Composition and definiteness without articles: A case study in Tagalog

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1. Introduction

The semantic property of definiteness is signalled in a variety of ways cross-linguistically. In English, the definiteness of NPs is for the most part signalled by articles like the and a. But other options are available when a broader cross-linguistic perspective is taken. This paper focuses on how the definiteness of NPs is signalled in Tagalog. Although Tagalog lacks definite articles, the definiteness of an NP can nevertheless be signalled by particular verbal affixes. This paper asks how a morpheme on the verb could determine the interpretation of an NP. How can we reconcile this kind of morphosyntactic signalling of definiteness with our understanding of NP interpretation and semantic composition?

I argue that one function of these verbal affixes is to shift the type of a transitive verb, thereby constraining the possible types of its argument NPs. Thus, NPs are forced to type-shift in certain cases in order for semantic composition to be successful. These type-shifts may induce a definite interpretation of the NP. Therefore, in Tagalog, definiteness emerges within the semantic composition and is not encoded by the lexical semantics of any dedicated definite article like English the. The paper shows that a theory of type-shifting allows for significant flexibility in compositional accounts of cross-linguistic variation in the morphosyntactic signalling of definiteness.

I show that, in Tagalog, bare NPs are interpreted as presuppositional definites if they are transitive patients marked with nominative case. With certain quantificational determiners, nominative patients may be interpreted as quantificational indefinites. In this respect I concur with the proposal of Paul et al. to appear that the Tagalog nominative case marker ang does not itself encode for either definiteness or indefiniteness (contra, e.g., Himmelmann 1998, 2005b).

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I also argue that bare NPs are *narrow scope indefinites* if they are transitive patients marked with genitive case. Genitive patients obligatorily scope beneath other scope-taking operators such as negation and intensional transitive verbs. However, in the absence of other operators, they may be interpreted as referential indefinites in the sense of Fodor & Sag 1982. I account for this pattern by proposing that genitive patients compose with their selecting verb via “semantic incorporation” à la Van Geenhoven 1998.

2. **The definiteness effect of voice and case**

Tagalog’s system of voice affixation and case marking is largely typical of western Austronesian languages (see e.g., Himmelmann 2005a). Foley (2008) makes the case that western Austronesian voice systems do not reduce to more familiar voice systems crosslinguistically, such as those employing passives and antipassives, but constitute their own class, termed “symmetrical voice systems”. This is the approach I assume here.

Tagalog voice affixes serve to promote one NP to subjecthood. Arguments that the promoted NP is a subject are found in De Wolf 1988, Kroeger 1993:§2. Unlike familiar voice systems, there is no morphologically unmarked voice (corresponding to e.g., the English active voice). In (1), the transitive root *tago* (‘hide’) may take either a patient-voice (PV) (1a) or an actor-voice (AV) (1b) affix, promoting the thematic patient or actor to subjecthood respectively. In both cases, the voice is morphologically marked. In Tagalog, subjecthood is marked by the nominative case marker *ang* on common nouns (1a), or by the nominative series of pronouns (e.g., the NOM.1SG pronoun *ako* in (1b)).

(1) a. \(t(\text{in})\text{ago} \ ko \ \text{ang kompyuter} \) \\
PV.PERF-hide GEN.1SG NOM computer
I hid the computer.

b. \(\text{nag-tag} \ ko \ ng \ \text{kompyuter} \) \\
AV.PERF-hide NOM.1SG GEN computer
I hid a computer.

In both cases, the subcategorized argument of the affixed verb which is not a subject is marked with genitive case, signalled by the marker *ng* on a common noun (1b), or by the genitive series of pronouns (e.g., the GEN.1SG pronoun *ko* in (1a)). Unlike more familiar voice systems such as passives and antipassives, the non-subject, subcategorized argument of the affixed verb is not demoted to an oblique status (Kroeger 1993:47–48, Foley 2008).

Of central import to this paper is the semantic distinction between the patient NPs in (1). The data in this section provides evidence that the distinguishing property is definiteness. Previous accounts (Rackowski 2002, Aldridge 2004, Rackowski & Richards 2005) characterize Tagalog nominative patients as specific. I argue that this characterization is not sufficiently precise. I instead adopt the generalizations in (2), taking the interpretation

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1Abbreviations: AV actor voice, CAUS causative, COMP complementizer, FUT future, GEN genitive, INF infinitive, LK linker, NEG negation, NOM nominative, OBL oblique, PERF perfect, PL plural, PURP purposive clause, PV patient voice, SG singular, TOP topic marker
of nominative patients to be sensitive to whether the nominative NP is bare or contains quantificational material.

