Ergativity and Equational Structure in Kapampangan

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1. Introduction

The clause structure of Philippine languages and other Austronesian languages has been analyzed in various ways, especially in the domain of the “focus” constructions. There are a variety of opinions on the proper characterization of focus alternations in the Philippine languages, e.g., as a nominative/accusative system, an ergative/absolutive system, or a nominal-equational system. Two major views, i.e., the equational analysis and the ergative analysis, are discussed in section 2. In terms of case marking, Kapampangan is clearly an ergative/absolutive language, as exemplified by the presence of cross-referencing enclitic pronouns. In section 3, constructions with no enclitic pronouns are discussed.

2. Philippine Clause Structure

Philippine languages (and more generally western Austronesian languages) exhibit a great variety of focus alternations. There has been a large amount of literature in this area (see Klamer 2002 for a recent review on voice, the status of “subject”, and ergativity in Austronesian languages).

A wide variety of analyses have been proposed for the Philippine focus alternations, which have traditionally been referred to as “focus”, both synchronically and diachronically, and especially for the Tagalog focus system and/or actancy structure. For example, Philippine languages have been claimed either to exhibit (i) a nominative/accusative system (e.g., the traditional works on Tagalog by Bloomfield 1917 and Blake 1925, where one active and three passives are distinguished), or (ii) an ergative/absolutive system. Another position is that (iii) the clause structure of Philippine languages is basically nominal-equational, where the clause structure is based on nominal relations, i.e., two appositive NPs. There are still many other various claims (see Liao 2004 for her review on previous analyses), such as that (iv) Philippine languages cannot be typologized either as accusative, ergative or equational (e.g., Schachter 1976, 1977, 1996, Shibatani 1988), or that (v) Philippine languages are the “symmetrical voice type”, neither the familiar active-passive nor ergative-absolutive type (Foley 1998).

In this section, I will focus on two approaches, which are most relevant to Kapampangan, the equational analysis (e.g., Naylor 1979, 1995, Himmelmann 1991) and the ergative analysis (e.g., De Guzman 1988, Gibson and Starosta 1990, Mithun 1994).

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2.1 Equational analysis

In an equational analysis, the clause structure is based on the relations of two appositive NPs. Let us consider Naylor’s view on Tagalog clause structure:

The syntax of Tagalog predications is based on nominal relations rather than verbal relations and the type of predication is attributive rather than predicational. (Naylor 1995:162)

Naylor identifies the genitive ng, which can mark an actor and a patient, as marking a generalized attributive relation (Naylor 1995: 174). Consider the following Tagalog example and her interpretation (her glosses with minor changes).

(1) [Tagalog] (Naylor 1995:172)

Nag-alis ng sapatos ang babae.
COMPL.AF.remove GEN shoes NOM woman
‘The woman removed (her) shoes.’
(Lit., ‘Removed of shoes (is) the woman.’)

2.2 Ergative analysis


Mithun 1994 states that Kapampangan exhibits an ergative system in terms of pronominal case marking. Ergativity in case marking is especially obvious for Kapampangan, since Kapampangan tends to cross-reference with second-position clitic pronouns (see section 3 for examples where clitic pronouns do not appear). This feature distinguishes Kapampangan from other related Philippine languages, especially Central Philippine languages, many of which employ second-position clitic pronouns but not as agreement markers. For example, let us compare the following Tagalog intransitive clauses (2) and their Kapampangan counterparts (3). In Tagalog, the argument appears either as a full NP ang babae (2a), or as a pronoun siya (2b). (For ease of comparison, I follow the ergative/absolutive glossing for both Tagalog and Kapampangan clauses.)

(2) [Tagalog] (Schachter and Otanes 1972:61)

a. Maganda ang babae.3
   beautiful DET.ABS.SG woman.
   ‘The woman is beautiful.’

b. Maganda siya.
   beautiful ABS.3SG
   ‘She is beautiful.’

