

Relative Clause Asymmetry: The Case of Tagalog

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Tagalog focus system

(1) AGENT FOCUS

H<um>a~habol aŋ lalake nŋŋ babae
<AF>IPFV~chase FOC man NFOC woman
'The man is chasing a/the woman.'

(2) PATIENT FOCUS

H<in>a~habol nŋŋ lalake aŋ babae
<PF>IPFV~chase NFOC man FOC woman
'A/The man is chasing the woman.'

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(3) AGENT RELATIVE CLAUSE

lalake=ŋ [h<um>a~habol _ nŋŋ **babae**]
man=L <AF>IPFV~chase NFOC woman
'the man who is chasing a woman'

(4) PATIENT RELATIVE CLAUSE

babae=ŋ [h<in>a~habol nŋŋ **lalake** _]
woman=L <PF>IPFV~chase NFOC man
'the woman who a man is chasing'

(5) UNGRAMMATICAL AGENT RELATIVE CLAUSE

***lalake**=ŋ [h<in>a~habol _ aŋ **babae**]
man=L <PF>IPFV~chase FOC woman
'the man who is chasing the woman'

(6) UNGRAMMATICAL PATIENT RELATIVE CLAUSE

***babae**=ŋ [h<um>a~habol aŋ **lalake** _]
woman=L <AF>IPFV~chase FOC man
'the woman who the man is chasing'

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Subject/object asymmetry in relativization

(7) Relativization of agent (subject)

The man [who _ is chasing the woman]
└──────────┘

(8) Relativization of patient (direct object)

The man [who the woman is chasing _]
└──────────────────────────┘

(7) Is known to have an advantage in processing, production, and acquisition in many languages

However, in some languages, such as ergative-absolutive languages, (8) shows an advantage.

What about Tagalog?

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Asymmetry in RCs

- Agent RC > Patient RC
– Found in many nom-acc languages and some erg-abs languages
- Agent RC < Patient RC
– Indication of ergativity (e.g., Aldridge 2004, De Guzman 1988, Liao, 2004)
- Agent RC = Patient RC
– Indication of symmetricity? (e.g., Foley 1978)

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Tanaka et al. (2014)

PREVIOUS PRODUCTION STUDY

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Figure 1. Sample agent RC item

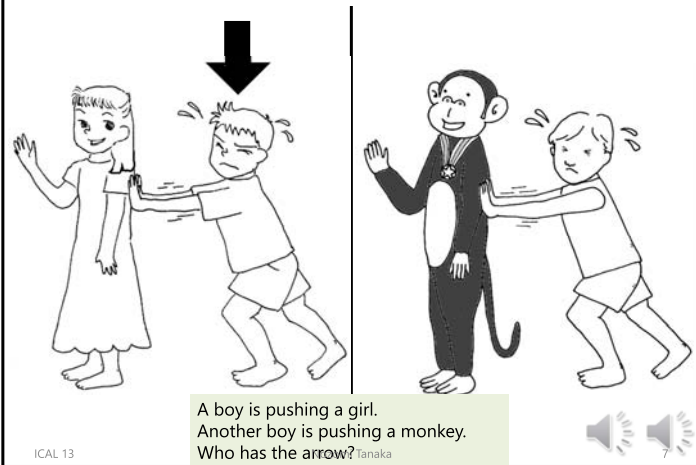


Figure 2. Sample patient RC item

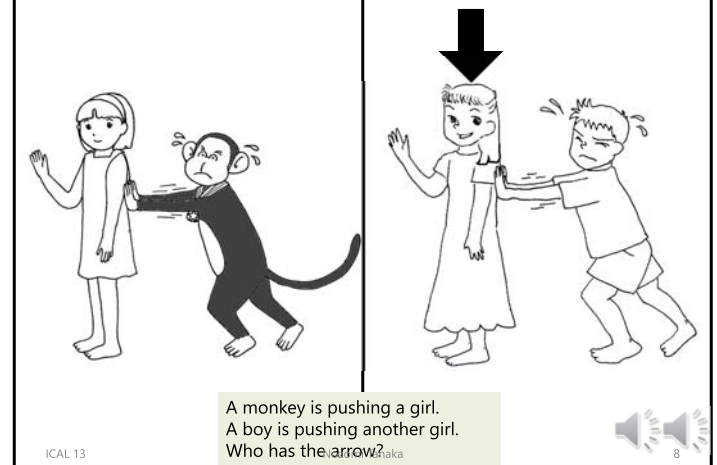
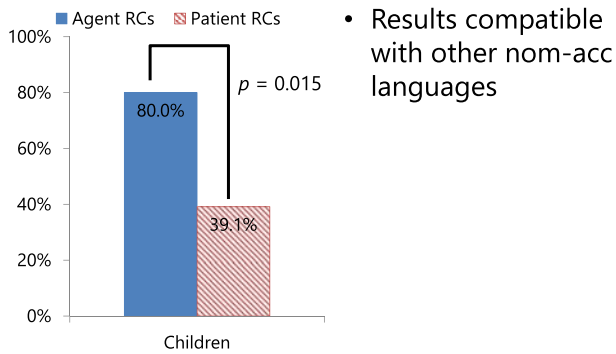
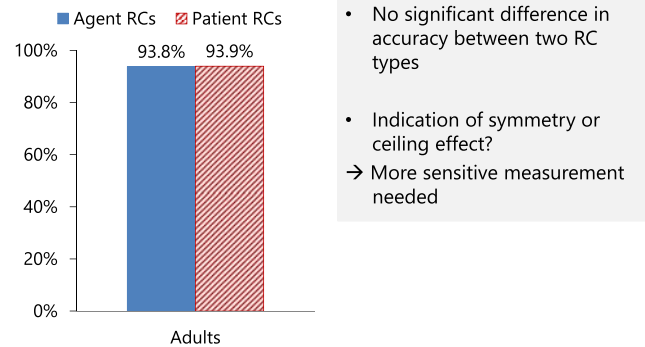


