

On the Stative Predicate: Tagalog “Existentials” Revisited¹

Paz Buenaventura Naylor
University of Michigan

1. Introduction

In Tagalog, a sentence with a predicate adjective would be like the following:

- (1) **Maganda** si Maria.²
STATIVE-beauty NOM Maria
‘Maria is beautiful.’

To express possession, we use a construction such as:

- (2) **May** pera ang bata.
EXISTENTIAL money NOM child
‘The child has money.’

To express existence in a location, we use the following construction:

- (3) **May** tao sa bahay.
EXISTENTIAL person LOC house
‘There is someone in the house.’

Put together like this, the structural parallelism of the three constructions is quite apparent.

- (4) Stative/Existential Marker + Existent + Location
ma- ganda si Maria
may pera ang bata
may tao sa bahay

The implicative relation between EXISTENCE, BEING, AND STATE SHOULD BE OBVIOUS.³ The fact that *ma-* is a prefix and *may* is an independent word (particle) does not negate their common syntactic-semantic function.

¹ In 1977, Lawrence Reid organized an Austronesian Symposium to which he had invited me to be a part of. It was held at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, in conjunction with the Linguistic Society of America Summer Linguistics Institute. This article grew out of that presentation.

² The form *si* is the nominative marker for personal proper names.

³ This was recently argued in an email discussion of ‘being’ and ‘existence’ in austronesian@yahoo.com led by Judd Evans in 2001.

However, in the grammars known to me, these constructions are not thus juxtaposed. Rather, they have been analyzed and described as separate and different predication types. The first is considered a NONVERBAL clause with a PREDICATE ADJECTIVE. The second, known as “the possessive”, has been considered a VERBAL clause with an UNINFLECTABLE verb, presumably due to its translation as ‘the child HAS money.’ The third, known as “the existential”, has been classified as a “SUBJECTLESS construction” with *may* supposedly functioning also as an UNINFLECTABLE VERB meaning ‘there is’.⁴

There has generally been consensus as to what *ma-* words do: they form “adjectives” and “adverbs” as well as “stative verbs”,⁵ although just what *ma-*words really ARE has not been sufficiently nor cogently addressed. With *may* constructions the analyses have neither been unanimous nor clear. For example, Bloomfield (1933) referred to *may* as an “exocentric attributive” particle; Lopez (1941) referred to *may* and its negative counterpart *wala* as “real particles”, and Santos (1940) likens *may* to *ay* which he considers a RELATOR, verb-like but uninflectable. Ramos and De Guzman (1971) consider *may* an “existential particle”.

Schachter (1977:289, footnote) reveals his point of view on the matter as follows:

According to Clark’s Table 3 (p.12),⁶ twenty-four of thirty-one languages use different structures for locatives and existentials. Moreover, one of the seven languages Clark lists as using the SAME structure for locatives and existentials is Tagalog, and this is, as we shall see, incorrect.

I beg to differ, however, from Schachter’s analysis, as well as similar others, of these Tagalog constructions. Most previous analyses have extrapolated from English grammar. Hence:

1. The verb ‘to be’ had been brought into the Tagalog where it does not exist.
2. Due to its VERBAL MEANING, *ma-* + process word has been viewed as syntactically different from *ma-* + material object/reified concept; the former is viewed as a verbal predicate and the latter as a nonverbal predicate adjective/adverb.
3. The *ang*-NP had been equated with *subject*, leading to the perception of the existential as a “SUBJECTLESS” construction; and this being the case, it is viewed as syntactically different from the possessive and the “stative verb”, both of which have the “topic/subject *ang*-NP”.
4. *may* is treated as a *verb* meaning ‘to have’ or ‘there is’, thus resulting in *may* predications appearing to be syntactically verbal.

TRANSLATION into their English equivalents in which the English verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ are used and the consequent syntactic analyses, based on what the constituents of the English constructions are, have been misleading. Furthermore, the failure to take

⁴ Carl Rubino (pers. comm.) considers *may* a proclitic since it comes before the existent; he also informs me that Nikolaus Himmelmann defines *may* as an “existential modifier”. Obviously “proclitic” refers to morphological form, while “existential modifier” refers to syntactic-semantic function.

⁵ Due to limitations of space, certain “stative verbs” such as the so-called “abilitative verb” with *ma-* (+ *ka-*) will be discussed only enough to demonstrate that they show identical semantic properties and syntactic structure as the other existential constructs.

