

# Referential prominence in Philippine languages: Syntax, morphology or both?

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## 1 Introduction

- There has been a long-noted connection between voice and “prominence” *of some sort* in Philippine-type languages.
- Recent work has converged on the “pivot”/nominative/absolute argument having a specific or definite interpretation without bearing any *inherent* pragmatic relation such as topic or focus.
- But where does this interpretation come from? A recent paper by Collins (2019) argues that interpretive properties of arguments are obtained purely through syntax and that the case markers themselves have no semantic contribution.
- I argue here that this cannot be right and that the case markers themselves must be responsible for a large part of an argument’s interpretation w.r.t. specificity and definiteness, in line with previous analyses (e.g. Himmelmann 1997).
- Nonetheless, counterexamples to this generalization are interesting and need to be accounted for. I examine the major cases for Tagalog and examine the extent to which this pattern holds throughout the Philippines.

## 2 Predication

- The predicate-subject relation in Philippine-type languages is determined by the relative referentiality of the two basic parts of a proposition similar to copular clauses in more familiar languages. The more referential half of the predication (i.e. the subject) follows the less referential half (i.e. the predicate).
- An underappreciated fact of Philippine-type languages is that the pivot completes the predication. (1b) and (2c) are judged to have truth values but (1c) and (2b) are not.

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| <p>(1) TAGALOG</p> <p>a. K&lt;in&gt;áin-Ø ni Juan ang tokwa<br/>&lt;BEG&gt;eat-PV GEN Juan NOM tofu<br/>'Juan ate the tofu.'</p> <p>b. K&lt;in&gt;áin-Ø ang tokwa<br/>&lt;BEG&gt;eat-PV NOM tofu<br/>'The tofu was eaten.'</p> <p>c. %K&lt;in&gt;áin-Ø ni Juan<br/>&lt;BEG&gt;eat-PV GEN Juan<br/>'Juan ate (it).'</p> | <p>(2) TAGALOG</p> <p>a. K&lt;um&gt;áin ng tokwa si Juan<br/>&lt;AV.BEG&gt;eat GEN tofu NOM Juan<br/>'Juan ate tofu.'</p> <p>b. %K&lt;um&gt;áin ng tokwa<br/>&lt;AV.BEG&gt;eat GEN tofu<br/>'(S/he) ate tofu.'</p> <p>c. K&lt;um&gt;áin si Juan<br/>&lt;AV.BEG&gt;eat NOM Juan<br/>'Juan ate.'</p> |
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- (1c) and (2b) are fully grammatical, but they must depend on the preceding discourse to provide a reference for the elided pivot and obtain a truth value.
- In contrast, as long as anyone ate the tofu, (1b) will be judged true but (1c) cannot be judged as true or false even if we know that Juan ate something. Similarly, for just anyone to have eaten tofu does not make the actor voice sentence in (2b) true.
- Conceptually, predication is a symmetrical relation but on the surface, few if any languages treat the subject/predicate relation as reversible; all languages appear to have a canonical position for the subject distinct from predicate.
- Both Philippine-type and English-type languages align the more referential argument with the subject position and the less referential argument with the predicate position.

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|---|---|
| <p>(3) ENGLISH</p> <p>a. Mary is a linguist.</p> <p>b. *A linguist is Mary.</p> | <p>(4) TAGALOG</p> <p>a. Abogado si Jojo<br/>lawyer NOM Jojo<br/>'Jojo is a lawyer.'</p> <p>b. *Si Jojo abogado<br/>NOM Jojo lawyer</p> |
|---|---|

- Philippine languages are famously far more flexible in terms of how lexical categories get mapped to the sentential relations subject and predicate, as shown in (5) (Bloomfield 1917; Gil 1993; Himmelmann 1987, 1991; Foley 2008; Schachter and Otnes 1982; Kaufman 2009):

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|--|---|
| <p>(5) TAGALOG</p> <p>a. K&lt;um&gt;a~káin ang laláki<br/>&lt;AV&gt;IMPRF~eat NOM man<br/>'The man is eating.'</p> | <p>b. Laláki ang k&lt;um&gt;a~káin<br/>NOM man &lt;AV&gt;IMPRF~eat<br/>'The eating one is a man.'</p> |
|--|---|

- But they are less flexible than English in requiring that subjects be definite (and predicates less referential).
  - Compare, in (6), how all types of definite, indefinite and quantificational noun phrases can serve as subject in English without further ado.
  - But in (normal spoken) Tagalog, only the definite noun phrase and the strongly quantified phrase with *lahat* can serve as subject, as in (7a-b).

