



An Aspectual Distinction in Tagalog

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0. INTRODUCTION. Most Tagalog verbs contrast a N (neutral) form and an A (AIA; ability and involuntary-action) form. Tag. *Ben N-crushed the box* means 'Ben did something with the intention of thereby crushing the box' and does not entail that the box was actually crushed, whereas Tag. *Ben A-crushed the box* means 'the box was crushed as a result of Ben's doing something to it (intentionally or not)' This paper will examine this distinction and characterize it more precisely.

1. NEUTRAL VERSUS ABILITY AND INVOLUNTARY ACTION.

- (1) *hinipo niya ang dingding.*
 N-pf-touch gen-3sg nom
 wall
 (a) 'He touched the wall
 (on purpose).'
- (2) *nahipo niya ang dingding.*
 A-pf-touch
 (b) 'He managed to touch
 the wall.'
 (c) 'He accidentally touched
 the wall.'

Tagalog has verbal forms like *nahipo* in (2) that I will call "ability and involuntary-action" (henceforth AIA) forms, following the terminology of Schachter and Otnes (1972:330).² These forms begin with the AIA prefixes *ma-/na-* and *maka-/naka-*. They contrast systematically with their unprefixated counterparts, which I will call, for lack of a better term, the neutral (henceforth N) forms. The form *hinipo* in (1) is the neutral counterpart of *nahipo*. Both forms are built on the same verbal root (*hipo* 'to touch'), they have the same Focus (Directional Focus) and the same aspect (perfective), and they differ only in that the AIA prefix occurs in *nahipo* but not in *hinipo*.³

The N-versus-AIA distinction is one of the most pervasive in the inflectional paradigm of Tagalog verbs. All the properties of an AIA form are predictable from those of its neutral counterpart.⁴ Most neutral forms have an AIA counterpart, and those that do not all belong to a few subclasses sharing certain well-defined morphological or semantic properties (see Schachter and Otnes 1972: 332).

According to Schachter and Otnes (1972:330), the AIA forms 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 (see 2 above). At least such is the situation today for many speakers in Manila: "Some speakers consistently pronounce *maka-* and *ma-* as /maka/ and /ma/ in ability verbs, as /maka:/ and /ma:/ in involuntary-action verbs. Other speakers, however, including most younger speakers of educated Manila Tagalog, either do not make this distinction, or do not make

it consistently. For these speakers, vowel length in the prefixes is either a matter of free alternation or determined by the individual verb, and any derived *maka-* or *ma-* verb is potentially ambiguous to the extent that both the ability and the involuntary-action meanings are compatible with the central meaning of the verb." These remarks are borne out by the reactions of my informants, all of whom were university students from the Metro-Manila area.⁵ The examples in this article will be written in the conventional spelling, which does not transcribe vowel length. Here are a few more examples of the N-versus-AIA contrast.⁶

- (3) *KINUNAN ni Ben ng litrato si Luisa.*
N-pf-take gen Ben gen picture nom Luisa
(a) 'Ben took a picture of Luisa.'
- (4) *NAKUNAN ni Ben ng litrato si Luisa.*
A-pf-take
(b) 'Ben managed to take a picture of Luisa.'
(c) 'Ben involuntarily took a picture of Luisa.'

Sentence (4) 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 (interpretation b). 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 (interpretation c). Sentence (3) could not be used appropriately to describe such a situation as that in (c), for it implies that there was a deliberate attempt to take a picture of Luisa. Here are other examples.

- (5a) *ITINAOB niya ang bangka para magalit ako.*
 N-pf-overturn gen-he nom boat for angry
 nom-I
 'He overturned the boat to make me angry.'
- (5b) *sinubukan niya ng maraming beses bago niya
 NAITAOB ang bangka.*
 N-pf-try gen-he gen many time before gen-he
 A-pf-overturn nom boat
 'He tried many times before he finally
 managed to overturn the boat.'
- (5c) *NAITAOB niya ang bangka nang hindi sinasadya.*
 A-pf-overturn gen-he nom boat nang not intend
 'He unintentionally overturned the boat.'
- (6a) *lagi niyang ITINATAPON ang tubig para
 magalit ako.*
 always gen-he N-impf-spill nom water for
 angry nom-I
 'He always spills the water to make me
 angry.'
- (6b) *pag inuuga niya ang timba nang malakas,
 NAITATAPON niya ang tubig.⁷*
 when rock gen-he nom bucket nang strong,
 A-impf-spill gen-he nom water
 'When he rocks the bucket hard enough, he
 finally manages to spill the water.'
- (6c) *twing nanginginig siya, lagi niyang
 NAITATAPON ang tubig.*
 every tremble nom-he, always gen-he A-impf-
 spill nom water
 'He spills the water whenever he trembles.'
- (7a) *pagkatapos niyang makapag-isip-isip,
 BUMUNOT siya ng alas.*

- after gen-he think-think, N-pf-pull nom-he
gen ace
'After pondering a while, he played an ace.'
- (7b) *ang galing niya sa pandaraya!* NAKABUNOT
pa siya ng alas.
ang good gen-he dat cheat, A-pf-pull more
nom-he gen ace
'What a good cheater! He's drawn another
ace.'
- (7c) *ang suwerte niya!* NAKABUNOT *pa siya ng alas.*
ang lucky gen-he, A-pf-pull more nom-he gen
ace
'How lucky he is! He's drawn another ace.'

