

Unergative and unaccusative adjectives in Tagalog comparatives

This paper is concerned with the projections of arguments of unergative and unaccusative adjectives in Tagalog and their bearing on their different syntactic distributions in the comparative constructions. It is proposed that comparative predicates project an additional argument internally to the AP, the lexical projection of the adjectival base. It is shown that the way the argument of the adjective is projected in syntax, interacting with an independent restriction in the language barring two DP arguments in the lexical projection of a predicate, explains the distributions of the adjectives in the comparatives.

As is well-known at least since Schachter and Otnes (1972), adjectives in Tagalog are of two major classes. One class comprises mostly unergative adjectives that are prefixed with *ma-* in predicate position (e.g., *matalino* ‘intelligent’, *masaya* ‘happy’, *madali* ‘quick’), and the other comprises monomorphemic, largely unaccusative, adjectives (e.g., *abala* ‘busy’, *sira* ‘damaged’, *hilo* ‘dizzy’). Schachter and Otnes pointed out that whereas unergative adjectives may occur in both equality and inequality comparatives (cf. (1)), unaccusative adjectives may occur in inequality but not in equality comparatives (cf. (2)) (cf. also Sabbagh 2007).

If unergative and transitive predicates taking an external argument (EA) project in syntax a lexical projection within which the internal arguments (IAs) are projected, e.g., a VP, and a functional projection in whose Spec the EA is projected, e.g., a *vP* (Larson 1988, Hale and Keyser 1993, 2002 and Chomsky 1995), while unaccusative predicates taking no EA project a lexical projection but no functional projection, then an unergative adjectival predicate projects an AP lexical projection and an *aP* functional projection in whose Spec the EA is base-generated (cf. (3)) (cf. Baker 2003), while unaccusative predicates, lacking the *aP* functional projection, project their sole IA in the AP lexical projection (cf. (4)) (Sabbagh 2007).

Suppose the comparative predicate projects a syntactic structure in which the comparative morpheme, *kasing* ‘as ... as’ for equality and *mas* ‘more’ for inequality, is the head of a DegP taking the projection of the adjectival base as complement (Sabbagh 2007) (the combination *kasing*+A or *mas*+A results from head-movement). The comparatives obviously differ from a non-comparative in that they have one more argument. I thus propose that this additional argument, a DP in the equality comparative, and a PP headed by the preposition *kaysa* ‘than’ in the inequality comparative, be projected internally to the AP lexical projection of the adjectival base (cf. (5)). As a consequence, the equality comparative with an unaccusative adjective would have a structure in which the AP lexical projection contains two DPs (cf. (6a)). This structure is excluded by the same restriction in Tagalog barring two DPs in the lexical projection of a predicate (cf. (7)), most evident in the lack of the double-object verbs (cf. (8)). No such problem arises for the equality comparative with unergative adjectives, since their EA is in *Spec aP*, not in the AP (cf. (5a)). Nor does the problem arise for the inequality comparative, as the additional argument is a PP, not a DP (cf. (5b) and (6b)).

In my account, the argument of the adjectives in both the comparatives and non-comparatives is uniformly base-generated in the same position, i.e., in *Spec aP* for unergative adjectives and in an AP-internal position for unaccusative adjectives; the additional argument in the comparatives is always internal to the AP. This contrasts sharply with Sabbagh’s (2007) analysis according to which the position of the argument of the unergative adjectives and that of the additional argument in the comparatives vary. In equality comparatives, the additional argument is in *Spec aP* and the argument of the adjectival base is in *Spec DegP* (cf. (9a)). In inequality comparatives the additional argument is in *Spec DegP* and the argument of the adjectival base is in *Spec aP* (cf. (9b)).

Moreover, the lack of weak crossover effects indicates that the additional PP argument in the inequality comparative is c-commanded by the argument of the adjectival base, and hence cannot be in *Spec DegP* (cf. (10)). The binding facts in (10) are consistent with the structures in (5b) and (6b), but not with that in (9b), if the argument of the adjectival base moves to an A-bar position above DegP as Sabbagh assumed.