- An indefinite or weakly quantified ‘logical subject’ must be introduced by the existential marker *may*, as seen in (7c-d).

(6)	ENGLISH	(7)	TAGALOG
a.	George arrived.	a.	D<um>ating si George <AV>arrive P.NOM George
b.	Everyone arrived.	b.	D<um>ating ang lahat <AV>arrive NOM all
c.	A dog arrived.	c.	May d<um>ating na aso EXT <AV>arrive LNK dog
d.	Someone arrived.	d.	May d<um>ating EXT <AV>arrive

## 2.1 Pragmatic relations

- While the Tagalog *ang* phrase is often referred to as “topic” in different analytic traditions, it has been shown clearly by Naylor (1975), Kroeger (1993) and Kaufman (2005) *inter alia* to have no inherent pragmatic status beyond its definiteness or referentiality.
- There’s a bona fide topic position on the left periphery in all Philippine languages.
- While predicate and subject are not pragmatic relations, there is a well known secondary relation between subjecthood and topichood.
- Subjects are canonically (but not necessarily) topic-like and predicates canonically (but not necessarily) align with the focused constituent of a clause.
- English has a very high tolerance for focused subjects, as seen in (8a), but cleft structures also serve to express the logical subject as a predicate when focused, as in (8b).

- (8) a. Only [John]<sub>FOC</sub> knows Jane.  
b. It’s only [John]<sub>FOC</sub> who knows Jane.

- On the other hand, Malay/Indonesian does not tolerate the non-canonical mapping in (8a). the Malay/Indonesian adverb *saja* ‘only’, which must combine with a focused constituent preceding it, cannot associate with a subject in a simple declarative clause, as in (9a).

- (9) INDONESIAN
- a. Presiden (\*saja) bisa menilai kinerja menteri.  
president only can AV:evaluate output minister  
‘A president can evaluate a minister’s output.’
- b. Presiden saja yang bisa menilai kinerja menteri.  
president only RELT can AV:evaluate output minister  
‘Only a president can evaluate a minister’s output.’

- In Philippine English, we see a transfer effect from a stricter alignment between the syntactic subj-pred relation and the pragmatic presupposition-focus relation.

- Whereas English can employ prosodic focus alone in a sentence like (10), Philippine English will invariably employ a cleft in the same function, as seen in (11). The Tagalog equivalent is given in (12).

(10)	US ENGLISH JOHN will carry your bag	(12)	TAGALOG Si Juan <b>ang</b> mag-da~dala ng bag mo NOM Juan NOM AV-IMPRF~carry GEN bag 2SG.GEN (Lit. 'Juan will be the one to carry your bag.')
(11)	PHILIPPINE ENGLISH John will be the one to carry your bag		

- It seems then that the stronger requirement in Philippine English (and Tagalog and even Indonesian) is that a (logical) predicate contained in the presupposition be packaged as a definite NP or relative clause. Here, if it's known that someone will be carrying your bag, this must be overtly expressed by *ang* in Tagalog or by *the one* in Phil. English.

### 3 Case marking versus relativizers

- Some key differences between Philippine-type languages and those south of the Philippine zone are seen in the contrast between Tagalog (13) and Indonesian/Malay (14):

(13)	TAGALOG	(14)	FORMAL INDONESIAN/MALAY
a.	Sino <b>ang</b> d<um>ating? who NOM <AV.BEG>arrive 'Who arrived?'	a.	Siapa <b>yang</b> datang? who RELT arrive 'Who arrived?'
b.	D<um>ating <b>ang</b> guro <AV.BEG>arrive NOM teacher 'The teacher arrived.'	b.	Datang abang-nya... arrive elder.brother-3s.GEN 'His brother arrived...' (Hikayat Pahang 128:9)

