

Finding the Middle in the *maka*-: Tagalog Morphology Offers New Insight on Middle Syntax^{*1}

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ABSTRACT

The semantic interpretation of English middles suggests a far richer syntax than English morphology can capture. In the past tense, the middle construction is ambiguous between two readings. One interpretation entails actualization and describes a specific event and subject. The second describes a property of the subject that held in the past, allows a specific *or* generic subject, and does not carry any actualization entailment. Since the middle literature has defined middles as generic statements only, non-generic examples have been largely overlooked in existing analyses.² In this paper, I examine the morphology of Tagalog *maka*-prefixed predicates to argue that these must share a common syntax with middles, based on their parallel interpretation. I then apply Bhatt's (1999) analysis of *was able to* to middles and *maka*-predicates, to arrive at a hypothesis for their underlying structures. I argue that middles are formed by embedding a non-volitional eventive predicate under a stative one which attributes a property to a Theme as its external argument.

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¹ Key for glosses: 1S – first person singular; 3S – third person singular; ACC – Accusative Case; AIA – 'ability or involuntary action' (*maka/naka*) morphology; AT/AV – actor topic voice morphology; COMP – complementizer; CONTP – contemplative aspects; DAT – Dative Case; GEN/CASE – Genitive=default/Oblique Case; IMP – imperfective aspect; N – neutral aspect; NEG – negation; NOM – Nominative Case; OV – oblique topic voice morphology; PERF – perfective aspect; TT/DV – theme topic voice morphology (the inconsistencies are due to examples taken from different sources).

² We could, of course, stick with the characterization of English middles as generics only, but this leaves us hard pressed to say what the non-generic readings are exactly, if not middles. Admittedly, the absence of non-generic English middle discussion is likely due to the unacceptability of such sentences to the consultants and authors of the works cited below, and the judgments herein (almost entirely from speakers of Canadian English, below the age of 30) may be indicative of a linguistic change in progress, or dialectal variation. An interesting sociolinguistic study could help settle this, but for another day.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE MIDDLE MUDDLE

The English middles in (1) offer a number of puzzles to linguistic theory, despite (and in large part due to) their deceptively simple construction:

- (1) a. This/An eggplant cuts easily.
 b. This/An eggplant cut easily. (past)

The ‘core’ middle in (1a) (termed by Fagan 1992) has received the most (if not all) attention in the syntactic literature, and can be paraphrased as ‘generally, in an event that is a cutting of this/any eggplant, the cutting is easy’ (Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1994, 1995; Bowers 2002; Condoravdi 1989; Fagan 1992; Hale & Keyser 2002; Hoekstra & Roberts 1993; Hulk & Cornips 2000; Keyser & Roeper 1984; Klingvall 2003; Lekakou 2003, 2004, 2005; Massam 1988; McConnell-Ginet 1994; Roberts 1987; Soschen 2002; Zwart 1996; a.o.). (1a), then, describes a state, or property of the subject, which is also the logical object of the predicate. The verbal morphology of this middle predicate, however, is homophonous to its active (and eventive) counterpart. These following questions are perhaps the most obvious: how does the surface subject come to be understood also as the logical object (or conversely, how does the logical object come to be in surface subject position), and how does the listener come to understand the eventive-looking (or sounding, rather) verb as a property of that subject?

The middle in (1b) has received far less, if any, attention in the literature, and at first seems only to extend the mystery. The past tense middle is ambiguous between two readings. The first reading describes the same property as the present middle, but situates the state as having held at a time prior to the time of utterance. This interpretation allows a specific or generic subject, and does not entail actualization (i.e., no verifying instances are required, following Bhatt 1999). The second entails actualization and describes only a specific event and subject. Again, we are faced with a more intricate semantic interpretation than is marked overtly by English morphology and the task of identifying the underlying syntax seems daunting.

In the following paper, I explore to what extent looking to the lush morphology of Tagalog can bring new insight to the English puzzles above. Section 2 introduces the Tagalog *maka*-prefix, examining first how its semantic readings parallel those of middles, then how its syntactic behaviour does likewise. In Section 3, I argue that Bhatt’s (1999) analysis of the English *be able to* construction applies also to middles, with the Tagalog *maka* data acting as a conclusive link between the two phenomena. I show that (1b)’s ambiguity follows from the perfective-imperfective alternation that is unseen in English morphology (but overt in Tagalog), and Bhatt’s (1999) observation that perfective aspect and genericity do not co-occur. Section 4 offers an analysis that aims to solve the middle mysteries of both (1a) and (1b) (with the leftover puzzle of middle modification), and Section 5 concludes.

2. SETTING UP THE PIECES: TAGALOG ‘ABILITY AND INVOLUNTARY-ACTION’ (AIA) VERBS

2.1 *MAKA-* AS AN AUSTRONESIAN MIDDLE?

Tagalog has a certain verbal prefix, *maka-/naka-*³ that seems to share certain properties parallel to the middles observed in English, which I flesh out in the following sections. Dell (1983-4) follows the terminology of Schachter & Otnes (1972) in calling these predicates “ability and involuntary-action” forms (AIA), since the addition of the prefix to the regular ‘neutral’⁴ form of verbs yields forms that are “systematically ambiguous between two readings, one indicating the ability to accomplish the action expressed by the verbal root, the other indicating its involuntary or accidental occurrence.”⁵ He gives the following example, where (2) is the neutral form of ‘take’ and (3) shares the same root, only prefixed with the AIA morphology:⁶

(2) kinunan ni Ben ng litrato si Luisa.
N.PERF.take CASE Ben CASE picture NOM Luisa
‘Ben took a picture of Luisa.’

(3) nakunan ni Ben ng litrato si Luisa.
AIA.PERF.take CASE Ben CASE picture NOM Luisa
a. ‘Ben managed to take a picture of Luisa.’
b. ‘Ben involuntarily took a picture of Luisa.’

(Dell 1983-4:177)

Both interpretations of (3) require that the ‘agent’ of the picture-taking not be in control of the result of his action, regardless of whether this agent had the psychological intention for that result to occur or not, which, I believe, is the distinction we observe in (3a) vs. (3b). As Dell explains, (3a) “could be used appropriately to talk about a situation in which Luisa did everything in her power to avoid being photographed, or one where the camera would most of the time fail to function properly.”⁷ He continues: “it could also be used to talk about a situation in which Ben was not *intending* to photograph Luisa, but she happened to walk into the range of the camera just at the moment he pressed the button,” (emphasis is mine JLM), which would yield the reading in (3b). In other words, (3) states that Ben photographed Luisa, but that something else *allowed* this to happen, or made the result possible, regardless of Ben’s intentions.

