

ON LEXICAL ASPECT DISTINCTION OF THE ACTOR FOCUS AND OBJECT FOCUS VERBS

Full Presentation
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In Tagalog, actor focus (AF) and object focus (OF) verbs are both perfective, signalled by the UM and IN affixes respectively (Schachter and Otnes 1972, De Guzman 1978, Reid 1992). Naylor (1986) however has observed that despite having the same perfective aspect, a difference still exists between the two verb forms in terms of the completion feature of the event. This difference relies on the definiteness of the object. Naylor posits that (1a) has a definite object that renders the event complete, as opposed to (1b) where the opposite is the case. Naylor does not specify whether the use of an adverb influences the (non)completion of the action nor whether it is infelicitous at all for both clauses. Consider (1):

(1) a. K-**in**-ain ng bata ang isda araw araw.
OF.PERF-eat GEN child NOM fish day day
'The child ate the fish everyday'.

b. K-**um**-ain ang bata ng isda araw araw.
AF.PERF-eat NOM child GEN fish day day
'The child ate fish everyday.'

Intuitively, Naylor's observation is correct with regard to the completion reading of (1a) and the non-completion reading of (1b). However, her observation doesn't fully address the following issues: (a) Why an AF verb with a perfective aspect has a non-completed reading, (b) To what extent the (in)definiteness of the object influences the (non)completion of the event, and (c) How an adverb may shift the (non)completion interpretation.

In this paper, I address these three issues by investigating the distinction between AF and OF verbs in terms of lexical aspect, i.e. the inherent temporal contour of the verb. I examine their aspectual differences using the standard tests for telicity, a semantic property of event that is purported to be crucial in defining the internal temporal contour of verbs and categorising them according to their event types (e.g. Dowty 1991, Krifka 1992, Tenny 1994, Depraetere 1995). The tests show that AF and OF verb alternations do not depend on temporal adverbials to characterise the nature of their internal temporal make up. In lieu of this, I use alternative aspectual operators such as *lahat* (all) as NP quantifiers and negation phrase *pero hindi natapos* (but did not finish) to define clearly the difference between the two verb alternations. The application of these alternative operators provides evidence for considering verbal affixes as having a quantificational force.

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Keywords: lexical aspect, event structure, telicity, temporal adverbials, verbal affixes, quantificational force

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