- Nearly all Philippine-type languages require some form of case marking on clausal arguments while non-Philippine type languages typically do not (Himmelman 2005). (Interesting counter-examples on the southern side include *Tukang Besi* (Donohue 1999) and *Balantak* (Van den Berg and Busenitz 2012)).
  - South of the Philippines, a true relativizer, like *yang*, emerges and is used in contexts such as (14a) to convert non-nominal predicates into arguments, but not in contexts like (14b).
  - The case markers of Philippine languages, on the other hand, do not discriminate between apparent verbal and nominal complements and are used for arguments of all types.
  - Philippine-type case markers are in near complementary distribution with Indonesian style relativizers.
- Constantino (1965) showed that this is a far reaching characteristic of Philippine languages with the comparisons in Table 1 and Table 2.
- In no Phil. language do putative pseudo-clefts contain an overt relative marker, wh- element, dummy head noun, or any extra sign of nominalization. The predicates in Table 1 are simply bare complements to the determiner in Table 2.

### 4 Where does referentiality come from?

- Here, I'd like to tackle the division of labor between syntactic position and morphological case marking in expressing referentiality in Western Austronesian languages.

TAGALOG	kina:ʔin	nang	ba:taʔ	<b>ang</b>	mangga
BIKOLANO	kinakan	kan	a:kiʔ	<b>ang</b>	mangga
CEBUANO	ginka:ʔun	han	bataʔ	<b>ang</b>	mangga
HILIGAYNON	kinaʔun	sang	ba:ta	<b>ang</b>	pahuʔ
TAUSUG	kyaʔun	sin	bataʔ	<b>in</b>	mampallam
ILOKANO	kinnan	dyay	ubing	<b>ti</b>	mangga
IBANAG	kinan	na	abbing	<b>ik</b>	mangga
PANGASINAN	kina	=y	ugaw	<b>su</b>	mangga
KAPAMPANGAN	pe:nga=na	ning	anak	<b>ing</b>	mangga
	eat:PV.PRF	GEN	child	NOM	mango
	‘The child ate the mango.’				

Table 1: Philippine sentence patterns following Constantino (1965)

TAGALOG	mangga	<b>ang</b>	kina:ʔin	nang	ba:taʔ
BIKOLANO	mangga	<b>ang</b>	kinakan	kan	a:kiʔ
CEBUANO	mangga	<b>ang</b>	ginka:ʔun	han	bataʔ
HILIGAYNON	pahuʔ	<b>ang</b>	kinaʔun	sang	ba:ta
TAUSUG	mampallam	<b>in</b>	kyaʔun	sin	bataʔ
ILOKANO	mangga	<b>ti</b>	kinnan	dyay	ubing
IBANAG	mangga	<b>ik</b>	kinan	na	abbing
PANGASINAN	mangga	<b>su</b>	kina	=y	ugaw
KAPAMPANGAN	mangga	<b>ing</b>	pe:nga=na	ning	anak
	mango	NOM	eat:PV.PRF	GEN	child
	‘It was the mango that the child ate.’				

Table 2: Philippine sentence patterns following Constantino (1965)

- Two diametrically opposed viewpoints have been put forth:
  - Himmelmann (1997, 1991) posits that the traditional case markers of Tagalog are determiners whose main function is to signal referentiality.
  - A more recent paper by Collins (2019), attributes referentiality entirely to the syntax-semantics mapping without the case markers themselves playing any role.
- Conceptually, both options are possible and both are unambiguously instantiated in Western Austronesian languages.
- I will argue for a middle path, in which the markers of interest carry both case and referentiality features. The distribution of these markers is thus constrained both by syntax and semantics.
- This solution crucially depends on considering a set of potential morphological outputs for each syntactic input.

#### 4.1 Collins 2019: Referentiality comes from syntax

- Tagalog as a language without definite articles:

“...certain languages which lack definite articles, such as Tagalog, are able to unambiguously signal the definiteness or indefiniteness of an NP via mechanisms besides articles, such as verbal affixes, case marking, and/or the grammatical relation of the NP.” (Collins 2019)

- Why depart from the traditional idea that case markers are referential?

