Tagalog and Philippine Languages

Philippine Languages

Over 150 languages are spoken by the more than 76,500,000 Filipinos who live in an archipelago of around 7,000 islands that stretches over 1,500 kilometers from north to south, and about 800 kilometers from the most western point of Palawan to the most easterly point of Mindanao. Most of the languages are dialectally diverse, with a number constituting extensive dialect chains.

All Philippine languages belong to the Western Malayo-Polynesian group of the Austronesian language family. The archeological record suggests that the earliest Austronesian speakers arrived in the northern Philippines, probably from what is now called Taiwan about 5,500 years ago, at the beginning of the migrations that later took them to the Indo-Malaysian archipelago, and ultimately into the Pacific. Since the time of the first Austronesian habitation of the Philippines, the original language has diversified into a number of fairly clearly defined subgroups (Blust 1991).

Of the 167 Philippine ethnolinguistic groups cited in Grimes (2000), at least ten are presently spoken by more than a million population, and constitute what have been referred to as the 'major' languages of the Philippines. These are Tagalog, Sebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, Samar-Leyte, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Maranao, and Magindanao. The first four of these languages have considerable importance in the Philippines. Tagalog, with some 15,000,000 native speakers, is the native language of Manila and a number of surrounding provinces. It is also the basis of the national language, now known as Filipino. Furthermore, it has become the main language of movies and comics, and much of the Philippine mass media. It is required to be taught in all the schools in the Philippines, and is rapidly becoming the main second language that people speak throughout the country. Sebuano, Ilokano, and Hiligaynon are widely spoken as regional trade languages. Ilokano is the main language of trade and wider communication spoken throughout northern Luzon. It is also spoken in some areas of southern Mindanao and is the main Philippine language spoken in the United States and other countries to which Filipinos have migrated. Sebuano is used not only in the Visayan area of the Central Philippines, but also in much of southern Mindanao. Hiligaynon is also spoken in some parts of southern Mindanao.

At the other end of the scale, there are scores of languages spoken by relatively small groups of peoples. Many of these languages are spoken in highly isolated areas, such as the remote, mountainous areas of Mindanao, Palawan, and Luzon, as well as on small, isolated islands. Some of the smallest languages, and the ones most in danger of dying out in the very near future are those spoken by some of the approximately 30 surviving Negrito groups, descendants of the original non-Austronesian inhabitants of the Philippines, whose original languages were ultimately replaced by those of the culturally more dominant Austronesians. These include Arta, the language of fewer than a dozen remaining members of a group in Quirino Province, the Atta and Agta groups of Kalinga-Apayao and Cagayan Provinces, some of the Dumagat and Alta

groups of Isabela and Quezon Provinces, the Sierra Madre mountain range, and the islands off the eastern coast of Luzon, as well as the many Ayta groups of Bataan and Zambales Provinces. Many of these languages are spoken by fewer than 1,000 people. On a slightly larger scale are the languages spoken in the Cordillera Central, the massive mountain range in the center of northern Luzon. These include closely related varieties of Ifugao, Bontok, Balangaw, Kankanay, and Kalinga, some of which have fewer than 50,000 speakers each. Similarly, the number of speakers of several of the Manobo languages of Mindanao is estimated to be no more than 10,000 to 15,000.

Prior to European settlement in the Philippines beginning with the Spanish in 1521, Philippine languages had already been strongly influenced by contact with traders from outside the country. The Chinese (primarily speakers of Hokkien) had established enclaves in major port areas (beginning around the twelfth century CE). Similarly, traders speaking a variety of Malay probably used in Brunei, Malaysia had firmly established themselves in the Manila area at least 100 years prior to the arrival of the Spanish. Their influence on Tagalog was considerable. But it was the Spanish occupation of the Philippines for over 400 years that had the most impact on the languages of the country. Probably every Philippine language has a large number of words that are ultimately of Spanish origin. There is at least one language in the Philippines that shows a far greater influence from Spanish than does Tagalog. This language, called Chavacano or Zamboangueño, is a creole language spoken mainly in Zamboanga City and surrounding areas.