Figure 3. Children's accuracy



- Results compatible with other nom-acc languages

Figure 4. Adults' accuracy



- No significant difference in accuracy between two RC types
- Indication of symmetry or ceiling effect?
- More sensitive measurement needed

Manifestation of "advantage"

- Higher accuracy rate
 - The proportion of target responses are higher
- Shorter reaction time (RT)
 - Participants take less time to respond

The current study

- Four dependent measures
 - Accuracy from production
 - RT from production
 - Accuracy from comprehension
 - RT from comprehension

Current study

ELICITED PRODUCTION

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Method

- Participants
 - 26 adults
- Materials
 - 33 sets of pictures
 - 3 practice items
 - 10 items with animate patients (5 agent RCs; 5 patient RCs)
 - 10 items with inanimate patients (5 agent RCs; 5 patient RCs)
 - 20 intransitive items
- Participants' responses were audio-recorded and transcribed

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Figure 5. Sample item for agent relative clauses with animate patient

A boy is chasing a monkey.
Another boy is chasing a girl.

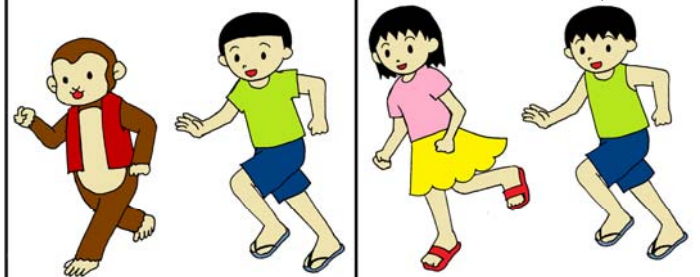


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Figure 5. Sample item for agent relative clauses with animate patient



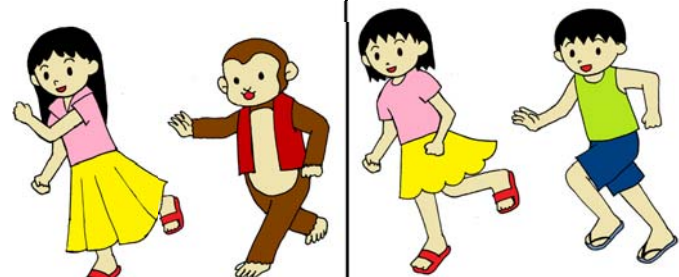
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Figure 6. Sample item for patient relative clauses with animate patient

A monkey is chasing a girl.
A boy is chasing another girl.

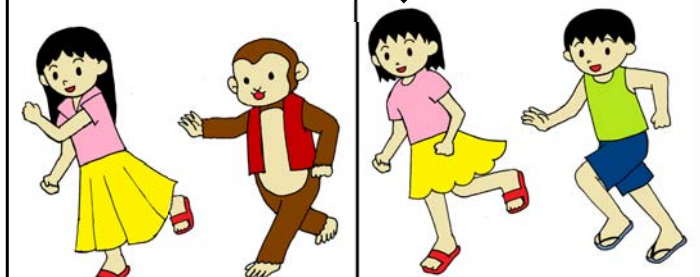


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Figure 6. Sample item for patient relative clauses with animate patient



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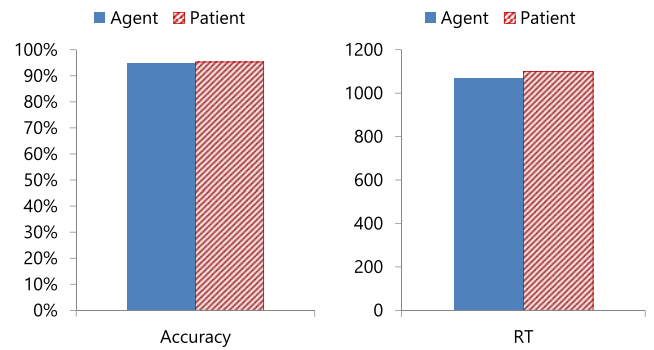
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Analysis

