Philippine Linguistics from an SIL Perspective—
Trends and Prospects

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1. Introduction

This paper considers the development of Philippine linguistics from an SIL perspective. More specifically, it reviews certain historical trends in linguistic research as practiced by SIL linguists in the Philippines, especially as evidenced through academic publications. The broader context of Philippine linguistics from the early 1900s to the present is sketched very briefly, and a few closing observations and suggestions for future work are offered.

The term “Philippine linguistics” rightfully refers to any research on or about the structure and/or use of languages spoken in the Philippines. Such a definition includes research done inside or outside the Philippines, by Filipino scholars or others. Hence, a more ambitious review of Philippine linguistics would certainly devote more coverage and analysis to the work of Lawrence Reid and his students and colleagues from the University of Hawai‘i. The present paper, however, apart from some very brief and general details, focuses out of necessity on research done by SIL linguists, usually from within the Philippines. Such an admittedly limited overview is offered here in appreciation and honor of a noted linguist who began his linguistics career in the Philippines under the auspices of SIL. It is offered here with hope that, in the tradition of Reid, it will foster further exchange of ideas and information toward the growth and development of Philippine linguistics more broadly.

SIL International, formerly known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, is an international non-government organization whose purpose is “to work with language communities worldwide to facilitate language-based development through research,

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1 An earlier version of this paper was delivered as the Annual Lecture for the Andrew Gonzalez, FSC Distinguished Professorial Chair in Linguistics and Language Teaching, 27 July 2002, at De La Salle University in Manila, and published in the June 2003 issue of Philippine Journal of Linguistics 34 (1).

2 I note here that there are over 6,000 other possible “SIL perspectives,” one for each SIL member. In preparing this paper I have benefited from interacting with numerous SIL colleagues, including Myra Lou Barnard, Sherri Brainard, Dick Elkins, Jan Forster, Hella Goschnick, JoAnn Gault, Bill Hall, Alan and Phyllis Healey, Lou Hohulin, Allan Johnson, Rex Johnson, Paul Kroeger, Rundell Maree, Howard McKaughan, Sue McQuay, Tom Payne, Carol Pebley, David Thomas, Anne West, Elmer Wolfenden, and Chuck Walton. I gratefully acknowledge the help of the following non-SIL linguists who responded to requests for information: Mark Donohue, William Foley, Malcolm Ross, Stan Starosta, Robert Van Valin, and Fay Wouk. Josephine Daguman provided a helpful exchange of ideas. Thanks to Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista, and especially to Hsiu-chuan Liao, both of whom offered substantive suggestions and persistent encouragement. Shortcomings remain my own.
translation and literacy.” (www.sil.org) Since 1953, SIL has been active in the Philippines through a working agreement with the Department of Education, enjoying productive affiliations through the years with the Institute of National Language, the University of the Philippines, the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, and the Translators Association of the Philippines (TAP). Over the past fifty years, SIL has done at least preliminary research in over ninety Philippine languages, and is currently active in some forty language projects around the country. The “typical” completed SIL language project has yielded phonological and grammatical descriptions, text collections, word lists or dictionaries, and varying amounts and types of vernacular literature, including translated portions of the Bible.

2. Linguistics as a Discipline in the Philippines

The early history of linguistics as an academic discipline in the Philippines has been summarized by others (e.g., Reid 1981a, Gonzalez 1986). Prior to the twentieth century, a number of Spanish priests produced grammars and word lists of Philippine languages for the purpose of teaching fellow missionaries these languages. These written grammars naturally followed a Latin model for grammatical analysis. National hero Jose Rizal, whose death by firing squad at the end of the nineteenth century prefigured the end of the Spanish era, may be considered the first Filipino linguist. Rizal produced a grammar of Tagalog and a series of short essays on Philippine cultural groups. But Rizal was a man of many interests and talents, and basically worked alone in his linguistic pursuits, without the benefit of a group of similarly minded scholars.

The field of linguistics was formally established in the Philippines with the founding of the Department of Linguistics at the University of the Philippines (UP) in 1924 under the leadership of Otto Scheerer, a German businessman, coffee planter and scholar. Cecilio Lopez, a student of Scheerer’s, completed his Ph.D. in 1928 under Otto Dempwolff at the University of Hamburg with a contrastive analysis of Ilocano and Tagalog. Lopez returned to a long and successful linguistics career at UP as the first Filipino professional linguist. The tradition of Lopez was carried forward through The Archives, a journal devoted to the study of Philippine languages and dialects, as well as through the activities of the Diliman Linguistics Circle. The most massive dictionary project ever undertaken on Philippine languages is surely that of one of Lopez’s students, the now retired Ernesto Constantino.

In spite of the foundational developments at UP during the first half of the twentieth century, there was no widespread interest in linguistics as a field of study elsewhere in the Philippines. Gonzalez (1986:81) notes that the establishment of linguistics as a discipline came largely as a post-World War II phenomenon, through the efforts of a number of Filipino scholars returning from studies in the US in applied linguistics in the 1950s. Significant milestones that followed were the founding of the Philippine Center for Language Study in 1957 (which became the Language Study Center of the Philippine Normal College in 1965) and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines.