⁶ Clark (1970) did a study of existential constructions in 31 languages.

certain details of Tagalog MORPHOLOGY into account, ON ITS OWN TERMS, appear to have obscured the STRUCTURAL ‘SAMENESS’ of all the three Tagalog existential constructions given above. Thus, if we set these within the framework of their basic UNDERLYING semantics as REALIZED in basic Tagalog PREDICATION SYNTAX, it will become clear that they belong to the SAME PARADIGM.

This paper aims to point out certain syntactic and semantic characteristics of the predicate phrase with *ma*-words and *may*-phrases and the sort of sentence constructions that they enter into. However, due to space limitations and other constraints, the semantics/pragmatics will only be indicated rather than addressed in detail. It will also be made clear through the illustrative examples of stative predications that *ma*-words and *may*-phrases are NOT SYNTACTICALLY VERBAL predicates. Even when the referent of the root word that is prefixed by *ma*- happens to be a PROCESS, i.e., VERBAL IN MEANING, the resulting predicate is NOT SYNTACTICALLY VERBAL. However, since the notion of PROCESS implies tense and aspect, *ma*- stative predicates may also inflect for *aspect* (*ma*- > *na*-) or in the case of *may* stative predicates (i.e., “existential” constructions ‘there is/are’, marked by suppletion).⁷ These and other observations lead to the perception of the possessive, existential, qualitative-modifier, and the so-called “stative verb” and “abilitative verb” constructions in Tagalog as having the SAME BASIC SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE and belonging to the SAME SYNTACTICO-SEMANTIC COMPLEX.

2. Tagalog Predication Syntax

The attempt to discuss and argue that the syntactic structure of the stative predicate in isolation is fraught with difficulty, and difficult questions will surely arise. In order to provide some semblance of a syntactic-contextual framework that should illuminate the description of the syntactic structure of the stative predicate, a very brief sketch of Tagalog basic predication syntax is offered at this point.

Without going into detail, I would like to indicate, as other Philippine and Western Austronesian scholars and I have observed or argued elsewhere,⁸ that TAGALOG BASIC PREDICATION IS SYNTACTICALLY NOMINAL. This is to say that even SEMANTICALLY VERBAL PREDICATIONS are SYNTACTICALLY NOMINAL. In view of this, Tagalog basic predication syntax appears to be ATTRIBUTIVE rather than predicative in character.⁹ The following sentences clearly illustrate such a characterization of the syntax of the BASIC SENTENCE TYPES of Tagalog:

(5) Titser ang babae.
 teacher NOM woman
 ‘The woman (is a) teacher.’

(6) Maganda ang babae.
 beautiful NOM woman
 ‘The woman (is) beautiful.’

⁷ This will be discussed and illustrated below.

⁸ In Naylor (1999, 2001, 2002); Shkarban (1995); Alieva (1978, 1980); Lopez (1928, 1941)

⁹ Naylor (1976, 1979) discusses the concept of SYNTACTIC ATTRIBUTE/ATTRIBUTION and Naylor (1999, 2001) deals with “Nominal Syntax in Verbal Predications”. Syntactic attribution is comparable to Martinet’s theory of predicate modification referred to as “PREMIER MODIFIANT, etc.” (C. Tchekoff, pers. comm.). Laurie Reid (pers. comm.) states that the syntactic attribute constituent COMES AFTER THE ATTRIBUTE [as the PREMIER MODIFIANT does].

- (7) Umalis ang babae.
left NOM woman
'The woman left.'

Note that PREDICATE NOUN, PREDICATE ADJECTIVE, and SEMANTICALLY VERBAL predicate are not SYNTAGMATICALLY differentiated; i.e., regardless of the referential meaning of the predicate word, be it NOMINA REI or NOMINA ACTIONIS.

Tagalog basic sentence structure has been described as BIPARTITE, consisting of a "comment" and a "topic" constituent (Ramos and De Guzman 1971) or like an EQUATION (Schachter and Otones 1972). Naylor (1973, 1975) subscribes to the same bipartite equational structure which fits in with the description of basic Tagalog predication syntax as attributive.

In view of this, Tagalog does not need to use a copula or "copulative verb" whenever the sentence has a predicate noun or a predicate adjective, as the way it does in English and other European languages. Predication by attribution is realized by simple juxtaposition — PARATAXIS.¹⁰

As is widely known, Tagalog is a PREDICATE-FIRST language or in Greenbergian terminology, a V-first language. Thus, sentences (5)–(7), with the predicate in the initial position, are examples of the UNMARKED order of clause/sentence constituents.

