

A SHORT NOTE ON A NON-NOMINATIVE GRAMMATICAL PIVOT IN A PHILIPPINE-TYPE LANGUAGE

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1. INTRODUCTION

A lot has been written about the status of the term 'subject' in the languages of the Philippines (henceforth Philippine-type languages, or PTLs). The essentials can be found in two early articles by Schachter (Schachter 1976, 1977); the discussion centers about the identity of grammatical relations in these languages, with most claims arguing that the grammatical subject should be equated with the argument that is 'in focus', as typically indicated morphosyntactically by means of the voice system on the verbal predicate, and the case on the nominal. As Givón (1984:167) puts it,

...case-marking systems of various kinds may be viewed as different solutions to the same functional dilemma...With respect to subjectivization, the Philippine solution is in a way rather elegant. Nouns that are *not* in the pragmatic case-role of subject/topic are marked for their *semantic* roles, by prefixes. The subject/topic noun is marked by prefix for its *pragmatic* role. And the verb is marked (by various prefixes/infixes/suffixes) for the *semantic* role of the subject/topic.

For PTLs, as exemplified by Tagalog, the grammatical properties associated with this argument include Quantifier Float, Relativization, Number Agreement, Raising, Possessor Ascension, and Conjunction Reduction. See Kroeger (1993) for exemplification of these properties.

Following Bell's (1976, 1983) and Kroeger's use of the case label 'nominative' for the case used to mark this (subject) argument, I shall use the term 'nominative argument' to refer to this morphologically chosen argument, and 'nominative' to refer to the case that marks it. It is important to note that the nominative argument cannot be determined on the basis of semantic or syntactic roles: The choice is essentially a pragmatic one (though see Kroeger 1993 for some alternative views to this assertion).

Interestingly, regardless of the assertions that a given PTL is 'ergative' or 'accusative' or otherwise,¹ there is consensus that (in most cases) the grammatical properties are split between the 'actor' (an S/A grouping, to use Dixon's (1979, 1994) terminology) and the nominative argument: The non-nominative argument is of itself syntactically inert, and does not play a role in the inter- or intraclausal syntax.² I intend to show that the non-nominative argument in *Tukang Besi*, regardless of its syntactic role, is relevant for the description of the phenomenon of floating adverbs, and so cannot be thought of as completely syntactically inert. This is preceded by a summary of the essential points of *Tukang Besi* morphosyntax, as they are relevant to understanding the constructions presented here.

2. TUKANG BESI MORPHOSYNTAX AND OTHER PTLs

Like most PTLs, *Tukang Besi* has a set of case markers that distinguish the nominative argument from other core arguments. Unlike most PTLs, the case used for non-nominative core arguments is not the same as the genitive case. A comparison of the *Tukang Besi* case system with those found in other PTLs is given in Table 1:

	Nominative	non-Nominative A	Genitive	non-Nominative O	Oblique
Tagalog	<i>ang</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>sa</i>
Mansaka	<i>yang</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>sang</i>	<i>sang</i>
Paiwan	<i>a</i>	<i>nua</i>	<i>nua</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>i tua</i>
<i>Tukang Besi</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>i</i>

TABLE 1: REPRESENTATIVE CASE CONFIGURATIONS IN PTLs

As Table 1 shows, most PTLs have a distinctive form for the nominative, genitive, and oblique cases. The variation is in the extension of the genitive or oblique cases to mark non-nominative non-oblique arguments. Atypically, *Tukang Besi* uses a fourth case to mark the non-nominative non-oblique arguments, separate from both the genitive and the oblique cases.

Unlike most PTLs, but in common with *Kapampangan*, there is agreement on the verb, with the S/A argument being prefixed onto the verb in *Tukang Besi*, and the O argument in a transitive clause optionally (though usually) marked with enclitics. Unlike *Kapampangan*, this pronominal indexing is the only source of information about the voice system in *Tukang Besi*: The sets of verbal affixes (typically *mag-*, *-um-*, *-en*, etc.) that are found in most PTLs are not in *Tukang Besi* (Sells 1995 presents a view of PTLs that requires pronominal elements as part of the voice system). Nevertheless, *Tukang Besi* fits into a functional characterization of a PTL, as described by Givón. The marking of the voice system on the verb is as follows:

the absence of an object suffix on the verbs indicates that the S/A argument has been selected as the nominative one;

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the presence of an object suffix indicates that O is selected as nominative.