3 Rubrico 1998 details a number of linguistic and Philippine language publications during the Spanish era (1565–1898), beginning with Doctrina Cristiano in 1593. A more extensive bibliography can be found in Ward 1971.

4 According to its preface, Constantino’s 1999 An English-Filipino Dictionary was originally meant “to serve as the ‘mother dictionary’ of more than 100 English to Philippine language bilingual dictionaries” begun in 1986.
Philippines, along with its journal, in 1969. A later development was the formation of a consortium of universities in Manila which offered a Ph.D. program in linguistics.

SIL has participated in the development of linguistics as a discipline in the Philippines by several means. From 1953, SIL served in advisory capacities to the Institute of National Language, which provided SIL’s first office space and published some of its earliest analytical works.\(^5\) SIL also helped provide teaching personnel for the M.A. program in linguistics at the University of the Philippines as early as 1954, and regularly provided staff in the 1960s and early 1970s through an agreement of affiliation with the UP College of Education. With a member on the board of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines since its founding in 1969, SIL has participated in numerous workshops and conferences with the broader academic community, and is a regular contributor to the Society’s *Philippine Journal of Linguistics*. SIL and LSP jointly established two series of publications: *Special Monographs* and *Studies in Philippine Linguistics* (now *Studies in Philippine Languages and Cultures*). From 1976 to 1986, in cooperation with the Department of Education, SIL provided teaching staff for an M.A. program in Applied Linguistics at the Baguio Vacation Normal School. More recently, SIL has worked in close partnership with the Translators Association of the Philippines, often through joint participation in linguistic workshops and, in several cases, assigning personnel to joint language projects. SIL has also provided teaching staff for TAP training programs in conjunction with Philippine Normal University and Alliance Biblical Seminary in Manila.

3. Philippine Linguistics Outside the Philippines

As far as the development of Philippine linguistics outside the country, one must first acknowledge the historically significant work of Otto Dempwolf in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century. The father of comparative Austronesian studies, Dempwolf, laid the foundation for further historical and comparative studies on the phonology and lexicon of Proto-Austronesian.\(^6\) As mentioned above, it was under Dempwolf that Filipino linguist Cecilio Lopez wrote his dissertation on Ilocano and Tagalog. Frank Blake’s 1906 ‘Expression of case by the verb in Tagalog’ was one of the first articles published in the US on a Philippine language. Leonard Bloomfield’s 1917 detailed grammatical analysis of a collection of Tagalog texts later became a basic reference for future descriptive grammars of Philippine languages. Two more recent foundational works produced through the cooperation of US and Philippine researchers, both published in 1972, were Schachter and Otanes’ *Tagalog Reference Grammar* and John Wolff’s *Dictionary of Cebuano Visayan*. Reid’s significant contributions to Philippine linguistics, beginning in the 1960s, come as the result of research on a wide variety of languages, often dealing with comparative and diachronic matters of morphosyntax. His most intensive fieldwork has been on Cordilleran, Negrito and Manobo languages.

The study of foreign languages in general took on added impetus in the US after World War II, and this included the study of Asian and Pacific languages. Several universities developed programs in linguistics and instruction in Philippine and other Austronesian languages, the most extensive course offerings being at the University of Hawai‘i. Strong programs in Southeast Asian Studies, which include Philippine

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\(^6\) Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) also did some descriptive work on Tagalog preparatory to his grammar of Kawi, a Javanese language. For details, see Percival 1974.
language offerings, also developed at Cornell, the University of Michigan and elsewhere. A separate locus of research for Asian and Pacific languages arose in Australia, most notably at the Australian National University in Canberra. Internationally, a number of other universities currently offer courses in Austronesian languages and linguistics. Since 1974, the International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics (ICAL) has met at three- to four-year intervals, and is a primary venue for interaction among scholars from Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific who do research on Austronesian languages.

4. SIL in Philippine Linguistics

4.1 Major research questions

SIL has addressed two primary research questions in the Philippines from the start, both of which have stemmed from a desire to serve among the lesser known language groups known nationally as “cultural communities.” These two questions are:

- What Philippine languages are there?
- What are these languages like?

It is noteworthy that the primary questions addressed by SIL overlapped with, but were not identical to, the primary interests of many of the Filipino linguists who were returning from study abroad to establish the discipline of linguistics in their own country in the 1950s and 1960s. These scholars were often more interested in the pressing matters of developing a national language and teaching an international language than with documenting and analyzing the many local languages. With the exception of a few linguists at the University of the Philippines who continued in the tradition of Cecilio Lopez, research on the majority of Philippine languages largely became the purview of foreign scholars.

