

EXISTENTIAL, LOCATIVE AND POSSESSIVE IN TAGALOG<sup>1</sup>

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1. INTRODUCTION

A fundamental rule of Tagalog sentence formation is that the verbal focus affix must express the semantic role of the subject noun phrase. If the verb has an actor affix, the subject must be actor; if the verb has a patient affix, the subject must be patient; etc. This rule is observed in examples (a-b) below, but violated in (c-d), hence the ungrammaticality:

1. a. Binili ni John ang libro.  
buy-PAT ACT-John SUBJ-PAT-book  
'The book was bought by John.'
- b. Bumili si John ng libro.  
buy-ACT SUBJ-ACT-John PAT-book  
'John bought a book.'
- c. \*Binili si John ng libro.  
buy-PAT SUBJ-ACT-John PAT-book  
'John was bought a book.'
- d. \*Bumili ni John ang libro.  
buy-ACT ACT-John SUBJ-PAT book  
'The book bought by John.'

A sub-class of existential sentences, the so-called indefinite existentials (cf. McFarland 1978; Schachter & Otones 1972), violates this rule and yet no ungrammaticality arises, for example:

2. May (librong) binili si John.  
there-be book PAT-buy SUB-ACT-John  
'There is (a book) John was bought.'

The verb *binili* 'was bought' is patient-oriented but the subject-marked noun phrase *John* is interpreted as actor, not patient. To our knowledge, this type of existential construction is the only apparent exception to the fundamental rule of verb-subject focus concord in Tagalog.

The present paper grew out of our attempt to account for the non-anomalous nature of this non-agreement in focus. Briefly our explanation for the focus non-agreement in (2) above is that the surface (final) subject is a derived subject, and that verb-subject focus concord applies prior to this derivation and is not affected by it.

In addition to providing an explanation for the anomaly, this analysis has other uses. First, it provides a syntactic evidence for the status of the patient as initial subject in Tagalog; this point has been discussed by one of the writers in an earlier paper (Ceña

<sup>1</sup>Paper read at the LSA Summer Meeting, Salzburg, Austria, August 3, 1979.

1977). And second, it leads to a different view of the relationship of the existential to two sentence types often associated with it--the locative and the possessive constructions. These sentences are illustrated below:

- |    |    |  |              |
|----|----|--|--------------|
| 3. | a. | May libro sa mesa.<br>there-be book table.   | EXISTENTIAL  |
|    | b. | Nasa mesa ang libro.<br>LOC table SUBJ-book<br>'The book is on the table.'                 | LOCATIVE     |
|    | c. | May libro si John.<br>there-be book SUBJ-John<br>'John has a book/There's a book by John.' | POSSESSIVE-1 |
|    | d. | Kay John ang libro.<br>PSR SUBJ-book<br>'The book is John's.'                              | POSSESSIVE-2 |

We shall re-affirm the generally held view that the existential sentence (a) above has for its source the locative (b). We shall support the view that the possessive-1 (c) is an existential; however, it will be shown that the source of possessive-1 is possessive-2. This point departs from the view held by Lyons (1968), Clark (1970), and Christie (1971), which proposed a locative base for all three sentence types.

In general, we view the existential to be a nonbasic structure, which can be derived from virtually any sentence type, including the existential itself. Existentialization then is a process with the same syntactic status as, say, negative or question formation.

The syntactic differences between these different instances of the existential will be shown to be regular reflexes of relation-changing rules.

The key to this analysis is a two-clause view of the Tagalog existential, which we now discuss.

## 2. A TWO-CLAUSE ANALYSIS OF TAGALOG EXISTENTIAL

At the highest level of surface constituent analysis, the existential in Tagalog has the structure:

4. [S E-PRED [NP NP S NP] S]

The higher clause consists of the existential predicate and its lone argument, the existent phrase. The existential predicate is realized as *may(roon)* 'there-be'. The existent phrase is a relative construction.