But this is just what happens, from a certain perspective, in middles: the control, or responsibility for the result described by the predicate is taken away from the agent, and attributed instead to some property of the (logical) direct object which ‘allows’ the result to

³ The discrepancy between *maka-* and *naka-* is due to an aspectual shift, where *n* marks the event as +started, which will be elaborated on shortly.

⁴ ‘neutral’ (marked ‘N’ in glosses) is the term Dell uses to refer to the unprefixated counterparts of the AIA-forms. The former contrast with the latter in that, as the name suggests, the former do not involve any ‘ability’ or ‘involuntary action’ meaning. In Dell’s examples, he matches the perfective/imperfective morphology of the neutral and AIA forms so that the only contrast is that of the added morphology.

⁵ Dell (1983-4:176), citing Schachter & Otnes (1972:330).

⁶ I have altered the gloss style here from Dell’s to be consistent with the previous examples in this paper.

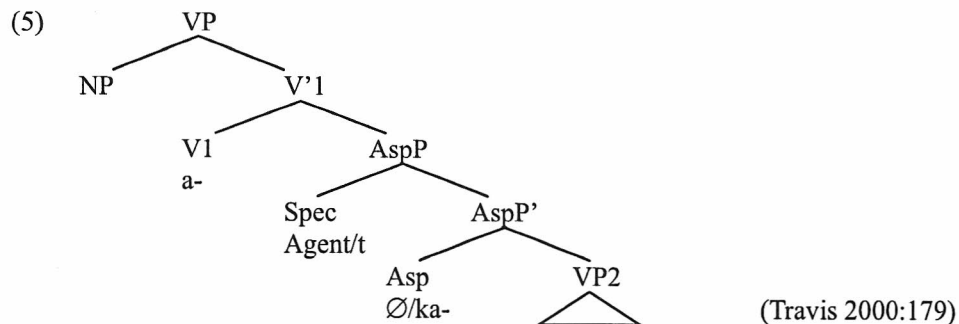
⁷ Dell (1983-4:177)

be possible. For Dell, the main contrast is as follows: whereas the neutral form asserts (or denies) that a particular ‘maneuver’ has been performed, the AIA-form asserts (or denies) that a certain ‘result’ is achieved from that maneuver. His example in (4) makes this point clear:

- (4) a. itinulak ni Ben ang bato.
 N.PERF.push CASE Ben NOM rock
 ‘Ben pushed the rock.’
 b. ... pero hindi niya naitulak, dahil napakabigat niyon.
 but neg CASE.3s AIA.PERF.push because very.heavy CASE.that
 ‘...but he could not make it move, because it was so heavy.’
 (Dell 1983-4:179, emphasis mine JLM)

When (4a) is completed by (4b), both the neutral and AIA-forms are used in the same statement where, as Dell suggests, the former asserts the maneuver of pushing carried out by the agent, while the latter denies the result of the rock having moved.

Although I have introduced the AIA morphology here as *maka-/naka-*, the AIA-forms given in (3) and (4) seem to have mysteriously lost their *ka-*. This disappearance is explained straightforwardly by Travis (2000a), who invokes Sportiche’s (1992) Doubly Filled Voice Filter.⁸ Travis observes that the *ka-* morpheme is lost predictably when the theme is marked as subject, or in other words, when the agent does not move to subject position. Based on the similar behaviour of Tagalog’s productive causative morpheme *pag*, she argues that the missing morpheme must head the projection which licenses the agent of AIA-predicates, and that, because of Sportiche’s filter, the head and specifier of this projection are restricted from both being realized phonologically simultaneously. Since the *ka-* morpheme also reduplicates to encode ‘incomplete’ aspect (discussed below), Travis calls the phrase which it heads Aspect Phrase, and, based on Tagalog morpheme ordering, locates this phrase between the lower VP and the higher VP which encodes causation, thus roughly giving the tree in (5):



When the logical theme appears in subject position, the agent remains in its base position, and *ka-* is filtered out. These deletion facts suggest that AIA-form agents are base generated

⁸ Sportiche’s filter being:

Doubly Filled Voice Filter: *[HP XP [H...]]

Where H is a functional head licensing some property P and both XP and H overtly encode P.

(Sportiche 1992:#75, cited in Travis 2000:164)

in a syntactic position different from the position of ‘neutral’-form agents, and as Travis explains, “...this difference in position leads to a difference in semantics – a volitional agent vs. a non-volitional agent.”⁹

This brings us to an interesting contrast between the AIA-forms with the agent marked as subject, and those forms where it is the theme that is subject-marked instead. Although he does not make this explicit, Dell’s example in (4b) captures an essential point to this contrast: the ‘logical object’ *bato* is marked as subject (i.e., is preceded by the Nominative Case marker, *ang*) of the AIA-verb *naitulak*, and it is a property of the ‘logical object’ that is explicitly stated as the cause for the failure of Ben’s attempt. I give the theme-subject form from (4b) again, along with its corresponding agent-subject form in (6):

- (6) a. **nakatulak** si Igor ng bato.
 AIA.PERF.push NOM Igor CASE rock
 ‘Igor was able to push a rock/rocks.’ (because he’s very strong)
- b. **natulak** ni Igor ang bato.
 AIA.PERF.push CASE Igor NOM rock
 ‘Igor was able to push the rock.’ (because it had rounded edges)¹⁰

Although both (6a) and (6b) mean essentially the same thing, in the former, it is a property or ability of the agent which allows for the pushing event, whereas in the latter, it is a property of the theme instead. The Tagalog structures are beginning more and more to resemble our English middles. In Section 2.2, I discuss Kroeger’s analysis of Tagalog Equi controllees, which elaborates the idea that AIA-predicates shift the responsibility for the result of the described event away from the agent’s volition, and which offers clues for my analysis.

A last characteristic of AIA-predicates to mention here is the interplay of aspect with the interpretation of these forms. Tagalog marks two kinds of aspect morphologically: the ‘outer aspect’ indicates with an affixed *n-/in* that the event/state has started, while the ‘inner aspect’ uses reduplication to indicate that the event/state is incomplete. In the examples above from Dell, perfective aspect is marked by the presence of the *n* affix, in combination with the absence of the reduplicative one.¹¹ His examples contrast the ‘neutral’ forms with the AIA ones, both in perfective aspect,¹² however, it is important for this discussion to also contrast perfective AIA verbs with their imperfective counterparts, as in (7):

⁹ Travis (2000:179). I have only actually presented half of the deletion facts here; the other facts covered in Travis’ paper show that the causative *pag* morpheme, which is assumed to head the highest VP, deletes when the theme is subject-marked, indicating that the volitional agent in Tagalog is projected in SPEC VP1 (or vice versa: its projection in SPEC VP1 causes it to be interpreted as volitional).