“Evidence that *ang* does not mark definiteness in Tagalog comes from NPs modified by the quantificational expression *isang*. *isang* is itself morphologically complex, composed of the cardinal numeral *isa*, ‘one’, and the “linker”-morpheme *ng*..While the nominative case marker *ang* does mark presuppositional definites (namely, bare NP patients), it also marks quantificational indefinites like those presented in this section.” (Collins 2019)

#### 4.1.1 The evidence

- Collins presents the sentences in (15) within the context of a class with six students and obtains the responses given.
- (16) demonstrates a similar point: *ang isang* can express an existential indefinite.

(15)a. I-p<in>asa ng guro ang mag-aaral.

PV-<PERF>pass GEN teacher NOM student

‘The teacher passed the student.’

Consultant response: Not with six students, it sounds wrong.

b. I-p<in>asa ng guro ang isa-ng mag-aaral.

PV-<PERF>pass GEN teacher NOM one-LNK student

‘The teacher passed one student.’

Consultant response: Fine, it sounds like five of them failed.

(16) Na-huli ni Maria ang isa-ng mamamatay tao noong Miyerkules at na-huli ni  
PERF.PV-catch GEN Maria NOM one-LNK killer person on Wednesday and PERF.PV-catch GEN

Karlos ang isa-ng mamamatay tao noong Huwebes

Karlos NOM one-LNK killer person on Thursday

‘Maria caught a murderer on Wednesday and Carlos caught a murderer on Thursday.’

Consultant response: Sounds like two different murderers

- The data in (17)-(23) are cited as “naturally occurring” examples and ostensibly...

“...provide evidence against any hypothesis which takes *ang* and *ng* to encode definiteness or specificity, including analyses which take *ang* to be a definite/specific article and *ng* to be an indefinite/nonspecific article.”

- It is important to note that nobody, to my knowledge, has ever analyzed *ng* as an indefinite determiner. The real question only regards *ang*.

(17) B<in>ili=ko ang isa-ng maliit na aklat sa Biola Bookworm

<PV.PERF>.buy=GEN.1SG NOM one-LNK little LNK book OBL Biola Bookworm

‘I bought a little book at the Biola Bookworm [about the First Great Awakening].’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A sermon by Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr. translated from English: [https://www.rlhymersjr.com/Online\\_Sermons\\_Tagalog/2009/082209PM\\_ErrorsRevival.htm](https://www.rlhymersjr.com/Online_Sermons_Tagalog/2009/082209PM_ErrorsRevival.htm)

- (18) ...b<in>ili nito ang isa-ng malaki-ng burger chain sa America  
 <PV.PERF>buy GEN.this NOM one-LNK large-LNK burger chain OBL Amerika  
 '[Jollibee became big news this last week because] it bought a big burger chain in America.'<sup>2</sup>
- (19) Maingat na p<in>i-pili ng gagamba ang isa-ng dahon, marahil mula sa mga  
 careful LNK <PERF>.PROG-choose GEN spider NOM one-LNK leaf probably from OBL PL  
 nakalapag sa lupa.  
 fallen OBL ground  
 'Carefully the (leaf-curling) spider chooses one leaf, probably from ones fallen on the ground.'<sup>3</sup>
- (20) I-s<in>alaysay ni Jesus ang isa-ng talinhaga upang ituro sa kanila na dapat  
 PV-<PERF>recount GEN Jesus NOM one-LNK parable in.order.to teach OBL them LNK must  
 sila-ng laging manalangin...  
 NOM.3SG-LNK always.LNK AV.pray  
 'Jesus recounted a parable in order to teach them that they must always pray...'<sup>4</sup>
- (21) Subali't hindi=ko na-kita ang isa-ng larawan nang aking sarili.  
 but not=GEN.1SG PERF.PV-see NOM one-LNK picture GEN my self  
 'But I didn't see an image of myself.'<sup>5</sup>
- (22) ...na-kilala=nila ang isa-ng bata na si Inari, apo ni Tazuna  
 ...PV.PERF-meet=GEN.3PL NOM one-LNK child LNK NOM Inari grandson GEN Tazuna  
 '[During their stay at Tazuna's house] they met a boy, Inari, grandson of Tazuna.'<sup>6</sup>
- (23) Ano ang dapat ko-ng gaw-in kung naka-ligta-an=ko ang isa-ng dosis?  
 what NOM must GEN.1SG-LNK do-PV if PERF-omit-PV=I NOM one-LNK dose  
 'What do I do if I miss a dose?'<sup>7</sup>