5. a. May [NP taong [S uminom ng alak S] ]  
E-Pred NP drink wine NP  
'There is someone/a man who drank wine.'
- b. May [NP taong [S nasa parke S] NP]<sup>2</sup>  
E-PRED NP park  
'There is someone/a man (who is) in the park.'

<sup>2</sup>The difference between this sentence and the sentence

May [NP tao [S sa parke S] NP]  
E-PRED NP park  
'There is someone/a man in the park.'

appears to be one of restrictiveness. This difference is not relevant to the discussion, hence we view these sentences to be of the same type.

The head noun may be deleted thus:

6. a. May [  $\phi$  [umiinom ng alak] ].  
 b. May [  $\phi$  [nasa parke] ].

At the highest clause level, the existential has no subject.<sup>3</sup> The existential is one of a number of constructions in Tagalog that do not mark a surface subject. The lower clause, however, may have a subject marked nominal, as shown in this example:

7. May kabayong [ <sub>S</sub> binili si John <sub>S</sub> ].  
 there-be horse buy SUBJ-mrkr  
 'There is a horse that John bought.'

This is the sentence type that contains the anomaly which we wish to explain.

The structure of the existential parallels the structure of another complex structure, that of WH-questions that question the subject.

8. Sino [ <sub>NP</sub> ang taong [ <sub>S</sub> bumili ng kabayo ] <sub>NP</sub> ]?  
 WH SUBJ-mrkr man buy horse  
 'Who was the man/one who bought a horse?'

The WH-element functions as predicate, in the same way that the existential marker is predicate. The difference is that the head noun in the existential is indefinite, whereas the head noun in WH-question has a definite marker, thus making the embedded clause the surface subject.

Thus, with respect to the *form* of the existential construction, there is little doubt that it supports a complex structure analysis.

We have come across one syntactic evidence for the complex structure underlying the existential. Tagalog restricts the occurrence of certain clauses as independent sentences, but not as dependent structures. Thus (a) below is not acceptable, because it requires that the reflexive be subject (compare the acceptable *Ipinagkanulo ng lalaki ang kanyang sarili*. '\*Himself was betrayed by a/the man', where the reflexive is subject). It is acceptable when embedded as a relative clause, as in (b-c).

- 9 a. \*Nagkanulo ang lalaki ng kanyang sarili.  
 betray SUBJ-mrkr man his self  
 'The man betrayed himself.'  
 b. Sino ang lalaking nagkanulo ng kanyang sarili?  
 'Who was the man who betrayed himself?'  
 c. Si John ang lalaking nagkanulo ng kanyang sarili.  
 'John was the man who betrayed himself.'

When part of an existential sentence, no ungrammaticality arises, thus showing that the existential is indeed a complex sentence:

- d. May lalaking nagkanulo ng kanyang sarili.  
 'There is a man who betrayed himself.'

<sup>3</sup>The sentence *Mayroon si Pedro* appears to have a subject at the highest level. It is an abbreviation of Possessive-1 sentences, thus: *Mayroong libro si Pedro*, and thus the subject belongs to the lower clause.

Semantically the existential is more complex than its declarative counterpart in that it is a predication that asserts one of the assumptions of the sentence from which it is extracted. To explain, associated with the declarative *John drank the wine* are some very basic assumptions: that there is a person named John, that John belongs to the class of objects that can perform the action expressed by the verb, that there is a class of objects called wine, that wine can be the object of drinking, etc. Linguistic communication, which makes more use of nonexistential declaratives, is rendered more efficient in that assumptions like these do not have to be stated everytime. However, needs arise when one of these assumptions has to be stated as the main predication, and the existential construction is used for this purpose. It is this added meaning of asserting what is normally an assumption that makes the existential semantically more complex than its non-existential counterpart.

The philosopher Frege, as pointed out by Kimball (1973), views the existential as second order predicate, that is, as a predicate of predicates, not a predicate of objects. Kimball wrote: "To say "tame tigers exist" for Frege was to say of the *concept* "tame tigers" that something fell under it. Thus the logical subject of such an utterance was not any tame tiger, but the concept itself" (268).