(2) a. Bare nominative patients (without additional quantificational material) are presuppositional definites.
   b. Nominative patients with indefinite quantificational determiners may be interpreted as indefinites.

In section 2.1, I focus on generalization (a). I show that the characterization of bare nominative patients as specific is too weak, potentially allowing for indefinite readings of bare nominative patients. I contrast bare nominative patients with bare genitive patients, which I argue are interpreted as indefinites.

2.1 Bare nominative and genitive patients

The data in (3) indicate that bare nominative patients, but not bare genitive patients, impose on the discourse context a felicity condition that the descriptive content of the NP must be instantiated by at least one individual. The utterance of the nominative patient *ang wizard* in (3a) is unacceptable as the mutual beliefs of the conversational participants do not determine whether or not a wizard exists. If the nominative patient in (3a) were able to be interpreted as a specific indefinite, (3a) should be felicitous. The genitive patient *ng wizard* in the same context is acceptable (3b), implying that the same condition is not imposed.

(3) a. Context: *Juan and Maria approach a closed, sound proof room. Maria walks in, then re-emerges and says:*
   #Na-kilala PERF.PV-meet GEN.1SG NOM wizard
   I met the wizard. (Comment: confusing, which wizard does she mean?)

   b. Naka-kilala ako ng wizard
   PERF.AV-meet NOM.1SG GEN wizard
   I met a wizard. (Comment: fine)

Further, bare nominative patients, but not bare genitive patients, enforce a requirement that the referent be unique or highly salient among individuals who instantiate the NP’s descriptive content. In (4), the use of the nominative patient *ang lawnmower ni Maria* is only acceptable if the discourse context entails the existence of only one salient lawnmower. In Context B, which does not support uniqueness, the usage is only acceptable if one lawnmower is understood as being more contextually salient than the others.

(4) Context A: *The speaker knows that Maria only has one lawnmower and wants to borrow it.*
   Context B: #?*The speaker knows that Maria has more than one lawnmower.*
A similar point can be made with the data in (5), adapting a diagnostic from Matthewson 1998:106). In (5a), nominative patients with the same descriptive content are understood as being coreferential, despite the implausible interpretation. This is expected if nominative patients impose a constraint that the descriptive content is instantiated by unique (or most salient) individuals. In (5b), no such constraint is imposed and the two genitive patients are able to refer to distinct individuals.

(5) a. Na-huli ni Maria **ang mamamatay tao** noong Miyerkules at na-huli PV-catch GEN Maria NOM murderer on Wednesday and PV-catch ni Carlos **ang mamamatay tao** noong Huwebes Maria caught the murderer on Wednesday and Carlos caught the murderer on Thursday. (Comment: Sounds like Maria let him go.)

b. Naka-huli si Maria **ng mamamatay tao** noong Miyerkules at naka-huli AV.catch NOM Maria GEN murderer on Wednesday and AV.catch si Carlos **ng mamamatay tao** noong Huwebes Maria caught a murderer NOM Carlos GEN murderer on Thursday on Wednesday and Carlos caught a murderer on Thursday.’ (Comment: Fine, different murderers.).

Thus, it appears that the use of nominative patients implies that the descriptive content of the NP has a unique salient referent in the context, a prototypical implication of presuppositional definites.

Moving to genitive patients of actor voice-affixed verbs, previous authors (e.g., Rackowski 2002, Aldridge 2004, Rackowski & Richards 2005) have argued that genitive patients are interpreted as nonspecific indefinites. Just as the characterization of bare NP nominative patients as specific is too weak, the characterization of genitive patients as nonspecific is too strong. In the absence of higher scoping material, genitive patients may be used referentially. In (6a), the genitive patient **ng estudyante** can be further elaborated by naming a referent. In (6b), the indefinite **ng babae** antecedes a pronominal anaphora **siya**, and further, the indefinite is fully identified as a particular individual.

(6) a. t⟨um⟩ukso si Carlos ng estudyante. Juan ang pangalan niya ⟨AV.PERF⟩.tease NOM Carlos GEN student. Juan NOM name GEN.3SG Carlos teased a student. Juan was his name.
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b. nakilala ako ng babae, at saka, siya ay si Jennifer
AV.meet NOM.SG GEN woman, and also, NOM.3SG TOP NOM Jennifer
I’ve met a woman, and what’s more, it’s Jennifer.