The desire to answer the question “What Philippine languages are there?” assured that SIL would be concerned with matters of comparative linguistics and dialectology, and in particular with the issue of dialect and language boundaries. The motivating question underlying this research was a practical one, namely: “How many distinct translation or language development projects does the linguistic diversity warrant?” Early language survey work concentrated on collecting word lists and making systematic comparisons among cognate forms in different dialects. This type of comparative linguistics was much like that used by historical linguists for reconstructing proto-forms and positing genetic relationships among language families. By 1969, SIL Philippines began to employ a method developed by SIL Mexico for testing aural comprehension of tape-recorded texts, a procedure documented in Casad’s 1974 *Dialect Intelligibility Testing*. This method was found to be a helpful means of augmenting measures of lexical similarity, as it was a more direct measure of comprehension as opposed to comparisons of wordlists. These types of language surveys — accompanied by an academic interest in matters of comparative linguistics, linguistic diversity and language contact — led to such publications as Walton’s (1979) ‘A Philippine language tree,’ Gallman’s (1979) *Proto-South-East Mindanao and its internal relationships*, Elkins’

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7 For a listing of libraries with significant Austronesian collections, and universities with related home pages, see (http://rspas.anu.edu.au/linguistics/AustLing/anhmpg.htm).

8 The 10th ICAL is scheduled for January 2006 in the Philippines, to be hosted jointly by the Linguistic Society of the Philippines and SIL International.
(1974) ‘A Proto Manobo Word List’ and Pallesen’s (1985) *Culture contact and language convergence*. Pallesen’s work highlighted the complexities involved in analyzing similarities between languages and positing the origin of those similarities. In later years, as the importance of sociolinguistic factors and their impact on the viability of language development projects became more evident, language survey work began explicitly to address such issues as language attitudes, language maintenance and shift, and varying roles for and levels of proficiency in second languages throughout a community. As SIL involvement in new language projects declined through the 1990s, so too did related research in language survey and comparative studies. A notable exception came in the publication of Casad’s *Windows on bilingualism* (1992), which consists of selected proceedings of an international conference on language survey held in Baguio in 1987.

The current state of affairs regarding the number of Philippine languages reported or recognized is an interesting one, with varying estimates from different sources. One of the earlier well-documented sources, Reid 1971 stated that there were “more than 80” Philippine languages (Reid 1971:vii). McFarland 1980 listed 118, while McFarland 1994 listed only 110. Constantino 2000 stated there were “maybe about 110.” Reid 2000 lists 150, whereas the 2002 *Ethnologue* lists 163 living Austronesian languages spoken natively in the Philippines (including Chavacano). Some of the differences in these estimates result from different groupings of dialect clusters or language complexes. Other differences no doubt come from differing access to and acceptance of sources of information.

The second major question of “What are Philippine languages like?” opens up wide areas for research, analysis and interpretation. From the perspective of a language development project there are certain issues that must be addressed. Initially, if a linguist from outside the language community wishes to learn the language, there are the questions of phonetics and how the language is pronounced. Where literacy in the language is a goal, an immediate concern becomes how the language can be written adequately. Designing a suitable alphabet presupposes valid conclusions on the distinctive sounds of the language in terms of its phonemic inventory. Actually settling on an alphabet that is acceptable to a cross-section of a community involves many other questions of attitudes and preferences, as well. In order to speak, or to encourage the production of literature in a given language, a linguist from outside the community must also have a good understanding of how that language combines words to form phrases, phrases to form sentences, and sentences to form stretches of discourse. The quest for this sort of understanding has spurred linguistic analysis for centuries, and has the potential for doing so for centuries more.

### 4.2 SIL academic publications

A review of SIL’s academic publications on Philippine languages and linguistics reveals areas of particular interest and relevance for SIL. Such areas of concentration with at least fifteen publications over the past fifty years include: comparative linguistics, sociolinguistics (including language survey), dictionaries and word lists, overall grammatical sketches or analyses, texts and text collections, general language

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9 Quakenbush 1989 is an example of a language survey that focuses on sociolinguistic issues.

10 The 2002 *Ethnologue* (ed. by Barbara F. Grimes) actually lists 172 languages for the Philippines, 169 of which are ‘living languages’. Of these, six are not Austronesian, including English, Spanish, and varieties of Chinese.
and linguistic concerns, phonology, discourse, semantics and translation, literacy related topics, and morphosyntax.

**Table 1:** SIL Philippines academic publications arranged by topic (1952–2002).

The numbers of SIL academic publications over the course of fifty years arranged into twelve categories is summarized in Table 1.\(^{11}\)

### 4.2.1 Morphosyntax

One category in Table 1 stands out above all others and deserves special comment here—Morphosyntax. The disproportionate number of publications in this area of linguistics reflects at least two factors. First of all, clause or sentence-level analysis generally preoccupied much of linguistic theory in the latter half of the twentieth century, as generative grammar and other models took the sentence as the basic unit of analysis. More important than the general preoccupation with the sentence as a unit of analysis, however, the number of SIL publications on morphosyntax reflects the complexity and controversy surrounding the analysis of the ‘voice’ or ‘focus’ phenomena of Philippine languages. Indeed, it is this complex system of verbal affixation and the relationship it bears with a selected nominal per clause that has become the defining characteristic of ‘Philippine-type languages.’ What to call this system of verbal affixation and the selected nominal to which it corresponds has remained controversial over the past fifty years.

