Tagalog Word Order & Case Markings

LIN 177 Final Paper
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Tagalog is an Austronesian language spoken as the first language by a quarter of the population of the Philippines. The nature of the language itself depends on case markings which come into play with its free word order. I chose this topic because It is my native tongue. Rules exist in the language that I never really thought about, because they always just come naturally. A few months ago, I was asked to describe my language to a friend who didn't speak the language for her linguistics project and I had trouble organizing my thoughts. I found that Tagalog was a lot harder than I first imagined. I picked this topic to understand the rules behind it better.

Something similar has been done in class. Homework 5 was about the fairly flexible word order of the German language. What enabled it were the case markers that came with the nouns of the language, just like in Tagalog! We've also briefly discussed Austronesian languages earlier in the year during the affixes chapter.

WORD ORDER

The linguistic phenomenon that is modeled is the relationship between the word order and case markers in Tagalog. There isn't a specific word order in the language. In fact, it's pretty flexible. For this section, highlights will follow this:
V=Verb
S=Subject
DO=Direct Object
IO=Indirect Object

For example:
The man gave the toy to the cat.

Sentence	Word Order
Binigay ng lalaki ang laruan sa pusa.	V S DO IO
Binigay ng lalaki sa pusa ang laruan.	V S IO DO
Binigay ang laruan sa pusa ng lalaki.	V DO IO S
Ang laruan ay binigay ng lalaki sa pusa.	DO V S IO

The next 3 sentences are grammatically correct and the nouns come with the same markers; however, the word order changed their meanings. The different roles of these case markers will be discussed later on. For this particular example, the way **ng** is used refers to possession. The possessor comes after **ng** and the possessed comes before.

Binigay sa pusa **ang laruan ng lalaki** → ***The man's toy*** *was given to the cat.*
Binigay **ang laruan ng lalaki** sa pusa → ***The man's toy*** *was given to the cat.*
Binigay **sa pusa ng lalaki** ang laruan → *The toy was given to* ***the man's cat****.*

In addition to these, a change of word order triggers a change in case markers.

For example:
The man read the book.

B(in)asa ng lalaki ang libro.	V S DO
B(um)asa ng libro ang lalaki.	V DO S

Note the change in **ng ↔ ang** when the verb changed. Both *binasa* and *bumasa* mean the past tense of *read*, but it triggered the change in word order to keep the

meaning of the sentence the same.

VSO → the subject takes the **ng** case marker

VOS → the subject takes the **ang** case marker

Another example:

The cat ate the food.

| K(in)ain ng pusa ang pagkain. | V S DO |
| K(um)ain ng pagkain ang pusa | V DO S |

REVERSE! REVERSE!

In Tagalog, the word order can be inverted by using **ay** ('**y** if after a vowel. This is limited to spoken discourse and does not show in writing). Doing so retains the meaning of the sentence.

For example:

The child sang.

| Kumanta ang bata. | V S |
| Ang bata **ay** kumanta. | S V |

BEFORE WE GO ON...

Upon further research, I've learned that Tagalog doesn't exactly use a word order that depends on a subject, object, etc. Instead, it is a focus-driven language. This means that instead of having a subject, Tagalog has a **focus**, which is what the sentence "focuses on". For the most part,however, the focus can be seen as the subject to make it easier to understand. In English, the way to emphasize a word would be to stress the word with our voice. In Tagalog, a focus is indicated by placing a marker before a word that is the focus.

Because of the flexible word order, Tagalog speakers are also able to choose which word they would like to emphasize.

For example:

| (1) Ang mabait na prinsipal | The kind principal |
| (2) Mabait ang prinsipal. | The principal is kind. |

For (1), *mabait* is an adjective that describes *prinsipal.* They are linked together by the linker **na**. This makes *mabait* and *prinsipal* one package, which is why this statement cannot stand on its own. In fact, the statement itself is a focus if it was connected to the rest of a sentence. For (2), we see that there is no linker (**na** or

ng). Instead, the verb *is* can be seen in the English translation. *Mabait* says something about the focus, *prinsipal*. This statement can also stand on its own and is a complete sentence.

The emphasis between the two statements are different. (1) emphasizes *mabait*, while (2) emphasizes *prinsipal*.

