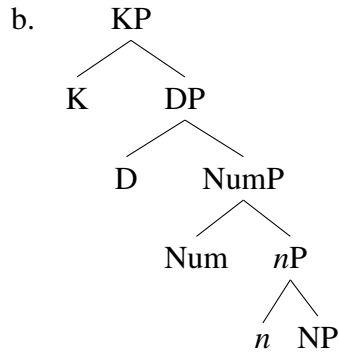
Thus, the gerundive clause in the Romanian example has the structure CP > AspP > *v*P > VP. Rather than restructuring from the top, this is restructuring from the middle, which we dub *internal restructuring*. Recall the two sentences that illustrate the phenomenon under consideration.

- (12)a. B<um>ili ang babae ng mansanas
 <PST.AV>buy ANG woman NG mansanas
 ‘The woman bought some an apple/some apples.’
- b. B<in>ili ng babae ang mansanas kahapon
 <PST.OV>buy NG woman ANG apple yesterday
 ‘The apple was bought by a woman yesterday.’

We propose that Tagalog quasi PNI, as in example (12a), results from internal restructuring. Specifically, a defective K selects *n*P directly, with no intervening DP or NumP.² We propose the following structures for the *ng*-object in (12a) and the *ang*-object in (12b), respectively.



² We use the term *defective* here rather loosely, assuming that *ng* is, in some way, the default case.



Case features are typically assumed to be uninterpretable (Adger 2003; Pesetsky and Torrego 2001). While discussions on the semantic contribution of D are plentiful in the literature, discussions of the semantic denotation of K are scant. Let’s assume that there is a link between K and D. That is, definiteness and/or specificity may ultimately derive from K (Kim 2019; López 2012; Kornfilt 1984; Öztürk 2005; Enç 1991). We assume that default Case, however, is semantically opaque.³

There is a long tradition of treating DP as type e and NP (or nP) as type $\langle e, t \rangle$ (Chierchia 1998, *inter alia*). We propose further that a defective K head may select nP . Our analysis for quasi PNI, then, is as follows. Consider first the *ng*-object in Tagalog. The KP in (13a) has the same denotation as nP , with type $\langle e, t \rangle$. In other words, it has the same semantics of bare nominals in more traditional (P)NI languages. NumP is missing, so there is no specification for number. The presence of K, however, requires Case checking, giving rise to the potential for movement, as with other Case marked nominals. This accounts for the free word order of the *ng*-object. The KP in (13b) takes DP as a complement. Thus, this KP is of type e , and as such gives rise to the usual semantic and syntactic properties of a full nominal.

The upshot of our proposal is as follows. K_{ng} can take any nominal complement (DP or nP), as it lacks definiteness and specificity features. K_{ang} , having definiteness and/or specificity features to pass down to D, must take a DP complement.

We turn now to some speculations on how adjectives fit into the picture so far. Exactly how adjectives merge into the extended nominal projection still a matter of debate. (See Cinque (2010) and Ernst (2002) for opposing views.) We assume that adjuncts adjoin to some maximal projection. That is, we do not assume a Cinquean cartography for adjectives, although we do not think that amending the proposal here to a Cinquean hierarchy would pose any great difficulties. In fact, it remains to be seen if different kinds of adjectives have any effect on the results found here.⁴ Furthermore, individual grammars may allow adjectives to adjoin in different locations.⁵ If an adjective adjoins above nP , then a full extended nominal will be projected. Such a speaker will not exhibit number neutrality in *ng*-marked nominals.

We end with a brief discussion of Sabbagh’s (2016) analysis of specificity in Tagalog. Sabbagh accounts for the following types of objects in ACTOR-SUBJECT constructions.

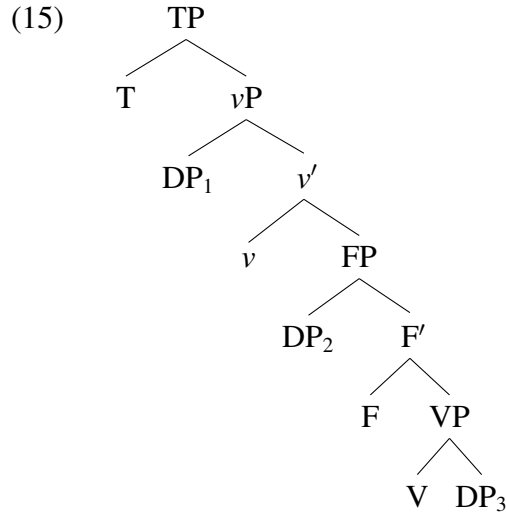
³ There is clearly a parallel between C to T feature inheritance and K to D feature inheritance alluded to here, as discussed in Kim (2019). We do not pursue the ramifications of this proposal here.

⁴ Specifically, a Cinquean hierarchy would predict that certain adjectives would require the presence of higher functional categories, perhaps in effect, requiring the presence of a DP. We leave this question to future research.

⁵ See Han et al. (2007) for an example of different grammars in an otherwise homogenous speech community.

- (14)a. Proper nouns, pronouns, *sa*-marked objects - DP₁
- b. Definite/specific NG-marked objects - DP₂
- c. Non-specific NG-marked objects - DP₃

He adopts Diesing’s Mapping Hypothesis (Diesing 1992) and gives the following structural analysis for these three kinds of objects.⁶



Sabbagh argues that the non-specific object (DP₃) is of type <e,t>, the others being of type e (or type <<e,t>,t> for quantified nouns). As such, it remains inside VP and is licensed by existential closure. Recall that argued this nominal has the structure in (13a), which is consistent with Sabbagh’s claim that this nominal is of type <e,t>. Sabbagh’s proposal on the clausal structure and semantic type of nominals coupled with the proposal here on the internal structure of nominals and number neutrality offers a coherent explanation for the facts.

We end here with an open question. Sabbagh’s discussion predicts that number neutrality should not be observed for DP₁ or DP₂ (in his terms—KP in our terms). These nominals are of type e, suggesting the presence of DP, hence the structure in (13b). We leave this question for future research.

5. Conclusions

We have argued that the properties of the *ng*-object in Tagalog result from its syntactic structure. Specifically, the *ng*-object consists of a KP that selects an *nP* directly (*internal restructuring*). We have dubbed this construction Quasi PNI as it has some of the properties of PNI (number neutrality, low scope) but still exhibits some properties of a full nominal (overt case marking, free movement). We have proposed that K (Case) is semantically opaque and that KP has the same semantic denotation as the sister of the K head. While K typically takes DP as a complement, we have suggested that a defective K (*ng*) takes a bare *nP* as a complement. It remains to be seen whether this analysis can be carried over to other similar constructions such as the partitive

⁶ Sabbagh assumes an additional functional projection sandwiched between *vP* and *VP* (Koizumi 1995; Johnson 1991). See however, Harley (2013) and Legate (2014) for arguments that VoiceP and *vP* are distinct functional projections. Note that we have simplified the structure in (15) for ease of exposition.

in Finnish (Kiparsky 1998). Finally, we showed that the proposal here meshes neatly with the proposal in Sabbagh (2016). We left open the question whether the definite or specific *ng*-marked objects in the ACTOR VOICE construction exhibits number neutrality. The proposal offered here predicts that we should not find number neutrality in these cases.

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