- There exist at least seven serious problems for a semantics-free analysis of Tagalog-style case markers

- i. Examples such as (17)-(23) belong to a particular translationese register
- ii. *ang* is a pure definiteness marker in non-sentential contexts
- iii. *ng* and *ang* are pure definiteness markers with predicates that do not alternate for voice
- iv. The alternation between *ang* and *ang isa* does not obtain in canonical copular clauses
- v. *ang* is in complementary distribution with pre-nominal demonstratives
- vi. The analysis of *isa* 'one' does not generalize to other numerals
- vii. *isa* can also give rise to a specific reading for genitive marked patients and thus *isa* must itself be treated as a marker of specific indefinites

<sup>2</sup>Source not found and no reference given by Collins.

<sup>3</sup>A Jehovah's Witnesses religious tract Translated from English: <https://wol.jw.org/tl/wol/d/r27/lp-tg/102002528>

<sup>4</sup>Lukas 18:1

<sup>5</sup>Translated from English "Hell is Real, I went there!": <https://www.facebook.com/jesuscomingsooner/posts/impverno-ay-tunay-napunta-ako-roonpatotoo-ni-jennifer-perez-ang-patotoo-ng-isang/1251679428179346/>

<sup>6</sup>Apparently, original Tagalog: <https://sites.google.com/site/jessesandig/about-us>.

<sup>7</sup>Translated from English. BC Centre for Disease Control pamphlet on Rifabutin: [http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Educational%20Materials/TB/Med%20Sheets/TB\\_Med\\_Rifabutin\\_Tagalog.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Educational%20Materials/TB/Med%20Sheets/TB_Med_Rifabutin_Tagalog.pdf)

#### 4.1.2 Translationese

- All examples cited by Collins except for one are translations from English. Translationese Tagalog (henceforth marked by <sup>T</sup>) can be considered a distinct register which has been influenced by Spanish and English.
- The use of *ang isang* above is not typical of every day spoken Tagalog. However, speakers do not judge such use ungrammatical because it is characteristic of a formal register commonly used on radio, television and print media.
- For instance, speakers may accept both (24a) and (b) as grammatical, but no native speaker would utter (24a) in a casual context to convey an existential indefinite object. (It could be used to indicate ‘that one banana’ or ‘the other banana’ in casual speech.)

- (24)a. <sup>T</sup>B<in>ili ko ang isang ságing  
 <PV.PERF>buy 1S.GEN NOM one-LNK banana  
 ‘I bought a banana.’
- b. B<um>ili ako ng isang ságing  
 <AV.PERF>buy 1S.NOM GEN one-LNK banana  
 ‘I bought a banana.’

- Topic fronting of non-topics is another feature of this genre.
- Both of these features can be seen in Collins’ example in (25). The indefinite subject of the first clause is topicalized without a case marker (or topic marker) and the *ang* phrase patient is a novel indefinite marked with *isa*.

- (25)a. Unggoy naka-wala, k<in>agat ang isa-ng bata.  
 monkey runaway <PV.PERF>.bite NOM one-LNK child  
 ‘Runaway monkey, bites a child.’
- b. In-atake at k<in>agat nang isa-ng nakawala-ng unggoy ang isa-ng bata sa  
 <PV.PERF>-attack and <PV.PERF>-bite GEN one-LNK runaway-LNK monkey NOM one-LNK child OBL  
 Batac, Ilocos Norte.  
 Batac Ilocos Norte  
 ‘A runaway monkey attacked and bit a child in Batac, Ilocos Norte.’

- (26) shows the title of the religious tract from which (21) is excerpted. It, too, shows the same clear hallmarks of translationese.

- (26) IMPYERNO AY TUNAY, NAPUNTA AKO ROON!  
 hell TOP real went 1S.NOM there  
 ‘Hell is real, I’ve been there!’