Sabbagh (to appear) provides several more examples of genitive patients used referentially. Examples like (6) and Sabbagh’s are unexpected under a characterization of genitive patients as necessarily nonspecific.

I instead propose that bare genitive patients are better characterized as narrow-scope indefinites: indefinites which necessarily scope beneath clausemate scope-taking operators if such operators are present. Their obligatory narrow-scope is evidenced by examples like (7). Here, the existential meaning component introduced by the genitive patient must scope beneath negation. Similar results obtain for conditionals, modals, and intensional transitive verbs. Thus, the referential uses in (6) require the absence of any higher scoping operators that cancel the existential commitment of the genitive patient.

(7) Context A: There are two interesting films, but Juan had an appointment so couldn’t see either.
Context B: *There are two interesting films, but Juan only saw one of them.
Hindi nakapanood si Juan ng interesanteng pelikula ngayon araw
NEG AV.watch NOM Juan GEN interesting.LK film today
Juan didn’t watch an interesting film today (true in context A, false in context B)

The data provided in this section support the view that bare nominative patients are presuppositional definites, while bare genitive patients are narrow-scope indefinites.

2.2 Quantified nominative patients

The previous subsection dealt with bare nominative patients. This subsection expands the picture to include quantified nominative patients. I show that the addition of indefinite determiners may create a quantificational indefinite. The nominative case marker ang may appear on both bare nominative patients and quantified nominative patients, and thus, on either indefinite or definite NPs. Based on this observation, I conclude that ang does not encode for definiteness, reaching the same conclusion as Paul et al 2016, contra Foley 1998, Himmelmann 1998, 2005b who analyze ang as an article.

The primary evidence against the analysis of ang as a definite article comes from indefinite uses of ang marked phrases. When ang is coupled with certain quantificational expressions such as isang ‘one’, the resulting NP can have an indefinite interpretation. This effect is mentioned in Kroeger 1993:15 and discussed in more detail in Adams & Manaster-Ramer 1988 and Paul et al. to appear (see also Bell 1978 on Cebuano). In (8), the bolded NPs with ang isang introduces novel discourse referents. Unlike NPs with just ang, there is no felicity condition that the existence of an individual instantiating the NP content is a common ground belief.

(8) Context A: There are two interesting films, but Juan had an appointment so couldn’t see either.
Context B: *There are two interesting films, but Juan only saw one of them.
Hindi nakapanood si Juan ng interesanteng pelikula ngayon araw
NEG AV.watch NOM Juan GEN interesting.LK film today
Juan didn’t watch an interesting film today (true in context A, false in context B)
(8) a. I-s(in)alaysay ni Jesus ang isang talinhaga upang ituro sa kanila PV.(PERF).recount GEN Jesus NOM one parable PURP teach OBL them na dapat silang laging manalangin LK must NOM.3SG.LK always.LK INF.AV.CAUS.pray Jesus recounted a parable in order to teach them that they must always pray... (Lukas 18:1).

b. Sa OBL kanilang they. LK pamamalagi stay sa OBL bahay house ni GEN Tazuna Tazuna ay TOP nakilala PERF.meet GEN nila.3 PL ang isang bata na si Inari, apo ni Tazuna. NOM one child COMP NOM Inari, grandson GEN Tazuna During their stay at Tazuna’s house, they met a boy who was named Inari, grandson of Tazuna.2

Furthermore, the uniqueness requirement of nominative patients is suspended with the addition of isang. In a variation on example (5a), two NPs with the same descriptive content in parallel clauses with ang isang are not necessarily understood to be coreferential (9). In fact, consultants preferred the non-coreferential interpretation of (9).

(9) h⟨in⟩uli ni Maria ang isang magnanakaw noong Miyerkoles, samantala ⟨PV.PERF⟩.catch GEN Maria NOM one thief on Wednesday, while h⟨in⟩uli ni Juan ang isang magnanakaw noong Huwebes ⟨PV.PERF⟩.catch GEN Juan NOM one thief on Thursday Maria caught a thief on Wednesday, while Juan caught a thief on Thursday.’ (Comment: two different thieves.)

