
Tucking-in and nominative-third word order*†

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1 Introduction

- It is often assumed in minimalist syntax that nothing stops a head from having more than one specifier (Richards 1997; Chomsky 2004).
- It has been claimed that if one of a head's specifiers is thematic, the thematic specifier must be the lowest specifier (McGinnis 1998; Rackowski 2002; Rackowski & Richards 2005).
- For Rackowski & Richards (2005), this is central to their explanation of Tagalog extraction.
- In this presentation, I will provide arguments from Cebuano that the situation is the opposite of what's described in Rackowski & Richards (2005): a head's thematic specifier is highest, not lowest.
- I will argue this by providing a new analysis of 'nominative-third' (Sells 1997, 2000; Travis 2010) word order facts (henceforth Nom-3), involving tucking-in.
- While this paper discusses Nom-3 word order as a general phenomenon, the examples will all come from Cebuano.

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†Non-Leipzig abbreviations: EA = external argument, IA = internal argument; AV = agent voice, IV = instrument voice, LV = locative voice, PV = patient voice.

Roadmap:

- theoretical background on tucking-in and thematic specifiers
- bringing in new data to this discussion: Nom-3 word order
- a new analysis of Nom-3: tucking-in to Spec-VoiceP . . . below the EA
- conclusion: thematic specifiers can have other specifiers below them

2 Background: tucking-in and the issue of thematic specifiers

2.1 Tucking-in

- Richards (1997) proposes that, when a head has a specifier, further specifiers that move to it do not 'extend the tree' as in (1), but rather move right next to the head, as in (2) (where Spec_n is the nth phrase to move)

(1) [HP Spec₂ [Spec₁ [H . . .]]]

(2) [HP Spec₁ [Spec₂ [H . . .]]]

- Evidence that is easy to appreciate comes (for example) from the ordering of multiple specifiers in *wh* questions. (3) is Bulgarian.

(3) a. Koji kogoj vižda t_i t_j?

who whom sees
'Who sees whom?'

b. *Kogoj koj_i vižda t_i t_j?

whom who sees

(Richards 1997:54, McGinnis 1998:114)

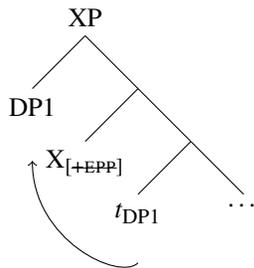
2.2 Thematic specifiers

- Rackowski (2002) argues that, if a head has more than one specifier and these include a thematic specifier, the thematic specifier will be closest to the head.
- Rackowski (2002) follows Chomsky (2001) in taking there to be a 'Immediate Agree' principle: "Agree always occurs as soon as possible."
- She also assumes, like Richards (1997), that tucking-in applies across-the-board:
 - Specifiers are *always* created right above the head; this is not an option that varies by language or head.

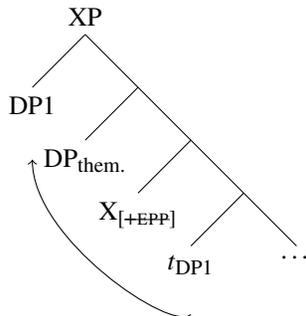
- Immediate Agree and tucking-in together have the following consequence (Rackowski 2002:14):

- “In a structure where a head as an [EPP] feature to check and also licenses a thematic specifier, . . . the [EPP] feature should be checked before the thematic specifier is merged in, triggering movement of the goal into a specifier.”
- “In addition, tucking-in predicts that the thematic specifier, when it merges in, will be the lowest specifier of the head.”

(4) *Agree immediately* (Rackowski 2002:13)



(5) *Merge Thematic Specifier* (Rackowski 2002:13)



- In terms of the details of Rackowski’s formalization, it’s not clear to me why her EPP feature couldn’t be satisfied by External Merge.
- But either way, we can rethink of Rackowski’s point as meaning that if *v*/Voice Agrees with the IA, it must do so before the EA is merged in Spec-*v*/VoiceP.

- Rackowski (2002:ch. 3) and Rackowski & Richards (2005) rely on this theory to capture extraction facts in Tagalog¹

- Based on the observation that subjects in Tagalog must be specific, they argue that subjecthood in Tagalog is a kind of ‘object’ shift.

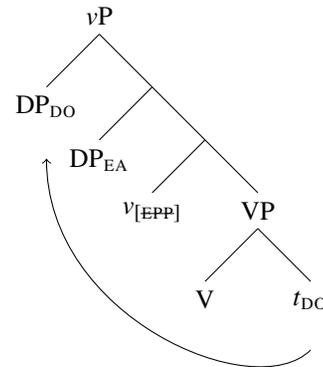
- The subject is the phrase that ‘object’-shifts to Spec-*v*P; it gets nominative case (*ang*) and the verb displays the corresponding voice morphology.