CASE MARKERS

Case markers are words that come before nouns/noun phrase to indicate their roles in a sentence. They may mark nouns as a subject, object, location, direction, etc. There are three main kinds of case markers: focus words, relational words, and locative words. For this section, highlights will follow this legend:
==focused word==
==unfocused word==

Focus Words: **Ang** & **Si/Sina**

A speaker will choose a word that they want to emphasize, ie. the most important word in a sentence, or it could also have some special sense of prominence. Both **ang** and **si/sina** mark these words.

Ang functions
  • marks the focus of the sentence except for names of people.
Ex:

Natutulog ang bata. → *The child* is sleeping.

This sentence follows the VS structure with ***ang bata*** as the focus.
  • noun definitizer → In English, it is the difference between 'the' and 'a'.
Ex:

Gusto ko ang mangga → *I like the mango*. (Definite)
Gusto ko ng mangga → *I like mangoes*. (Indefinite)

This is a good example of a focus not being the subject of the sentence. These sentences are both following the VSO structure. The foci for both sentences are ***ang mangga*** and ***ng mangga***. The role of **ang** here is solely whether it translates to 'the …' or 'a …'.

Si/Sina functions
  • Marks the focus of the sentence if it is a name of a person
  • Si → singular
  • Sina → plural

Ex:

Mabait si Toni → *Toni is nice.*
Mabait sina Toni at Rita → *Toni and Rita are nice.*

Relational Words: **Ng** & **Ni/Nina** (unfocused)

Both **ng** and **ni/nina** mark the word that follows as NOT the focus of the sentence. They can sometimes act as the opposite of **ang** and **si/sina**.

Ng functions
- Possession – indicates there is some kind of relationship between the word that follows it. It follows the structure: *owned* ng *owner*.

Ex:

ang kotse ng babae → *the car* of *the woman*/the woman's car

Here, **ng babae**(unfocused word) is the owner of **ang kotse**(focused word)**.**

- Unfocused direct object

Ex:

(1) B(um)asa ng libro ang titser → *The teacher* read *the book.*

- Unfocused actor – indicates the unfocused doer of the action verb

Ex:

(2) B(in)asa ng titser ang libro → *The teacher* read *the book.*

It is important to note that (1) follows the VOS structure, while (2) follows the VSO structure. However, both sentences follow the *verb-unfocused-focused* structure. Note that the verb affixes also change to accommodate the change in word order. This is to keep the meaning of the sentences the same.

Ni/Nina functions
- Ni → singular
- Nina → plural
- Possession – indicates there is some kind of relationship between the name that follows it. It follows the structure: *owned* ni *owner's name.*

Ex:

ang kotse ni Toni → *the car of Toni*/Toni's car
ang kotse nina Toni at Rita → the car of Toni and Rita

Similar to above, **ni Toni**(unfocused) is the owner of **ang kotse**(focus).

- Unfocused actor – indicates the unfocused doer of the action verb

Ex:

Binasa ni Toni ang libro. → *Toni* read *the book*.

Binasa nina Toni at Rita ang libro. → Toni and Rita read the book.

Locative Words: **Sa** & **Kay/Kina** (unfocused)

Sa is a very broad word that is used anytime the speaker is talking about the location or direction of something. **Kay/kina** works the same way **si/sina** works for **ang**, and **ni/nina** works for **ng**. **Kay/kina** are markers meant for names.

Sa functions
- Location

Ex:

Nakatira ako sa bahay. → *I* live *in the house*.

- Direction – towards or away from a place

Ex:

Pumunta sila sa Baguio. → *They* went *to Baguio*.

- Beneficiary of an action – indicates someone doing something for another person. The word **sa** is always preceded by the word **para** when using it this way.

Ex:

Nagdala si Toni ng laruan para sa bata. → *Toni* brought a toy *for the child*.

The sentence above is a good example of a ditransitive sentence. It follows the *verb-focused name-unfocused direct object-unfocused beneficiary* structure.

- Future time – indicates a specific day/date/season

Ex:

May trabaho ako sa Lunes. → *I* have work *on Monday*.

Kay/Kina functions
- Location

Ex:

Naroon kay Toni ang gamit mo. → *Your stuff* is *with Toni*.