The other major influence on Philippine languages has come from English as a result of the 50 years that America colonized the Philippines. English is still spoken widely throughout the Philippines, is one of the languages used in education, and continues to influence Philippine languages.

Most Philippine languages have sound systems that are relatively simple. Most have between three and six vowels. Tagalog originally had three distinctive vowels, *i*, *a*, and *u*, but two more vowels, *e* and *o*, have developed as a result of influence from Spanish borrowings. Many languages still retain the same vowel system that has been reconstructed for Proto-Austronesian, with four vowels, *i*, *a*, *u*, and ★ (Reid 1973). Similarly, most Philippine languages have fewer than 18 consonants. They are nontonal, but some have lexical stress and distinguish vowel length. A number of the languages of northern Luzon, such as Inialoi, exhibit complex morphophonemic variation.

Most Philippine languages have only two or three different kinds of syllables. Words are commonly built using just two syllable types, CV and CVC, where C

stands for any consonant and V for any vowel. The disyllabic Tagalog word *bahay* 'house' is typical of the great majority of common nouns in Tagalog and other Philippine languages. Verbs are commonly morphologically highly complex, with various prefixes, infixes, and suffixes providing both syntactic and semantic information. A wide variety of reduplicative processes is also found.

Tagalog

Tagalog is a nonconfigurational language (Kroeger 1993). Its basic sentences are predicate initial, with nominal complements typically following the predicate. Noun phrase word order is not rigid, except that actors typically precede other actants, and full NPs which carry nominative case tend to occur later in the sentence. Since there is no copula verb, Tagalog sentences may have a noun, an adjectival form, or a prepositional phrase as the predicate of a sentence: e.g. *Doktor ang bisita.* 'The visitor is a doctor.' *Maganda ang babae.* 'The woman is beautiful.' *Nasa kusina ang regalo.* 'The gift is in the kitchen.' NPs are typically introduced by one of a small number of short, unstressed words, often referred to as determiners, that provide information about the case, plurality, and personhood of the following noun, as in Table 1. Most common nouns are not inflected for plurality, but may have a plural word *mga* (/ma a/) following the determiner to mark plurality: e.g. *Tumakbo ang mga batà.* 'The children ran.' Nominative forms typically mark an NP as specific or definite. They may also mark topicalized NPs and definite NPs functioning as predicates.

Tagalog distinguishes three case-marked sets of personal pronouns, as shown in Table 2. In addition to pronouns that refer to the speaker (first person), directly address the hearer (second person), or refer to a third person, Tagalog like other Philippine languages has distinct forms for first person plural exclusive ('we, not you'), and first person plural inclusive ('we all'). Pronouns with dual reference ('we, two'), while common in many Philippine languages, are used only in rural areas where Tagalog is spoken. An irregular combined form of Genitive 1s and Nominative 2p, *kita*, occurs, e.g. *Iniibig kita.* 'I love you.' Third person pronouns do not distinguish gender. Nominative pro-

TABLE 1 Tagalog Determiners

	Nominative	Genitive	Oblique	Locative
Common	*ang*	*ng* /na•/	*ng* /na•/	*sa*
Personal				
Singular	*si*	*ni*	—	*kay*
Plural	*sina*	*nina*	—	*kina*

nouns also function as predicates: e.g. *Ikaw ang anak ni Pedro*. 'You are the child of Pedro.' Genitive forms express not only possessors that follow their noun heads, but also actor participants in a clause: e.g. *Ibinigay nila ang libro sa titser nila*. 'They gave the book to their teacher.' Pronominal forms, as well as clitic adverbs such as *na* 'already', *pa* 'yet', and *din* 'also', occur as second position clitics attaching to the first constituent within the clause, such as a negative auxiliary, e.g. *Hindi ko pa rin binili ang libro*. 'I still haven't bought the book yet', or a fronted adverb, e.g. *Bukas na siya papasok*. 'He will enter tomorrow already.'