However, when the marked order is used, with the constituents in the reverse order, the particle *ay* — a discourse/relation marker in Tagalog,¹¹ is inserted.¹² In colloquial speech, instead of *ay*, a pause is usually used.¹³

Thus, one can see examples, such as *Ang babae ay titser* or *Ang babae/titser*. It is very obvious that due to its occurrence between the topic and the predicate, *ay* has been thought to be a copula like the English copula 'is'.

¹⁰ There has been lively discussion on the role of the VERB 'to be' in English, Spanish, and French, and the existential constructions of Tagalog and Anutan (e.g., Evans, Feinberg, and Potet, email 2001). Is it the quintessential vehicle for the expression of *existence* and is it in fact a verb at all? It was brought out that Tagalog, which has no copula or copulative verb at all, demonstrates that the existential can be expressed without it.

¹¹ The order of "topic/(subject) + predicate" was deemed to be the unmarked order with *ay* as the copulative verb, presumably originally modeled after Spanish sentence syntax and later after English sentence syntax. To this day, many Tagalog speakers continue to believe that "Tagalog is just like English". Filipinos were taught in school that, as conventional wisdom had it, *ay* is a copulative verb — just as in Spanish and English. Yet in his *Balarila* 'Grammar', written in Tagalog, Santos (1940) had pointed out that *ay* was NOT, strictly speaking, a real verb, but a RELATION MARKER (which included the copulative function). A. Buenaventura (1967) argued that it was NOT a copula; it was an INVERSION MARKER. This analysis has been widely held since among linguists. Potet (pers. comm.) calls it an ANTEPOSER. However, I have argued in print and in unpublished presentations that *ay* is NOT an inversion marker or an anteposer either; it is a RELATION MARKER, a DISCOURSE NEXUS MARKER.

¹² This is demonstrated by the common occurrence of *ay* in non-inverted order sentences; e.g., *Mabuti pa'y umalis tayo nang maaga bukas* 'Better yet that we leave early tomorrow' to which the interlocutor might reply *Ay sinabi mo* 'You said it'. As I recalled that speakers of Cavite Tagalog can respond to the previous discourse with something like *Ay bakit naman nagkaganoon* '(well) why did it end up like that?' or *Ay kung gay'on, huwag na lang!* '(well) if that is so, better not'. One is even led to wonder if the ubiquitous discourse marker *E* developed phonetically, [AI > E], from *ay*. (To my knowledge, hardly any analysis of the discourse markers *E*, *A*, and *O* has been done to date.)

¹³ Certain dialects of Tagalog, e.g., the Cavite and Bulacan dialects of Tagalog use the *ay* construction with greater frequency. Idiolectal variation within dialects can also be observed.

3. The Stative Predicate: *Ma-* vs. *May*

It is generally believed that *ma-* is a PAN stative prefix;¹⁴ the particle *may* appears to consist of *ma-* + *i* (the PAN locative marker). In the literature on existentials (e.g., Clark 1970, Kuno 1971), it has been shown that there is an entailment relationship between locatives and existentials.

In a nutshell, while both *ma-* and *may* mark existence, *ma-* codes A STATE OF BEING that results from and is defined by the EXISTENCE of the EXISTENT (the referent of the root word to which it is attached) IN A LOCUS (animate or inanimate). *May* directly marks a STATE OF EXISTENCE,¹⁵ defined by the EXISTENT (the referent of the word or phrase that it is in construction with) IN A LOCUS (animate or inanimate). When BOTH TYPES OF STATIVE PREDICATES are pared down to their least common denominator, we have:

Exists X= 'existent' in Y= 'locus'.

Certain semantic/pragmatic distinctions between *ma-* versus *may* stative predicates do arise, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (8) Mabalaklak ang puno.
 EXIST.flower NOM tree

 'The tree (is) flowery/full of flowers.'
- (9) May bulaklak ang puno.¹⁶
 exist-there flower(s) NOM tree

 'The tree has (a) flower(s).'
- (10) May bulaklak sa puno.
 exist-there flower(s) DAT/LOC tree

 'There is/are flower(s) on the tree.'
- (11) Mayaman ang babae.
 wealthy NOM woman

 'The woman (is) wealthy.'
- (12) May yaman ang babae.
 exists-there wealth NOM woman

 'The woman has wealth.'