Naroon kina Toni at Rita ang gamit mo. → *Your stuff* is *with Toni and Rita*.

- Direction

Ex:

Binigay ni Toni ang laruan kay Sally → Toni gave Sally the toy.	
Binigay ni Toni ang laruan kina Sally at Rita. → Toni gave Sally and Rita the toy.	

- Beneficiary of an action – similar to **sa**, **kay** is preceded by **para**.

Ex:

Binili ko ang laruan para kay Toni. → I bought a gift for Toni.	
Binili ko ang laruan para kina Toni at Rita. → I bought a gift for Toni and Rita.	

- Possessor – in this case, **kay** comes before the noun possessed. The linker **na** (or **-ng**. This is limited to spoken discourse.) is required between the 2 nouns.

Ex:

kay Toni na kotse → car of Toni	
kina Toni at Rita na kotse → car of Toni and Rita	

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

After this section, we can now go back to our first examples from the "Word Order" section and change their labels to whether the word is a focused word or unfocused word. Again, because of the relationship between Tagalog's free word order and case markers, there are still many ways of saying the same sentence. For the next examples, I will be using this legend:

Focused Words

Unfocused Relational Words

Unfocused Locative Words

For example (ditransitive sentence):

The man gave the toy to the cat.

Sentence	Word Order
Binigay ng lalaki ang laruan sa pusa.	V UR F UL
Binigay ng lalaki sa pusa ang laruan.	V UR UL F
Binigay ang laruan sa pusa ng lalaki.	V F UL UR
Ang laruan ay binigay ng lalaki sa pusa.	F V UR UL

Switching their markers changes their meanings.

(3) Binigay ang pusa sa laruan ng lalaki. → The cat was given to the toy of the man.
(4) Binigay ng pusa ang laruan sa lalaki. → The cat gave the toy to the man.

Though the meanings have changed, it is important to note that the word order still follows one of the 4 above. Sentence (3) follows the V F UL UR word order, while sentence (4) follows the V UR F UL word order.

Another example (transitive sentence):
The man read the book.

Sentence	Word Order
Binasa ng lalaki ang libro.	V UR F
Ang libro ay binasa ng lalaki.	F V UR

Switching their case markers:
The book read the man.

Binasa ng libro ang lalaki.	V UR F

Another example (intransitive sentence):
The man loved.

Sentence	Word Order
Nagmahal ang lalaki.	V F
Ang lalaki ay nagmahal.	F V

PROLOG

My PROLOG code will implement the word order above using the same examples. Tagalog seems to follow 8 word orders:

- *verb-unfocused relational-focused-unfocused locative*

- *verb-unfocused relational-unfocused locative-focused*

- *verb-focused-unfocused locative-unfocused relational*

- *focused-"ay"-verb-unfocused relational-unfocused locative*

- *verb-unfocused-focused*

- *focused-"ay"-verb-unfocused*

- *verb-focused*

- *focused-"ay"-verb*

The verb seems to come first for the most part. The only other time that it wouldn't come first is if a focused word comes first. When it does, the case particle "ay" must be inserted before the verb.

To query the project, make this call:

```
?- tagalog(A, [sentence, _]).
```

This query will show ditransitive, intransitive, and transitive sentences. All sentences that show are grammatically correct and occur in the Tagalog language. A little note, however, *binasa* has multiple meanings in the language depending on the pronunciation. It can both mean *read* (past tense) and *soaked*. The way of differentiating is to add a final glottal stop to the word. So, *binasa = read* and *binasa' = soaked.* I've kept both meanings on the Prolog code.

My *tagalog.pl* doesn't implement all case markers, as I only wanted to focus on the words and examples above, in the *Putting It All Together* section. When writing the code, I followed the framework for the *german.pl* homework. This may have been a disadvantage considering the Tagalog word order is not as flexible as the German word order. As a result, I have had to put a few more restrictions on the predicates and facts. I also named the arguments differently as I learned more about case markers in Tagalog.

References

- http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Grammar%20Activities/Grammar%201/Markers/Markersfs.htm

- http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Grammar%20Activities/Grammar%201/Sentences1/Simple%20sentence-fs.htm