Describing the AIA forms as being systematically ambiguous between ability and involuntariness readings may be a useful starting point, but it covers only certain uses of the AIA forms. In the following sections I will characterize more precisely the semantic difference between N and AIA forms by describing some uses of the AIA forms that do not readily fit into the ability/involuntariness dichotomy.

2. MANEUVER AND RESULT. Consider the following.

- (8) *ITINULAK ni Ben ang bato.*
N-pf-push gen Ben nom rock
'Ben pushed the rock.'
- (9) *ITINULAK ni Ben ang bato, pero hindi niya
NAITULAK, dahil napakabigat niyon.*
(idem), but not gen-he A-pf-push, because
very-heavy gen-that
'Ben pushed the rock, but he could not make
it move, because it was so heavy.'

- (10) *PUMUNTA sa Maynila si Pedro.*
 N-pf-go dat Manila nom Pedro
 'Pedro went to Manila.'
- (11) *PUMUNTA sa Maynila si Pedro, pero naligaw
 siya, kaya hindi siya NAKAPUNTA.*⁸
 (idem), but get-lost nom-he, hence not
 nom-he A-pf-go
 'Pedro set off for Manila but got lost,
 and didn't get there.'

Sentence (9) is not contradictory. Although (8), uttered by itself, usually carries the implication that the stone was actually displaced as a result of Ben's pushing it, (8) does not strictly speaking entail that result. Similarly, (10) is usually understood to imply that Pedro actually got to Manila, but it does not actually entail this, as is shown by the fact that (11) is not contradictory. Now consider the AIA counterpart of (8):

- (12) *NAITULAK ni Ben ang bato.*
 A-pf-push gen Ben nom rock
- (a) 'Ben managed to move the rock by pushing it.'
- (b) 'Ben accidentally moved the rock by pushing it.'

On either interpretation, the Tagalog sentence (12) cannot be true unless the Maneuver (M) and the Result (R) are both true:

- (M) Ben exerted on the rock a force directed away from himself.
- (R) The rock changed location.

One semantic difference between (12) and its neutral counterpart (8), then, is that (12) entails both propositions (M) and (R), whereas (8) entails (M) but not (R).

The lexical meaning of the root *tulak* involves two distinct ideas. One has to do with the agent's engaging in a certain action or "Maneuver" (pushing the rock), and the other has to do with a certain "Result" that may (but need not) be brought about by that Maneuver (the displacement of the rock).

It is my contention that the ultimate semantic difference between neutral forms and their AIA counterparts is this: one uses a neutral form when one intends to assert that a certain Maneuver took place, but one wants to remain noncommittal as to whether it did actually bring about the intended Result; on the other hand, one uses an AIA form when the main business at hand is to assert that a Result, intended or not, was actually achieved.

Examples (13) and (14) are the negative counterparts of examples (8) and (12), respectively.

(13) *hindi ITINULAK ni Ben ang bato.*

(14) *hindi NAITULAK ni Ben ang bato.*

Example (13) simply denies that Ben exerted on the rock a force directed away from himself. Example (14) denies that the rock was displaced. Let $+P$ stand as a shorthand for "P is true," $-P$ for "not-P is true," $\emptyset P$ for "no claim made about the truth of P." One can symbolize the relevant aspects of the meaning of the Tagalog examples (8), (13), (12), and (14) as follows.

(8) $+M$, $\emptyset R$

(13) $-M$, $\emptyset R$

(12) +M , +R

(13) \emptyset M , -R

Abstracting from these particular examples and from the particular root *tulak*, one can use this notation as an aid to represent more precisely the semantic relationships between a neutral form, its AIA analog, and between each and its negated counterpart. Let NEUT, AF, and NEG stand for "neutral form," "occurring in an affirmative sentence," and "occurring in a negative sentence," respectively. Furthermore, let V be any verb, and M and R the Maneuver and the Result associated with the lexical meaning of that verb. Then one can write:

(15) AF-NEUT(V) : +M , \emptyset R

(16) NEG-NEUT(V) : -M , \emptyset R

(17) AF-AIA(V) : +M , +R

(18) NEG-AIA(V) : \emptyset M , -R

These formulas describe a regular correspondence between certain aspects of the morphemic make-up of sentences (on the left side) and certain aspects of their meaning (on the right side). If α is a variable which ranges over {AF, NEG} in the left half of formulas such as the above, and over {+, -} in their right half, then, by a notational convention commonly invoked in phonology, (15) and (16) can be collapsed into (19), and (17) and (18) can be collapsed into (20):

(19) α NEUT(V) : α M , \emptyset R

(20) α AIA(V) : α R

These formulas are simply a convenient shorthand for making as conspicuous as possible the fact that N sentences assert or deny whether a certain Maneuver was performed, whereas AIA sentences assert or deny whether that Maneuver brought about a certain Result.