Evidence that NPs with ang isang are truly quantificational indefinites comes from conditional sentences. In (10a), the existence implication of the bare nominative patient scopes out of the conditional antecedent, expected under an account where bare nominative patients are presuppositional definites. In (10b) and (10c), the introduction of isang into the nominative NP cancels this effect, the existential quantification scoping within the conditional antecedent.

(10) a. Maiinis si Mary kung ipapatugtog ni John ang rekord annoyed NOM Mary if PV.FUT.CAUS.play GEN John NOM record Mary will be annoyed if John plays the record. (Comment: There’s a specific record.

b. Maiinis si Mary kung ipapatugtog ni John ang isang rekord annoyed NOM Mary if PV.FUT.CAUS.play GEN John NOM one record Mary will be annoyed if John plays a record. (Comment: Any record in general.)

2tl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naruto
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c. Ano ang dapat kong gawin kung nakaligtaan ko ang isang dosis? 
   What must GEN.1SG.LK do.PV if PV.PERF.omit GEN.1SG NOM one dose 
   What do I do if I miss a dose?³

The data above suggests that the addition of isang in a nominative patient NP suspends the ordinary definite presuppositions (existence and uniqueness). If nominative patients may become indefinite merely by the addition of isang, we must conclude that the definite implications of bare nominative NPs are not due to the nominative case marker ang, which is present in both definite and indefinite nominative patients.

This effect can also be observed with universal quantifiers. In the following web example, consultants judge the author as not necessarily committed to the existence of jeeps which will stop on the curb.

(11) Hulihin at pagmultahin [ang lahat ng jeep na hihimpil sa kanto para catch.PV and fine.PIV NOM all GEN jeep COMP FUT.stop OBL curb for maghintay ng pasahero] 
   AV.INF.pick-up GEN passenger 
   Catch and fine all jeeps that park on the curb in order to pick up passengers.⁴

Similarly the following sentence with a nominative universally quantified object is perfectly acceptable in a discourse context which does not entail the existence of individuals instantiating the descriptive content.

(12) a. mumultahin ni John [ang lahat ng lalakad sa damo’] 
   FUT.fine.PV GEN John NOM all GEN FUT.walk OBL grass 
   John will fine everyone who walks on the grass.

  b. aarestohin ni John [ang lahat ng magnanakaw sa distrito niya] 
   FUT.arrest.PV GEN John NOM all GEN thief OBL district NOM.3SG 
   John will arrest every thief in his district. (Comment: It’s like a general rule, doesn’t mean there are thieves in his neighbourhood.)

The nominative case marker ang is able to mark both definite and indefinite NPs, depending on the presence or absence of quantificational material. Thus, ang cannot enode definiteness directly; rather, definiteness emerges in the course of semantic composition. In the next section, I provide an analysis of how the compositional semantics gives rise to definite interpretations of bare NPs.

³http://www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/8EE8C1E4-0227-4CEC-9A45-0C883C1D412E/0/IsoniazidMarch2015_TagV04.pdf
⁴http://www.autoindustriya.com/talkboard/shoulder-lane/6/survey-on-traffic/20147
3. Patient voice and type-shifting

In this section I provide a compositional account of the observed facts, arguing that the interpretation of the NP as definite or indefinite should be derived from the structure of the NP itself and its composition with the surrounding syntactic context. I propose that definite interpretations of Tagalog NPs arise in composition via type-shifting operators, rather than via overt articles. Key to the analysis are the constraints in (13).

\[(13) \quad \begin{aligned}
&\text{a. Bare nominative patients denote properties.} \\
&\text{b. Patient voice verbs combine with individual-type expressions.}
\end{aligned}\]

In order to illustrate, the analysis in (14) construes the PV verb \textit{tinago} ‘hide’ as an individual-relation \((e,et)\)-type and the KP (case-marked phrase) \textit{ang kompyuter} as an \((e,t)\)-type property, following the constraints in (13). The structure contains a type-mismatch, leaving the VP node undefined.

\[(14) \quad \begin{array}{c}
&\text{VP} \\
&\text{undefined} \\
&\text{tinago} & \text{KP} & \text{ang kompyuter} \\
&\text{hide} : (e, (e,t)) & \text{computer} : (e,t)
\end{array}\]

