

# Voice and general number in Tagalog

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Various semantic features of Tagalog, an Austronesian language, are voice dependent. Telicity, scope, and specificity to name a few. The fact that Tagalog has general number (GN) is not new (Corbett 2000). What is new is that it is voice dependent. My analysis examines Tagalog general number with respect to incorporation.

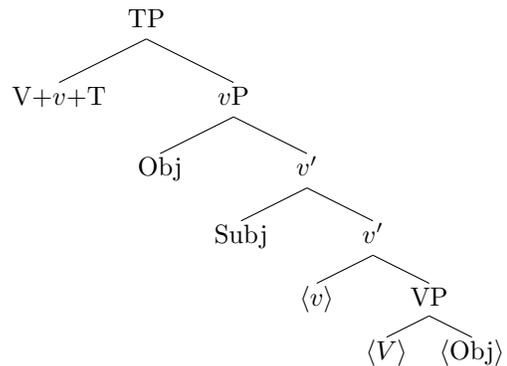
Tagalog GN is briefly described as a system where the morphology of singular nouns is shared with GN nouns (Corbett 2000:16). An unmodified form like *libro* can mean ‘book’ or ‘books’. There are several restrictions in place; only objects can have GN and they must be unmodified. There is an additional restriction on GN not noted in the literature, namely, that GN is voice dependent. Only unmodified objects in agent voice (AV) sentences have GN interpretations (see (1)-a). Unmodified objects in patient voice (PV) can only denote a singular noun (see (1)-b). (Both examples have V[S][O] word order.)

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| (1) | a. | B<um>ili [ang babae] [ng libro].<br>AV.buy ANG woman NG book<br>‘The woman bought one or more books.’ | b. | B<in>ili [ng babae] [ang libro].<br>PV.buy NG woman ANG book<br>‘The woman bought the book.’ |
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General number is characteristic of noun incorporation (NI) however my analysis finds that Tagalog GN shares the semantic properties of NI but not the syntactic properties. In traditional NI, the incorporated noun maintains a close relationship to the verb. Tagalog allows free post-verbal word order and GN interpretations are unaffected by whether a sentence has VSO or VOS word order. Thus, I describe Tagalog as a pseudo-NI language, borrowing the term from Massam (2001).

Specificity and GN are often mutually exclusive and this holds true for Tagalog as well. Non-specific objects have GN and specific objects are atomic. The semantic framework of my analysis uses Chung and Ladusaw (2004)’s *Restriction and Saturation* to distinguish between agent voice and patient voice. I also draw parallels between previous syntactic analyses on specificity and my description of voice dependent general number. The given tree structure, borrowed from Rackowski (2002) and Aldridge (2012), forms the syntactic basis for my analysis. Subjects are generated as the [spec *v*P] and are inherently specific. There are two object copies with various effects on word order and voice. Word order is dependent on which copy of

the object is pronounced at PF. Pronouncing the higher copy yields VOS word order and pronouncing the lower copy yields VSO word order. Voice is a morphological indicator of which copy of the object is interpreted at LF, interpreting the higher copy yields patient voice and interpreting the lower copy yields agent voice.



My analysis expands on this by providing a syntactic and semantic description of voice dependent general number in Tagalog.

## References

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