The N-versus-AIA contrast often provides an overt morphological marking for the distinction between the "action predicates" and "result predicates," a distinction which is covert in English and French.⁹ Consider the following example, which is similar to those discussed by Kac (1972) and others for English.

(21) *nagtataka akong SINAKAL ni Pedro si Ben*
(imbes na saksakin).

surprised nom-I-that N-pf-strangle gen
Pedro nom Ben (instead of stab)

'I am surprised that Pedro strangled Ben
(rather than stabbed him).'

(22) *nagtataka akong NASAKAL ni Pedro si Ben;*
akala ko hindi niya kaya.

surprised nom-I-that A-pf strangle gen
Pedro nom Ben; belief gen-I not gen-he
able

'I am surprised that Pedro strangled Ben;
I didn't think he could do it.'

In (21), the speaker is surprised that Pedro undertook the maneuver of squeezing Ben's throat, whereas in (22) he is surprised the squeezing resulted in Ben's death. Consider also the following pair.

- (23) (a) *isang oras bago niya* { *ISINAULO* } *ang tula.*
 (a) { *NASAULO* }
 one hour before gen-he {N-pf-memorize/A-
 pf-memorize} nom poem
 (a) 'One hour elapsed before he began to
 learn the poem.'
 (b) 'One hour elapsed before he had memorized
 the poem.'

While (a) asserts that one hour elapsed before he initiated the Maneuver, (b) asserts that one hour elapsed before the Result was achieved.

Imagine that the sentences in (24) are broadcast from the control tower of Manila International Airport to the pilot of an aircraft which has just landed there from Hongkong. The speaker and the pilot both know that there is a bomb in the airplane.

- (24) (a) *kailangan mong* { *IBALIK* } *iyong eroplano sa*
 (b) { *MAIBALIK* }
Hongkong bago sumabog ang bomba.
 necessary gen-you-that {N-bas-return/A-
 bas-return} nom-that airplane dat HK
 before explode nom bomb
 'You must take that airplane back to
 Hongkong before the bomb explodes.'

If the speaker utters (24b), his request is that the airplane be back in Hongkong¹⁰ when the bomb explodes. If the speaker utters (24a), all he requests is that the airplane set out for Hongkong before the bomb explodes. The speaker is indifferent to whether the bomb explodes five minutes after the aircraft's takeoff from Manila, or after its landing in Hongkong.

Here are other sentences analogous to (9) which exemplify the N-versus-AIA contrast for verbs other than *tulak*:

- (25) *SINIPSIP niya ang buko, pero may nakabara sa istro, kaya hindi niya NASIPSIP.*
N-pf-aspirate gen-he nom coconut, but have obstruct dat straw, hence not gen-he A-pf-aspirate
'He sucked at the coconut milk, but the straw was blocked and nothing came (into his mouth).'
- (26) *HINARANG ko siya, pero nadulas ako, kaya hindi ko rin siya NAHARANG.*
N-pf-block gen-I nom-he, but slip nom-I, hence not gen-I also nom-he A-pf-block
'I tried to block his way, but I slipped, and he got past me.'
- (27) *PINAGPAG ko ang ipis sa kumot, pero hindi ko NAPAGPAG dahil nakakapit iyon.*
N-pf-shake gen-I nom cockroach dat blanket, but not gen-I A-pf-shake because cling nom-that
'I shook the blanket, but the cockroach was clinging so tightly that I could not shake it off.'
- (28) *matagal na niyang HINUHULAAN kung sino ako, pero hindi pa rin niya NAHUHULAAN.*
long-time already gen-he N-impf-guess whether who nom-I, but not yet also gen-he A-impf-guess

'He has been trying for a long time to guess who I am, but he still hasn't.'

(29) *PINILIT ko siyang magsalita, pero kahit anong panakot ang sabihin ko, hindi ko rin siya NAPILIT.*

N-pf-force gen-I nom-he speak, but even what means-of-frightening nom say gen-I, not gen-I also nom-he A-pf-force
'I tried to force him to speak, but no matter how I threatened him, I couldn't.'

The verbs in the above sentences have the following meanings: *sipsipin* 'to take in X by aspirating it through a tubular object'; *harangin* 'to prevent X from moving in a certain direction by obstructing the way'; *paggagin* 'to remove X by slapping or shaking it off'; *hulaan* 'to come to know X by guesswork'; *pilitin* 'to get X to do something by constraining him'.

In the semantics of each of these verbs one can segregate a Result and a Maneuver. There are, however, numerous verbs which specify a Result without specifying any Maneuver, such as the following: *alisin* 'to remove X'; *painumin* 'to get X to drink'; *abutin* 'to reach X'; *paghiwahiwalayin* 'to separate X's from one another'; *takutin* 'to frighten X'. These verbs allow the same N-versus-AIA contrast as those of (25-29), as exemplified below:

(30) *INALIS ko ang mantsa, pero naubusan ako kaagad ng sabon, kaya hindi ko NAALIS.*

N-pf-remove gen-I nom stain, but run-out-of nom-I rapidly gen soap, hence not gen-I A-pf-remove

'I tried to remove the stain, but I ran out of soap, and couldn't.'