3. EXPLAINING THE NON-ANOMALY

The verb-subject focus non-agreement we wish to explain is illustrated in (2), repeated below:

- 2. May (librong) binili si John.  
 there-be book PAT-buy SUBJ-mrkr ACT-John  
 'There is (a book) John was bought.'

The verb *binili* 'was bought' is patient-oriented, but the surface subject is actor.

Another point that needs some explaining is that focus appears to condition the presence or absence of subject in this type of existential. The patient-oriented verb above has a surface subject, but when the verb is actor-oriented, the construction is subjectless, as shown in the following example:

- 10. May taong bumili ng libro.  
 there-be man ACT-buy PAT-book  
 'There's a man who bought a book.'

We wish to show that there is one explanation for both this and the matter of focus non-agreement.

The central process in Tagalog existentialization is the raising or ascension of the existentializable nominal. In principle, the process is not unlike the raising of *Mary* in the sentence pair *John believes [that Mary is innocent] – John believes Mary [to be innocent]*.

What is the existentializable nominal? In sentences with an overtly marked subject, only the subject may be existentialized. Thus from the underlying structure (a) below, the existential (b) may be formed, where the subject of the lower clause, the actor *tao* 'man', ascends via relativization to become the head of the existent phrase. The nonsubject patient *alak* 'wine' cannot be so raised, as shown in (c).

- 11. a. Underlying structure:  
 [S may [NP [S bumili ang tao ng alak S] NP] S]  
 D-PRED buy-Pat SUBJ-mrkr man wine
- b. May taong bumili ng alak.  
 'There's a man/someone who bought wine.'
- c. \*May alak na bumili ang tao.  
 'There's wine that the man bought.'

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When the patient is subject, as in underlying structure (a) below, it may be existentialized, as in (b), but now the nonsubject actor cannot be so existentialized, as in (c).

12. a. Underlying Structure:

[<sub>S</sub> may [<sub>NP</sub> [<sub>S</sub> binili ng tao ang alak <sub>S</sub>] <sub>NP</sub>] <sub>S</sub>]  
           E-PRED       PAT-buy   PAT-man SUBJ-mrkr SUBJ-wine

b. May alak na binili ang tao.  
     'There's some wine the man bought.'

c. \*May taong binili ang alak.  
     'There's a man the wine was bought.'

From this derivation, we can clearly see the source of verb-subject focus non-agreement in existentials. As a result of the ascension of subject patient *alak*, the non-subject actor advances to subject position in (12) without consequent focus reinflection of the verb. This ascension, except for the matter of verbal concord, is not unlike the familiarization process of passivization.

Ascension of the subject actor *tao* in (11) does not result in advancement of the nonsubject patient *alak* to subject position. Thus the resulting existential (11) is subjectless.

The failure of the nonsubject patient in (11) to advance and the ability of the non-subject actor in (12) to assume subject position is at the heart of the argument that the patient is initial subject in Tagalog. The nominal *alak* in (11) is a demoted subject, and therefore it cannot re-assume subject position, whereas the nominal *tao* in (12) is initially nonsubject and can assume subject position. The details of this argument for patient primacy in Tagalog are spelled out in Cefia (1977).

Advancement is carried out only when there is demotion. That is, some nominal must abandon its position before another nominal can take its place. The demoted nominal typically becomes an oblique phrase. There is clear evidence that ascension in existential whose lower clause has a patient subject is accompanied by demotion, thus paving the way for advancement of another nominal. When the existentialized NP is one of an NP - NP construction, for example, a possessor-possessed construction, and the other NP is left behind, the marker of the constituent left behind changes to an oblique marker. For example in (a) below, when the possessed *ulo* 'head' is existentialized, the genitive marker of *ni* of its possessor John changes to the oblique marker *kay*, as shown in (b).