¹⁰ These data were elicited from my native speaker, Raphael Mercado, as well as all other data in this paper not specifically marked otherwise.

¹¹ Travis (2000:169-70), citing Maclachlan (1989).

¹² Although both the neutral and AIA-forms appear to be in the perfective aspect, it is a curious property of Tagalog (and other languages such as St’at’imcets) that the neutral forms only *imply* cumulation without entailing it, whereas the *naka*-prefixed verbs do in fact entail cumulation of the event. (see Travis 2000:172, for similar facts in Malagasy, and Bar-el, Davis & Matthewson 2004 for St’at’imcets)

- (7) a. **nakakakain** ako ng lamok.
 AIA.IMP.eat 1S.NOM CASE mosquito
 ‘I am able to eat a mosquito.’
 b. **nakakain** ako ng lamok.
 AIA.PERF.eat 1S.NOM CASE mosquito
 ‘I accidentally ate/managed to eat a mosquito.’

Here we observe that, where the perfective *naka-* yields an accidental/involuntary interpretation, the imperfective *nakaka-* (+incomplete) yields one of an ability assigned to the agent. The verbs in (7) can also both appear with the theme as subject, given in (8):

- (8) a. **nakakain** ko ang lamok.
 AIA.IMP.eat 1S.CASE NOM mosquito
 ‘I am able to eat the mosquito.’
 (or literally, ‘the mosquito/mosquitoes is/are eatable by/for me.’)
 b. **nakain** ko ang lamok.
 AIA.PERF.eat 1S.CASE NOM mosquito
 ‘I managed to eat/accidentally ate the mosquito.’
 c. **nakakain** ang lamok.
 AIA.IMP.eat NOM mosquito
 ‘ANYONE is able to eat this mosquito/Mosquitoes are edible.’
 d. **nakain** ang lamok
 AIA.PERF.eat NOM mosquito
 ‘SOMEONE managed to eat/accidentally ate this mosquito.’

Again, the reading (although not easily made explicit in the translation) attributes the cause of or responsibility for the event to the mosquito. Finally, if the agent DP is left out completely from (8), we get the sentences and interpretations in (8c,d).

Remarkably, this last pair of sentences now seem to share all the features of the English middle pair given in the introduction to this paper (modulo the necessary modification of English middles): in (8c), the logical object is in subject position, is interpreted as responsible for the potential event described by the predicate, and this responsibility is understood to hold generically for events that are an eating of it, for any given agent, as a property of the logical subject. These are exactly the properties that Lekakou (2004) claims hold for middles cross-linguistically. (8d), on the other hand, is interpreted exactly as (7b) ‘my paper wrote smoothly,’ in that it describes a particular event that has cumulated, and that was caused/allowed by the logical object in subject position; that is, the generic reading in (8c) is missing from (8d).

Now that the parallel between middles and Tagalog AIA-predicates has been established, we can begin to solve some of the riddles that they pose. If the logical object in sentences like (8c,d) is interpreted as the cause of possible (or attested) events, how is it also interpreted as the theme/affected object without violating the Theta-Criterion requiring each DP to receive one and only one theta-role? How does this object come to be understood as the causer/allower, but not the agent, even when the true agent is not present? What part does the required modification in English middles have to play in the middle reading, and why is the

same modification unnecessary in Tagalog AIA-forms? The aim of the following sections is to find clues to the answers for these questions with the help of Tagalog data and research, as well as from work on the syntax-semantics of *was able to*.

One curious point to note regarding (7a) before moving on is that the *n-/+*start morpheme forces an entailment that the ability in question actually be attested/accomplished at least once. This differs from the English expression of ability which is ambiguous between whether it has been demonstrated or not, and will become important when I compare the two languages in Section 3.3. The contemplative aspect, indicated by reduplication and the absence of *n-* (i.e. –start, +incomplete), is used instead to capture what might be more appropriately termed a ‘capacity,’ where no attestation is entailed. This will be elaborated below (in Section 3.3), but first, I turn to some Tagalog Equi facts.

2.2 *MAKA-/NAKA-* AND EQUI-DP DELETION

Kroeger (1993), expanding on observations from Dell (1981), discusses some curious facts involving AIA-predicates, and embedded clauses, more specifically, those containing equivalent-DP deletion. This is defined as the deletion of a DP from an embedded clause if it is equivalent to a DP in a higher clause, and is controlled by this higher DP. He explains that the Equi target, or ‘controllee’ (the DP which deletes), of Tagalog embedded clauses must be the agent (or Actor in his terms) in all but two circumstances, one of which is just in case the complement verb is marked with *maka-/naka-*.¹³ A typical (Actor-controllee) Tagalog Equi construction is shown in (9a), with a non-volitional (AIA) case in (9b):

- (9) a. binalak niya-ng [magbigay NOM ng pera sa nanay]
 PERF.plan.OV 3SGEN-COMP AV.give (3sNOM) GEN money DAT mother
 ‘He planned to give money to Mother.’
 b. inutusan ko si maria-ng [mahalikan NOM ni pedro]
 PERF.order.DV 1sGEN NOM Maria-COMP AIA.PERF.kiss (1sNOM) GEN Pedro
 ‘I ordered Maria to be kissed by Pedro.’ (Kroeger 1993:94-5)

Kroeger begins his analysis of this variation by identifying the semantic conditions on controllee selection. He notes, following Farkas (1988), Dixon (1979), and Sag & Pollard (1991), that Equi complement clauses observe “essentially the same semantic constraints as imperatives,”¹⁴ as in (10a) vs. (10b):

- (10) a. #John tried to receive a letter.
 b. #Receive a letter! (Kroeger 1993:73)

The awkwardness of these examples is due to the fact that ‘receive’ does not involve an ACTION, and that Equi predicates and imperatives alike must express volitional ACTIONS.¹⁵

¹³ Kroeger (1993:71). The first exception occurs only with certain Equi predicates which, although related, I will not go into here.

¹⁴ Kroeger (1993:73)

¹⁵ Kroeger follows Jackendoff (1983) in his use of ‘action’ whereby an action is basically an event that involves the performance of ACTION by an ACTOR, as in (i) where (ia-d) are all events, but only (ia,b) are actions:

According to Farkas (1988), “Equi predicates... require that their controlled situations be possibly intentional, and that their controllee be the initiator of the controlled situation, that is, the argument of the complement clause which is viewed as being primarily responsible for bringing about the controlled situation.”¹⁶ Since, in a typical ACTION sentence the Actor is also the ‘initiator’ of the situation, this predicts the first Tagalog controllee pattern from (9a). Kroeger summarizes the semantic constraints as follows:

- (11) CONTROL CONSTRAINT (revised from Fodor 1974)
- a. Equi predicates require that their complement express a volitional action.
 - b. The controllee must be construed as the Actor of that action. (Kroeger 1993:76)

This explains also why a passive Equi complement such as (12) seems to imply some kind of control or volitionality by the subject, despite that it is the logical object:

- (12) Ron persuaded Nancy to be kissed by Mikhail. (Kroeger 1993:74)

The complement clause ‘to be kissed by Mikhail’ must be interpreted as a volitional ACTION, and so the controllee must be understood as being responsible for bringing the situation about. This English example appears, intuitively, very similar to what must be occurring in the second Tagalog pattern from (9b), and in fact very similar to middles themselves.