- (31) *PINAINOM ko siya ng gamot, pero lagi niyang iniwas ang bibig niya, kaya hindi ko rin NAPAINOM.*

N-pf-make-drink gen-I nom-he gen medication,
but always gen-he avert nom mouth gen-he,
hence not gen-I also A-pf-make-drink

'I tried to get him to take his medication,
but he kept averting his head, so I
couldn't.'

- (32) *INABOT niya ang saging, pero kapos ang patpat niya, kaya't hindi rin niya NAABOT.*

N-pf-reach gen-he nom banana, but lacking
nom stick gen-he, hence not also gen-he
A-pf-reach

'He reached for the banana (with a stick),
but the stick was too short, so he didn't
get it.'

- (33) *matagal niyang PINAGHIWA-HIWALAY ang mga gamit nina Pedro at Luisa, pero halu-halo ang mga ito, kaya hindi niya NAPAGHIWA-HIWALAY.*

long-time gen-he N-pf-separate nom plur
thing gen-plur Pedro and Luisa, but
mix-mix nom plur this, hence not gen-he
A-pf-separate

'He tried for a long time to sort Pedro
and Luisa's things, but they were so
mixed up he couldn't.'

- (34) (a) *bakit mo sinasabi iyon?* { *TINATAKOT* }
 (b) { **NATATAKOT* }
mo ba ako?
 why gen-you say nom-that? {N-impf-
 frighten/A-impf-frighten} gen-you
 interrog nom-I?
 'Why are you saying that? Are you
 trying to frighten me?'ll

While the verb *pagpagin* in example (27) applies only when removal is done through slapping or shaking, *alisin* in example (30) does not impose any restriction on how removal might be effected. Verbs unspecific with respect to M naturally fit into our scheme, if one assumes that when M is lexically empty, it automatically takes the form of (35):

- (35) M : The agent did something.

Hence the first clause of (30) will be characterized as +M, ØR, with M as in (35), and R as in

- (36) R : The stain was not there (anymore).

Finally, there are verbs which may at first look as though they were entailing a Maneuver but not a distinct Result, such as *tawag* 'to call'. Consider the following:

- (37) { *TINAWAG* } *ko si Ben, pero walang lumabas*
 (38) { **NATAWAG* }
na salita sa bibig ko.
 {N-pf-call/A-pf-call} gen-I nom Ben, but
 no come-out na word dat mouth gen-I
 'I tried to call Ben, but not a word came

out of my mouth' (someone reporting a dream or a situation of violent stress).

The sentence *tinawag ko si Ben*, which is the first clause of (37), becomes true as soon as I have done anything which can be construed as an attempt to call Ben.¹² Verbs like *tawag* should be handled in the same way as those of sentences (30-34). Their M component is lexically empty, and their whole lexical content falls under R. In the case of *tinawag ko si Ben*, for instance, M is as in (35), and R is (very) roughly

(39) 'I made some signal intending to attract Ben's attention.'

In translating into English a Tagalog sentence containing a neutral verb, it is usually appropriate to use simply a finite form of the (closest) English equivalent to that verb, but we know now that this overall equivalence is deceptive and hides a basic semantic difference: the difference between implication and entailment. The sentence *pinilit ko siyang magsalita* (example 29) normally carries along the implication that I actually got him to speak, unless it is uttered in a context such as (29), which cancels that implication. Thus, outside of contexts like (29), it is most appropriate to translate it as 'I forced him to speak', although the latter sentence does not merely *imply* that I got him to speak, it *entails* it. Outside of contexts such as (29), the translation 'I tried to force him to speak' is not appropriate because this English sentence would normally carry the implication 'I could not get him to speak', which contradicts the implication normally carried by the Tagalog sentence.

3. INTENTION, CIRCUMSTANCE, ACTUALIZATION. In the pair (19-20), the N forms are contrasted with the AIA forms taken *en bloc*, regardless of the ability/involuntariness distinction. Let us now see how this distinction should be accommodated in the scheme sketched earlier.

There are countless ways in which Ben could have accidentally pushed the rock: he may have meant to use it as a foothold, believing it to be steadier than it actually was, or he may have brushed past it, or he may have mistaken it for something else, and so on. All these situations share one feature: the end result (the rock's displacement) is at least in part different from the result Ben intended to achieve, and that feature is the only one that counts for the characterization of the involuntariness interpretation in Tagalog.

Let us introduce the proposition I:

I : By acting as described in M, the agent intended to bring about R.