Additionally, a full nominal is case-marked with nominative case. Although this is a much reduced version of the more elaborate systems found in the more northerly PTLs, it matches in many respects the systems found in the south (e.g., western Indonesia and the southern Philippines). Sama (Walton 1984, Foley and Van Valin 1984, Donohue 1996a) has a similar two-voice system, though with the A-voice the marked choice.

Examples of basic transitive and intransitive sentences, illustrating the case marking and verbal agreement described above, are given in (1)-(5):³

Transitive:

- (1) No-'ita ='e na kene=no te ana.
 3R-see=3OBJ NOM friend=3POSS CORE child
 'The child saw its friend.'
- (2) No-'ita te kene=no na ana.
 3R-see=3OBJ CORE friend=3POSS NOM child
 'The child saw its friend.'

Passive:

- (3) No-to-'ina=mo na kene=no (i koranga).
 3R-PASS-see =PF NOM friend =3POSS OBL garden
 'Its friend was seen (in the garden).'

Intransitive:

- (4) No-into na ana.
 3R-run NOM child
 'The child ran off.'

Genitive:

- (5) Te wunua nu ina =su
 CORE house GEN mother' =1SG.POSS
 'my mother's house'

As can be seen in these examples, each clause may have no more than one nominative argument, which is the S,A argument with verbs which do not have a pronominal enclitic for the O, and which is necessarily the O if the clitic is present, as in (1).⁴

An illustration of the syntactic significance of the nominative argument may be found in the restrictions found with floating quantifiers. As in most PTLs, a quantifier may only 'float' to a position outside its NP if that NP is nominative. If it has floated to a position outside the NP, it most commonly appears in an immediately pre- or post-verbal position. This can be seen in a northern PTL with the following examples from Tagalog, in which we can see the relevance of the nominative status of an argument for the purposes of determining the scope of a floating quantifier, and the irrelevance of the syntactic role (A, S, or O) that the argument bears.

- lahat* quantifies nominative A:
 (6) B[um]abasa =ng lahat ng libro ang mga= bata.
 reading:AV =LNKR all GEN book NOM PL= child
 'All the children are reading books.'

- lahat* quantifies nominative O:
 (7) B[in]abasa =ng lahat ng bata ang mga= libro.
 reading:OV =LNKR all GEN child NOM PL= book
 'The children are reading all the books.'

In these examples the quantifier *lahat* can only be construed as having scope over the nominative argument, regardless of the syntactic roles (A or O) that this argument bears. In turn, that nominative argument is unambiguously indicated as the A (example (6)) or the O (example (7)) by the verbal morphology, *-[um]-* and *-[in]-* in the examples above.

Compare this behavior with that found in *Tukang Besi*; (8) shows a transitive clause with a nominative A, and (9) shows that the quantifier may appear outside the NP, and be interpreted unambiguously as having scope over the A. In (10) the O is nominative, and (11) shows that the floated quantifier can only have scope over the nominative O. Examples (12) and (13) show that the sole (and necessarily nominative) argument of an intransitive verb may also be quantified by *saba'ane* outside the NP.

Nominative A:

- (8) No-lemba te kaluku [KP na amai[QUANTsaba'ane]].
 3R-carry CORE coconut NOM 3PL all
 'All of them carried coconuts.'

Floated:

- (9) No-lemba [QUANT saba'ane] te kaluku [Kp^{na} amai].
 3R-carry all CORE coconut NOM 3PL
 'All of them carried coconuts.'

Nominative O:

- (10) No-lemba =e [KP na kaluku] [KP^{te} amai]
 3R-carry =3OBJ NOM coconut CORE 3PL

[QUANT saba'ane].
 all

'They carried all of the coconuts.'