In 1917, Bloomfield analyzed Tagalog as having three passive constructions: direct passive, with *-in*; instrumental passive, with *i-;* and local passive, with *-an.\(^{12}\) In the first

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\(^{11}\) I thank Rex Johnson for making this information available to me in varying formats from the database of an SIL Philippines bibliography currently in process. Included are works by SIL Philippines members on a broad range of concerns as well as books and articles on Philippine languages by other SIL members.

\(^{12}\) Blust 2002 states that Bloomfield’s analysis is a continuation of a Dutch tradition established by van der Tuuk and first applied to Philippine-type languages by Adriani 1893. Blake 1906 may be the first analysis of Tagalog in English.
publication on a Philippine language authored by SIL members, McKaughan and Forster 1952 followed Bloomfield in the use of the term ‘voice’ in their grammar of Ilocano. But by 1958, several SIL members were using the term ‘focus’ to describe the same sort of phenomena (cf. Dean 1958, Healey 1958, and Thomas 1958). The motivation behind the choice of a distinct term was to convey that this system had some characteristic differences from how ‘voice’ had come to be used for Indo-European languages. The primary difference was the mere existence of multiple ‘passive’ forms. A secondary difference was the fact that these so-called ‘passive’ forms were actually more frequent and less ‘marked’ than the so-called ‘active’ forms. The ‘focus’ system then, became the way to refer to the system whereby verbal affixation signaled the semantic role of a selected nominal per clause.

What to call this selected nominal, marked in Tagalog by ang, was also problematic. In many ways, it corresponded to the ‘subject’ of Indo-European languages. But since the selection of this ‘subject’ seemed to be made on a different basis than the subject in English, for instance, some early SIL linguists in the Philippines felt a need for another term. McKaughan 1962 introduced the term ‘topic’ for the nominal in Maranao which bore the ‘primary’ relation to the verb, introduced by so. Many other linguists have since followed suit for many other Philippine languages. ‘Topic’ has the advantage of being similar in meaning to ‘subject’ in everyday English, as in the essentially equivalent expressions: ‘the topic of conversation’ and ‘the subject of conversation.’ ‘Topic’ also helps capture the essential ‘Comment-Topic’ structure of sentences. Like ‘focus,’ it conveys a distinctness to Philippine languages. The debate on whether this special nominal should be called subject or topic has continued to the present, with SIL linguists taking both sides (and sometimes switching from one side to the other, as McKaughan did in 1973). Schachter and Otanes 1972 referred to the ‘topic’ NP, in agreement with the established Philippinist sense of these terms at that time. Schachter 1976 concluded that properties held by ‘subjects’ in other languages were actually split in Tagalog between the ‘topic’ NP and ‘actor’ NP.

Unfortunately for the fate of both terms, ‘topic’ and ‘focus’ have been used elsewhere in the world of linguistics with different, and varying, senses. For some, ‘topic’ came to refer to ‘given information’ that was previously mentioned or assumed in a discourse. For others, it became a noun phrase fronted to the beginning of a sentence through a syntactic process called ‘topicalization.’ ‘Focus,’ on the other hand, generally came to refer to heightened emphasis for particular purposes, as in an element given ‘contrastive focus.’ While linguists working on Philippine languages have usually understood each other’s use of these terms, there has been persistent misunderstanding, along with consistent objections, from linguists outside the Philippinist or Austronesian tradition. There has likewise been discontent from those within such a tradition who

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13 Dick Elkins (pers. comm.) states that it was Dick Pittman who first promoted the use of the term ‘focus’ among SIL members in the Philippines, and that Elkins used it in an unpublished paper in 1955. Phyllis Healey (in press) reports that the term first came into being during a discussion among Pittman, Alan Healey, and Wilf Douglas in early 1954 at a linguistics course in Melbourne, Australia.

14 See Forster 1964 for an early, elegant discussion of how ‘topic’ and ‘focus’ work in Dibabawon.

15 See McKaughan 1973 for a switch in terminology, and Kroeger 1993b and Brainard 1996 for differing viewpoints on what the ‘subject’ is in Philippine languages.

16 This is the sense in which ‘topic’ is used by Bresnan and Mchombo 1987, quoted by Kroeger 1993b.
argue that these special terms mask similarities between Philippine languages and languages of other parts of the world.

Some linguists have maintained that Philippine languages are indeed very similar to other languages of the world, namely those which are classified as ergative languages. For these linguists, ang marks the absolutive case. Under such an analysis, transitive-like ‘actor focus constructions’ are analyzed as ‘antipassives.’ An ergative analysis seems to work more easily for some Philippine languages than for others. Tagalog, for instance, in the words of Foley and Van Valin (1984:138), “defies simple classification as either accusative or ergative.” One general problem with an ergative analysis for Philippine languages is that it remains to be shown conclusively that the ‘actor focus constructions’ are in fact intransitive, which in turn presupposes an as of yet unagreed upon “cross-linguistically valid definition of ‘transitive’ and ‘intransitive’” (Ross 2002:24). An additional problem some find with an ergative analysis is that there is no specific marking on the verb in Tagalog, for instance, that exclusively marks the antipassive construction. What does occur is an affix that also occurs in certain other clearly intransitive expressions.