Sentence (8) entails I. Hence it entails the conjunction of M and I. Replacing M by $M \wedge I$ in (19) yields (40), which is a more accurate characterization of the meaning of sentences containing a neutral form:

(40) NEUT(V) : $\alpha(M \wedge I)$, $\emptyset R$

Now that we have availed ourselves of I, we could contrast the interpretation associated with the "ability" (ABL) prefixes and the one associated with the "involuntariness" (INV) prefixes by introducing opposite values of I in (20), as shown below:¹³

(41) α ABL(V) : +I, α R

(42) α INV(V) : -I, α R

Formulas like (40-42) do not purport to include all the relevant entailments contributed to the meaning of sentences by N or AIA forms. They contain only as much as is necessary to contrast N forms and AIA forms against one another.¹⁴ The incompleteness of my notation is evident with respect to the ability reading. The notation in (41) only indicates that the agent made a certain Maneuver with the intention of thereby achieving a certain result, and that precisely that result came about. But something more is implied by the ABL sentences. Often, such sentences are used to describe situations in which the intended result is achieved only after some amount of struggling against adverse circumstances, something I try to convey by using verbs such as 'to manage' in my English renditions. But such an implication is not always present, as shown by (43):

(43) *malabo ang paningin ko, pero napakalapit niya sa akin, kaya NABARIL ko siya nang walang kahirap-hirap.*

dim nom eyesight gen-I, but very-close
gen-he dat dat-I, hence A-pf-shoot
gen-Inom-he nang no difficulty

'My eyesight is bad, but he was so close
I shot him without any difficulty.'

What seems always to be present—and the 'managing to' nuance is just a particular case of it—is some special emphasis on the fact that the circumstances were such as to allow the agent to achieve his goal. We never have total control over the result of our actions.

The nature of that result always depends in part on circumstances which we cannot assess with any absolute certainty, for instance, that the rock is not cemented to the ground (in 8). Any completed action, even one in which everything works out as planned by the agent, can thus be viewed in two different perspectives. In the first the emphasis is laid on the fact that the result came about only because the agent deliberately initiated a causal chain which he had reasons to think would bring it about. In the second perspective, the emphasis is laid rather on the fact that the result came about only because certain circumstances not under the agent's control allowed it. The neutral forms of Tagalog typically present events in the former perspective, whereas the AIA forms under the ability interpretation present them in the latter, and so do the AIA forms under the involuntariness interpretation, for obvious reasons.

One could say that while the neutral forms are agent-oriented, the AIA forms are circumstance-oriented.¹⁵ It is this circumstance-orientedness that is expressed by the use of 'can', 'be able', 'manage', 'accidentally', and so forth in the English translations.

Whatever the exact contribution of the ABL prefixes to the meaning of sentences, it will not do to consider them simply as inflectional analogs of English 'can', 'be able'. By themselves, these items express a mere potentiality, without any commitment as to actualization, whereas Tagalog ABL sentences do entail that actualization. In Tagalog, when one wants an ABL sentence to express a mere potentiality, and remain noncommittal as to its actualization, one must put its verb in the contemplated aspect. In English, one can say without contradiction:

- (44) 'Although Pedro has never drunk a drop of beer in his life, I know he could drink ten bottles in a row.'

In Tagalog, this would be expressed as follows:

- (45) *kahit hindi pa nakakainom si Pedro ng kahit na isang patak ng bir, alam kong*
(a) { *MAKAKAINOM* } *siya ng sampung bote nang*
(b) { **NAKAKAINOM* }
sunod-sunod.

even not yet A-impf-drink nom Pedro gen
even na one drop gen beer, know gen-I-
that {A-ctp-drink/A-impf-drink} nom-he
gen ten bottle nang follow-follow

Sentences (45a) and (45b) differ only in that in (45a) the verbal form 'ABL-drink' is in the contemplated aspect, whereas in (45b) it is in the imperfective aspect. In general, one uses the imperfective aspect to express that the state, action, or process indicated by the verb has already begun at a given point in time (the time of the utterance, unless indicated otherwise in the sentence), whereas the contemplated aspect characterizes the action as not yet begun at that point (Schachter and Otnes 1972:66-67). Sentence (45b) is contradictory because the imperfective *nakakainom* does not merely indicate that at the time of the utterance, Pedro has the ability to drink ten beers in a row. It entails also that Pedro has actually done it earlier or is right in the process of doing it. Example (46b) below is impossible for similar reasons.

- (46) *nagpunta sana si Ben kahapon, kung*
 (a) { *MAKAKAPUNTA* } *siya.*
 (b) { **NAKAKAPUNTA* }
- come would nom Ben yesterday, if
 {A-ctp-come/A-impf-come} nom-he
 'Ben would have come yesterday, if he
 had been able to.'

The first clause of (46a-b) implies that Ben did not come yesterday. The second clause of (46b) entails that he actually did come yesterday, and not simply that he was able to do so.