Floated:

- (11) No-lemba =e [QUANTsaba'ane] [Kp^{na} kaluku] te amai.
 3R-carry =3OBJ all NOM coconut CORE 3PL
 *'All of them carried coconuts.'

Nominative S:

- (12) No-mbule =mo [KPna amai [QUANT^{saba'ane}] i
 3R-return =PF NOM 3PL all OBL

kampo=no.
 village =3POSS
 'They all went home.'

Floated:

- (13) No-mbule =mo [QUANT^{saba'ane}] [KP na amai] i
 3R-return =PF all NOM 3PL OBL

kampo =no.
 village =3POSS
 *'They went to all their homes.'

These examples show us that the selection of the nominative argument is important in *Tukang Besi*, just as it is in other, better known, PTLs. In *Tukang Besi* other grammatical tests that refer to the nominative status of an argument are Internal relative clauses, Temporal clauses, and External Possession.

The status of the nominative argument as the undisputed subject in *Tukang Besi* is not so clear-cut, however; many constructions in *Tukang Besi* refer to an S/A pivot ('actor') (the constructions include External relativization, verbal agreement, Equi-deletion or coreference, Article adoption, Passivization), and the status of the argument as nominative or not is irrelevant to the grammaticality of the construction. Donohue (1995:483-484 ff.) describes these in detail; only the External relative clause formation is (briefly) presented here.

Only the core arguments of a verb may head a relative clause; these are the A, S, or O of a clause. An oblique argument may not be relativized; extensive applicative morphology fulfills the purpose of making otherwise oblique arguments core. The verb in an External relative clause is marked with the 'subject-infix' *-[um]-* when the head of the relative clause is an S or an A, and prefixed with the 'object prefix' *i-* when the head is an O. An A heading a relative clause can be seen in (14) - (15); note that in (15) the head of the relative clause cannot be the nominative argument of the clause headed by *lemba*, since that verb appears with an object enclitic and a nominative O.

- (14) Ku-'ita te amai [Rcl[um]emba te kaluku].
 1SG-see CORE 3P carry.SI CORE coconuts
 'I saw the ones who carried the coconuts.'

- (15) Ku-'ita te amai[Rcl[um]emba='e na kaluku].
 1SG-see CORE 3PLcarry.SI=3OBJ NOM coconuts
 'I saw the ones who carried the coconuts.'

In (16) the head of the relative clause is an S, and still uses the *-[um]-* infix. When the head is an O, the verbal morphology is the *i-* prefix, and the relative clause uses nominal morphology.

- (16) Ku-'ita te amai [Rc[um]jule i kampo=no].
 1SG-see CORE 3PL return.SI OBL village=3POSS

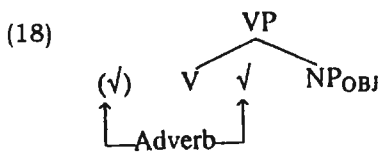
- (17) Ku-'ita te kaluku [KC i-lemba = no].
 1SG-see CORE coconut OP-carry=3 POSS
 'I saw the coconuts which they carried.'

Of particular interest is the construction involving a floated adverb, which, as shall be seen in section 3, involved a non-nominative pivot.

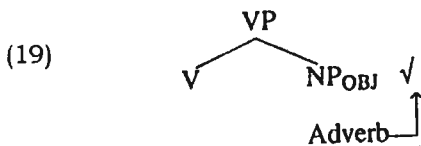
3. FLOATED ADVERBS: NON-NOMINATIVE PIVOT

A *Tukang Besi* adverb typically appears directly following (and sometimes preceding) the verb, but may (in the right conditions) appear in other positions in the verb phrase, either preceding or following the verb or VP-internal NP.

Basic adverb position



Alternative adverb position



Adverbs may appear in the alternative position only if they refer to a condition on the action that is relevant to a non-nominative argument. Examples of normal adverbs immediately following or preceding the verb are given in (20), and an ungrammatical sentence final position, outside the VP, is shown in (21):

- (20) a. [VP_{No-wila} [ADV legolego]] na amai.
 3R-go arms.swinging NOM 3PL
 'They went (along) with their arms swinging.'
- b. [VP_{ADV Menti'i}] no-wila] na amai
 fast 3R-go NOM 3PL
 'They went (along) quickly.'

