

Topichood of the Philippine topic

Revisited from a cross-linguistic perspective^{*}

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This paper reexamines the nature of the so-called topic in Philippine languages, specifically its topichood in Tagalog, from a cross-linguistic perspective by comparing it with that of prototypical topic in other languages such as Japanese. The study reveals that its topichood is remarkable in its non-occurrence rather than its occurrence in sentences. It is also shown that although it exhibits similarities with prototypical topic in discourse in terms of its actor-orientedness, they also exhibit significant differences. I argue that one of the difficulties in identifying the nature of the Philippine topic lies in the fact that its choice is made by the interaction of its sentential and discourse topicality itself with an independent grammatical characteristics that penetrates into the grammar of Philippine languages in general, i.e. patient-orientedness, and the relational balance between these factors can be different depending on transitivity of verbs and the degree of grammaticalization among different Philippine languages.

1. Introduction

Much has been debated over the so-called topic NP in Philippine languages: whether it is topic, subject, or neither, etc. One of the difficulties in identifying the status of the NP in question lies in the fact that the notion of topic itself is vague and difficult to define, and thus cannot easily be determined within the language(s) alone. This paper reviews and discusses topichood or topicality of the NP in question in Tagalog among other Philippine languages, from cross-linguistic perspectives, by comparing its distribution and behaviors with those of the prototypical topic in other languages such as Japanese.

Cross-linguistically, there are generally three means to express topic: 1)

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morphological means (by means of a grammatical marker to express topic); 2) syntactic means (by placing topic in the sentence-initial position); 3) phonological means (pausing after topic and/or via intonation). For instance, languages like Japanese, Korean, Ainu, and Burmese use a morphological means to express topic, while languages like Chinese and Bantu languages, etc. use syntactic means, and languages like English, Spanish, Russian, etc. mainly use phonological means sometimes alongside with syntactic means.

Tagalog, among other Philippine languages, seems to have all these three means to express “topic”. For example, in the following Tagalog sentences, roughly meaning “The woman bought (the) fish”, the NP marked by the prepositional *ang* (“ang-phrase”, in boldface, henceforth) is presumed to be topic.¹

- (1) Bumili **ang babae** ng isda.

AF+buy TOP woman GEN fish

- (2) **Ang babae** ay bumili ng isda.²

TOP woman INV AF+buy GEN fish

- (3) **Ang babae,** bumili ng isda.

TOP woman AF+buy GEN fish

The sentence (1) is a basic sentence in which one of the NPs in a clause is marked by *ang*. In the sentences (2) and (3), the ang-phrase is placed in the sentence-initial position, with the inversion marker *ay* placed after it in (2), and with a pause following it in (3). The sentences like (2) and (3), however, are said to be characteristic of formal style, occurring more commonly in formal styles such as writing, lectures, sermons, etc. than in ordinary conversations (Schachter and Otnes 1972:485). Katagiri (1998) examines the functions

¹ Abbreviations: ACC=ACCUSATIVE; AF=ACTOR FOCUS; CL=CLASSIFIER; CONTR=CONTRASTIVE; DAT=DATIVE; DF=DIRECTIONAL FOCUS; EX=EXISTENTIAL; GEN=GENITIVE; GF=GOAL FOCUS; INT=INTENSIFIER; INV=INVERSION MARKER; LK=LINKER; MOD=MODALITY; NOM=NOMINATIVE; NOMI=NOMINALIZER; NONEX=NON-EXISTENTIAL; OBL=OBLIQUE; PERF=PERFECTIVE; PL=PLURAL; Q=QUESTION MARKER; RP=RECENT PERFECTIVE; SG=SINGULAR; TOP=TOPIC.