¹⁴ Wouk (pers. comm.) remarked that "PAN *ma-*" seems to sometimes or often disappear with [the development] of the focus system. This has not happened in Tagalog where the full-fledged focus system has continued to coexist with the stative predicate system.

¹⁵ It appears that THE SEMANTICS OF HAVING (possession), "state of existence" in a specified location that *may* codes might imply moveability or change of location from which attribution of an alienable property might be inferred; whereas the SEMANTICS OF BEING (qualification), "state of being" that *ma-* codes which implies non-moveability would seem to code attribution of an inalienable property. Consider and compare sentences (8) and (9) with (11) and (12). Although these sentences seem to amply illustrate the observation just made, further research on this topic is needed.

¹⁶ Tagalog does not usually mark number. Whether a word is singular or plural is deducible from the context. However, when for pragmatic reasons, plurality must be specified, the plural-marking particle *manga* (written as *mga*) is used before the word to mark plurality.

- (13) May (ka-)yaman(-an) sa babae.
exists-there wealth DAT/LOC woman
'There is wealth in the woman.'

In (8) and (11), what the stative predicate with *ma-* says about the target of predication is that the tree/woman is in a state of being, defined or modified by the existence of flowers/wealth WITHIN them. On the other hand, in (9)/(12) and (10)/(13) what the stative predicate with *may* says about the target of predication is that 'there exist flowers/wealth in the tree/woman', as possessor in (9)/(12) but as location in (10)/(13).¹⁷

3.1 *Ma-* stative predicates

Words prefixed with *ma-* are associated with MODIFIERS (adjectives and adverbs) and what is generally referred to as "STATIVE VERBS".¹⁸ In combination with the affix *ka* to form *maka-*, *ma-* stative predicates are similarly viewed as verbal predicates and referred to as "abilitative verbs".

As pointed out earlier, *ma-* codes A STATE OF BEING, defined by the *referent of the root word* (the EXISTENT) that it is prefixed to and arrived at by the EXISTENCE OF THE EXISTENT in the LOCUS (the TARGET OF PREDICATION). The target of predication UNDERGOES THE STATE OF BEING referred to by the *ma-*stative predicate; it is therefore in the semantic case role of UNDERGOER.

The referent of the root word (the existent) may be: a MATERIAL OBJECT or a REIFIED CONCEPT (quality or process). Thus, we have:

- (14) *ma-* + material object:

ma- + *tinik* 'thorn/fishbone' > *matinik* 'thorny/bony'
ma- + *damo* 'grass' > *madamo* 'grassy'

- (15) *ma-* + *reified concept* (quality)

ma- + *ganda* 'beauty' > *maganda* 'beautiful'
ma- + *bagal* 'slowness' > *mabagal* 'slow/slowly'

- (16) *ma* + *reified concept* (process)

- a. *ma-* + *tulog* 'sleep' > *matulog* 'be asleep'
ma- + *kita* 'see' > *makita* 'be visible'
ma- + *tapos* 'finish' > *matapos* 'be finishable' (or 'be able to finish')
ma- + *kain* 'eat' > *makain* 'be edible/eatable (or 'be able to eat')

¹⁷ Since *may* predicates code possession or location that carries the implication of potential moveability, this distinction suggests that *may* marks attribution of an *alienable* property while *ma-* marks attribution of an *inalienable* property. At this point, however, this suggestion requires further exploration.

¹⁸ Grant (1999) asserts that "adjectives can be construed as a kind of stative verb". Read in context, it is clear that his use of "verb" is interpretable as "predicate".

- b. *ma-* + *ka-* (inchoative) + reified concept (process)
ma- + *ka-* + *tulog* > *makatulog* ‘be able to sleep’
ma- + *ka-* + *kita* > *makakita* ‘be able to see’
ma- + *ka-* + *tapos* > *makatapos* ‘be able to finish’
ma- + *ka-* + *kain* > *makakain* ‘be able to eat’

The following examples will illustrate these different types of *ma-* stative predicates.

(17) ***Ma-*** + material object

- a. *Matinik ang isda.*
 bony NOM fish
 ‘exists bones in fish’
 (‘The fish is bony.’)
- b. *Madamo ang parke.*
 grassy NOM park
 ‘exists grass in park’
 (‘The park is grassy.’)