#### 4.1.3 Non-sentential contexts

- The definite interpretation of the *ang* phrase must come directly from the case marker itself, as it obtains even in fragments and exclamations such as (27) (Kaufman 2011).

- (27)a. dagà!  
 rat  
 ‘A rat!’
- b. ang presidente!  
 NOM president  
 ‘The president!’



- The use of *ang* in (27a) would be infelicitous unless there was a uniquely identifiable rat in the context. Conversely, *ang* must be used in (27b) even if the president was not part of the immediate discourse, as there is only one (ergo uniquely identifiable) president.

#### 4.1.4 Non-voice marked transitive predicates

- There are stative predicates in Tagalog such as *kailangan* ‘need’ and *gusto* ‘want’ which typically appear without aspect or voice marking.
- With these predicates, the experiencer is expressed in the genitive case but the expression of the theme is entirely dependent on hearer identifiability (definiteness).
- On a purely syntactic account, the correlation between case marking and interpretation is indirect and this is unexpected.

(28)a. kailangan ko ng susi  
 need 1S.GEN GEN key  
 ‘I need a key.’  
 b. kailangan ko ang susi  
 need 1S.GEN NOM key  
 ‘I need the key.’

(29)a. gusto ko ng asul  
 like 1S.GEN GEN blue  
 ‘I like blue.’  
 b. gusto ko ang asul  
 like 1S.GEN NOM key  
 ‘I like the blue one.’

#### 4.1.5 Canonical copular clauses

- In canonical copular clauses such as (30a), a bare noun phrase like *problema* can only be interpreted indefinitely.
- The same NP, when preceded by *ang* can only be interpreted definitely. (The mapping of the two parts of the predication to the syntactic subject and predicate position is discussed in Kaufman 2018.)
- *Isa* cannot derive an indefinite interpretation in (30c). It is rather interpreted as ‘the other problem’, or ‘the one problem’.

(30)a. Problema iyan  
 problem that.NOM  
 ‘That is a problem.’  
 b. Iyan ang problema  
 that.NOM NOM problem  
 ‘That is the problem.’  
 c. Iyan ang isang problema  
 that.NOM NOM one:LNK problem  
 ‘That is the other problem.’  
 (Not: ‘That’s a problem.’)

- The same holds for apparent cleft sentences. The only difference in the minimal pair shown in (31) is that the nominal predicate is preceded by *ang* in (31b), which corresponds to its definite interpretation.

(31)a. Isdà ang h<in>a-hanap ko  
 fish NOM <RL.PV>IMPRF-search 1S.GEN  
 ‘It’s fish I’m looking for.’

b. Ang isdà ang h<in>a-hanap ko  
 NOM fish NOM <RL.PV>IMPRF-search 1S.GEN  
 ‘It’s the fish I’m looking for.’

#### 4.1.6 Complementary distribution with demonstratives

- *ang* is in complementary distribution with the demonstratives in prenominal position, as seen in (32a) (Kaufman 2010:217 and Himmelmann 2016:334)
- Demonstratives can co-occur with the case marker but they must appear in an NP final position when doing so (Himmelmann 2016; Kaufman 2010), as in (32b).
- This supports the notion that case markers and demonstratives share a role in expressing referentiality and thus may occupy the same position in the left periphery of the noun phrase.

- (32)a. (\*ang) ito-ng problema  
 NOM this-LNK problem  
 ‘this problem’
- b. ang problema-ng ito  
 NOM problem-LNK this  
 ‘this problem’

#### 4.1.7 *Isa* does not behave like other numerals

- *Isa* is unique in coercing an indefinite reading when embedded in an *ang* phrase.
- While the translationese (33a) is acceptable with an indefinite object, the same indefinite reading is not available (in any genre) for the quantified object in (33b).

- (33)a. <sup>T</sup>B<in>ili ko ang isa-ng libro  
 <PV.PERF>buy 1S.GEN NOM one-LNK book  
 ‘I bought one book.’
- b. B<in>ili ko ang dalawa-ng libro  
 <PV.PERF>buy 1S.GEN NOM two-LNK book  
 ‘I bought the two books.’