² While an inversion marker appears in languages like Tagalog, exemplified in the sentence (2), there is no inversion marker in languages like Cebuano. In addition, inverted sentences like (2) with an inversion marker and those with a phonological pause like (3) seem functionally equivalent.

of the inverted sentences, the kinds of invertible elements and their frequency in text, and shows that actor nominals have grammatical privilege and predominance in text frequency in the inverted construction, and that inverted sentences in text function to specify a viewpoint and from which the following events are described. Thus, the ang-phrase occurring in the sentence-initial position in the inverted construction is construed as textual topic.³

The present discussion centers around topichood or topicality of the ang-phrase itself that appears throughout the three constructions illustrated in (1), (2) and (3). Much has been debated over the nature of the ang-phrase, whether it is a topic, subject, or neither, and so on. However, due to the fact that the notion of topic itself is a vague one, and that the discussions have mostly been limited to Philippine languages alone, the nature of the ang-phrase is not yet clear. This paper reviews and discusses the nature of the ang-phrase, specifically its distributions and syntactic behaviors from cross-linguistic perspectives, especially in comparison with the distribution and behaviors of prototypical topic that occurs in other languages like Japanese, which has a well-established category of topic. The discussion includes: the problems in identifying the nature of the ang-phrase; constructions in which the occurrence of the ang-phrase is obligatory, optional or prohibited; and the occurrence of the ang-phrase in discourse from the semantic point of view and transitivity of sentences. By comparing the behaviors of the ang-phrase with those of topic in other languages, I will demonstrate that the ang-phrase in Philippine languages parallels with topic in other languages to a great extent although the parallelism is remarkable in its non-occurrence rather than its occurrence. This is because the so-called patient-orientedness, which penetrates into the grammar of Philippine languages in general, greatly affects the occurrence of the ang-phrase. One of the difficulties in identifying the nature of the ang-phrase is due to the fact that its choice is affected by the relational balance between topicality of what the ang-phrase itself denotes and the degree of patient-orientedness which penetrates into the grammar.

³ In Katagiri (1998), the sentence-initial ang-phrase is construed as discourse-textual topic, but it is better treated as textual topic since the inverted construction is not often used in ordinary conversations.

2. The nature of ang-phrases

2.1 Topic or subject?

Over the nature of the ang-phrase of Tagalog and the corresponding phrase in other Philippine languages, there are roughly two claims. On the one hand, some linguists claim that the phrase in question is topic, and the category “subject” is not applicable (Schachter 1976, 1977, Schachter and Otnes 1972, Naylor 1995, etc.). On the other hand, the phrase is claimed to be subject, or a category that is grammaticalized into subject (McKaughan 1973, Starosta, Pawley and Reid 1982, De Wolf 1988, Shibatani 1991, Constantino 1992, Kroeger 1993, etc.). The arguments on which these two claims are based are summarized below (Shibatani 1988, Katagiri 1998):

(4) ang-phrase as topic, not subject

- a. In principle, a noun phrase with any semantic role can be ang-phrase;
- b. Semantically definite.

(5) ang-phrase as subject, not topic

- a. One ang-phrase obligatorily occurs in primary sentences;
- b. Its semantic role is marked on the verb as a focus affix (verbal agreement);
- c. Target of syntactic phenomena relevant to subject in other languages (e.g. relativization, wh-question, quantifier float, control of gap in subordinate clauses, raising from subordinate clauses);
- d. Patient nominals are more likely to be chosen as ang-phrase than actor nominals.⁴

Recent discussions seem to favor the claim that the ang-phrase is construed as grammaticalized subject, mostly due to its grammatical nature. However, it has not been very clear whether the category has lost its semantic content as topic through grammaticalization if any, to what extent and in what environment it has retained its status as topic, and its occurrence and function in discourse. In the following discussion, we

⁴ The fact that patient nominals, rather than actors, are more likely chosen as ang-phrase itself does not point to its subjecthood, but rather suggests that the ang-phrase is not like prototypical topic because the category that is most typically chosen as topic is actor.

briefly review the distribution and behaviors of the ang-phrase where it obligatorily occurs, and discuss its topicality by comparing those of topic in other languages.

2.2 The environment in which the ang-phrase occurs

2.2.1 Basic sentences

Philippine languages are verb-initial in their basic order. The sentences in (6) are basic or descriptive sentences in Tagalog with nominal predicate in (6a), adjectival predicate in (6b) and verbal predicate in (6c, d, e).

- (6) a. *Artista ang babae.*
 actress TOP woman
 ‘The woman is an actress.’
- b. *Maganda ang babae.*
 pretty TOP woman
 ‘The woman is pretty.’ ‘Women are pretty.’
- c. *Nagbigay ang babae ng isda sa bata.*⁵
 AF+give TOP woman GEN fish OBL child
 ‘The woman gave fish to the child.’
- d. *Ibinigay ng babae ang isda sa bata.*
 GF+give GEN woman TOP fish OBL child
 ‘The woman gave the fish to the child.’
- e. *Binigyan ng babae ng isda ang bata.*
 DF+give GEN woman GEN fish TOP child
 ‘The woman gave the child a fish.’