- This results in a construction where both the EA and the subject are in Spec-*v*P.

- The PV example (6) is represented as in (7).

- (6) Lu-lutu-**in** ng lalaki **ang** adobo.
ASP-cook-ACC CS man ANG adobo
‘The man will cook the adobo.’ (Rackowski & Richards 2005:569)

- (7) TAGALOG PV (Rackowski & Richards 2005:569)



- Rackowski & Richards rely on this configuration to explain the well-known extraction restriction, that only the subject can be extracted, as shown in (8) (Hsieh 2018):

- (8) a. lalaki=ng [**kumain** ng mangga sa kusina]
man=LK **ate.AV** GEN mango OBL kitchen
‘man who ate mango in the kitchen’
b. *mangga=ng [**kumain** ang lalaki sa kusina]
mango=LK **ate.AV** NOM man OBL kitchen
‘mango that the man ate in the kitchen’

¹In addition to the theory in Rackowski (2002), Rackowski & Richards (2005) also point to Chomsky (2001) (which I discuss below) and McGinnis (1998). McGinnis (1998) differs from the other work cited here in positing that tucking-in occurs only in some situations. I leave out due to time constraints.

c. mangga=ng [**kimain** ng lalaki sa kusina]
 mango=LK **ate.PV** GEN man OBL kitchen
 ‘mango that the man ate in the kitchen’

- Rackowski & Richards have the subject move above the EA, and define locality as in (9), making the subject more local to higher heads than the EA, and therefore the only possible goal.
- In fact, they claim that it is “only the highest specifier of a phase [that] will be able to escape the phase” (Rackowski & Richards 2005:580).

(9) A goal α is the closest one to a given probe if there is no distinct goal β such that for some X (X a head or maximal projection), X c-commands α but does not c-command β . (Rackowski & Richards 2005:579)

2.3 Interim summary

- There is a claim that, when a head has more than one specifier, the thematic specifier is the lowest
- Empirical evidence for this comes from extraction facts in Tagalog (not word order)²

3 Some new data from nominative-third languages

3.1 Nom-3 word order

- ‘Nominative-third’ (Sells 1997) languages are a subset of Austronesian languages spoken in the Philippines where the subject (a.k.a. ‘pivot,’ ‘topic’) follows the verb and external argument.

- Of course, this is unless the external argument itself is the subject, in which case it comes second.

(10) V > (EA) > subject > XP (Travis 2010:41)

- In (10), XP represents all other phrases (the internal argument, locatives, etc.).

²McGinnis (1998) has word order evidence from Icelandic, where shifted objects are to the left of external arguments:

(i) [CP $\text{Pa}\delta_i$ l su [TP t_i [vP [pessar b kur]_j aldrei neindir st dentar [vP t_j f fyrri]]]].
 there read these books never any students last year
 ‘No students ever read these books last year.’ (McGinnis 1998:36, 115)

Chomsky (2001), in contrast, views this object shift as involving further movement leftwards of the object from the phase edge. It does not show us the object’s position at Spec-vP.

- For example, aside from the subject, phrases in Kalagan are ordered as Agent-Object-Instrument-Beneficiary-Locative-Time (Travis 2010:41)

- Nom-3 languages include Kalagan, Pangasinan, Dibabawon, Isnag, Balangao, Limos Kalinga, and of course Cebuano (see references in Sells 2000:124 and Travis 2010:41).
- (11) illustrates Nom-3 through Cebuano sentences in four voices, with the external argument (EA) underlined and the subject bolded.

- In (a), the EA is the subject, and in (b–d), the subject is positioned immediately after the EA.

- The Nom-3 order is pointed out (for example) by Bell (1976:7), who writes, “the nominative NP follows the Actor.”

(11) NOM-3 IN CEBUANO, from Bell (1976:7–11)

- Mag-luto’ **ang babaye** ug bugas sa lata.
 AV-cook NOM woman OBL rice OBL can
 ‘The woman will cook rice in the can.’
- Luto’-on sa babaye **ang bugas** sa lata.
 cook-PV GEN woman NOM rice OBL can
 ‘The rice will be cooked by the woman in the can.’
- Luto’-an sa babaye **ang lata** ug bugas.
 cook-LV GEN woman NOM can OBL rice.
 ‘The woman will cook rice in the can.’
- I-sulat ni Linda **ang lapis** ug sulat.
 IV-write GEN Linda NOM pencil OBL letter
 ‘Linda will write a letter with the pencil.’