In sentence (18a), *maganda* functions as a stative predicate and the construction is generally known in the literature as of the predicate adjective sentence type. In sentence (18b), however, *mabagal* ‘slow/slowly’ is *not* functioning as a stative predicate but as modifier of *lumakad* ‘walk/walked’.

(18) ***Ma-*** + reified concept (quality)

- a. *Maganda ang bahay.*
 STATE-beauty NOM house
 ‘state-beauty/beauty-exists-in house’
 (‘The house is beautiful.’)
- b. *Mabagal lumakad ang babae.*
 STATE-slow walk NOM woman
 ‘state-slow/slowness-exists-in walk woman’
 (‘The woman walks slowly.’)

3.1.1 *Ma-* + reified concept (process)

The following *ma-* words are labeled STATIVE VERBS in the literature and accordingly treated and taught as SYNTACTICALLY VERBAL PREDICATES. While the English translations are verbal predications, it must be borne in mind that the Tagalog sentences are not. Note the UNDERLYING SEMANTIC and MORPHOSYNTACTIC parallelism that hold between the “predicate adjectives” given above and the “stative verbs” given below:

- ma-* + *tulog* ‘state of being, defined by sleep’ (‘to sleep’)
- ma-* + *gutom* ‘state of being, defined by hunger’ (‘to get hungry’)
- ma-* + *takot* ‘state of being, defined by fear’ (‘to be afraid’)

These stative predicates are “centripetal” (“intransitive” in English) and do not involve other argument NPs in the process.

Furthermore, ‘to sleep’, ‘to get hungry’, and ‘to be afraid’ are not volitional acts and this is revealed in Tagalog literal rendition as ‘to be in the state of being asleep/hungry/afraid’. As we shall see below, this semantic property of the stative predicate gives rise to rhetorical functions that serve sociocultural modes of communication exceptionally well.

Other stative predicates defined by process words do involve other arguments; i.e., the process is “centrifugal” (“transitive” in English grammar). For example:

ma- + *kita* ‘state of being, defined by visibility (‘to see’)

ma- + *dinig* ‘state of being, defined by audibility (‘to hear’)

‘To see (something)’ is realized in Tagalog by the string of words that actually mean ‘(something) is “see-able”, i.e., in a visible state’. The same goes for ‘to hear (something)’ is realized in Tagalog as ‘(something) is “hear-able”/in an audible state’.

Similarly, we have:

ma- + *gawa* ‘state of being doable’ (‘to be able to make/do [something]’)

ma- + *tapos* ‘state of being finishable’ (‘to be able to finish [something]’)

ma- + *basa* ‘state of being readable’ (‘to be able to read [something]’)

ma- + *kain* ‘state of being edible’ (‘to be able to eat [something]’)

Stative predicates defined by *process* words, as to be expected, are subject to *aspectual* distinctions.¹⁹ The examples of stative predicates given thus far have been in the IRREALIS (not begun) INFINITIVE aspect. It is, however, the REALIS aspect forms, the ONGOING and the COMPLETIVE, that occur most often in usage.

These REALIS aspect forms are coded by the replacement of the IRREALIS marker /m/ in *ma-* with the REALIS marker /n/, as in:

<i>matulog</i>	>	<i>natutulog, natulog</i>
<i>magutom</i>	>	<i>nagugutom, nagutom</i>
<i>makita</i>	>	<i>nakikita, nakita</i>
<i>marinig</i> ²⁰	>	<i>naririnig, narinig</i>
<i>maubos</i>	>	<i>nauubos, naubos</i>
<i>mabasa</i>	>	<i>nababasa, nabasa</i>

The following examples illustrate this type of stative predicate:

- (19) **Natulog** ang babae.
 COMPL.STATE.sleep NOM woman
 ‘state of sleep (perf) woman’
 (‘The woman slept.’)

- (20) **Nagutom** ang babae.
 COMPL.STATE.hunger NOM woman
 ‘state (perf) of hunger woman’
 (‘The woman got hungry.’)

¹⁹ The aspect system of Tagalog is based on the following distinctions: IRREALIS (not begun) vs. REALIS (begun); within IRREALIS, INFINITIVE vs. CONTEMPLATIVE (future) and within REALIS, ONGOING (present/progressive) vs. COMPLETIVE (preterit).

²⁰ In Tagalog, intervocalic [d] is replaced by [r].