4.2.2 Discourse

Another category of SIL academic publications from Table 1 which deserves comment is that of Discourse. If the Text Collection category is merged with the Discourse category — a reasonable grouping due to the latter being entirely dependent on the former — Discourse becomes the area with the greatest number of publications. An emphasis on language patterns “beyond the sentence” was given impetus through SIL workshops in the Philippines led by Pike in 1963 and Longacre in 1967 and 1968. For field linguists whose motivation included the natural and meaningful translation of textual material, discourse analysis was as practical as it was appealing. The numerous studies resulting from these workshops helped to refine and promote insights into discourse analysis from a tagmemic perspective. This sort of analysis is based on the categorization of texts into distinct genres, and then the analysis of those texts into smaller chunks or tagmemes. The four most common genres are Narrative, Procedural, Hortatory and Expository. Each genre is further subclassified into types according to the presence or absence of certain nuclear tagmemes. The tagmemes of a Narrative discourse, for example, may include aperture, episode, denouement, anti-denouement, closure and finis. These tagmemes are filled by constructions from different levels of the grammatical hierarchy extending upward from morpheme, through stem, word, phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph and discourse. The crucial characteristic of a Narrative discourse is a chronological orientation of accomplished time. Procedural

See Payne 1982 for a comparison between Yup’ik and Tagalog. For ergative analyses of other specific Philippine languages, see Walton 1986 (Sama Pangutaran), Gault 1992 and 1999 (Sama Bangingi’), and Brainard 1994a, 1994b (Karao).

Sherri Brainard (pers. comm.) has pointed out that the situation is actually more complex than whether a given language is ‘ergative’ or not, and that many Philippine languages display split patterns of ergativity on both the morphological (case marking of S versus P) and syntactic levels (dealing with patterns of coreferential noun phrase deletion). See Wouk 1996:363 for two definitions of ergativity on the discourse level.

This ‘additional problem’ some linguists have with an ergative analysis for Philippine languages was pointed out to me by Tom Payne (pers. comm.). It is not generally agreed upon that the lack of an affix exclusively marking antipassive constitutes a compelling or even valid objection to an ergative analysis.

For a readable introduction to the basic concepts of tagmemics, see Pike 1982.
discourse also involves chronological sequence, but in projected time. The primary purpose of an Expository discourse is to explain something, while the primary purpose of a Hortatory discourse is to influence behavior.\textsuperscript{21}

Discourse studies in the tagmemic tradition have sought, among other things, to characterize the shape grammatical constructions typically take in different discourse types or genres, and in different sections of those types. One expects to find differences in verb forms, for example, in a narrative peak, where they may occur without affixation to convey heightened immediacy or drama. Noun phrases are more likely to be fully expanded in the ‘aperture’ of a narrative, where participants are introduced, than they are in the sequential narrative episodes where activity takes precedence over explanation or background information.

Although discourse studies by SIL linguists have been done primarily in a tagmemic tradition, some work has been done from other perspectives. Participant identification and tracking of information through a discourse, one of the hallmarks of discourse analysis in a Givonian tradition, represent one area where there has been some productive overlap between perspectives.\textsuperscript{22} At least one study of formal speech events has been done from a more sociolinguistic or interactional perspective.\textsuperscript{23} And several works have analyzed and documented the genius of storytellers and their ‘oral narratives’ in traditional Philippine communities from more of an anthropological perspective.\textsuperscript{24} Two notable discourse publications that were first completed as M.A. theses at De La Salle University were Benn 1991 and Goschnick 1989.

Texts accompanied by interlinear glossing and free translations were among the very first publications of SIL linguists in the Philippines. Collections of texts began to be published in earnest in 1977 with the establishment of the joint LSP-SIL series, \textit{Studies in Philippine Linguistics} (now \textit{Studies in Philippine Languages and Cultures}). These text collections not only provide data for linguists, anthropologists and others interested in learning more about the cultural communities, they also can provide an outlet for the commentary and philosophy of members of the cultural communities on matters of importance to individual and societal life.\textsuperscript{25}

\subsection*{4.2.3 Lexicography}

A third category of SIL academic publications which deserves additional comment is that of Lexicography—dictionaries and dictionary-making. The number of publications to date under this category do not adequately reflect its importance in a language development project. Beginning with the early word lists compiled as part of language surveys, the analysis and documentation of Philippine language lexicons,

\textsuperscript{21} See Longacre 1968 for further elaboration of Philippine language material, and Longacre 1983 for a more developed theoretical discussion. Longacre 1983 distinguishes the four “notional” types of discourse based on two criteria: contingent succession and agent orientation.

\textsuperscript{22} Pebley 1999 deals with participant reference in Kagayanen. See Brainard and Vander Molen (this volume) for a study of word order inverse phenomenon in Obo Manobo as related to topic continuity and referential distance. Quakenbush 1992 points out some of the weaknesses of topic continuity studies for expository discourse, and illustrates the importance of a consideration of discourse type when analyzing basic word order.

\textsuperscript{23} See Hall 1987 for a study of formal speech behavior in a Western Subanon setting.