In the sentences (6c-e) with verbal predicate, the semantic role of each ang-phrase is marked on the verb as a focus affix. For example, in (6c), the actor nominal *babae* ‘woman’ is chosen as the ang-phrase with an actor focus marker *nag-* affixed to the verb

⁵ As this example illustrates, noun phrases have ang-forms (nominative, or topic form depending on different analyses), genitive forms and oblique forms, depending on their functions in sentences. Common nouns are marked by prepositional *ang*, *ng*, and *sa*, respectively, while personal nouns are marked by prepositional *si*, *ni*, and *kay*, respectively. Pronouns (personal, demonstrative, or wh) have their independent ang forms, genitive forms and oblique forms.

bigay ‘give’, and thus, sentences like (6c) are called actor focus sentences. Likewise, (6d) is a goal focus or patient focus sentence, and (6e) is a directional or recipient focus sentence.

It is important to note here that a nominal with any semantic role, such as beneficiary, instrumental, location, and cause, can basically be made to an ang-phrase.

Thus, in a basic sentence, one ang-phrase obligatorily occurs in the subject or non-predicate position. The ang-phrase is semantically definite in its typical interpretation, but generic interpretation is also possible in sentences like (6b). This semantically wide applicability leads to the claim that the ang-phrase is construed as topic, but it exhibits a significant difference from topic in other languages in terms of its choice. That is, among the verbal sentences like (6c, d, e), with referentiality or definiteness of nominals being equal, the most preferred sentence is goal or patient focus sentences like (6d), followed by actor focus sentences like (6c). The situation in which goal or patient nominals are more likely to be chosen as ang-phrase than actor nominals is different from that of topic in other languages. We will return to this matter later.

2.2.2 Equational or cleft sentences

While only one ang-phrase occurs in the non-predicate position in a basic sentence, two ang-phrases can occur in certain construction called equational construction; one in the non-predicate position like in a basic sentence and the other in the predicate position. This construction roughly corresponds to cleft in meaning in languages like English, but they are as frequently used as basic sentences in Philippine languages, with slight semantic differences between the two. Compare the following sentences in (7) with those in (6a-c) above.

(7) a. **Ang babae ang artista.**

TOP woman TOP actress

‘The one who is the actress is the woman.’ ‘The woman is the actress.’

b. **Ang babae ang maganda.**

TOP woman TOP pretty

‘The one who is pretty is the woman.’ ‘The woman is the pretty one.’

c. **Ang babae ang nagbigay ng isda sa bata.**

TOP woman TOP AF+give GEN fish OBL child

‘The one who gave fish to the child is the woman.’

If we compare (7a-c) with (6a-c) respectively, we can find the differences in the fact that, first the ang-phrase occurs in the non-predicate position in basic sentences, while it also occurs in the predicate position in equational sentences; and second, the interpretation of the ang-phrase in basic sentences can be indefinite or non-specific, while that of the ang-phrases in the subject position and in the predicate position in equational sentences is specific. For example, the sentence (7a) is used to inform the hearer interested in the actress who is the actress.

The ang-phrase occurring in the predicate position in equational sentences potentially possesses a contrastive meaning. In the equational sentence (8b), which occurs as the response to the question (8a), the ang-phrase in the predicate position *si Rosa* has a contrastive meaning. The contrastive meaning becomes even clear with a contrastive marker *siya* inserted in the ang-phrase in the non-predicate position (Schachter and Otnes 1972:151), as in (8b).

(8) a. Nakita ba niya **si Maria?**

GF+see Q 3SG:GEN TOP Maria

‘Did he see Maria?’

b. Hindi, **si Rosa ang (siya-ng) nakita niya.**⁶

no TOP Rosa TOP CONTR-LK GF+see 3SG:GEN

‘No, the one who he saw is Rosa.’