- (21) **Nakita** n(an)g bata ang babae.²¹
 COMPL.STATE.see GEN/ATTR child NOM woman
 ‘visible of/to child (perf) woman’
 (‘The child saw the woman.’)
- (22) **Narinig** n(an)g bata ang babae.
 COMPL.STATE.hear GEN/ATTR child NOM woman
 ‘audible of/to child (perf) woman’
 (‘The child heard the woman.’)
- (23) **Nainom** n(an)g bata ang gamot.
 COMPL.STATE.drink GEN/ATTR child NOM medicine
 ‘drinkable of/to child (perf) medicine’
 (‘The child drank the medicine.’)
- (24) **Nabali** n(an)g bata ang sanga.
 COMPL.STATE.break GEN/ATTR child NOM branch
 ‘breakable of/to child (perf) branch’
 (‘The child broke the branch.’)

Stative predicates such as these may also be used with the locative focus suffix *-(h)an* depending on whether the root word is semantically compatible with the locative focus,²² as in (25)–(27).

- (25) **Nainuman** n(an)g bata ang bote.
 COMPL.STATE.drink.LOC GEN/ATTR child NOM bottle
 ‘drinkable-from of/to child (perf) bottle’
- (26) **Nabalian** n(an)g bata ang sanga.
 COMPL.STATE.break.LOC GEN/ATTR child NOM branch
 ‘breakable-off of/to child (perf) branch’
- (27) **Nasarapan** n(an)g bata ang pansit.
 COMPL.STATE.delicious.LOC GEN/ATTR child NOM pansit
 ‘delicious-to of/to child (perf) pansit’

Presenting information that is potentially damaging or embarrassing for the undergoer NP as a *process* couched in stative-predicate form, i.e., as a RESULTANT STATE (rather than as a deliberate act on someone else’s part) provides the means for not casting any aspersions on anyone. The stative predicate is thus generally used to inform of an adverse state of affairs that has BEFALLEN the undergoer NP and presents the undergoer as victim of circumstances. The following examples clearly demonstrate such a rhetorical/pragmatic function of the stative predicate.

²¹ The orthographic tradition has the genitive particle *nang* written as *ng*.

²² It is not to be confused with the (semantically) adversative stative predicate.

- (28) **Natanggal** ang babae.
COMPL.STATE.remove NOM woman
'state-removed (perf) woman'
(‘The woman was laid off (not fired).’)
- (29) **Natifus** ang babae.
COMPL.STATE.typhoid NOM woman
'state-typhoid (perf) woman'
(‘The woman got typhoid.’)

It is interesting to note that the locative focus is explicitly marked in sentences (30) and (31).

- (30) **Namatayan** ang pamilya.
COMPL.STATE.death.LOC NOM family
'state-death on (perf) family'
(‘There was a death in the family.’)
- (31) **Nasunugan** ang pamilya.
COMPL.STATE.fire.LOC NOM family
'state-fire on (perf) family'
(‘The family had a fire.’)

As previously mentioned, the semantics/pragmatics of the notion of STATE appears to have given rise to implications of NONVOLITIONAL/INVOLUNTARY/ACCIDENTAL happenings. At the same time, the semantic component of “DO-ABILITY” has given rise to implications of ABILITY to bring about the resultant state of the process named by the root word. As a result, many of these stative predicates could indicate either one of the following two things: (a) The actor was ABLE to accomplish the process named by the stative predicate; (b) The actor UNINTENTIONALLY accomplished the process named by the stative predicate. For example, *nakita* [na.kí.ta] can mean ‘HAPPENED to see’ or ‘was able to see’.²³ Similarly, *narinig* [na.ri.níg] means ‘HAPPENED to hear’ or ‘was able to hear’; *nainom* [na.i:nóm] means ‘ACCIDENTALLY drank’ or ‘was able to drink’; *nabali* [na:bá.le?] means ‘ACCIDENTALLY broken’ or ‘was able to break’.²⁴

The semantic component of state of “DO-ABILITY” is made explicit by the addition of the affix *ka-* to the stative prefix *ma-* to form the “abilitative” prefix *maka-* in what is known as “abilitative verbs” in Tagalog (e.g., *makatulog*, *makakita*, *makakain*, *makainom*, *makaalis*, *makalakad*, etc.).²⁵ The affix *ka* introduces an INCHOATIVE component into the semantic complex of this variety of stative predicate. Thus the closest translation of *makatulog*, for example, is ‘to COME TO BE ABLE to sleep’. The fact that the imperative mode is ruled out for *maka-* predicates indicates that they are in fact

²³ In some dialects, this meaning is marked by vowel lengthening in *na-* [na:].