\textsuperscript{24} See Wrigglesworth 1991, Wrigglesworth and Mengsenggilid 1993, and Wrigglesworth and Ampalid 2004 for three such examples.

\textsuperscript{25} See Polenda 1989 for an outstanding example of this sort of discourse material.
along with studies on the art and science of lexicography in general, have grown in sophistication and breadth.

Abrams and Svelmoe 1955 and Forsberg and Lindquist 1955, in Mansaka and Tagabili, respectively, were among the first published attempts by SIL linguists to begin recording the lexicons of Philippine languages. Thomas and Thomas (1964) documents early investigation toward a language-wide semantic structure of Mansaka, which yielded a ‘thesaurus.’ Investigation along these lines spread from SIL in the Philippines to Vietnam and Thailand, and has since yielded a number of small thesauruses in minority languages of mainland Southeast Asia.26

The success of the First Asia International Lexicography Conference in Manila in 1992 demonstrated the importance and relevance of dictionary-making among linguists and language communities throughout the broader geographical region.27 Dictionaries of Philippine languages currently being produced by SIL linguists range from more ‘popular’ varieties, whose primary user audience is the local language community, to ‘academic’ varieties, which include more information specifically of interest to linguists and members of the international academic community.28 Philippine language dictionaries produced to date have largely been ‘bilingual’ in nature, often with English as the second language of reference. The most recently published dictionary by an SIL member is Behrens’ 2002 Yakan-English dictionary, intended to be part of a three-volume series on that language, including separate grammar and text collection volumes, as well.29 Newell 1995 stands as SIL Philippines’ most significant single contribution to the art and science of lexicography in general. His 1993 landmark Batad Ifugao dictionary with ethnographic notes is soon to be followed by a dictionary of Romblomanon, a language of the Visayas.

4.3 Endangered languages

In each of these three categories — syntax, discourse and lexicography — SIL linguists have concentrated on the ‘smaller’ languages of the cultural communities. This has not been exclusively the case, since SIL linguists have authored several publications on Ilocano, Tagalog and Hiligaynon.30 But with other linguists and institutions more focused on the ‘major’ languages, SIL naturally has concentrated its efforts on the ‘minor’ languages to which its personnel have been assigned. Each of these minor languages could be considered an ‘endangered language.’

Just what constitutes an endangered language is not always clear. Krauss (1992:7) has argued that “the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind’s languages” and that only those languages with either official state support or a “very large number of speakers” can be considered safe from extinction. The manifesto of the Foundation for Endangered Languages (2002) states that “There is agreement among linguists who have considered the situation that over half of the world’s languages are moribund, i.e. not effectively being passed on to the next generation. We and our children, then, are living at the point in human history where, within perhaps two generations, most languages in the world will die out.” The

26 David Thomas (pers. comm.).
27 See Sibayan and Newell 1994 for selected proceedings from this conference.
28 For two examples of popular dictionaries, see Elgincolin et al 1988 (English-Tina Sambal-Pilipino) and Wolfenden et al 2001 (Masbateño-English).
29 See Brainard and Behrens 2002 *A grammar of Yakan.*
30 See, for example, McKaughan and Forster 1952 (Ilocano), Wolfenden 1961 (Tagalog), Wolfenden 1975 (Hiligaynon) and Kroeger 1993a (Tagalog).
manifesto lists three courses of action to lessen the damage that will accompany the loss of so many languages: (1) document the languages as much as possible; (2) emphasize particular benefits of the diversity still remaining; (3) promote literacy and language maintenance programs. SIL has been involved in each of these activities, particularly the first and third. Goals for typical SIL language projects in the Philippines include published grammatical descriptions, text collections, and dictionaries, as well as communities literate in the vernacular. Since the Philippines ranks tenth in the world in terms of numbers of indigenous languages, what happens with endangered languages of the Philippines is of global significance.

4.4 SIL vernacular publications

The present review of SIL academic publications (in English) on Philippine linguistics would be incomplete without a comparison to 'vernacular' publications in Philippine languages. Table 2 shows that the overall number of academic publications constitutes only about one fourth of SIL’s total publications over the past fifty years. Literacy- and translation-related publications in the vernacular account for three-fourths of SIL’s publications. Literacy-related publications include a wide range of educational materials, as do translated publications, which include portions of the Bible.

Table 2: SIL Philippines publications by type (1952–2002).

Table 3 shows a breakdown of publication types by decade. It is clear that vernacular publications have outnumbered linguistic publications in every decade, sometimes dramatically so. Translated publications were fewer in number in the

31 This statistic is from Krauss (1992:6, citing the 1988 *Ethnologue*).
32 For purposes of the comparison in Table 2 only, all publications in English (whether dealing with linguistics, anthropology, translation, literacy or other related topics), are grouped under the broader ‘academic’ category. ‘Translation’ and ‘Literacy’ then become vernacular language only categories.
33 The Literacy and Translation categories in Table 3 overwhelmingly reflect vernacular language publications, although they include a few academically-related publications in English. The Linguistics publications are solely in English.
1950s and 1960s, about equal to linguistic publications in the 1970s, and have outnumbered linguistic publications since.