13. a. Sinuntok ni Pedro ang ulo        *ni* John.  
       hit        GEN        PSD-head GEN  
       'The head of John was hit by Peter.'

b. May sinuntok si Pedro *kay* John.  
     'There is s.t. Peter hit in John.'

So far we have shown that the presence or absence of a surface subject is a consequence not of the focus of the verb, but of the advancement capability of nominals. We have also shown that advancement of the actor nominal to subject position without re-inflection of the patient-oriented verb is what causes focus non-agreement.

Why re-inflection fails is difficult to explain although how it comes about is not difficult to show. The mechanism that insures that no re-inflection takes place is the cycle. Verb-concord applies within a sentence. As soon as derivation moves up to the next higher clause, verb-concord rules cannot apply in a lower clause, although relation-changing rules may apply.

One important side effect of existential formation is the unspecification of the existentialized nominal. The existentialized nominal is replaced by a less specific class label. For example, if the nominal is a proper name, say Imelda, the existent may be *babae* 'woman', or *tao* 'human being'. Since a noun can belong to a great many class categories that vary according to specificity, the existent noun can also vary in this respect according to how un-specific the speaker wishes it to be. Some examples of existent nominals are:

<i>Existentialized NP</i>	<i>Existent NP</i>
Marcos	<i>presidente</i> 'president', <i>pulitiko</i> 'politician', <i>lalaki</i> 'man', <i>tao</i> 'human being'
Porsche (car)	<i>kotse</i> 'car', <i>sasakyan</i> 'mode of trans- portation', <i>bagay</i> 'thing'
Maynila	<i>siyudad</i> 'city', <i>lugar</i> 'place'

The existent NP may be deleted, and in such a case, it becomes completely unspecific, that is, it can be interpreted to refer to just about any noun phrase that will give the sentence an acceptable reading.

Thus far, we have made clear two points with respect to existential with a verbal phrase in it, as in (a) below: that this existential construction is underlying a two-clause structure, and that existential formation may involve advancement. There are existential sentences that on surface look different from (a); these sentences are illustrated in (b-d):

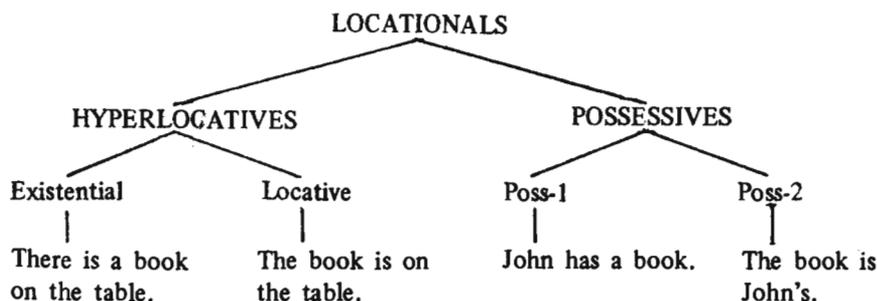
- 14 a. May librong binili si John.  
there-be book buy-PAT SUB- ACT-John  
'There is a book John bought.'
- b. May libro si John.  
there-be book SUBJ-PSR-John  
'There is a book of/by John.'  
(i.e. 'John has a book.')
- c. May libro sa mesa.  
there-be book LOC-table  
'There is a book on the table.'
- d. May sunog.  
there-be fire  
'There's a fire.'

We would like to show that the two properties of the existential pointed out above are properties of all existential sentences. Sentence (b) has a final subject, and this just may be an advancee subject, but the two-clause structure of this sentence type is not apparent. On the other hand, sentence (c) can be readily given a two-clause structure, with *sa mesa* 'on the table' as the predicate of the lower clause, but this sentence does not appear to have undergone advancement. And lastly, sentence (d) does not look like it has structure nor that advancement has taken place.