Relative clauses follow their head noun and are linked to it by a 'ligature' *na* (following consonants) or *-ng* (following vowels). Their structure follows the so-called gap strategy, with the gap corresponding to the nominative NP of the relative clause, e.g. *ang babae**ng** pumasok* 'the woman who entered', *ang bahay **na** bibilhin ko* 'the house that I will buy'. A ligature also links a main verb and its complement, e.g. *Huwag ka**ng** umiyak*. 'Don't cry.'

Tagalog is typical of other Philippine languages that have traditionally been considered to be typologically different from other languages in that they have been assumed to have a unique type of grammatical system, known as the 'focus system'. This is a system characterized by the use of verbal affixes to indicate the thematic role of the NP bearing the nominative case in a sentence. The term 'focus system' was first introduced to describe the languages of the Philippines. Subsequently, other Austronesian languages exhibiting a similar type of grammatical system (such as many of the languages in Taiwan, Sabah, northern Sarawak, and northern Sulawesi, as well as Malagasy, Palauan, and Chamorro) have been described as having a 'Philippine-type' syntax.

Basic verbal clauses in Tagalog have one of two basic structures. 'Actor focus' verbs carry one of a set of affixes on the verb that indicate that the actor is expressed by the Nominative case. These may be monadic, expecting only one NP, e.g. with infix *-um-*:

TABLE 2 Tagalog Personal Pronouns

	Nominative	Genitive	Locative
Singular			
1st person	*ako*	*ko*	*akin*
Dual	*kata*	*nita*	*kanita*
2nd person	*ka / ikaw*	*mo*	*iyo*
3rd person	*siya*	*niya*	*kaniya*
Plural			
1st person	*kami*	*namin*	*amin*
Dual	*tayo*	*natin*	*atin*
2nd person	*kayo*	*ninyo*	*inyo*
3rd person	*sila*	*nila*	*kanila*

*Pum**asok si Nila*. 'Nila entered.', or dyadic, in which case an additional NP expressing a theme argument occurs, expressed by the oblique case when indefinite, or a partitive, definite NP, e.g. ***Bum**ili sila ng mangga*. 'They bought mangoes'; ***Um**inom noon ang mga batà*. 'The children drank some of that.' Such sentences are syntactically intransitive. 'Nonactor focus' verbs carry one of a different set of affixes on the verb that indicates whether some participant other than the actor carries Nominative case. In these sentences, the actor carries Genitive case. All are syntactically transitive: e.g. Goal focus, with *–in*: *Bibilh**in** nina Juan ang mga mangga bukas*. 'Juan (and companions) will buy the mangoes tomorrow.' Location focus, with *–an*: *Bibilh**an** nila ng mangga ang mga batà*. 'They will buy mangoes from the children.' Beneficiary focus, with *i-*: ***I**bibili nila ng mangga ang batà*. 'They will buy the child a mango.' Instrument focus, with *ipang-*: ***Ipam**bibili nila ng mangga ang pera nila*. 'They will buy mangoes with their money.'

In addition to the affixes that mark focus or voice, verbs also carry a wide range of affixes marking temporal aspect (perfective, imperfective, and contemplated), and mood (volitional vs. nonvolitional). They may also be derived with a causative affix, introducing an additional actant (a causer) into the clause.

The grammatical system of Philippine-type languages has been a topic of considerable controversy in linguistic analysis. Hardly any of the statements made in this article have gone unchallenged in recent times. Various issues discussed in the literature are the following: Do Philippine languages have a 'subject', and if they do, which NP is it? Are Philippine languages accusative, ergative, split-ergative, or some other type? Do Philippine languages have a true passive construction? Do they have an antipassive construction? Do the 'focus affixes' constitute inflectional voice morphology on the verb, or are they derivational 'applicative' affixes?

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LAWRENCE A. REID

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