- (21) * [VP_{Nowila}] na amai [ADV legolego]

An example of an adverb in a basic position with a transitive clause shows it between the verb and the object when postverbal, as seen in (22):

- (22) [VP_{No-'ita} [ADV ki'iki'i] te ika] na amai.
 3R-see little CORE fish NOM 3PL
 'They saw some of those fish.' / 'They partially saw those fish.'

Two interpretations of the sentence with the adverb in (22) are possible. The adverb *ki'iki'i* can modify the event:

with the implication that it was because of a defect in the watchers (swimming away behind a rock, for instance) that prevented all of them from being seen

or

with the implication that it was the action of the school of fish (cataracts in their eyes, or long hair) that prevented all the fish being seen

As the two interpretations show, the immediately post-verbal adverb can be based on the A (first interpretation) or the O (second interpretation). The same interpretations are found in a clause with a nominative object and an adverb in a basic position, as seen in (23).

- (23) [VP_{ADV} Ki'iki'i] no-ʻita=e] na ika te amai.
 little 3R-see=3OBJ NOM fish CORE 3PL
 'They saw some of those fish.'/'They partially saw those fish.'

The interpretation of the adverb when it is in a nonbasic position at the edge of the VP, however, is interesting. In a transitive clause a verb without object suffixes allows an adverb connected with properties of the O to float, and a verb that does use object suffixes allows adverbs which indicate a property dependent on the A to float. Sentence (24) shows the adverb in a final position at the edge of the verb phrase, and only one possible interpretation, that with the adverb referring to the O.

- (24) [VP_{No-ʻita} te ika [ADV ki'iki'i]] na amai.
 3R-see CORE fish little NOM 3PL
 'They saw some of those fish.'

(with the implication that it was the action of the school of fish (swimming away behind a rock, for instance) that prevented all of them from being seen)

*(with the implication that it was because of a defect in the watchers (cataracts in their eyes, or long hair) that prevented all the fish from being seen)

In (25) we can see that when the adverb is VP-final and the clause has a nominative subject⁵ (and an object enclitic on the verb), the only interpretation is that the adverb refers to the A.

- (25) [VP_{No-ʻita=e} [ADV ki'iki'i]] na ika te amai.
 3R-see=3OBJ little NOM fish CORE 3PL
 'They partially saw those fish.'

(with the implication that it was because of a defect in the watchers (cataracts in their eyes, or long hair) that prevented all the fish from being seen)

*(with the implication that it was the action of the school of fish (swimming away behind a rock, for instance) that prevented all of them from being seen)

With *moboha* 'heavy' used adverbially, as in (26), it can, because of the inherent semantics of the verb and the adverb (heaviness, in the context of lifting objects, is a property associated with the lifted item, not with the lifter), only refer to the O, and so may only be grammatically floated within the verb phrase if the object is non-nominative. The basic post-verbal position is shown in (26), and sentence (27) shows an alternative position at the end of the VP.

- (26) [_{VP}No-lemba [_{ADV} moboha]] te wemba].
 3R-carry.on.shoulder heavy CORE bamboo
 'They carried the bamboo with difficulty.'

(with the sense that the heaviness of the bamboo made the carrying difficult)

- (27) [_{VP}Nolemba te wemba [_{ADV} moboha]].

Similarly, *menti'i* 'fast' can only be used adverbially referring to the A (since a carried object does not affect the speed of the movement), and so must have a non-nominative subject if it is to appear in a VP-final position. A basic adverbial form is given in (28). Sentence (28) also provides evidence for the verb-phrase external position of the nominative object, through the fact that, unlike (26), a floating adverb may not appear following the object KP. The ungrammatical sentence in (29) shows that with a nominative A the verb may not grammatically appear in a VP-final position, since it would refer to the non-nominative O in order to appear in a non-basic position, and the semantics of the adverb and verb together disallow this construal.