4. PROBLEMS WITH THE ABILITY/INVOLUNTARINESS DICHOTOMY. In this section, I present data which could be taken to suggest that the scheme (40-42) is overdifferentiated as an account of the dialect of my informants. This set of data would square better with a scheme obtained by replacing both (41) and (42) by (47):

(47) $\alpha AIA(V) : \emptyset I, \alpha R$

Scheme (47) implies that, contrary to what I assumed until now, AIA sentences have no systematic ambiguity between two readings; rather, they have one single reading which makes these sentences equally appropriate when describing a situation of the "ability" type or one of the "involuntariness" type. To take a simple analog, the English sentence *that is a weapon* is true when the word *that* is used to refer to a sword, and it is also true when the word *that* is used to refer to a gun. But it does not follow from this that the word *weapon* is ambiguous. *Weapon* has but one meaning which makes it applicable to swords and

guns alike.

The first type of data which do not fit into the ability/involuntariness dichotomy are the AIA sentences expressing a Perfect. These have been mentioned by previous authors.¹⁶ In affirmative sentences of that type, the AIA verb is in the perfective aspect and obligatorily co-occurs with the particle *na*.¹⁷ McFarland (1976:20) writes that such verbs may sometimes "refer to an event which has been accomplished at least once in the past" and sometimes to "an action which has just been completed." Here are examples of both uses:

(48) *NAKASAKAY ka na ba sa kalabaw?*
A-pf-ride nom-you already interrog dat
buffalo
'Did you ever ride a buffalo?'

(49) *huli na! NAINOM na niya ang lason.*
late already! A-pf-drink already gen-he
nom poison
'Too late! He has already drunk the
poison.'

When an AIA verb occurs in the latter use, it does not necessarily refer to a recent past, as implied by McFarland's use of the word *just* in the above quotation, as is shown by the sentence below, which would be perfectly appropriate in the mouth of a physician speaking of a patient on which he remembers having performed a tonsillectomy fifty years ago:

(50) *NAALISAN na siya ng tonsil.*
A-pf-remove already nom-he gen tonsils.
'He has already had his tonsils out.'

The cases of the experiential type like (48) and those of the completion type like (49) are only different ways of putting to use a single meaning (Perfective). Consider for instance the following:

- (51) *NAKALABAS na si Lito ng bansa.*
A-pf-go-out already nom Lito gen country
(a) 'Lito has already been abroad.'
(b) 'Lito has already left the country.'

Sentence (51) can be used with an experiential interpretation by a speaker who intends to convey that Lito's impending trip to Hongkong will not be his first experience in travelling abroad. It can also be used with a completion interpretation as, for example, by a speaker who wants to point out that Lito is now out of reach of the Filipino courts. In either case the semantic representation of the Tagalog sentence is the same, that is, something roughly paraphrasable as 'on at least one occasion in the past, Lito left the Philippines'. Accounting for the various ways it can be put to use in actual conversation is a matter of pragmatics. Similar remarks can be made about the negative AIA sentences expressing a Perfective.¹⁸ Hence sentence (52) can be put to an experiential use or a completion use analogous to those discussed above for (51), but both uses follow from the same reading 'never yet has Lito left the country'.

- (52) *hindi pa NAKAKALABAS ng bansa si Lito.*
not yet A-impf-go-out gen country nom Lito
(a) 'Lito has never been abroad.'
(b) 'Lito hasn't left the country yet.'

The AIA sentences expressing a Perfective do not exhibit any circumstance-orientedness; that is, they do not carry any of the special implications typical of the ability or the involuntariness interpretation.

Many actorless AIA sentences do not fit the ability/involuntariness dichotomy either, again because of a lack of circumstance-orientedness.¹⁹ Consider for instance the discourse consisting of sentences (53) and (54a) uttered one after the other by the same speaker:

(53) *alam mo ba kung ano ang nangyari kay Pedro kahapon?*

know gen-you interrog whether what nom
happen dat Pedro yesterday
'Do you know what happened to Pedro
yesterday?

(54a) *NATANGGAL siya sa trabaho.*

A-pf-remove nom-he dat work
'He was fired.'

Sentence (54a) would be perfectly appropriate in the mouth of someone who intended merely to impart the fact of Pedro's dismissal, and did not intend to imply that that dismissal was either accidental (e.g., as a result of mixing up names on a payroll list) or that it had been impossible earlier than yesterday (e.g., because of the local union's opposition, which the boss finally managed to overcome). All my informants agree that, as uttered by a speaker with the minimal intentions just described, the discourse (53-54a) has a more natural ring than the discourse (53-54b), where *tinanggal* is the neutral counterpart of *natanggal*:

(54b) *TINANGGAL siya sa trabaho.*

I am at present unsure what exactly the meaning difference between (54a) and (54b) is. All I can say is that of the two, (54a) is the most neutral way of asserting that Pedro was dismissed.²⁰

When an actor NP is present, however, it is the AIA sentence which is semantically the more marked member of the pair (*ko* = 'gen-I'):

(55a) *NATANGGAL ko siya sa trabaho.*

(55b) *TINANGGAL ko siya sa trabaho.*

'I fired him.'

If the speaker simply wishes to report the mere fact of his dismissing Pedro yesterday, he should utter (55b). Sentence (55a) will necessarily carry along circumstance-oriented implications like those I alluded to when commenting on the meaning of (54a).