Kroeger looks to the notion of CAUSATIVE COERCION used by Sag & Pollard (1991) (henceforth S&P) to explain the added permissive/volitional interpretation given to the logical object in (12), and likewise to Tagalog Equi complements with non-volitional predicates. He explains that S&P’s notion is formalized as a lexical rule which inserts an unexpressed ‘cause’ predicate into the semantic structure of the basic one, as in (13):

- (13) $P\langle\dots,y,\dots\rangle \rightarrow \text{CAUSE}\langle y, P\langle\dots,y,\dots\rangle\rangle$

Kroeger argues that although it operates on semantic representations, this rule must be pragmatically triggered:

-
- (i) What Fred did was
- a. run away.
 - b. put the book on the table.
 - c. *hear about the accident.
 - d. *receive a letter.
 - e. *love Louise.

(Kroeger 1993:72, from Jackendoff 1983:180)

¹⁶ Kroeger (1993:74). He also cites that Farkas defines ‘intentional situations’ as those which “may be viewed as being brought about by the actions of an individual intending to bring [them] about,” and therefore interchangeable with the ‘volitional actions,’ mentioned above.

[T]he application of such a rule is motivated by Gricean principles. For example, when a speaker utters the sentence in [12], he appears to be violating the constraint that Equi targets must be Actors. Yet the hearer assumes that the speaker intends to utter a well-formed and meaningful sentence. In order to resolve this paradox, the hearer must appeal to a secondary rule of interpretation, namely the rule of Causative Coercion. This rule allows the hearer to derive a valid interpretation of the sentence which does not clash with the Control Constraint in [11].¹⁷

The second step in Kroeger's analysis is to show that Tagalog AIA predicates do not describe ACTIONS (again, in Jackendoff's terms), and thus must also succumb to Causative Coercion in Equi complements. He does this by noting a similarity Dell makes between the Tagalog neutral/AIA split and the ACTION/RESULT predicate distinction of Kac (1972). Just as for the Tagalog 'neutral'-forms discussed above, for Kac ACTIONS assert an action and imply a result, whereas RESULTS, parallel to Tagalog AIA-verbs, assert a result and presuppose an action. 'Kill' is ambiguous between RESULT and ACTION, in these terms, while 'murder' is unambiguously an ACTION, demonstrated in the discrepancy between (14a) and (14b):

- (14) a. John almost killed Fred.
 b. John almost murdered Fred. (Kroeger 1993:84)

In (14a), *almost* can modify the action, as in 'John *almost* did something that would have potentially killed Fred, but he stopped himself,' or the result, giving something like 'John did something and Fred *almost* died because of it, but Fred pulled through in the end.' On the other hand, (14b) can only be interpreted with *almost* modifying the action.

Coming back to the Equi facts with non-volitional (AIA) verbs, based on their similarities to RESULT predicates just mentioned, Kroeger concludes that they cannot encode ACTIONS, and this subjects them to Causative Coercion when placed in ACTION-requiring situations, like Equi complements.¹⁸ Since these non-volitional verbs are often used precisely to indicate that the Actor is *not* in control of the situation, it is logical that Actors should be unavailable as controllees, and that these clauses be used to attribute responsibility to the subject-marked argument instead (as in the logical object in (6b)).

Again, this bears remarkable similarity to what has been argued for middles, with the exception that there is little sense in how the logical object of 'this book reads easily' can be construed as the 'intentional' causer of any action. To an uncertain extent, I assume that the necessity for volition is a restriction made by the semantics/pragmatics of the Equi verb; A must 'persuade' B to do/allow C volitionally, since it is essential to the notion of persuasion. On the other hand, volition is obviously not an essential part of 'causing.'

These notions of ACTION and Causative Coercion explored here are useful to us if we consider that all verbs that can be used as middles are indeed predicates requiring an ACTION by an ACTOR. It is possible that English middles create a situation parallel to the situation described above by Kroeger for (12): the speaker utters sometime like 'this bread cuts easily,'

¹⁷ Kroeger (1993:77). I have replaced his example numbers with those given to the same examples in this paper.

¹⁸ Kroeger (1993:84)

but the listener recognizes ‘cut’ as an ACTION requiring an Actor, and the statement appears to violate this requirement since her knowledge of the universe says that bread cannot cut (in the non-middle sense). In order to ‘resolve the paradox,’ assuming that the speaker intended to say something meaningful, the listener invokes the rule of Causative Coercion, and a middle interpretation is achieved. This middle interpretation which results is that the bread must have caused or allowed the cutting of it to be easy, which of course cannot be understood as volitional on the part of the bread. This would seem to be ruled out again based on our pragmatic world knowledge, but (15) suggests that this is not the case:

- (15) a. This bread cuts easily.
 b. #This bread cuts.

(15a) is a well formed middle and is understood as described just above. (15b), however, without any added stress on ‘cuts,’ is marked precisely because it implies that the bread is the volitional agent of the cutting. This raises the question again of what role the adverb is playing in (15a), and also suggests that Causative Coercion is not solely triggered by pragmatics either, otherwise (15b) should receive the same interpretation as (15a). The same argument can be made for Tagalog AIA-forms with theme-subjects, but this then raises the question of why Causative Coercion seems to occur in AIA-forms if Dell argued that these are not ACTIONS to begin with. In Section 4, I return to these questions to argue that Causative Coercion is not the right force to appeal to, especially considering that, in middles and AIA-verbs alike, our final outcome is not an event at all, but a state. But first, I bring to the discussion another set of facts that appear to tie Tagalog AIA-verbs and English middles.