In the rest of this paper, we will show that both (b) and (c) indeed have underlying complex structures. The presence of an advancee subject in (b) and its absence in (c) will be shown to follow from properties of certain nominal types with respect to how they behave in relation-changing processes. It will be suggested that (d) is simply a special kind of existential, one in which the existent nominal is not qualified.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG EXISTENTIAL, LOCATIVE, AND POSSESSIVE

One of the earliest attempts to show the relationship among these sentence types within the generative framework is Lyons (1967), where it was suggested that existential and possessive constructions have a locative base. Clark (1970) adopted Lyons' analysis, and proposed the following schema of the relationship among these constructions:



The Tagalog equivalent sentences are:

- |     |    |  |               |
|-----|----|--|---------------|
| 15. | a. | May libro sa mesa<br>there book table<br>'There is a book on the table.'   | (Existential) |
|     | b. | Nasa mesa ang libro<br>'The book is on the table.'                         | (Locative)    |
|     | c. | May libro si John.<br>Lit.: There is a book of John!<br>'John has a book.' | (Poss-1)      |
|     | d. | Kay John ang libro.<br>'The book is John's.'                               | (Poss-2)      |

In Clark's analysis, the possessor is treated as locative, because, in her words, 'if an object is *in some place* and the "place" is actually an animate being, then the object is *possessed* by the "place". In other words, it is the (+animate) feature added to Loc(us) that transforms it into a Pr (possessor)' (L3). We assume that possessor is used in its usual sense, i.e., to mean permanent ownership, as opposed to temporary or nominal possession.

Clark's analysis falls short of providing a satisfactory account of the facts of Tagalog existential. The basis of Clark's position is that location and possessor are one and the same, except for a difference in the feature animacy. We will show independence of location and possessor in Tagalog by showing that (a) an animate nominal can be location without necessarily possessor, (b) an inanimate nominal can be possessor without necessarily location, and (c) that a possessive sentence can have a locative phrase, and a locative sentence can have a possessor phrase.

That an animate noun can be location, without necessarily possessor, is shown in the example below, where John is simply location.

- |     |                          |            |
|-----|--------------------------|------------|
| 16. | Nakay John ang libro.    | (Locative) |
|     | LOC book                 |            |
|     | 'The book is in John's.' |            |

That John is not possessor is clear from the fact that a possessor phrase can be added to the above example.

17. Nakay John ang libro ni Mary.  
           LC           PSD       PSR  
       'The book of Mary is in John's.'

Furthermore, the locative (16) contrasts with the possessive sentence below, where John is possessor of *libro* 'book'.

18. Kay John ang libro.  
           PSR  
       'The book is John's.'

This possessive sentence can have a locative phrase:

19. Kay John ang libro sa mesa.  
           PSR                   LOC  
       'The book LOC-the-table is John's.'

That locatives can have a possessor phrase, as shown in (17) above, and that Poss-2 can have a locative phrase, as just shown, indicate that location is independent of possession, and vice versa.

That an inanimate noun can be possessor, without necessarily location, is shown in the example below, where *kotse* 'car' is possessor.

20. Sa kotse ang gulong.  
           PSR           PSD  
       'The tire is the car's.'

That *kotse* 'car' is not location is clear from the fact that a locative phrase can be added to the above example:

21. Sa kotse ang gulong sa garahe.  
           PSR           PSD       LOC  
       'The tire in the garage is the car's.'

The possessive sentence (20) contrasts with the locative sentence below, where *kotse* 'car' is location:

22. Nasa kotse ang gulong.                   (LOC)  
           LOC  
       'The tire is in the car.'

To this sentence a possessor phrase can be added:

23. Nasa kotse ang gulong ng traktora.  
           LOC           PSD       PSR  
       'The tire of the tractor is in the car.'

As to Point (c), sentences (19) and (21) above show that a possessive sentence can have a locative phrase, and sentences (17) and (23) above show that a locative sentence can have a possessor phrase.



- b. Binunggo ni Max si John sa ulo.  
 'John was bumped in the head by Max.'