Table 3: SIL Philippines publications by type (1950s to 1990s, and 2000–2002).

![Pie chart showing SIL Philippines publications by type.](chart.png)

### 4.5 Observations

The picture that emerges from this overview of SIL’s participation in Philippine linguistics is a multi-faceted one. It is clear overall that there has been a great deal about Philippine languages to capture the interest of linguists, particularly in the realms of morphosyntax and discourse. From the decrease in number of academic publications since the 1970s and 1980s shown in Table 3, it also appears that this interest is currently in a state of decline.

The 1970s stands out as the most productive decade for SIL linguistic publications. What factors were behind the steady growth from the 1950s through the 1970s, and the decrease thereafter? Several factors had their impact. As mentioned earlier, SIL appeared in the Philippines at a time of increased interest and growth in the field of linguistics. From the influence of Cecilio Lopez and others at the University of the Philippines, from a growing number of applied linguists returning from studies abroad, from an Institute of National Language and a government interested in programs that would benefit the nation’s diverse cultural communities, from the founding of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines and departments of linguistics at additional notable universities—from all these sources there proceeded an environment that nurtured research and development of the discipline of linguistics in the Philippines. Other factors were more internal to SIL. From 1953 on, the leadership of SIL put a high priority on academic research and publication. The influence of Dick Pittman, in particular, on the first SIL members in the Philippines to do and publish research of excellence was a recurring theme in dialogue with several of these individuals.

34 Beginning in the 1960s, SIL took
intentional measures to involve its members in linguistic production workshops, first of all by bringing in leading linguists from abroad, such as Pike and Longacre, and secondarily by training a group of locally-based consultants. The series now called *Studies in Philippine Languages and Cultures* was initiated in 1977 in order to provide an additional publication outlet for SIL research. SIL as an organization in the Philippines grew in membership and numbers of language projects until the 1980s. The 1990s, in contrast, was a decade when a number of language projects were completed, and no new ones were taken on. While the completion of language projects should certainly be interpreted as progress, fewer language projects also inevitably meant fewer linguistic publications. The absence of newer work particularly impacted linguistic publications, since new projects typically had yielded phonemic and grammatical analyses of a preliminary nature in fairly quick succession.

The decline in SIL linguistic production is somewhat greater than can be accounted for solely by a decrease in personnel. Table 3 also indicates a shift in emphasis away from linguistics and toward literacy and translation publications. The decrease in linguistic production after a period of intense activity reflects what has happened in Philippine linguistics on a national level as well. Gonzalez 1998 pointed out that although the foundation and infrastructure are currently in place for the practice of linguistics as a discipline, what is lacking are linguists with the time and leisure to do the needed research. He called for a “steady stream of scholars” and concluded that “We should now direct our efforts, with the resources possible, to renew our ranks so that linguists may find a home in all the major institutions of learning in our country, for one cannot study human beings in all their dimensions without looking at their expressive creations and sign systems” (1998:142).

5. Recommendations

Taking the optimistic view that the ranks of practicing linguists in the Philippines (and elsewhere in the world, for that matter) can indeed be renewed, the question then becomes “What questions shall these Philippine linguists address?” I suggest that the major research questions SIL has addressed over the past fifty years are still valid, namely:

1) What Philippine languages are there?
2) What are these Philippine languages like?

5.1 What Philippine languages are there?

The first question of what Philippine languages there are still needs a more definitive answer. With leading scholars quoting numbers not far above a hundred, yet with 163 living Austronesian languages listed under the Philippines in the 2002 *Ethnologue*, there is clearly room for further research and debate. While there may never be complete agreement over which language varieties constitute dialects of others, and which are distinct languages, our current understanding would almost certainly be advanced by a careful comparison of already published data in an attempt to determine which, if any, of the 163 varieties listed in the *Ethnologue* are not considered to be distinct languages by some linguists. The results of such a comparison would no doubt lead to more specific questions to be answered for different language areas around the country. Such research, continuing in the tradition of Reid’s own careful work, would help clarify the actual Philippine language situation, and may also yield further insights into the general issue of the identification of dialects versus languages. In addition to
careful comparison of already published sources, additional field work would be in order for areas of the country that are less well documented.

5.2 What are these languages like?

As noted above, the second question of what Philippine languages are like takes on greater importance in light of the fact that some have already ceased to exist, and others will surely follow. A minimum documentation goal for all Philippine languages might consist of a basic phonological statement, grammar sketch, word list and simple text collection. In communities where speakers are interested in promoting the use of their own language variety, orthography and literature production would become additional local issues. Although it has been clear from the start that there is considerable variety among Philippine languages, it has too often been assumed in the linguistic literature that one (or a few) of the better known languages adequately represent(s) Philippine languages overall. Such studies as Reid 1971 and McFarland 1980 represented significant advances in our knowledge of the variety characterizing the Philippine language situation. They have long been waiting to be expanded and refined. Reid and Liao (2004a) represents an important and welcome step in this direction.