2.3 ‘CAUSATION’ AND EMPTY ANAPHORS

Travis (2000b) builds on research by del Pilar (1994) that offers evidence for an empty anaphoric pro in Tagalog that may be licensed by overt causative morphology. Del Pilar’s data involves the productive causative affix ‘pag,’ which turns a two-place predicate into a three-place one, seen in (16a) vs. (16b). When the third argument is dropped, however, it is interpreted as necessarily bound by the highest argument (the causer), seen in (17):¹⁹

- (16) a. *sumundo* *si* *A ng B.*
 AT.PERF.fetch NOM A ACC B
 ‘A fetched a B.’
 b. *nagpasundo* *si* *A kay B ng K.*
 AT.PERF.pagpa.fetch NOM A OBL B ACC K
 ‘A caused B to fetch a K.’
- (17) *nagpapuri* *si* *A kay B.*
 AT.PERF.pagpa.praise NOM A OBL B
 ‘A caused/let B to praise A’s self.’

¹⁹ Travis (2000b:185), data from del Pilar (1994). The judgments in this section are not shared by all Tagalog speakers. Namely, the *ng* Accusative marker cannot be used to mark people according to those speakers’ dialect.

Travis notes that this is unlike pro-drop since the antecedent must be found within the sentence, shown in (18). From this, she assumes (following del Pilar) that the empty category in (17) and (18b) is a pro, and that it is anaphoric. It must also be syntactic, since it controls PRO in (18b):

- (18) a. nagpahikayat si A kay B ng K na bumili ng bahay.
 AT.PERF.pagpa.persuade NOM A OBL B ACC K comp AT.buy ACC house
 ‘A caused/let B persuade K to buy a house.’
- b. nagpahikayat si A kay B na bumili ng bahay
 AT.PERF.pagpa.persuade NOM A OBL B comp AT.buy ACC house
 ‘A caused/let B persuade A PRO to buy a house.’
- c. [_{IP} nagpahikayat [_{NP} si A]_i; kay B [_{NP} pro]_i; [_{CP} na [_{IP} bumilli PRO_i ng bahay]]]

Travis represents these control facts of del Pilar’s anaphoric pro with (18c), which shows that the empty anaphor, which is bound to the highest argument, A, itself binds the PRO of the lowest clause.

From these constructions as well as others documented by Carrier-Duncan (1985) involving argument binding phenomena in Tagalog, Travis argues that two conditions must hold for anaphoric pro to be licensed: the causative *pag* morpheme must be overt, and the antecedent must be in subject position.²⁰

Interestingly, a similar anaphoric pro has been posited by Massam (1988) to occupy the object position of English middles. In that paper, Massam makes the keen observation that the structure of middles is identical to what she terms Recipe Context Null Object Constructions (RCNOCs). An example of RCNOCs is shown in (19):

- (19) Take the cake mix, 1 cup water and 3 eggs. Mix ___ well and beat ___ for five minutes. Pour ___ into a well-greased cake pan and bake ___ for 20 minutes. Remove ___ from oven and cool _____. (Massam 1988:327)

In (19), the dashes stand in place for the null objects, which Massam explains cannot receive an arbitrary interpretation; the missing objects are all understood to refer back to an antecedent in the preceding co-text (the cake mix, water and eggs in this case). She also notices that these null objects are only possible in ‘no-subject imperative structures,’ demonstrated by (20a) vs. (20b):

- (20) a. First, take two eggs, ½ cup of flour, and 3 tsp. sugar. Beat ___ well and cook ___ for 5 minutes. Serve ___ while ___ still warm.
 b. First, you take two eggs, ½ cup of flour, and 3 tsp. sugar. *You must beat ___ well and cook ___ for 5 minutes. *You then serve ___ while still warm. (Massam 1988:328)

²⁰ Travis (2000b:186)

Remarkably, when the object is left out yet the subject is overt, the sentences in (20b) all receive a middle reading, proving with little doubt that these are in fact the same phenomena. Similar to middles again, she argues that the RCNOCs have *no* syntactic agent, rather than a null subject PRO, since (21) is not quite grammatical:

- (21) ??You then try [PRO to beat ___ carefully] (Massam 1988:328)

This leaves the SPEC TP position open for a “running discourse topic,” which “will then bind the Case-marked, theta-marked null reflexive element in object position,”²¹ or for the overt logical object antecedent itself in the case of middles.

Coming back to *maka-*, given the similarities between AIA-verbs and middles, it seems logical that when the theme is subject, they should involve the same anaphoric pro in their object position as hypothesized by del Pilar, Travis and Massam. As made clear by Travis (2000b), however, this empty anaphor must be licensed by overt causative morphology. Although there is no *pag* to be seen in AIA-predicates, there is *maka-*, and as discussed in Section 2.1, there is causation. In fact, following Phillips (1996) regarding the Malagasy counterpart *maha-*, Travis (2000a) analyzes *maka-* as composed of three morphemes: *m-*, *a-*, and *ka-*. As we have already seen, *ka-* heads the AspP and encodes +/- incomplete aspect. *M-* appears to have some role to play in voice morphology. This leaves us with *a-*, which Travis claims is a stative morpheme that heads VP1, similar to the causative morpheme *pag-*.²² If this stative morpheme can fulfil the requirement for overt causative morphology posited by Travis, then AIA-predicates create the desired environment for anaphoric object pro precisely when the theme is in subject position.

This comparison now offers a unique take on middle structure, if we assume that the sub-parts that build up the AIA-verbs are all necessarily present in English also. Perhaps most interestingly, this suggests that middles contain a covert stativizing head above an otherwise eventive tree. The next section is a return to our problem with the disappearing genericity with help from *was able to*, and following that we will see how the pieces just mapped out fit into a novel analysis of middle syntax.

3. GENERICITY

3.1 BHATT (1999) AND WAS ABLE TO

One of the goals for this paper has been, since the beginning, to account for the discrepancy between (22a) and (22b) (repeated here from (1)):

- (22) a. This eggplant cuts easily.
b. This eggplant cut easily.

In the fifth chapter of his dissertation, Bhatt (1999) discusses the interplay of genericity and aspect in *was able to* constructions which can be successfully applied to the phenomena we

²¹ Massam (1988:328).

²² Travis (2000a:176).

have observed thus far.²³

Bhatt first observes that *was able to* is ambiguous between two readings which can be paraphrased as ‘managed to’ and ‘had the ability to.’ The former describes an event that came to completion despite the intentions or control of the agent, while the latter describes a past ability attributed to the subject. This split in interpretation is, by now, quite familiar to us, since it mirrors the alternation from perfective to imperfective in AIA-verbs, as well as that above in (22), as I elaborate shortly. The two readings of *was able to* can be drawn out by embedding an example such as (23) in two different contexts, (24a) and (24b):

(23) John was able to eat five apples in an hour.