²⁴ As with *nakita*, some dialects mark “involuntary” with vowel lengthening in *na-* [na:].

²⁵ Ramos and De Guzman (1971: 583) state that “Unlike the dynamic *mag-/-um-* forms, the *maka-/makapag-* forms indicate a POTENTIALITY or STATE of readiness.” They nonetheless consider *maka-/makapag-* predicates as verbs.

mayroon is a *full word*. This means that *may* can not stand alone and may not be used in isolation, whereas *mayroon* can do so and it may be used in isolation.

The full word *mayroon* (*may* + *doon*²⁷ ‘there’) and its colloquial form *meron* may be used in all contexts while the use of the particle *may* is subject to certain restrictions.

The particle *may* may only be used when it is immediately followed by a full word (e.g., noun, possessive pronoun, verbal word, modifier, etc.).²⁸

- (36) **May** pera ang bata.
 STAT-LOC money NOM child
 ‘exist-there money child’
 (‘The child has money.’)
- (37) **May** kanyang sarili ang bata
 STAT-LOC his own NOM child
 ‘exist-there his (own) child’
 (‘The child has his own.’)
- (38) **May** biniling laruan ang bata.
 STAT-LOC bought toy NOM child
 ‘exist-there bought toy child’
 (‘The child has a bought toy.’)
- (39) **May** malaking baril-barilan ang bata.
 STAT-LOC big-LKR/ATTR toy-gun NOM child
 ‘exist-there big toy gun child’
 (‘The child has a big toy gun.’)

Whenever another particle or word comes between *may* and the existent word, *mayroon* must be used. This happens when the IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING word is a pronoun,²⁹ a particle such as the interrogative marker *ba*, *na* ‘already/now’, or a modal such as *yata* ‘looks like/seems’.

Both *mayroon* and *meron* require the use of the “linker” (attributive marker) *na*.

After a vowel or /n/, *na* changes to the clitic *-ng* which is attached to the preceding word:

mayroon/meron + *na* + *pera* > *mayroong/merong pera*
 ‘has/there is money’

Whenever a word or particle comes between *mayroon/meron* and the existent word, the clitic =*ng* (< *na*) is attached to such a word or particle, as in (40)–(43).

²⁷ It is to be noted that *may* + *doon* results in a double locative.

²⁸ Santos (1940:248–9) lists the pluralizer particle *manga* (written *mga*) and the locative marker *sa-* that is used as an adjectivizer prefix among the words that can be used with *may*. Although they are written as separate words, they and the word preceded by them form a single lexicosemantic entity. This would therefore invalidate their inclusion in the list; they simply belong to the category of FULL WORD (e.g., noun, modifier, etc.).

²⁹ Tagalog pronouns generally show clitic tendencies. When they do not occur in isolation, they immediately follow the predicate word. For example, **Umalis nang maaga ako* > *Umalis ako nang maaga* ‘I left early’.

- (40) Mayroon siyang **baril**.
 (< may baril siya.)
 ‘S/he has a gun.’
- (41) Mayroon **bang** baril ang titser?
 (< may baril ba ang titser?)
 ‘Does the teacher have a gun?’
- (42) Mayroon **nang** baril ang titser.
 (< may baril na ang titser.)
 ‘The teacher already has a gun.’
- (43) Mayroon yatang **baril** ang titser.
 (< may baril yata ang titser.)
 ‘I wonder if the teacher has a gun.’

Yet another instance that the full word *mayroon/meron* must be used is when it is used in isolation as in a one-word answer to a question, as in (44) and (45).

- (44) Q: May pera ba ang bata?
 ‘Does the child have money?’
 A: Oo, **mayroon**.
 ‘Yes, s/he does.’
- (45) Q: May bulaklak ba sa hardin?
 ‘Are there flowers in the garden?’
 A: Oo, **mayroon**.
 ‘Yes, there are.’

When the quantifier *marami* ‘many/lots of’ is used to modify the existent word, *may* or *mayroon/meron* is usually dropped.³⁰ Thus, instead of **May/mayroong/merong maraming bulaklak sa hardin*, the correct form is as follows.

- (46) Maraming bulaklak sa hardin.
 EXIST-many-LKR/ATTR flower(s) LOC garden
 ‘exist-many flowers in garden’
 ‘There are lots of flowers in the garden.’

