

Tagalog Resultatives

Maayan Abenina-Adar, UCLA

This work examines the properties of aspectual verbal morphology in Tagalog known as “Ability and Involuntary Action” inflection (AIA), which appears as a prefix *ma-/maka-* on verbs (Schachter and Otnes 1972, Dell 1982, Travis 2010). Dell 1982 shows that AIA verbs differ from “neutral” (N) verbs lacking this additional morphology in that AIA verbs entail the culmination of an action, while N verbs only imply it. This is highlighted by the contrast in their ability to be followed felicitously by a clause denying the result of the action (1a-b).

(1a) **Neutral, t<um>ayo**

unti-unting t<um>ayo si Juan ... (**pero hindi niya na-kaya**)
gradually <PRF>stand.up SUBJ Juan ... but NEG GEN.3s AIA.PRF-able
‘Juan tried to get up slowly but he couldn’t; lit. Juan slowly got up (but he couldn’t)’

(1b) **AIA Verb, naka-tayo**

unti-unting nakatayo si Juan ... (**#pero hindi niya na-kaya**)
gradually <AIA.PRF>stand.up SUBJ Juan ... but NEG GEN.3s AIA.PRF-able
Intended meaning: ‘Juan managed to get up slowly (but he couldn’t)’

In addition to ensuring that the result is achieved, when this inflection occurs in perfective viewpoint aspect, it contributes a meaning that the action was “managed” by the participant (e.g. it required effort) or that it occurred unintentionally — hence the term “AIA.”

Summary

One analysis of this aspectual alternation and a similar one in Malagasy is presented in Travis 2010: ch. 7. The analysis is that languages like Tagalog and Malagasy, among others, differ in the way that they describe events most neutrally; unlike in English, telicity is not present in neutral event descriptions like (1a) by default but rather is constructed with inflectional morphology, like the *ka-* component of the AIA morphology. Travis’s proposal is that the morpheme *ka-* is merged in a verb-phrase internal aspectual head and has the effect of changing the Aktionsart of the underlying event description into that of an achievement, corresponding to the transition into a state holding after the event. Additionally, this morpheme, rather than the typical functional head *v*, introduces the external argument, which results in its being interpreted as a non-agentive cause or experiencer. Under this analysis, the aspectual properties of the construction and the effortful/unintentional reading ascribed to the external argument go hand in hand.

In this work, I present two pieces of data suggesting that i) the AIA morphology does not overwrite the Aktionsart of the neutral verb form as an achievement and ii) the morphology instead contributes an additional layer of aspectual meaning while preserving the properties of the underlying event (I do not discuss the source of the AIA reading itself). The evidence for (i) comes from adverbial modification, which indicates that the duration of the underlying event description is still available; the evidence for (ii), from ambiguity in the interpretation of inchoatives with AIA morphology, which can either assert that the transition into a target state occurs or that the target states itself holds. I then point out some similarities and differences between AIA verbs and the better-studied perfect construction in English.

Data

Typically, achievement-type event descriptions are characterized as having an endpoint and lacking duration e.g. *solve the riddle*, *see the rabbit*, *explode*, etc. These verb phrases are either anomalous when modified by adverbs that pick out the duration of an event, such as *gradually* or *for X time*, or they receive a coerced reading (e.g. in the sentence *I gradually solved the riddle*, *solved the riddle*

is an accomplishment-type predicate describing the process leading up to solving a riddle). As shown by Milambiling 2013, AIA forms based on verbs that would otherwise have a process component accept modification with adverbs like *gradually*, as in (2a). To this I add (2b), where the underlying event is an activity whose duration is still available for modification, as highlighted by the *for X time* phrase.

- (2a) **unti-unting** nainom ni Juan ang lason
 gradually <AIA.PRF>drink GEN Juan SUBJ poison
 “Juan gradually drank up the poison”
- (2b) nakapagsayaw kami nang isang oras
 <AIA.PRF>dance SUBJ.1pl.excl. for one hour
 “We were able to dance for an hour”

Such modification is unexpected if AIA morphology serves to shift the Aktionsart of the event description to that of the achievement, rather than contributing telicity through some other means. A second piece of evidence that suggests that AIA morphology applies additively to the underlying event description is that AIA forms based on inchoatives can either assert the transition into a target state (i.e. an eventive achievement reading, like *managed to lay down, stand up, move in, face*, etc.) or assert that the target state itself holds (*was lying down, was standing, was living in, was facing* — see Schachter and Otnes 1972: 299). This seems to be a very common use of AIA morphology, found even in borrowings as in (3), a naturally occurring example where the AIA verb receives a target state reading.

- (3) **naka tune in** po kami sa inyo (habang nasa opisina kami...)¹
 <AIA.PRF>tune-in polite SUBJ.1pl.excl OBL2pl while we’re in the office
 “We were tuned in to you (i.e. your station) while we were in the office”

The two meanings associated with inchoatives highlight that both the underlying event description and the target state are present in the meaning of AIA forms.

Beginnings of an Analysis

AIA morphology is puzzling because in certain cases, like (3), it seems to scope over an entire verb phrase, changing an event description into a description of that event’s target state. This property is reminiscent of the semantics ascribed to the perfect in English, which yields something outwardly stative but contains an event description (cf. Katz 2003). However, at the same time, AIA morphology seems to affect the thematic role of the external argument, suggesting that the AIA morphology is within the syntactic domain where an event is structured and where arguments establish thematic relations. Additionally, target state readings are not always available, like in the sentences in (2). Thus, while the English perfect introduces a result state regardless of the properties of the embedded eventuality (the state sometimes being called the Perfect Time Span, as in Iatridou et al. 2001), AIA morphology is only able to derive target states with a limited class of predicates, namely, inchoatives. Even roots that have target states otherwise in Tagalog, as evidenced by the possibility of a stative adjectival passive (e.g. *baság*, “broken”), do not receive a target state reading with AIA inflection if they are not formed of a root that is an inchoative in its neutral form (e.g. *nabasag ang baso*, “the glass broke,” “*the glass was broken”). These interpretive restrictions according to properties of the verb phrase suggest that AIA morphology selects a verb phrase directly, unlike the perfect. While no conclusions are drawn here, this work attempts to explore what relation, if any, the AIA construction in Tagalog has to the English perfect.

¹ http://streema.com/radios/Yes_Fm_Metro_Manila_DWYS