For verbs like *fire*, *promote*, *bribe*, a rational agent is always assumed to exist, even if one is not explicitly mentioned in the sentence. The properties exemplified by (53-55) also hold for sentences describing events which are not necessarily initiated by a rational agent. Consider, for instance, the following sentences:

(56a) *sasabihin ko sa iyo kung paano* { *NABUGAW* }

(56b) { *BINUGAW* }

ang mga ibon.

say gen-I dat dat-you whether how

{A-pf-scare-away/N-pf-scare-away}

nom plur bird

'I'll tell you how the birds were scared away.'

- (57) *sinigawan ni Pedro*
 N-pf-shout-at gen Pedro
 'Pedro shouted at them.'
- (58) *kumulog.*
 'There was a thunderclap.'
- (59a) *sasabihin ko sa iyo kung paano* {NABUGAW}
 (59b) {BINUGAW}
- ni Pedro ang mga ibon.*
 say gen-I dat dat-you whether how
 {A-pf-scare-away/N-pf-scare-away}
 gen Pedro nom plur bird
 'I'll tell you how Pedro scared the birds
 away.'

The discourse consisting of sentences (56a) and (57) uttered in a row is perfectly natural, and so is discourse (56a-58). The clause *nabugaw ang mga ibon* conveys the bare fact that the birds were scared away, with no implications whatsoever concerning how that came about. It is thus compatible with both (57) and (58). Discourse (56b-57) is perfectly natural and requires no special comment. Discourse (56b-58) sounds odd at first. The clause *binugaw ang mga ibon* entails that someone did something with the intention of thereby scaring the birds away, and sentence (58) specifies this something as a thunderclap. Hence discourse (56b-58) implies that someone can cause thunderclaps at will. But this runs counter to usual beliefs, hence the oddness.²¹

Let us now examine the discourses containing the sentences (59a-b), in which an agent is mentioned. Discourse (59b-57) is natural for the same reasons as (56b-57). Discourse (59b-58) calls for exactly

the same comments as discourse (56b-58) above, and discourse (59a-58) calls for similar ones. For (59a-57), a rather precise English rendition would be 'I'll tell you how Pedro (finally) managed to scare the birds away: he shouted at them'. Taken alone, sentence (59a) allows both an ability and an involuntariness interpretation. But—at least under usually held beliefs—the involuntariness interpretation conflicts with (57)'s entailment that Pedro's shouting at the birds was deliberate, and hence only the ability interpretation of (59a) is possible in discourse (59a-57).

One would wish to find general reasons why sentences containing an AIA verb are circumstance-oriented when they explicitly mention the agent of that verb, and otherwise are not. One should probably link this with observations (i) and (ii) below, but the exact connection has yet to be worked out: (i) the distinction between agent-orientedness and circumstance-orientedness concerns the relation between the agent and the action (or its result), and (ii) sentences lacking an overt agent usually carry the implication that the identity of that agent, or the relation between the agent and any feature of the situation depicted in the sentence, are of little or no relevance to the point that the speaker wishes to make by means of that sentence.

The scope of this article is limited to sentences with an actor NP referring to a human agent. There indeed exist pairs such as (60a-b), but I have not yet figured out how they work:

- (60a) { *TINANGAY* } *ng agos ang mga kahon.*
 (60b) { *NATANGAY* }

{N-pf-carry-away/A-pf-carry-away} gen
current nom plur box
'The boxes were carried away by the
current.'

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NOTES

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²I will follow their terminology throughout this article, unless stated otherwise.

³In *h-in-ipo* the infix *-in-* is a portmanteau for the morphemes Directional Focus and Perfective Aspect, whereas *na-* in *na-hipo* is a portmanteau for those plus the AIA morpheme.

⁴The syntactic properties of an AIA form and its neutral counterpart are identical, as far as I know. On how to predict the morphological make-up of an AIA form, given that of its neutral counterpart, see

Schachter and Otnes 1972:331-332. Suffice it to say here that the AIA morpheme shows up as *maka-/naka-* in the Actor Focus (i.e., the active voice) and as *ma-/na-* in the Goal Focus constructions (i.e., the passive voices). The choice between the *m*-initial variant and the *n*-initial one depends on aspect: *ma-*, *maka-* occur in the basic and contemplated aspects, whereas *na-*, *naka-* occur in the perfective and imperfective aspects. On the morphology of aspect, see Schachter and Otnes 1972:361-371.

⁵The behavior described in the first sentence of the quote from Schachter and Otnes (1972) is the one prescribed by normative grammarians. Assuming that that behavior represents an earlier stage of the language, the systematic ambiguity found in the dialect of the young Manila speakers came about historically as the result of a merger between two sets of prefixes distinguished only by vowel length. Vowel length contrasts do not otherwise show any sign of weakening in Manila Tagalog.

⁶The verbal forms under scrutiny will be capitalized to make them more conspicuous.

⁷This might be said, for instance, in describing the habitual attempts of an ape to procure water.