- At least in the case of Cebuano, note that word order is generally not rigid; Nom-3 is (only) a preference, the “most natural” word order.
- Nonetheless, I assume that this preference shows us what the basic structure is. Discourse-configurational languages still have a ‘basic’ word order (e.g. Latin is SOV in the basic case, despite ‘free’ word order).

- I don’t aim to explain how the non-Nom-3 word orders are derived; it could be phonological movement, or additional information-structural heads (or both).

3.2 Tagalog is not Nom-3

- I should note: unlike Cebuano, Tagalog is Nom-3.

- It has been described as preferring the subject to be last (see Garcia et al. (2018) for a recent overview of the literature) unless the topic is the EA

- Kroeger (1991) provides three principles:

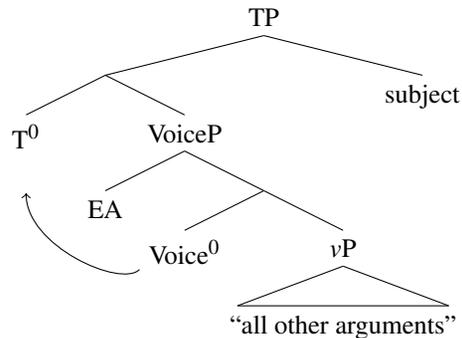
(12) Principles of Tagalog word order (Kroeger 1991:109)

- The Actor phrase tends to precede all other arguments.
- The NP which bears nominative case tends to follow all other arguments.
- “heavier” NP’s tend to follow “lighter” NP’s.

- Kroeger’s principles are encouraging from the perspective of taking seriously word order as a marker for underlying structure:

1. the EA is first because it is the highest thematic specifier
2. the subject is a right-branching specifier
3. there is phonological movement (or the like) at play in creating non-basic word orders.

(13) Basic word order in Tagalog



- What matters for us in the distinction between Tagalog and Nom-3 languages is this:

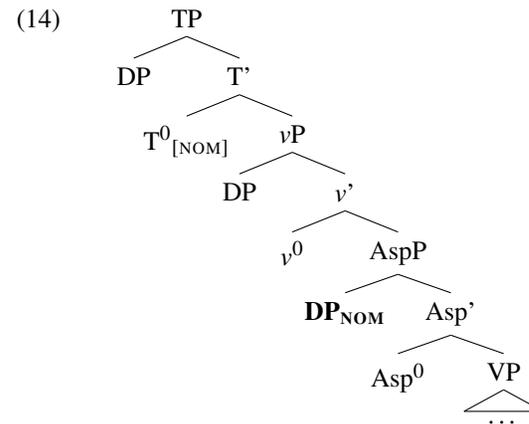
- because the subject is a rightward specifier in Tagalog, we can’t as easily see how high it is.

► (13) might be wrong, e.g. the subject could be in a right-branching specifier of Spec-VoiceP

► But in Nom-3, the subject is couched between the EA and subsequent arguments, giving a clearer picture of what needs to be generated.

4 Travis’ analysis

- Travis (2010:91) analyzes Nom-3 as involving the subject moving into Spec-InnerAspP, placing it lower than the EA:



- She has the subject in a lower specifier than the EA because an alternative analysis, where the subject is in Spec-TP and the agent has moved higher up, is undesirable:

- such movement is “not supported by similar phenomena in other languages,” and “we cannot explain why it is always the external argument” that moves to that higher position (Travis 2010:43)

► I agree her that the EA should be in its base position, and therefore we don’t have a choice but to put the subject somewhere within VoiceP

- I suggest three issues with Travis’ analysis:

1. Her Spec-InnerAspP is in general meant to be the position for objects in telic sentences, so we should not use it as a canonical derived subject position.

- She does use this specifier position to introduce certain arguments in Malagasy, but this is justified on the ground that it takes place in certain constructions that interact with telicity.

► Cebuano subjects are not known to interact in unusual ways telicity.

2. Fixing the previous issue by saying subjects aren’t actually in an InnerAspP but in the Spec of some “subject” head (e.g. AgrSP) still begs the question of what happens when the EA is the subject:

- Presumably AgrS⁰ in this scenario would Agree with the subject (or at least has an EPP feature or the like); but the EA is higher than it, in Spec-VoiceP.

► having an AgrS⁰ that does not actually need to agree with the subject is similarly ad hoc to having an InnerAspP that doesn't affect telicity.