This potential of contrastive meaning is one of the characteristics of topic in other languages. For example, the Japanese topic marker can be used to mean contrast. Incidentally, wh-questions with wh-pronouns “who”, “what” and “which” occur in the form of equational sentences. The response, on the other hand, can be basic or equational sentences, depending on the definiteness of the noun which refers to the focus of the

⁶ The contrastive marker *siya* is different from the ang-form of the third person singular pronoun *siya*. The contrastive marker *siya* occurs only in the ang-phrase in the subject position of equational sentences, and not necessarily refers to a third person nominal. E.g. *Ikaw* (2SG:TOP) **ang siyang nakita niya** ‘It is you that he saw.’ (Schachter and Otnes 1972:152).

question. For example, the response to a question like (9a) can be equational sentences like (9b-c) if the focus noun phrase is definite, while it can be basic sentences like (9d) if it is indefinite.

- (9) a. **Sino ang kumakanta?**⁷
 who:TOP TOP AF+sing
 ‘Who is (the one) singing?’
- b. **Si Sharon (ang kumakanta).**
 TOP Sharon TOP AF+sing
 ‘(The one who is singing is) Sharon.’
- c. **Ang artista (ang kumakanta).**
 TOP actress TOP AF+sing
 ‘(The one who is singing is) the actress.’
- d. **Artista (ang kumakanta).**
 actress TOP AF+sing
 ‘(The one who is singing is) an actress.’

We will return to this later.

2.2.2 The head of relative clauses

Only ang-phrases can occur as the head of relative clauses. In other words, only ang-phrases are relativizable. Sentences (11a, b) are those relativized from (10a, b), respectively.

- (10) a. **Bumili ang babae ng damit.**
 AF+buy TOP woman GEN clothes
 ‘The woman bought clothes.’
- b. **Binili ng babae ang damit.**
 GF+buy GEN woman TOP clothes
 ‘The woman bought the clothes.’
- (11) a. **Maganda ang babae[-ng bumili ng damit].**⁸

⁷ Pronouns including wh-pronouns have independent ang-forms, genitive forms and oblique forms (Cf. fn. 2). For example, the ang-form, the genitive, and the oblique form of a pronoun “who” is *sino*, *nino*, *kanino*, respectively.

pretty TOP woman-LK AF+buy GEN clothes

‘The woman who bought clothes was pretty.’

- b. Maganda **ang damit** [na binili ng babae].

pretty TOP clothes LK GF+buy GEN woman

‘The clothes the woman bought was pretty.’

The fact that only ang-phrases are relativizable has often been used to as an argument for the ang-phrase as subject, based on the NP accessibility hierarchy proposed by Keenan and Comrie (1977). However, Fox (1987) argues that the basic function of relative clauses is a descriptive function by which they characterize the head noun which is worth commenting on. Takami (1997:154) also claims that relative clauses can be well-formed only when the head noun functions as topic. That is, the fact that only ang-phrases are relativizable irrespective of their semantic roles does not serve as direct evidence for the claim that the ang-phrase is subject, but rather shows that the head of relative clauses is worth being commented on, or, in other words, something that functions as topic.

2.2.4 Reflexive form

Lastly, we briefly observe the behaviors of a constituent that has reflexive meaning. Compare the following two sentences in (12).

- (12) a. Nagmamahal **si Maria** sa kanyang sarili.

AF+love TOP Maria OBL her self

- b. Minamahal/Mahal ni Maria **ang kanyang sarili**.

GF+love love GEN Maria TOP her self

‘Maria loves herself.’

Among these two sentences, the actor focus sentence (12a) is grammatical but unnatural, while the patient focus sentence (12a) is predominantly preferred, due to the patient-orientedness mentioned earlier. That is, the patient focus is preferred because the patient nominal is a reflexive pronoun and thus definite. The preference is also implied in the fact that the verb in the patient focus sentence (12b) can be a bare form (*mahal* ‘love’).

⁸Linkers serves to link the head and its modifier, with the order being either way, as the example shows. If the head (or its modifier) ends in a vowel, the form is *-ng*, while if it ends in a consonant, it is *na*.

These facts do not appear to be directly relevant to the topicality of ang-phrases, but they can serve as an argument against that the ang-phrase is subject. While control of a reflexive constituent is one of the syntactic properties of prototypical subject, the controlled reflexive pronoun rather than the controller is chosen as the ang-phrase as the first priority, and thus, the ang-phrase seems to be considerably different from prototypical subject in terms of control of reflexives.