#### 4.1.8 *Isa* permits wide scope for AV objects

(34) a. Hindi ako naka-kità ng mantsa  
 NEG 1S.NOM AV.ABL.PRF-see GEN stain  
 ‘I didn’t see a stain (any stain).’

b. Hindi ako naka-kità ng isa-ng mantsa  
 NEG 1S.NOM AV.ABL.PRF-see GEN one-LNK stain  
 ‘I didn’t see a (particular) stain.’

c. Hindi ako naka-kità ng ni isa-ng mantsa  
 NEG 1S.NOM AV.ABL.PRF-see GEN even one-LNK stain  
 ‘I didn’t see even one stain.’

(35) a. Hindi ko na-kità ang mantsa  
 NEG 1S.GEN UV.ABL.PRF-see NOM stain  
 ‘I didn’t see the stain.’

b. Hindi ko na-kità ang isa-ng mantsa  
 NEG 1S.GEN UV.ABL.PRF-see NOM one-LNK stain  
 ‘I didn’t see a (particular) stain.’

c. Hindi ko na-kità ang ni isa-ng mantsa  
 NEG 1S.GEN UV.ABL.PRF-see NOM even one-LNK stain  
 ‘I didn’t see even one stain.’

- Examples such as (35c) do occur naturally even outside translationese, as shown in the quote below.<sup>8</sup>

(36) hindi pa na-i-bá-balik ang ni isa-ng sentimo sa mga ma-hi-hírap na Pilipino  
 NEG still UV.ABL-CV-IMPRF-return NOM even one-LNK cent OBL PL ADJ-PL-poor LNK Pilipino  
 ‘Not a single cent has been returned to poor Filipinos yet.’

- (34) and (35) show that determiners and adverbs can coerce particular readings regardless of voice/case. It does not follow that the case markers themselves have no semantic content.
- It is of particular interest that *isa* can derive a specific indefinite reading on an undergoer in both actor voice and undergoer voice (also noted by Paul et al. 2015).

<sup>8</sup><https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/02/24/1896427/galit-ang-tao-sa-magnanakaw-hilbay-says-after-revilla-acc>  
 GzwTwacuU570VvUYe.99

- As an aside, Collins suggests that *isang* “encodes for a different scope-taking mechanism, e.g., Reinhart’s (1997) choice functions.”
- I interpret this as showing that the lowest layer (the layer most local to the noun) takes priority over higher levels in noun phrase interpretation. In other words, the interpretation is fixed as early as possible.

## 5 Bayanihan: cooperative labor at the interface

- Hopefully, I’ve convinced you that NP interpretation must rely in part on the case marking determiners themselves.
- However, both a purely syntactic and purely morphological account must be possible in principle. South Sulawesi languages make much the same referentiality distinction as Philippine languages using solely voice morphology, as exemplified in (37). A similar example is seen in Pangutaran Sama (38), which also lacks case marking yet maintains a non-referential reading for AV/antipassive objects.

(37) MAMUJU

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. ku-kapiya lopi<br>1S.ERG-make boat<br>‘I made the boat.’ | b. mang-kapiya=a’ lopi<br>ANTIP-make=1S.ABS boat<br>‘I make a boat.’ or ‘I make boats.’ |
|---|---|

(38) PANGUTARAN SAMA (Walton 1986:120)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| a. Ø-bono? sultan banta? na<br>UV-kill Sultan enemy 3S.GEN<br>‘The king killed his enemy.’ | b. m-bono? sultan banta? na<br>AV-kill Sultan enemy 3S.GEN<br>‘The king kills/fights some of his enemies.’ |
|--|--|

- Note that the indefinite reading of the object in these languages does not rely on surface adjacency to the verb. The agent argument often intervenes between the actor voice/antipassive verb and the object, as in (39) (Riesberg et al. 2019).

(39) MAMUJU  
mang-kande ia bau  
ANTIP-eat 3s fish  
‘S/he eats fish.’

- On the other hand, we find the Bikol languages, which make very rich referentiality distinctions in their case markers, as discussed in detail by McFarland (1974).
  - In the Buhi dialect, whose case marking paradigm is shown in (40), we see that a generic object is marked by *nin*; a definite, but not yet “realized” object is marked by *nya*; and a definite, identifiable or “realized” object, is marked by *nyu*.
  - As in Tagalog, the nominative phrase does not naturally lend itself to an indefinite interpretation but still distinguishes what McFarland calls “definite” from “specific” readings. (McFarland apparently uses the term “specific” to refer to an anaphoric, rather than a specific indefinite, NP.)