- (28) [_{VP}No-ala='e [_{ADV} menti'i]] na kaitela (te amai).
 3R-fetch=3OBJ fast NOM corn CORE 3PL
 'They fetched the corn quickly.'

- (29) *[_{VP}No-ala te kaitela [_{ADV} menti'i]] (te amai).
 3R-fetch CORE corn fast CORE 3PL
 'They fetched the corn quickly.'

Since an intransitive verb has only one core argument, and since a clause requires a nominative argument, there is no possibility of adverb float in an intransitive clause; the absence of a VP-internal O, however, makes this hard to prove.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The evidence presented in section 3 has shown that there are compelling reasons to consider that the non-nominative core arguments play a role in determining the grammaticality of some constructions in *Tukang Besi*. This is unusual given that the nominative status, or actor status of an argument, is also referred to in many (other) grammatical constructions.

We can conclude that not only is the notion of grammatical subject more problematic in *Tukang Besi* than in other PTLs (the addition of the numerous constructions with accusative syntax mentioned in section 2, and the data in Donohue 1996b, add further evidence to the claim), but we can additionally see that we are dealing with a language that on the one hand affords privileged status to the nominative argument of a clause, as is the (diagnostic) case with PTLs, but that the non-nominative argument is also crucial in other grammatical constructions.

The non-nominative argument cannot be dismissed as a syntactically inert argument, nor as an unusually case-marked oblique argument, but must be thought of as possessing a privileged status of its own, a status probably due to its being a core argument of the verb, but crucially not the nominative argument.

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ENDNOTES

¹ For some examples of differing opinions see, among many others, Blake (1991), De Guzman (1988), Gerdtz (1988), Byma (1986), for ergative analyses. For an argument that the languages operate on an accusative basis syntactically, see Guilefoyle et al. (1992). Alternatives to both these standpoints can be found in Foley and Van Valin (1984), Kroeger (1993), Maclachlan (1995).

² Recently Sityar (1994 on Cebuano) and Maclachlan (1995 on Tagalog) have suggested that non-nominative arguments might be able to be fronted within the clause; this fronting, however, is restricted to non-nominative A (and S?) arguments, and is not found with non-nominative Os, and so can be taken as an 'actor' property, rather than one of non-nominative arguments generally.

³ The following abbreviations have been used: 1, 2, 3 first, second, and third person; AV actor voice, CORE core argument, GEN genitive, LNK linker, NOM nominative, OBJ object, OBL oblique, OP object prefix, OV object voice, PASS passive, PF perfective, PL plural, POSS possessive, QUANT quantifier, R realis, RC relative clause, SG singular, SI subject infix.

⁴ The antipassive analysis of the Philippine voice system doesn't work, certainly not for *Tukang Besi*. It could be argued that there is really one basic transitive clause type, the form shown in (1), and that (2) represents an 'antipassive' derivation from it; indeed, similar analyses have been proposed for other Philippine-type languages. Problems with this analysis for *Tukang Besi* are that we have to assume that there is no explicit antipassive morphology on the verb, whereas there is explicit passive morphology in the passive voice, with the prefix *to-*; that the 'antipassive', not the active, clause is used as input to the passive derivation, which cannot appear with object suffixes; that the *by*-phrase in the 'antipassive' is still a core argument of the verb, not an oblique (demonstrable by time-adverb placement restrictions, and case-marking choices); and that the derived 'subject' of an antipassive clause (the *see-er*, in (2)) behaves differently with respect to relativization than does either the derived subject of a passive clause, or the subject of an intransitive verb. For these reasons I have adopted the analysis of *Tukang Besi* as showing a voice system which I describe as being 'Philippine-type', not adequately characterizable as either nominative-accusative with passives or ergative-absolutive with antipassives.

⁵ Nominative arguments are necessarily external to the VP, and so *na ika* is not included in the VP in (25). In (25) we might think the scope of the adverb is ambiguous, since it can be interpreted as immediately post-verbal. In fact the interaction with the other VP-internal elements shows that the adverb in (25) is in a VP-final position, and the interpretation of the adverb bears this out.

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