- In Travis' analysis, non-EA subjects are always properly below the EA. They should therefore not be able to bind it. This prediction is not borne out (cf. Richards 2000:114):³

- (15) Gi-tudlu-an sa ilaha_i=ng amahan ang matag anak_i.
 PV-teach-PV GEN 3PL=LK father NOM every child
 'His_i father teaches every child_i.'
- (16) ?Nag-tudlu ang ilaha_i=ng amahan sa matag anak_i.
 AV-teach NOM 3PL=LK father ACC every child.
 'His_i father teaches every child_i.'

Recap

- Nom-3 word order involves a subject to the right of an EA
- Travis (2010) argues the EA is in its base position
- ... but I'm claiming the subject shouldn't be lower than the EA

5 A tucking-in analysis

5.1 Tucking-in to Spec-VoiceP

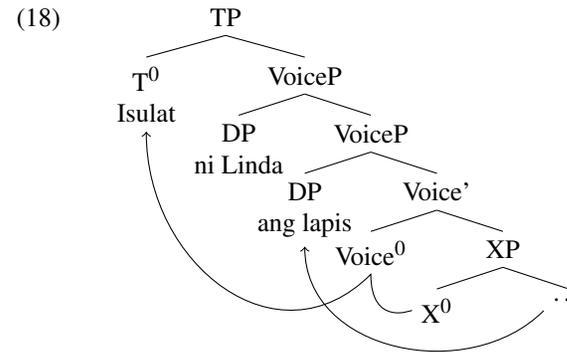
- I propose the Nom-3 word order arises from tucking-in of the subject to Spec-VoiceP, hence landing just below the EA.
- (18) shows this for (17) (repeated from (11d)).

- (17) I-sulat ni Linda ang lapis ug sulat.
 IV-write GEN Linda NOM pencil OBL letter
 'Linda will write a letter with the pencil.'

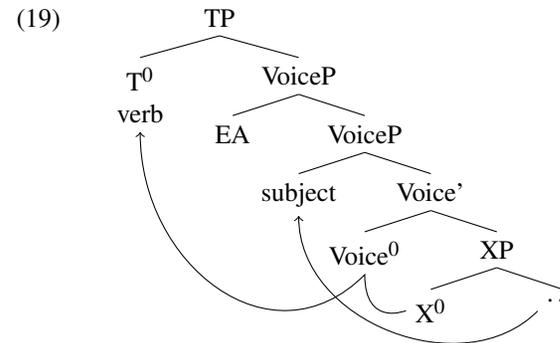
³The judgement for (16) is improved with a non-basic (non-Nom-3) word order where the binder is moved to the left of the EA:

- (i) ?Nag-tudlo sa matag anak_i ang ilaha_i=ng amahan.
 AV-see ACC every child NOM 3PL=LK father.
 'His_i father sees every child_i.'

But (15) is still the best of these sentences.



- More generally, Nom-3 is schematized in (19).



- This analysis allows the subject to occur immediately after the EA, deriving the Nom-3 word order.
- Nothing unusual needs to be said for cases where the EA is the subject (since the head that introduces the EA and that subjects move to is the same)
- Finally, under the assumption that multiple specifiers of a single head are equidistant (Chomsky 2001), we now have a way of explaining that subjects can bind into EAs despite being to their right: they are equidistant once the subject moves to Spec-VoiceP

- (20) is repeated from (15)

- (20) Gi-tudlu-an sa ilaha_i=ng amahan ang matag anak_i.
 PV-teach-PV GEN 3PL=LK father NOM every child
 'His_i father teaches every child_i.'

5.2 Consequences for thematic specifiers

- Recall: it’s been claimed that thematic specifiers are always lowest (McGinnis 1998; Rackowski 2002)
- Crucially, in my analysis of Nom-3, **the subject is below the EA, not above it.**
- I conclude that it is not the case that thematic specifiers must be lowest.

6 Conclusion

- I’ve proposed a new account of ‘nominative-third’ word order, based on the subject tucking-in to Spec-VoiceP, landing below the EA.
- This account is very similar to Rackowski & Richards’ (2005) discussion of Tagalog, which also has the subject shift to Spec-VoiceP, but differs minimally in that I have the thematic specifier (the EA) above the subject rather than below.
- This is clearly seen in the word order of Nom-3 languages, but not in Tagalog, which prefers rightward subjects.
- This provides empirical evidence that thematic specifiers are not (necessarily) lowest among multiple specifiers, as argued by Rackowski (2002).
- If the Earliness / Immediate Agree principle is correct, it should not be taken to mean that heads agree with material in their complement before material is externally merged.
- It also means that we need an account of the extraction restriction in Austronesian that does not rely on subjects being higher than EAs.

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