(24) a. Yesterday, John was able to eat five apples in an hour. (past episode)

b. In those days, John was able to eat five apples in an hour. (past generic)

(Bhatt 1999:173)

These two interpretations contrast in terms of their cumulation entailments (Actuality Entailments, as Bhatt terms them), as well as in their compatibility with generic subjects. The statement in (24a) requires John to have actually eaten five apples, that is, the event’s cumulation is necessarily entailed. The statement in (24b), however, carries no such entailment; John had the ability to eat five apples in an hour, maybe by combination of a large stomach and powerful jaw, but may never have needed to physically demonstrate this ability. A situation like (25) seems perfectly reasonable on the ‘ability’ reading:

(25) Ickabod — ‘Well, I got to my citar lesson on-time, no thanks to you!’

Juniper — ‘It’s your own fault. I *was able to drive you*, but you never called, so I assumed you didn’t need the ride.’

The discrepancy with regards to generic subjects is a shade more complicated. Basically put, however, *was able to* on its ‘managed to’ interpretation (as in (26a)) allows only existential (specific) subjects, whereas its ‘had the ability to’ reading (as in (26b)) appears to combine with both existential and generic subjects. This is exemplified best with an indefinite or bare plural subject, as in (26), and its disambiguating contexts in (26a) and (26b):

(26) A fireman was/Firemen were able to eat five apples.

a. Yesterday at the apple eating contest, a fireman was/firemen were able to eat five apples. (Past episodic, actuality entailment, existentially interpreted subject)

b. In those days, a fireman was/firemen were able to eat five apples in an hour.

(Generic, no actuality entailment, generically interpreted subject OR Generic, no actuality entailment, existentially interpreted subject) (Bhatt 1999:174)²⁴

The ability interpretation of *was able to*, is actually ambiguous also, however. As noted by Bhatt citing Lawler (1973) and Dahl (1975), there are (at least) two kinds of genericity:

²³ Many thanks to Marika Lekakou for bringing Bhatt’s thesis to my attention.

²⁴ I made some minor adjustments to Bhatt’s example here in accordance with a revision he makes further on in his thesis.

'habitual' and 'dispositional'. Taking again his example, (27) receives either a habitual reading on which John is a habitual beer drinker, or a dispositional reading on which John may not be a drinker, but he is not against drinking beer, and so might drink it on the occasion of that someone buys him a pint.

(27) John drinks beer.

A crucial distinction between the two is, as Bhatt explains, that "the dispositional reading does not require verifying instances while the habitual reading does."²⁵ In the case of *was able to*, the dispositional interpretation corresponds to an ability that has not been attested, while the habitual reading corresponds to an ability that has been attested. In Standard English, these two readings are usually only teased out by context: the dialogue in (25) is only dispositional, while (28) is more saliently habitual:²⁶

(28) Gwendolyn was able to run ten kilometres a day when she was young. Now she can only manage it a couple times a week.

In (28), Gwendolyn is understood to have had the ability to run ten kilometres daily, and it is strongly implied that she actually did so. As I will come to in the next section, the fact that Tagalog calculates aspect via the combination of two distinct morphemes allows it to mark this distinction overtly.

For most characteristics that Bhatt attributes to *was able to* just summarized, middles such as that in (29) can be shown to follow suit:

(29) A paper/Papers wrote sluggishly.

Just as the ambiguous (23) above can be disambiguated by accompanying co-text, so can (29) when embedded in (30a,b):

- (30) a. Last night I worked tirelessly from dusk to dawn. A paper wrote sluggishly, but it's not something I necessarily want to own up to.²⁷ (Past episodic)
 b. Back in the day, a paper/papers wrote sluggishly because it was all done on typewriters and for every mistake you had to restart from the beginning of the page. (Past generic)

Parallel to (24a) above, (30a) describes a specific event of a specific paper being written to completion. In Bhatt's terms, it carries with it an actuality entailment, and forces an

²⁵ Bhatt (1999:186)

²⁶ I specify Standard English here, since Terry (2004) demonstrates that African American English, like Tagalog, also distinguishes overtly between dispositional and habitual genericity. He claims that when the generic operator Gen positioned above the progressive verb form 'V-ing' in AAE the dispositional reading is excluded and the habitual remains (Terry 2004:182).

²⁷ This particular situation does not combine well with the bare plural 'papers' perhaps for pragmatic reasons. An example for which an existential reading of a bare plural is easily attained can be seen in (i):
 (i) When I did the dishes this morning, plates washed quickly, but glasses were a real pain.

existential interpretation of its subject. In contrast, (30b) refers to a property that papers in general had at a point in the past, or ‘back in the day’. Although it seems at first difficult to get a past dispositional reading for middles, again, the right context shows that it is possible, as in (31):

- (31) Back in the Cold War days, my aunt Phoebe had bought one of those radiation suits that zipped up quickly if an A-bomb detonated. They sure don’t sell those anymore.

A last point leading to Bhatt’s analysis of these constructions is that *was able to* with its ‘managed to’ interpretation does not require that the subject have the *ability* to ‘V,’ as the example in (32) shows:

- (32) a. Yesterday, Brown hit three bull’s-eyes in a row. Before he hit three bull’s-eyes, he fired 600 rounds, without coming close to the bull’s-eye; and his subsequent tries were equally wild.
 b. Brown was able to hit three bull’s-eyes in a row.
 c. Brown had the ability to hit three bulls-eyes in a row.
 (Bhatt 1999:180, taken from Thalberg 1969)

Given the situation in (32a), I could make the statement in (32b) truthfully, but not so the one in (32c). Middles make this distinction exceptionally clear, as in (33):

- (33) a. Last Bloom’s Day, 50 enthusiasts participated in a read-off of a selection from *Ulysses*. 49 of the participants struggled through at a snail’s pace, but one speed-reader, Judy, finished the entire section in no time.
 b. *Ulysses* read quickly (for Judy).
 c. **Ulysses* reads quickly.

Just as in (32) above, (33c) is infelicitous since it attributes a property of ‘being able to be read quickly’ to *Ulysses* which is contradicted by the context of (33a). (33b) is acceptable because it does not entail the property attributed to the subject of (33c).

Bhatt’s explanation for these facts follows straightforwardly from the behaviour we have been observing between genericity and aspect here, as well as in the middle and Tagalog constructions above. He proposes that the two readings of *was able to*, ‘managed to,’ and ‘had the ability to,’ are both derived from an underlying predicate *ABLE*, and that when this combines with a covert generic operator, *Gen*, the result is interpreted as an ability. Furthermore, *GEN* is only possible in non-perfective environments, which is supported by the fact that “across languages, imperfective aspect primarily makes two distinct semantic contributions – the semantics of an event in progress and the semantics of genericity.”²⁸ This restriction also corresponds to what is claimed about the generic operator, that it “must have at least one variable to generalize over.”²⁹ Perfective statements refer to a specific event, and so do not provide a free variable for *Gen* to bind. Bhatt represents this pattern as in (34):

²⁸ Bhatt (1999:177).