2 Reid 2001 and Liao 2004 discuss the pronominal forms functioning as agreement markers in some Cordilleran languages.

3 Note that Reid 2002 proposes an analysis that the pre-nominal monosyllabic forms such as Tagalog ang are not determiners but specifying-nouns meaning ‘the one’ and the heads of their phrases.
In contrast, the pronoun ya in (3) is obligatory whether its coreferential full NP is present (3a) or not (3b). In other words, clitic pronouns in Kapampangan function as agreement markers (see section 3 for a detailed discussion of cases where a clitic pronoun does not appear when its coreferential full NP is present).

(3) [Kapampangan]⁴

a. Malagu ya  ing babai.
   beautiful ABS.3SG DET.ABS.SG woman
   ‘The woman is beautiful.’

b. Malagu ya.
   beautiful ABS.3SG
   ‘She is beautiful.’

The following pair of Kapampangan clauses clearly shows an ergative system of case marking. The only core argument in a canonical intransitive clause (“S”) (4a) and a more patient-like argument in a transitive clause (“O”) (4b) are marked alike by one form, and a more agent-like argument in a transitive clause (“A”) (4b) are marked by another form. Thus, in Kapampangan, intransitive clauses require a clitic pronoun coreferential with the only argument (absolutive), whereas transitive clauses require two clitic pronouns coreferential with two core arguments (ergative and absolutive).⁵

Tagalog and some other non-Cordilleran Philippine languages have no coreferential clitic pronouns. (From here on, predicates in Actor Focus constructions are glossed as INTR (intransitive), while those in other Focus constructions (e.g., Patient Focus) are glossed as TR (transitive).)⁶

(4) [Kapampangan]

a. Manaws ya.
   calling.INTR ABS.3SG
   ‘S/he is calling.’

b. Awsan mi ya.
   calling.TR ERG.1EX ABS.3SG
   ‘We (ex.) are calling him/her.’

3. Presence or Absence of Clitic Pronouns

As stated earlier, Kapampangan makes almost obligatory use of clitic pronouns, which clearly demonstrates that Kapampangan is an ergative/absolutive language. Clitic pronouns are present whether the predicate is verbal, adjectival, or nominal, as in (5) below. Constructions with cross-referencing clitic pronouns (i.e., agreement markers) can be handled by the ergative analysis. In (5), the clitic pronoun functions as

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all Kapampangan examples are from my own field notes.
⁵ Some combinations of clitic pronouns (and clitic adverbs) often undergo phonological fusion, appearing as one fused form.
⁶ It must be pointed out, however, that there are intransitive clauses in Kapampangan that take ergative pronouns (e.g., recent past constructions: Karatangdatang na. ‘He just arrived.’).
an agreement marker; it agrees with *i Juan*, the argument, and the other constituent is the predicate.

(5)  [Kapampangan]

a. Mumuli ya i Juan.  
goins.home.INTR ABS.ABS DET.ABS.SG Juan  
‘Juan is going home.’

b. Matwa ya i Juan.  
old ABS.ABS DET.ABS.SG Juan  
‘Juan is old.’

c. Estudyante ya i Juan.  
student ABS.ABS DET.ABS.SG Juan  
‘Juan is a student.’

However, there are cases in which a clitic pronoun does not appear when its coreferential full NP is present, i.e., there is no agreement marking. Mithun (1994: 251, 253) shows that indefinite entities in a presentative construction, mass entities, and abstract entities are not cross-referenced by an enclitic pronoun. Here is an example from Mithun where the absolutive *ing pamangan*, which is a mass entity, is not cross-referenced (her glosses with minor changes).

(6)  [Kapampangan] (Mithun 1994:253)

ampong makasawa ing pamangan.  
and lack.variety DET.ABS.SG food  
‘and the food lacks variety.’

Use of cross-referencing clitic pronouns may be conditioned by semantic factors. Consider the following pair of examples. The absolutive *ing danum* is cross-referenced when a “particular” water is referred to, as in (7a), but it is not when “all” the water that one can find at the moment is referred to, as in (7b).

(7)  [Kapampangan]

a. Marimla ya ing danum.  
cold ABS.ABS DET.ABS.SG water  
‘The water is cold.’

b. Marimla ing danum.  
cold DET.ABS.SG water  
‘The water is cold.’

