

Quasi PNI in Tagalog: Internal Reconstruction

Nutshell: We re-examine data on pseudo noun incorporation (PNI) in Tagalog (Starr, 2015; Barrie and Kim, 2018) and show that nominals case-marked with *ng* have *some* typical semantic PNI properties (scope, number neutrality.) but lacks syntactic properties (case marked, free movement). We dub this construction quasi PNI. We suggest an analysis called *internal reconstruction*, which like (P)NI, functional material is removed from the nominal, but from the middle rather than from the root. Specifically, KP is still present, but DP and NumP are absent. We make some tentative suggestions on the semantics of structural Case (or lack thereof) and how quasi PNI has the semantics of PNI without the syntactic properties of PNI.

Background: Syntactic Noun Incorporation (NI) consists of morphological fusion between N and V (Baker, 1988). PNI has similar semantic properties to NI, but does not exhibit the same kind of morphological fusion as NI (Dayal, 2011; Massam, 2001). PNI-ed objects are typically impoverished morpho-syntactically. Crucially, they lack case marking and determiners; however, they may still appear with plural marking, depending on the language. Additionally, PNI-ed nominals are number-neutral, indefinite, and non-referential obligatorily low scope.

In previous work on Tagalog Starr (2015) analyzes *ng*-objects in Tagalog as having undergone PNI. *Ng*-marked objects can receive a general number reading, while *ang*-marked objects cannot. Furthermore, *ng*-marked objects with an adjective resist general number. However, in a subsequent study by one of the authors that replicated Starr’s investigation it was found that *ng*-marked objects with an adjective can also exhibit number neutrality for some speakers. Finally, it has been observed that *ng*-marked arguments can be specific or unspecific in contrast to *sa*-marked arguments (Latrouite (2011)).

Results: Number neutrality of *ng*-objects and number-specificity of *ang*-marked arguments (Starr, 2015) are confirmed in our study.

- (1) a. Bumili ang babae ng mansanas
buy.PST.AV ANG woman NG mansanas
‘The woman bought some a book/some books.’
- b. Bumili ang babae ng mga mansanas
buy.PST.AV ANG woman NG PL mansanas
‘The woman bought some books’
- c. Binili ng babae ang mansanas kahapon
buy.PST.PV NG woman ANG apple yesterday
‘The apple was bought by a woman yesterday.’ (singular only)

General Number broadly aligns with Starr in that an *ng*-object can have general number while a *ang*-NP cannot. A *ng*-object can be specific or non-specific. A specific reading can be induced by modifiers such as ‘certain’ (Paul et al., 2015), a *sa*-marked object is specific (Latrouite, 2011), and an *ang*-marked object is typically specific, but a non-specific reading can be forced in certain contexts (Paul et al., 2015). In terms of scope, a *ng*-object scopes low (optionally high with negation, though) and *ang*- and *sa*-objects obligatorily scope high (data not shown for lack of space).

Where quasi-PNI object in Tagalog differ is in linear adjacency. While Nieuwenhuis requires strict adjacency, Tagalog does not. Note that only a portion of the word order possibilities are shown here.

- (2) Bumili ang babae kahapon ng mansanas.
buy.AV.PST ANG woman yesterday NG apple
‘The woman bought some book(s) yesterday’
- (3) Kumain ng dahan-dahan ang babae ng mansanas.
eat.AV.PST NG slowly ANG woman NG apple
‘The woman slowly ate the apple(s).’

Discussion: Reconstruction typically chips away from the highest functional projection (V selects CP or TP or *v*P or VP; V selects KP or DP or NumP or *n*P or NP). Alboiu (2009) proposes for Romanian that

CP can select *vP* directly with no intervening TP. She states that there is no evidence for TP (no tense), but that epistemic adverbs (*probably*) and topicalized phrases are possible, suggesting a CP layer.

(4) CP > *vP* > VP

Rather than reconstruction from the top, this is reconstruction from the middle, which we dub *internal reconstruction*. We propose that Tagalog quasi PNI results from internal reconstruction. A defective K selects *nP* directly, with no intervening DP or NumP.

(5) KP > *nP* > NP

We propose the following structures for the *ng*-object in (1-a) and the *ang*-object in (1-c), respectively.

(6) a. [KP [*nP* N]]
 b. [KP [DP [NumP [*nP* N]]]]

Case features typically assumed to be uninterpretable (Adger, 2003; Pesetsky and Torrego, 2001), and discussions of the semantic denotation of K are scant. Thus, we assume that structural Case is semantically opaque. There is a long tradition of treating DP as type <*e*> and NP (or *nP*) as type <*e,t*> (Chierchia, 1998). Under the assumption that Case is semantically opaque, we propose that K has no semantic denotation and that KP has the same semantic denotation as K's sister. We propose further that a defective K head may select *nP*.

With these ingredients in place we can understand the quasi PNI effects in Tagalog as follows. Consider first the *ng*-object in Tagalog. The KP in (6-a) has the same denotation as *nP*, <*e,t*>. Thus, it has the same semantics as bare nominals in more traditional (P)NI languages. NumP is missing, so there is no specification for number. The presence of K requires Case checking, along with the potential for movement, thus accounting for the free word order of the *ng*-object. The KP in (6-b), on the other hand, takes DP as a complement, so the KP is type <*e*>, giving rise to the usual semantic and syntactic properties of a full nominal.

Conclusion and Outlook: We have argued that the properties of the *ng*-object in Tagalog result from its syntactic structure. Specifically, the *ng*-object consists of a KP that selects an *nP* directly (*internal reconstruction*). We have dubbed this construction Quasi PNI as it has some of the properties of PNI (number neutrality, low scope) but still exhibits some properties of a full nominal (overt case marking, free movement). We have proposed that K (Case) is semantically opaque and that KP has the same semantic denotation as the sister of the K head. While K typically takes DP as a complement, we have suggested that a defective K (*ng*) takes a bare *nP* as a complement. It remains to be seen whether this analysis can be carried over to other similar constructions such as the partitive in Finnish (Kiparsky, 1998).

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