²⁹ Krifka et al. (1995:32).

- (34) a. Past (Perf(ABLE) [VP]) = *managed-to*
 b. Past (Gen (Impf(ABLE) [VP]) = *had-ability-to* (Bhatt 1999:177,185)³⁰

This pattern is precisely the one identified for middles and AIA-predicates, modulo ABLE, however.³¹ What *is* the contribution that ABLE makes to the interpretations in (34), after all? It is interesting to remark that the Tagalog AIA-verbs get translated into English as ‘was able to/managed to’ in their perfective forms, and therefore sensible to assume that ABLE simply does what *maka-* does: it signals to the listener that some other force is in control/is responsible for the result of the event, and not the agent. English middles have neither of these overt elements, but as demonstrated above in (15), the necessary modification of middles appears to play some lead role, which I return to in Section 4.2.

3.2 WAS ABLE TO MEETS MAKA-

There is an obvious parallel to be made between *was able to*, and AIA-verbs discussed in Section 2. We have already observed above that the AIA-forms that yield an accidental, or ‘managed to’ reading are marked for perfective aspect, and therefore entail actualization. As shown in (35a), they allow existential subjects only, just as their *was able to* counterpart:

- (35) a. *nahiwa ang mangga.*
 AIA.PERF.cut NOM mango
 ‘SOMEONE managed to cut the mango.’ (actuality entailment)
 b. *nahihiwa ang mangga.*
 AIA.IMPF.cut NOM mango
 ‘SOMEONE/ANYONE was(is) able to cut the mango.’ (actuality entailment)
 c. *mahihiwa ang mangga.*
 AIA.CONTP.cut NOM mango
 ‘SOMEONE/ANYONE would be able to cut the mango.’ (no actuality entailment)

The agent argument is missing from all the sentences in (35). As expected, this missing argument must be interpreted as a particular individual who performed the action of cutting the mango in (35a), whereas (35b,c) both allow a generic subject, as in ‘the mango is cut-able by anyone.’ These examples pattern exactly as Bhatt would predict, with the generic operator being excluded from the perfective environment in (35a).

It is interesting to note, however, that Tagalog has two distinct forms for expressing this generic ability: (35b), where the AIA-verb is marked for imperfective aspect, and (35c) which is in contemplative. Morpho-syntactically, the two forms differ only in their outer-aspect value; *nahihiwa* contains the morpheme for +start (*n-*) which is absent in *mahihiwa*. Semantically, what this extra +start feature adds to (35b) the entailment that the ability has been previously attested; that is, Tagalog outer aspect distinguishes between the

³⁰ I have combined two of Bhatt’s representations into one for facility of exposition.

³¹ As I come to in the next section, ‘incomplete’ or ‘non-perfective’ seem better terms to describe the environments which combine with the generic operator, since English does not mark imperfective in the same usage as languages that do, whereas Tagalog distinguishes between imperfective and contemplative aspect, both of which combine with the generic operator, and both of which are marked as –incomplete.

two kinds of genericity discussed by Bhatt, dispositional and habitual, which are ambiguous in English. If we were to take the final step and call theme-subject AIA-predicate constructions the Tagalog middle, we would have to also admit that Tagalog has in fact two middle varieties which are indistinguishable, one from the other, in English. I suggest that Bhatt's conclusion that only imperfective environments license the generic operator be modified slightly to 'incomplete' (or alternatively 'non-perfective') ones instead, to accommodate these new observations.

4. SOMETHING OF AN ANALYSIS OF SORTS

4.1 ASSEMBLING THE PUZZLE

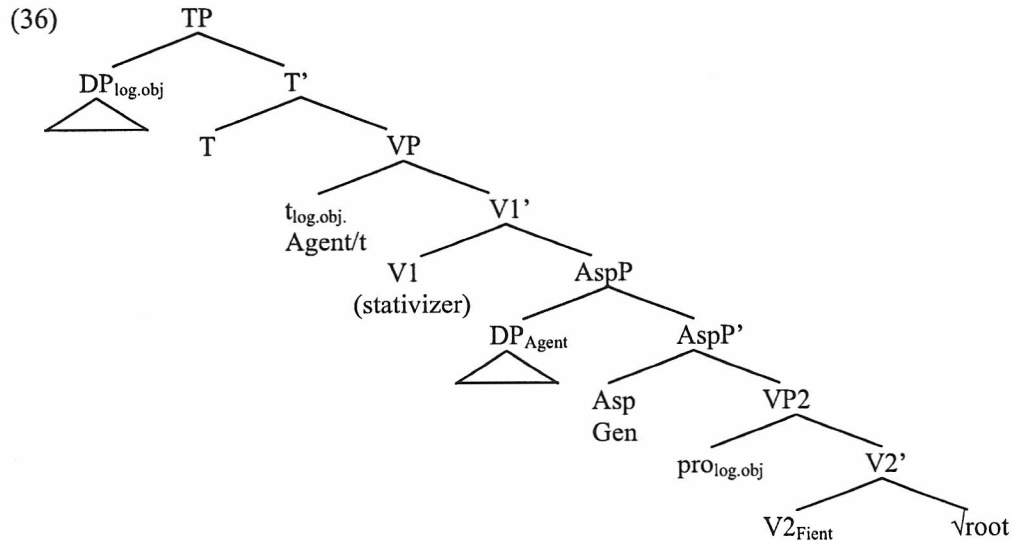
We are now in a position to fit all the pieces of the middle-AIA puzzle into something of an analysis. From Travis (2000a) on Tagalog morpho-syntax, we have seen that the AIA-constructions are composed of a verbal root, an aspectual morpheme which encodes +/-incompleteness (and whether the statement is generic or not), and a stativizing morpheme in SPEC VP1. The Tagalog deletion facts she examines shows that AIA-form agents are projected in the SPEC of AspP, and in this position are interpreted as non-volitional/removed from control of potential events, allowing other arguments to fill the SPEC VP1 position.

Del Pilar (1994) and Travis (2000b) argue for the presence of an empty anaphor licensed by an overt causative morpheme in the head of VP1, and which must take as antecedent the highest argument in the clause. Given that the stative morpheme of *maka* also heads VP1 and ascribes a causative or responsibility role to its subject, I claim that *maka* fulfills the criteria for licensing a null anaphor in object position. By positing such a pro to be projected in SPEC VP2 of middles as well as AIA constructions, we avoid the Theta-Criterion violation that ensues from a movement account. The existence of an empty anaphor in middles is also supported by the recipe context data from Massam (1988) who (as far as I know) is the first to have suggested this solution for English middles.