(40) Buhi Bikol case markers (McFarland 1974:164)

	NOMINATIVE	GENITIVE	OBLIQUE
INDEFINITE	–	nin	sa
DEFINITE	a	nya	sa
SPECIFIC	yu	nyu	sa

- The key to understanding the division of labor was already laid out by McFarland (1978:157) with a paradigm similar to (41) (see also Himmelmann 2016).
- In (41a), we see that the interpretation of a genitive object is indefinite and (41b) shows that differential case marking cannot change this felicitously. Rather, when the undergoer is definite, one of the undergoer voices is used, as in (41c).
- In a cleft-like sentence, where the predicate corefers with the actor, there is no choice but to use actor voice, as in (42). Here, oblique case felicitously signals a definite object, as in (42b), and even the interpretation of the genitive object is variable.

(41) VERB-INITIAL CLAUSES

- a. k⟨um⟩ain ng dagà ang pusa  
 ⟨AV.PRF⟩eat GEN rat NOM cat  
 ‘The cat ate a rat.’
- b. ?\*k⟨um⟩ain sa dagà ang pusa  
 ⟨AV.PRF⟩eat OBL rat NOM cat  
 (For ‘The cat ate the rat.’)
- c. k⟨in⟩ain ng pusa ang dagà  
 ⟨PRF.PV⟩eat GEN cat NOM rat  
 (For ‘The cat ate the rat.’)

(42) CLEFT-LIKE CLAUSES

- a. ito ang pusa-ng k⟨um⟩ain ng dagà  
 this NOM cat-LNK ⟨AV.PRF⟩eat GEN rat  
 ‘This is the cat that ate a rat.’  
 (indef. preferred, but def. also possible)
- b. ito ang pusa-ng k⟨um⟩ain sa dagà  
 this NOM cat-LNK ⟨AV.PRF⟩eat OBL rat  
 ‘This is the cat that ate a rat.’  
 (unambiguously definite)

- In the “bayanihan” Philippine-type system, voice aligns a definite undergoer to the nominative if possible.<sup>9</sup> But if voice alternations are unavailable, case marking and overt quantification can coerce marked readings on any argument.
- In translationese, it seems that determiners are a preferred strategy for indicating referentiality while the voice system takes a back seat. (This is what we would expect if language contact is responsible.)

### 5.0.1 Language register and syntactic change

- The large body of work on Philippine voice alternations and referentiality seems to overlook language register, contact and change.
- This is most apparent in the work critiqued in §4.1, which employs a register that has undergone drift from a “bayanihan” system towards a determiner based system. The drift that affects translationese, has proceeded further in languages outside the Philippines, as can be seen from the relative use and acceptability of structures as in (43b) and (44b).

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<sup>9</sup>The details of this are more complicated, as affectedness and other factors also play a secondary role in voice selection. This has been widely discussed by Schachter (1976); McFarland (1978); Naylor (1986); Adams and Manaster-Ramer (1988); Kroeger (1991); Maclachlan (1997); Rackowski (2002); Nolasco (2003); Liao (2004); Aldridge (2004); Saclot (2004); Latrouite (2011) among many others.

- |      |   |      |  |
|------|---|------|--|
| (43) | TAGALOG   | (44) | MALAY/INDONESIAN   |
| a.   | Walà ako-ng na-kità<br>NEG.EXT 1S.NOM-LNK UV.PERF-see<br>'I didn't see anyone/thing.'                           | a.   | Tiada yang ku-lihat<br>NEG.EXT RELT 1S.ERG-see<br>'I didn't see anyone/thing.'   |
| b.   | <sup>T</sup> Hindi ko na-kità ang sinu-man<br>NEG 1S.GEN UV.PERF-see NOM NOM.who-even<br>'I didn't see anyone.' | b.   | Aku tidak me-lihat siapa-pun<br>1S NEG AV-see who-even<br>'I didn't see anyone.' |

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