The inability of oblique noun phrases to advance is illustrated below, where in (b) existentialization has not resulted in the subject-marking of *dingding* 'wall'.

- 29. a. Humilig si John sa dingding.  
 lean ACT-SUBJ-John OBL-wall  
 'John leaned on the wall.'
- b. May humilig sa/\*ang dingding.  
 'There is s.o. who leaned on the wall.'

And now it can be seen that from the Poss-2 sentence (a) below, the Poss-1 sentence (b) can be derived through existentialization of the subject *libro* 'book'. The possessor John promotes to subject.

- 30. a. Kay John ang libro. (Poss-2)  
 'The book is John's.'
- b. May libro si John. (Poss-1)  
 'There is a book of/by John.'  
 (I.e. 'John has a book.')

Similarly, from the Loc sentence (a) below, the Exist sentence (b) is derived through existentialization of the subject *libro* 'book'. However, the oblique noun *mesa* 'table' does not advance to subject.

- 31. a. Nasa mesa ang libro. (Loc)  
 'The book is on the table.'
- b. May libro sa mesa. (Exist)  
 'There is a book on the table.'

Thus the so-called existential sentence *May libro sa mesa* 'There is a book on the table' is just one instance of the existential. It asserts the existence of an entity and specifies its location; the source is a locative sentence. The so-called Poss-1 sentence *May libro si John* '(lit.) There is a book of/by John' is another instance of existential. In this sentence, the possessor of the existent is identified; the source is a possessive sentence. Other existentials differ only in the way the existent nominal is qualified:

- 32. a. May librong para kay John. (benefactor)  
 'There's a book for John.'
- b. May librong tungkol kay John. (information)  
 'There's a book about John.'
- c. May librong galing kay John. (source)  
 'There's a book from John.'
- d. May bus na pasa Maynila. (direction)  
 'There's a bus to Manila.'
- e. May babaing mahiyain. (adjective)  
 'There's a woman who is shy.'

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These existentials are derived from corresponding sentences whose predicate becomes the qualifier of the existent nominal, thus: *Para kay John ang libro* 'The book is for John', *Tungkol kay John ang libro* 'The book is about John', etc. The essence of all of these sentences is the assertion of the existence of a qualified indefinite entity, and the syntactic device used is the same for all sentences. Thus we see no reason to treat them other than as instances of one sentence type, namely, the existential construction.

Indeed, an existential may be formed from another existential, provided that the source existential has a subject. Thus the 'double' existential (b) is from the existential (a).

33. a. *May alak na binili ang tao.*  
'There is some wine the man bought.'
- b. *May taong may alak na binili.*  
'There is a man there is some wine bought (by him).'

One special instance of the existential is illustrated in the example below:

34. *May sunog!*  
'There's a fire!'

In the light of the analysis proposed here, that the existential derives from a sentence with a subject, where the subject becomes a head noun of a relative clause construction whose main body consists of the predicate of the source sentence, sentence (34) above does not appear to be derivable.

Our understanding of the meaning of sentences like the above is that the location of the existent is unspecified. (When such an utterance is heard in real life, one assumes that the location of the fire is in the immediate vicinity.) We give this sentence the following underlying structure:

35. [E-PRED [ sa  $\phi$  ang sunog ] ]

where  $\phi$  is an unspecified location. Given such underlying structure, the existential (34) is a regular result of existential formation, with the additional detail that the unspecified locative predicate is nulled out of surface structure.

In summary, we have suggested to analyze the Tagalog existential to consist of the existential predicate with one argument, the existent phrase. The existent phrase is a relative construction, whose head is the subject of the predicate of the source sentence. Existential formation involves raising or ascension of the subject nominal of the lower clause, a process that initiates readjustment of the relational functions of the nominals in the lower clause. We have suggested that the advancement capabilities of nominals during re-adjustment provide a basis for explaining both the verb-subject focus non-agreement in existentials whose lower clause has a transitive verb, and the absence of a final subject in what is traditionally called the existential sentence.

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