I propose that this type-mismatch is resolved by lowering the bare NP via Partee’s (1987) \textit{iota} operator. The \textit{iota} operator is a partial function from properties to individuals, defined just in case the input property is instantiated by exactly one individual and where defined, returns that individual as its output. Set-theoretically, it is a function which maps singleton sets to their sole members. Therefore, the bare NP under the scope of \textit{iota} is equivalent to a Strawsonian definite, defined just in case the NP’s content has a unique salient referent, and where defined, refers to the sole instantiator (Strawson 1950). As the \textit{iota}-shifted NP is an \(e\)-type expression, composition may proceed without a mismatch (26).

\[(15) \quad \begin{array}{c}
&\text{VP} \\
&\lambda y. \text{hide}(y, t(\text{computer})) : (e,t) \\
&\text{tinago} & \text{KP} & \text{computer} : (e,t)
\end{array}\]

Alternatively, the NP may serve as the restrictor argument of an overt quantificational determiner like \textit{isang} ‘one’ or \textit{lahat} ‘all’. In (16), the nominative patient is a generalized quantifier \((et,t)\)-type, and may combine with the transitive verb via quantifying in or QR.

\[(16) \quad \begin{array}{c}
&\text{VP} \\
&\text{tinago} & \text{ KP} & \text{computer} : (e,t) \\
&\text{hide} : (e, (e,t)) & t(\text{computer}) : e
\end{array}\]
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(17) sketches a derivation showing how a nominative patient with *lahat* yields a quantifi-
cational interpretation.

(16) t⟨in⟩ago ko [ang lahat ng kompyuter]
    ⟨PV.PERF⟩.hide GEN.1SG NOM all GEN computer
    I hid every computer.

(17) *ang lahat ng kompyuter(λx.tinago(ko,x)) ⇝ ∀z[computer(z) → hide(Sp,z)]*

Returning to bare nominative patients in (14), a question arises as to why only *iota* is able to apply as opposed to other type-shifter proposed by Partee (1987). For example, Partee proposes the type shifter *A* (18), which applies to a property *Q*, and returns a GQ which holds of any property that has a non-empty intersection with *Q*.

(18) *A ⇝ λQλP.∃x[Q(x) ∧ P(x)]*

In other words, *A* is a covert version of a standard quantificational analysis of an indefinite determiner. As *A* takes property-type arguments, why should it not apply to the nominative patient in (14), generating an unattested indefinite reading? Why is type-shifting by *iota* available, but not type-shifting by *A*?

As Tagalog does not lexicalize a definite article (i.e., an overt *ι*-operator), covert *ι-*application of bare nominative patients is not blocked by principle (19) (Chierchia 1998:360) which prevents covert application of type-shifters when the language supplies a morpho-
logically overt version.

(19) *Blocking Principle: For any type shifting operation *τ* and any *X*: *τ(X) if there is
a determiner *D* such that for any set *X* in its domain, *D(X) = τ(X).*

However the principle (19) does block application of covert type-shifting of nominative patients with *A* in (14). *A* is lexicalized in Tagalog by the quantificational determiner *isang*.

Patient NPs of PV-verbs may be overtly quantified by quantificational determiners in-
cluding *isang*. With *isang* (as in (8)-(10)), the quantified nominative patient is interpreted
as a generalized quantifier (20a). The meaning of the GQ is equivalent to the putative mean-
ing of nominative patients type-shifted by *A* (20b). As Tagalog provides an overt means to
generate the indefinite meaning (20a), the covert means of generating the same meaning
(20b) is blocked by the principle (19).

(20)  a. *ang isang kompyuter ⇝ λP.∃x[computer(x) ∧ P(x)]*
   b. *A(kompyuter) ⇝ λP.∃x[computer(x) ∧ P(x)]*

The GQ combines with the transitive verb via quantifying in/QR, generating an indefinite reading of the patient NP.
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(21) \( t\text{(in)ago ang isang kompyuter} \sim \lambda x.\exists y[\text{computer}(y) \land \text{hide}(x, y)] \)

Under this analysis, a PV-verb composes with GQ arguments, including indefinites, without type-shifting, but forces property-denoting bare NPs to lower via \( \text{iota} \). As Tagalog does not lexicalize a definite article, covert \( \text{iota} \)-application is not blocked and definite readings of bare NPs may arise. According to this view, definite interpretations of bare nominative patients are introduced within the semantic composition via covert application of type-shifters, and not from the lexical semantics of overt functional material.

4. Actor voice

While bare nominative patients are definite, bare genitive patients of actor voice verbs are indefinite. Furthermore, they must scope below operators such as negation (22).