⁸Sentence (11) was pointed out to me by Mr. Brian Fegan. Some speakers indicated to me that it rings better if its last clause reads *hindi siya nakarating* 'he was not able to get there' (the root *dating* means 'to arrive'). I presume the reasons for that preference are the same as those for preferring (ii) over (i) in English: *I shot at Pedro but I did not* {(i) *shoot*/ (ii) *hit*} *him*. In any case, the points made in this paper remain valid.

⁹On that distinction, see Kac (1972) and references therein.

¹⁰*Ibalik* means 'to return X to its former place'.

¹¹The asterisk indicates that (b) is not appropriate in this context. It means 'are you actually frightening me?'

¹²I must have *done* something, even though it be just an attempt to set my vocal cords in motion. If I wanted to call Ben, but did not go through any motion to do so, the sentence would not be true. While accepting sentence (37), some informants pointed out to me that in order to express that there was a mere attempt to call, it sounded better if one used lexical means like the verb *subok* "try". This however does not change my point, that is, one can express this by means of a simple neutral form.

¹³The notation should be interpreted in the same fashion as earlier. Thus (41) is a shorthand for the following: when an AIA form with an ABL prefix occurs in an affirmative sentence, the sentence entails I and R; when an AIA form with an ABL prefix occurs in a negative sentence, the sentence entails I and not-R. The same goes for (42). I assume here that Tagalog has two parallel sets of homophonous AIA prefixes. The prefixes of one set call for the ability reading while those of the other set call for the involuntariness reading. There are other ways of presenting that systematic ambiguity, but they do not make any difference to my discussion.

¹⁴For (12) to be true, not only must M and R be true, but also something like C: 'R came about as a consequence of M'. That is, the Tagalog sentence (12) would not be true (nor would the English 'Ben pushed the rock into the well') of a situation in which Ben exerted a force on the rock, and in which the rock was displaced as a result of another force exerted simultaneously on it. There is no need to include C

in our formulas, for it can be provided for by a general principle of semantic theory.

¹⁵Bloomfield (1917:280) speaks of the short-vowelled *ka-* as having an "involuntary meaning" (§ 432). On p. 281 (§ 436) he says that the active *maka-* "may denote an animate actor who is able, succeeds in doing so and so; *the involuntary element inheres in the matter of ability, which is not dependent on the actor's will*" (emphasis added).

¹⁶See Schachter and Otnes (1972:332), McFarland (1976:19-20), Bloomfield (1917:282). Bloomfield seems to consider the "completed action" cases as peripheral subcases of the ability interpretation. He writes (p. 282, § 437) that they are "closely bordering" on the ability cases (about which see the quote in n. 15), and the English gloss he gives for the first example *nakaalis na siya* is worded thus: "He has already (succeeded in going, i.e.) gone away." McFarland (p. 19) puts the completed action meaning on an equal footing with the two others: "There are at least three meanings expressed by aptative [i.e., AIA] verbs, and the boundary lines between these meanings are not well marked. The three meanings are: (1) ability, (2) completed action, (3) accidental occurrence."

¹⁷*na* has roughly the same meaning as English *already*. See Schachter and Otnes 1972:415-419.

¹⁸These are in the imperfective aspect and contain the particle *pa* 'still, yet', on which see Schachter and Otnes 1972:415-419.

¹⁹"Actor" is a syntactic notion. The actor of a Tagalog sentence is its topic NP if that sentence is in the Actor Focus. Hence the actor is the NP *si Ben* (the topic) in the Actor Focus sentence *natatakot si Ben sa aso* 'Ben is afraid of the dog'.

If the sentence is in one of the Goal Focuses, its actor is that NP which corresponds to the topic of the Actor Focus analog of that sentence. Hence in *kinakatakutan ni Ben ang aso*, which is a (roughly synonymous) Direction Focus analog of the sentence above with *ang aso* "the dog" as a topic, the actor is the genitive NP *ni Ben*. If one of the arguments of the verb of a Tagalog sentence is an agent (a semantic notion), then it is an actor (a syntactic notion), but the converse is not true, as exemplified by the sentences above.

²⁰Some informants pointed out that although no agent of the firing is mentioned, the idea of such an agent is more or less present in the back of the minds of the speakers and hearers in the case of (54b), but not in that of (54a). One anonymous reviewer suggested that the difference between the two sentences was the same as that between *he got fired* and *he was fired*. The fact that the (morphologically) "neutral" sentence is more marked semantically than its AIA counterpart in the pair (54a-b) is not an artifact of pragmatic implications particular to *tanggalin sa trabaho* 'to fire', as one can see by checking pairs of sentences with other pragmatic implications. In particular, sentences (54a-b) describe an event which is characteristically accidental, in that (i) it is considered detrimental to the patient, and (ii) the patient need not play an active part in it. But the considerations of the main text hold as well for pairs (i) and (ii):

- (i) (a) *NAITAAS* } *siya ng puwesto.*
(b) *ITINAAS* }
'He was promoted.'
- (ii) (a) *NALAGYAN* } *siya ng sampung piso.*
(b) *NILAGYAN* }
'He got a ten peso bribe.'

²¹The oddness disappears if different beliefs are held, as for instance if Zeus is allowed to enter the scene.

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