Thus, it is clear that semantic factors, such as definiteness and possibly animacy, are crucial for the presence or absence of cross-referencing clitic pronouns.

In the following, we will consider syntactic factors. We will look at some constructions in which clitic pronouns are *not* used, i.e., question-word (wh-word) questions.
Normally, questions employing *nanu* ‘what’, *ninu* ‘who’, and *isanu* ‘which one’ do not contain a cross-referencing clitic pronoun. Consider the following examples.

(8) [Kapampangan]

a. Nanu=ng biklat mu?
   what=DET.ABS.SG opened.TR ERG.2SG
   ‘What did you (sg.) open?’

b. Ninu=ng ginawa kanita?
   who=DET.ABS.SG made.INTR OBL.that
   ‘Who made (=cooked) that?’

c. Isanu=ng pinili mu?
   which.one=DET.ABS.SG selected.TR ERG.2SG
   ‘Which one did you (sg.) select?’

If the equational construction is understood primarily as a structure based on the relations of two appositive NPs, these clauses, with two NPs and without a clitic pronoun, would be prototypical examples of equational structure. Of the *ing*-marked NP and the question-word, it is difficult to determine which is the argument and which is the predicate. This is partly because the clauses are interrogative, but also because there is no cross-referencing pronoun. In contrast, in (5c) above, the clitic pronoun cross-references the argument, *i Juan*, and the rest of the clause, *estudyante*, is the predicate. These two NPs cannot be regarded as appositive NPs.

Mirikitani 1972 gives two pairs of constructions, cited in (9) and (10) below (my glosses). One of each pair is an equational construction employing *ninu* ‘who’, (9a) and (10a), whereas the other is non-equational, employing *kaninu* ‘to whom’, (9b), which is the oblique form of *ninu*, and *para kaninu* ‘for whom’, (10b). Note that cross-referencing clitic pronouns do not appear in the equational constructions.

(9) [Kapampangan] (Mirikitani 1972:181)

a. Ninu ing sulatanan mu?
   who DET.ABS.SG write.to.TR ERG.2SG
   ‘Who is the one to whom you (sg.) will write?’

b. Kaninu ka sumulat?
   OBL.who ABS.2SG write.INTR
   ‘To whom are you (sg.) going to write?’

(10) [Kapampangan] (Mirikitani 1972:181)

a. Ninu ing pinyali mu=ng malan?
   who DET.ABS.SG bought.for.TR ERG.2SG=LK clothes
   ‘Who is the one for whom you (sg.) bought clothes?’

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7 The absolutive singular determiner *ing* is often contracted to *=ng* and cliticized to the preceding element, especially in spontaneous speech, behaving as an enclitic. Native speakers can easily tell whether an occurrence of *=ng* is that of the linker or the determiner.
b. Para kaninu ka sinali=ng malan?  
for OBL.who ABS.2SG bought.INTR=LK clothes  
‘For whom did you (sg.) buy clothes?’

It must be pointed out that in some cases, a clitic pronoun seems to be optional, as in the following example. It is not certain, in such cases, when a clitic pronoun is used and when it is not.

(11) [Kapampangan]  
Nanu (ya) ing mibuklat?  
what (ABS.3SG) DET.ABS.SG opened.INTR  
‘What opened?’

We have considered the clauses beginning with question-words nanu, ninu, and isanu. Question-word questions can be characterized as a straightforward equational structure, since they are consisted of two appositive NPs, both of which are absolutes.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed two major views on the clause structure of Philippine languages, i.e., the equational analysis and the ergative analysis. Clearly Kapampangan exhibits an ergative system in terms of pronominal case marking, although there are some constructions with no cross-referencing pronouns. Furthermore, it should be noted that there are semantic factors responsible for the presence and absence of cross-referencing pronouns.

Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
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<tr>
<td>AF</td>
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Foley, William A. 1998. Symmetrical voice systems and precategoriality in Philippine languages. Paper delivered at Workshop on Voice and Grammatical Functions in Austronesian Languages, LFG 98, July 1, University of Queensland, Brisbane.