- Accuracy = Percentage of target responses
- Reaction times = The duration between the beep and the onset of speech in the recording

Figure 7. Overall production results



Current study

COMPREHENSION

Method

- Participants
 - 15 adults
- Materials
 - 5 verbs (*basa* 'wet/splash,' *buhat* 'carry,' *habol* 'chase,' *tulak* 'push,' *yakap* 'hug')
 - 10 items (5 agent RCs; 5 patient RCs)
- Data were recorded using the MouseTracker software (Freeman & Ambady 2010; Borja, Chung, & Wagers, to appear)

Figure 8. Sample agent RC item.

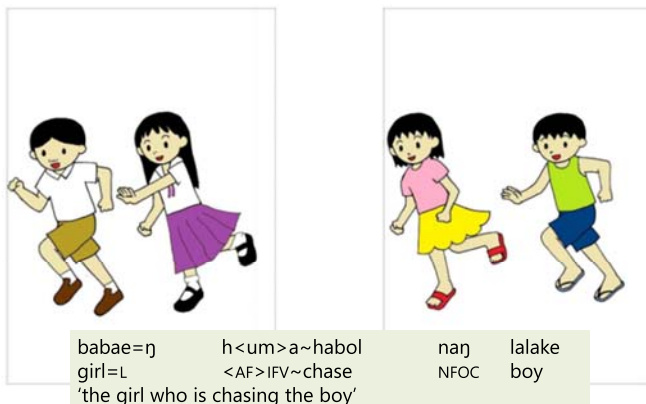


Figure 8. Sample agent RC item.

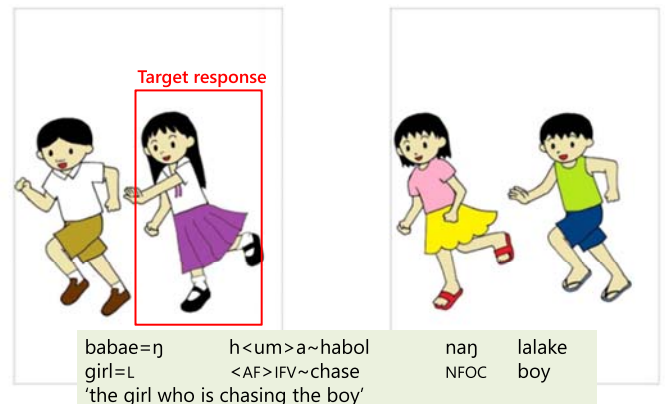


Figure 9. Sample patient RC item.

babae=ŋ h<in>a~habol naŋ lalake
 girl=L <PF>IFV~chase NFOC boy
 'the girl who the boy is chasing'

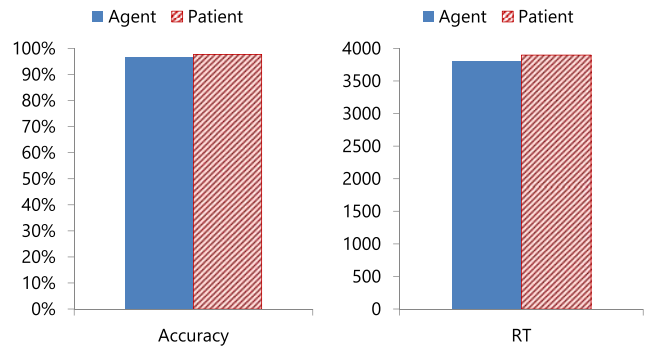
Figure 9. Sample patient RC item.

babae=ŋ h<in>a~habol naŋ lalake
 girl=L <PF>IFV~chase NFOC boy
 'the girl who the boy is chasing'

Analysis

- Accuracy = Percentage of target responses
- Reaction times = The duration between the onset of the prompt and the click

Figure 10. Overall comprehension results



Summary of findings

Adults	Accuracy	RT
Production	No difference	No difference
Comprehension	No difference	No difference

Discussion

- Children's results are compatible with those reported for other nominative-accusative languages
- Adults' results suggest Tagalog is not a nom-acc language, at least not a typical one.
- The lack of asymmetry in adults' production and comprehension points toward a symmetrical voice language (Foley 1998)

What about children?

- A factor unrelated to alignment might be responsible for their preference for agent relative clauses.
- They may not yet have realized that the language is symmetrical.

Future directions

- Is there really no RC advantage among adults? Might other experimental techniques uncover an asymmetry that has thusfar evaded detection?

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