(22) Hindi \( \text{NEG} \) nakapanood si Juan \( \text{AV} \) interesanteng \( \text{pelikula} \) ngayon araw
\( \text{NOM} \) Juan \( \text{GEN} \) interesting \( \text{film} \) \( \text{today} \)
Juan didn’t watch any interesting film today.

A hypothesis that the indefinite semantics of the patient NP in (22) is introduced by the case marker \( \text{ng} \) is easily discounted. Genitive NPs which are not the patient argument of actor voice verbs may be interpreted as definites. For example, in (23), the bolded genitive refers to a discourse old individual.

(23) Noong unang \( \text{at} \) unang \( \text{previous} \) \( \text{panahon} \), mayroon \( \text{exist} \) \( \text{man} \) \( \text{COMP} \) AV \( \text{live} \) \( \text{OBL} \) forest. PV \( \text{visit} \) GEN \( \text{lalaki} \) ang \( \text{man} \) \( \text{NOM} \) babae.
\( \text{man} \) \( \text{NOM} \) woman
Once upon a time, there was a man who lived in the forest. The man visited the woman.

I will explore the hypothesis that, like nominative bare NP patients, genitive bare NP patients are \( \langle e, t \rangle \)-type properties. However, unlike nominatives, genitives are not coerced into an \( e \)-type expression via type-shifting.

Previous work on narrow scope indefinite transitive patients (Van Geenhoven 1998 on West Greenlandic, Chung & Ladusaw 2004 on Māori and Chamorro, Collins to appear on Samoan) provide compositional analyses of transitive verbs combining with property-denoting bare NPs, generating narrow scope, indefinite interpretations of the NP. The analysis I will pursue provides the actor voice morpheme with the denotation in (24). The morpheme combines with a transitive root and existentially quantifies over its patient argument. Combining the \( \text{AV} \)-morpheme \( \text{nag} \) with a transitive root like \( \text{tago} \) ‘hide’, yields the denotation in (25). Under this analysis, transitive roots like \( \text{tago} \) denote \( \langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle \)-type individual relations, the actor voice morpheme is semantically contentful, and the patient voice
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morpheme is semantically vacuous. This reconstructs Van Geenhoven’s (1998) analysis of incorporating verbs in West Greenlandic.

(24) \( \lambda V \sim \lambda R \lambda P \lambda y. \exists x [P(x) \land R(y, x)] \)

(25) \( \text{nag-tago} \sim \lambda P \lambda y. \exists x [P(x) \land \text{hide}(y, x)] \)

The actor voice verb then combines with the property-denoting bare NP, yielding a narrow scope indefinite interpretation. As the existential quantifier is introduced by the inflected verb itself, it necessarily scopes beneath operators like conditionals and negation.

(26)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\lambda x. \exists y [\text{computer}(y) \land \text{hide}(x, y)] : \langle e, t \rangle \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
V
\]

\[
\text{nagtago}
\]

\[
\lambda P \lambda x. \exists y [P(y) \land \text{hide}(x, y)] : \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle
\]

\[
\text{ng kompyuter}
\]

\[
\text{computer : } \langle e, t \rangle
\]

As the actor voice verb \text{nagtago} combines directly with property-denoting arguments, the genitive patient has no motivation to shift types and thus, no definite reading of the genitive patient is generated.

5. Conclusion

In Tagalog, morphosyntactically bare NPs inherit definite or indefinite interpretations via type-shifting, but the range of interpretations is constrained by verbal morphology. This study focused on patient voice and actor voice, which I claim restrict the type of their patient arguments to individual types and property types respectively. Verbs which combined with \( e \)-type objects (i.e., patient voice verbs) force property-denoting bare NP patients to shift to a presuppositional definite interpretation. Quantificational patients may combine via mechanisms like QR. Verbs which combined with property-type objects (i.e., actor voice verbs), combine with bare NP patients without type-shifting.

This analysis suggests that semantic complexity arising in NP interpretation should not always be handled by complicating the representations of NP semantics. Here I have presented a system in which the complexities of NP interpretation seem best handled by enriching the semantics of the NP’s selecting verbs, which constrain the types of their arguments, thus deriving the observed range of NP interpretations via type-coercion. Although Tagalog lacks definite articles, it is still able to express semantic notions associated with articles in English, albeit with very different morphosyntactic signalling. The proposal shows how definiteness may emerge within semantic composition, even when not encoded by the lexical semantics of any dedicated article.
References


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