By comparing middles and *maka*-verbs to Bhatt's (1999) analysis of *was able to*, we have established that the generic operator Gen, in combination with +incomplete aspect (or possibly realized by +incomplete aspect, as claimed for imperfective by Lekakou (2004)), adds the generic and ability/property readings to the semantic stew. When the above morphology is combined instead with -incomplete (and +start) aspect, the generic and ability/property readings are absent.

The key assumption I make in this analysis is that these same 'parts' which are observable in Tagalog are present in English middles (some overtly and some not), and it is the combination of these parts that yields the complex semantic interpretation which the two phenomena share. The structure I argue for both theme-subject AIA-constructions and English middles, therefore, is given in (36).³²

³² I am not terribly attached or concerned with the bottom branches of this tree presently – what is shown here is modeled after Embick (2004) but a view more along the lines of Condoravdi (1989), McConnell-Ginet (1994) and Larson (2004) for middle adverbs would have them combine directly as complement to the predicate so as to make up the nuclear scope of the sentence, which is attractive for many reasons I am presently investigating.



Another claim that this structure makes, is that Causative Coercion, in the pragmatic terms that Kroeger describes it in (see Section 2.2), is not responsible for the cause/responsibility attributed to the subject of middles and AIA-theme-subjects. Rather, this causation is derived from the position in which the logical object is projected. Looking back to the example with ‘persuade’ in (12), when contrasted with a similar example where a middle is in the embedded clause, we see that it is only the volition of the subject that changes from (37b) to (37c); the subject is the causer/allower, and therefore projected in SPEC VP1, in both instances:

- (37) a. Ron persuaded Nancy to be kissed by Mikhail. (Kroeger 1993:74)
 b. The Prime Minister bribed easily.
 c. Igor persuaded the Prime Minister to bribe easily.

Using a human subject for a change yields surprising results: in (37b), it is possible to construe the Prime Minister as being volitional *or* non-volitional in the facility of his being bribed. The situation in (37c) just forces the volitional interpretation, given in (38):

- (38) a. The Prime Minister bribed easily... she greeted us with hands wide open OR ...
 actually she was unconscious for the whole thing.³³
 b. Igor persuaded the Prime Minister to bribe easily... she greeted us with hands side open. *but* *... actually she was unconscious for the whole thing.

Since the Prime Minister’s unconsciousness seems to be a reasonable cause for her bribing to be easier than otherwise, (38a) can have this interpretation. However, to be persuaded by Igor,

³³ I am told that this is better if it reads instead as ‘The Prime Minister bribed easier than we expected; she was unconscious.’

the Prime Minister must be conscious, and must allow the bribing to be easy volitionally, based on the semantics of ‘persuade.’ Again, in both cases the subject is in the same syntactic position, SPEC VP1. This is a pleasant outcome since it unifies the target site for Equi controllees across embedded clause types to the SPEC VP1 position.

4.2 LEFTOVER PUZZLE

The final loose end to say a word about is with regards to adverbs (and other means of modification). The necessary modification of English middles plays such an essential role in their interpretation, and yet we understand so little of what exactly that role is. But taking (15) as a typical example, repeated here as (39), I will try to suggest some directions for further study:

- (39) a. This bread cuts easily.
b. #This bread cuts.

The sentence in (39b) is awkward because it states that the bread is the agent of the cutting instead of the allowee/causer of the cutting, which would be required for a middle interpretation like (39a). The adverb in this case, then, signals somehow to the listener which theta role to assign the logical object in subject position.

Generally, the adverbs that facilitate middles belong to the manner class: they describe the manner in which a possible event described by the predicate should be able to be carried out. They seem also to force an eventive reading of verbs that are ambiguous between a state and event, as in (40):

- (40) a. These figures add-up perfectly.
b. These figures add-up quickly.

Add-up in (40a) describes an arithmetical property of the figures having a sum with no remainder, or perhaps adding to match an intended number, and is intransitive in this use. In (40b), however, *quickly* requires that *add-up* be interpreted as the event of someone adding-up the numbers, and that this adding be quick. In forcing an eventive reading, this also forces the semantic presence of an agent, arbitrary or specific, but syntactically absent (perhaps for the structural reasons above).³⁴ For many of these adverbs, *quickly/easily/sluggishly/etc.*, they also license an experiencer of their quickness/easiness/sluggishness/etc. Somehow the modification in English middles is contributing/targeting the same structure as *maka*, *able* in *was able to* or even *-able* in adjectives like *washable*, *edible*, *e-mailable*, etc; that is, it communicates that the logical agent is not in control of the event, but is demoted to an experiencer, and consequently that the logical object in subject position is the new causer/allowee of the event (although not the agent). This explanation does not do the importance of the question justice, however, and I leave this also for later studies.

³⁴ Thanks to Anne-Michelle Tessier for pointing out the contrast in (40), and Marcin Morzycki for e-mail discussions on these points and so many others.

5. CONCLUSION

One of the goals of this study has been essentially to demonstrate that English middles have yet to be solved to satisfaction by testing and analyzing English alone. Once we look to languages whose event structure is directly observable in their morphosyntax, however, the trickiest puzzles can be pieced together. The Tagalog morphology examined here has allowed us to support certain claims hypothesized for middles, to refute others, and to create novel claims for their underlying syntactic structure as well.

The success of this comparison encourages us to take a similar approach to other murky areas of event structure, such as the nature of and distinction between states and events, individual-level and stage-level predicates, aspect, aktionsart, genericity, etc. But I leave this all for future research.

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RÉSUMÉ

L'interprétation sémantique des constructions intermédiaires en anglais suggère une syntaxe bien plus riche que la morphologie de l'anglais n'est capable de capturer. Au temps passé, la construction intermédiaire est ambiguë avec deux interprétations possibles. Une interprétation implique l'actualisation et décrit un sujet et un objet spécifiques. La seconde décrit une propriété du sujet qui valait dans le passé, permet un sujet spécifique *ou* générique, et ne comporte pas d'implication d'actualisation. Puisque la littérature sur les constructions intermédiaires a défini les intermédiaires seulement comme étant des affirmations génériques, les exemples non génériques ont été essentiellement négligés dans les analyses existantes. Dans cet article, j'examine la morphologie des prédicats portant le préfixe *maka* en tagalog dans le but de montrer qu'ils doivent partager une syntaxe commune avec les constructions intermédiaires, sur la base de leur interprétation parallèle. J'applique ensuite l'analyse de Bhatt (1999) de la construction anglaise *was able to* aux intermédiaires et aux prédicats avec *maka*, pour arriver à une hypothèse concernant leurs structures sous-jacentes. Je soutiens que les constructions intermédiaires sont formées en enchâssant un prédicat événementiel non-volitionnel sous un prédicat statique qui attribue une propriété à un Thème en tant que son argument externe.