Earlier comparative linguistic studies dealt almost exclusively with phonology and lexicon. Reid’s work stands out for its consideration of the morphosyntax of Philippine and Austronesian languages. Further comparison of how languages from different parts of the Philippines handle specific morphosyntactic or discourse matters may provide additional evidence for the most natural groupings of Philippine languages, as well as for how they have impacted each other in contact situations. Such studies would surely further our understanding of the grammatical phenomena in and of themselves. In order to achieve greater understanding among the broadest possible community, the linguist must use terminology that is understood as widely and as well as possible. This consideration leads to a reevaluation of certain terms that have become current in Philippine linguistics.

5.3 A terminological aside

The special Philippinist senses of ‘focus’ and ‘topic’ as described in the section of morphosyntax above both trace their origins to ‘Philippine linguistics from an SIL perspective.’ These terms served to highlight distinctives of Philippine languages and, for the most part, have enabled Philippine linguists to communicate well with each other. Because of the level of confusion generated by both terms among a wider linguistic audience, however, it would seem beneficial at this point to discontinue the use of both. In the case of ‘focus,’ I suggest a return to the prior terminology of ‘voice.’ While ‘voice’ may have previously implied a close correspondence to the active/passive construction in English and other Indo-European languages, such is no longer the case. More recent analyses have broadened the use of the term ‘voice’ to refer to active/antipassive alternations in ergative languages as well as other types of alternations that involve “a realignment in syntactic pivots and semantic roles” (Himmelmann 2002:12). Given this broadened understanding of ‘voice,’ the special term ‘focus’ is no longer necessary.

35 The 2002 Ethnologue lists three Philippine languages as ‘extinct.’
36 See, for example, Reid 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c, 1981b. Reid and Liao 2004a, 2004b provide a syntactic typology for Philippine languages that is likely the most complete of its kind.
In the case of ‘topic,’ a return to prior terminology is more problematic. The term ‘subject’ is not an ideal candidate since it is not used uniformly across the linguistic world. To many linguists it presupposes a range of properties that are not shared by any single nominal in a Tagalog clause. At present, the best options for referring to the nominal marked by *ang* in a Tagalog verbal clause (and corresponding nominals in other Philippine-type languages) seem to be the case labels ‘absolutive’ or ‘nominative.’ For a number of linguists who analyze Philippine-type languages as ergative, ‘absolutive’ remains the most natural and revealing term. For those who see Philippine-type languages as something other than ergative, or who desire a term that could be used in a broader sense for describing Austronesian languages that are not argued to be ergative, the term ‘nominative’ can be pressed into service in a broadened sense. Such a broadened sense of ‘nominative’ includes the more specific term ‘absolutive,’ and refers to the nominal in a clause with a special syntactic status, whose semantic role is cross-referenced by affixation in the verb, and which is typically introduced by a unique marker such as the Tagalog *ang*. We have seen that as our understanding of voice phenomena grew, so did the range of phenomena that could be covered by the term ‘voice,’ such that a special Philippinist use of the term ‘focus’ was no longer required. A parallel development accompanied by a broadened use of the traditional case term ‘nominative’ could also obviate the need for a special Philippinist use of the term ‘topic’.

6. Summary

This paper has presented an overview of “Philippine linguistics” from an SIL perspective. After briefly considering the historical development of linguistics as an academic discipline in the Philippines, and noting a few landmarks in the study of Philippine languages by selected scholars outside the Philippines, it concentrated on SIL’s participation in Philippine linguistics. Two basic research questions were seen to have guided the academic production of SIL: (1) What Philippine languages are there? and (2) What are these languages like? These questions were also offered as valid ones for guiding continued research in Philippine linguistics. An analysis of SIL’s academic publications over the past fifty years revealed special areas of concentration in morphosyntax, discourse analysis, and lexicography. It was noted that the special Philippinist senses of ‘focus’ and ‘topic’ came about historically from an “SIL perspective.” A desire to communicate adequately certain distinctives about Philippine languages that SIL linguists found led them to use these terms in novel ways. Although these innovations served their purpose, it was also suggested that these terms could now be discontinued. Expansion in the areas of meaning of more traditional terms such as ‘voice’ and ‘nominative’ make the special Philippinist terms no longer necessary.

Although the focus of this paper was on SIL linguistic production, it became clear that Philippine linguistics and the career of Lawrence Reid intersect at a number of strategic points. An interest and involvement in Philippine linguistics, begun under the auspices of SIL, engendered Reid’s early academic career. That interest and

38 Other terms which have been used for the phrase marked by the absolutive/nominal case include ‘pivot’ (as in Himmelmann 2002:12 above) and ‘trigger.’ Wuk (1986:392, and elsewhere) employs the latter term, attributing its first use to an unpublished manuscript by Fox (1982).
39 See Reid and Liao (2004a) for an example of the use of the term ‘nominative’ in this broader sense by linguists who analyze Philippine-type languages as ergative.
involvement have continued to shape his academic endeavors over the past decades. As a result, Reid has enriched Philippine linguistics with many insights and publications, especially in the documentation and comparative analyses of a broad range of Philippine languages. Reid’s scholarship, which runs both broad and deep, will continue to shape the field of Philippine linguistics for those who follow in his footsteps in the decades to come.
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