However, it appears that in semantically possessive sentences *may* is often retained. Thus, the following sentence is quite acceptable:

³⁰ As pointed out earlier, something similar happens with *mabulaklak* ‘full of/has lots of flowers’. Instead of saying *Maraming bulaklak ang sampaguita* ‘The sampaguita plant has lots of flowers’, one can say *Mabulaklak ang sampaguita*.

- (47) **May** maraming bulaklak ang babae.
 STATE-LOC EXIST-many-LKR/ATTR flower(s) NOM woman
 ‘exist-there many flowers woman’
 ‘The woman has lots of flowers.’

3.3 *May* existential sentences

The English existential sentence ‘There is X in Y’ is rendered in Tagalog as the existential construction: *may* + X + locative marker + Y.

Sentences (36)–(44) can be transformed to existential sentences simply by replacing the nominative marker *ang* of the target of predication/topic NP with the LOCATIVE MARKER *sa*. Thus, sentence (36) would be:

- May pera **ang** bata.
 May pera **sa** bata.
 ‘The child has money.’ / ‘There is money with/on/in the child.’

Sentences (38)–(43) can be similarly transformed from semantically possessive to locative existential sentences. It should be borne in mind that the lexical-semantic contrast between nominative and locative case marking is irrelevant to the function of TARGET OF PREDICATION and the semantic case role of UNDERGOER.

3.3.1 *May* and *nasa*

The discussion of constructions with *may* and *nasa* have usually taken the point of view that they do NOT belong to the same paradigm. Again, this appears to stem from the English translations. Note that the morphosemantics reveals aspectual distinction within the same paradigm:

- ma-* (irrealis/imperfective) + *-i* (locative)
na- (realis/perfective) + *sa* (locative)

The examples usually worked over are:

- (48) **May** libro sa mesa.
 STATE-LOC book LOC table
 ‘exist-there book on table’
 (‘On the table there is a book.’)
- (49) **Nasa** mesa ang libro.
 STATE-COMPL-LOC table NOM book
 ‘exist-there table (perf) book’
 (‘The book is on the table.’)

In sentence (48) the target of predication is *mesa* ‘table’, while in sentence (49) the target of predication is *libro* ‘book’. The fact that *mesa* is locative and *libro* is nominative is immaterial to the syntactic structure of the stative predication. As regards the morphosemantics, there appears to be correlation between PERFECTIVITY and DEFINITENESS (Wierbiczka 1972).

3.3.2 *May and wala*

How can *may* and *wala* belong to the same paradigm? Whenever this question has been raised, the answer has been “No, they can’t; they behave differently morphosyntactically” — so the conventional wisdom goes.

However, morphologically, the opposite of *wala* is not *may*; it is *mayroon*. As pointed out earlier, *may* is a particle, while *wala* and *mayroon* are full words. Morphosyntactic differences can be expected to ensue from the difference in category membership between *may* and *wala* but not between *mayroon* and *wala*. *Wala* follows the same rules outlined above for *mayroon*.

SEMANTICALLY, however, *wala* ‘nothing(ness)’ is in fact the opposite of *may* ‘state/existence’.

4. Coda

The differences of morphological form, “meaning”, and “part of speech” category have obscured the underlying syntactic structure that both *ma*-words and *may* phrases are stative predicates.

The stative prefix *ma*- marks a STATE OF BEING, defined by the EXISTENT (the referent of the root word that it is attached to) and *may* marks a STATE OF EXISTENCE, defined by the EXISTENT (the referent of the root word that it is in construction with — IN A LOCUS, animate or inanimate). As we may have seen from the illustrative sentences given above, however, it is clear that when both these stative predicates are pared down to their least common denominator, we have the basic syntactic structure:

Existential marker* + X = *Existent* + Y = *Locus

Existence as extralinguistic reality may be perceived as QUALIFICATION in its various forms, POSSESSION, or STATEMENT OF EXISTENCE IN A GIVEN LOCATION.

Presenting an event as a state rather than as an act absolves the participants of any blame or potentially damaging aspersions. The target of predication or the topic NP of the *ma*-/*may* stative predicate is in the semantic case role of UNDERGOER, not agents, even in process-word predicates. These rhetorical/pragmatic functions are at the heart of stative vs. narrative/dynamic predication. It is remarkable how well certain syntactic constructs of a language can provide the means to articulate certain matters of the basic cultural ethic of its speakers.

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