2.3 Sentences without ang-phrase

The ang-phrase can be subject-like in terms of its grammatical obligatoriness on the one hand, it is topic-like in its wide applicability and definiteness on the other hand. And in terms of patient-orientedness in the choice of the ang-phrase, it is neither subject-like nor topic-like. Thus, if we only consider sentences in which an ang-phrase occurs, the nature of the ang-phrase is not very clear. However, if we look at sentences and constructions in which an ang-phrase does not occur, we can find remarkable similarities with those in other languages where topic does not occur.

2.3.1 Meteorological and temporal expressions

In many languages, meteorological and temporal expressions are expressed by topicless sentences. In particular, it is pointed out that appearance of a phenomenon is more likely expressed by topicless sentences than its disappearance (Nakagawa and Sawada 2003). In Tagalog, too, the appearance of a phenomenon can be expressed by sentences without ang-phrase. Compare the following Tagalog, Japanese and Chinese sentences in (13). (Tones are omitted in Chinese examples.)

(13) ‘Oh, it is/has started raining.’

Tagalog: Ay, umuulan na.

oh AF+rain already

Japanese: A, ame-ga/*-wa huttekita.

oh rain-NOM/TOP started falling

Chinese: Aiya, xia yu le. / *Aiya, yu xia le

oh fall rain PERF / oh rain fall PERF

(14) ‘It has stopped raining.’

Tagalog: Huminto na **ang ulan**.

AF+stop already TOP rain

Japanese: Ame-ga/-wa yanda.
rain-NOM/TOP stopped

Chinese: Yu ting le. /*Ting yu le.
rain stop PERF / stop rain PERF

In Japanese, topic is morphologically marked by a topic marker *wa*. In Chinese, on the other hand, topicless sentences instead of topic sentences are marked by inverted VS order. As shown in (13), the expression ‘it has started raining’, as an instance of appearance of a phenomenon, is expressed by a sentence without ang-phrase in Tagalog, topicless sentence in Japanese, and in inverted sentence in Chinese. For temporal expressions, too, ang-phrase does not occur, as in (15): they are also expressed in topicless sentences in Japanese, and in inverted order in Chinese.

- (15) a. Alas sais na.
o'clock six already
‘It’s six o’clock.’
- b. Lunes ngayon.
Monday today
‘It’s Monday today.’
- c. Bakasyon pa sa isa-ng buwan.
vacation still OBL one-LK month
‘It’s still vacation next month.’

Thus, the fact that ang-phrase does not occur in many meteorological or temporal expressions parallels to the fact that topic does not occur in other languages.

2.3.2 Existential sentences

Among the existential expressions, the construction without ang-phrase is used in Tagalog in order to express existence or non-existence of an indefinite entity. Compare Tagalog (T) and corresponding Japanese (J) and Chinese sentences in (16).

- (16) a. ‘There is a child on the street.’
Tagalog: May (*ang) bata sa kalye.

- EX (TOP) child OBL street
 Japanese: toori-ni kodomo-ga/*wa iru.
 street-on child-NOM/TOP EX
 Chinese: You yi-ge xiao hai zai jie shang.
 EX one-CL small child at street on
- b. ‘There is no water!’
- Tagalog: Wala-ng (*ang) tubig!
 NONEX-LK (TOP) water
 Japanese: Mizu-ga/*-wa nai!
 water-NOM/TOP NONEX
 Chinese: Meiyou shui! /*Shui meiyo!
 NONEX water. water NONEX

As shown in the sentences in (16), to express existence or non-existence of an indefinite entity, an ang-phrase does not occur in Tagalog, while topicless sentences are used in Japanese, and inverted VS order in Chinese. On the other hand, in order to express existence or non-existence of a definite entity, basic sentences with ang-phrase is used in Tagalog, topic sentences in Japanese, and in usual SV order in Chinese, as in (17).

- (17) a. ‘The child is on the street.’
- T: Nasa kalye **ang bata**.
 OBL street TOP child
 J: Sono kodomo-**wa** toori-ni iru.
 that child-TOP street-on EX
 C: Na-ge xiao hai zai jie shang.
 that-CL small child be street on
- b. ‘The woman is not here.’
- T: Wala rito **ang babae**.
 NONEX here TOP woman
 J: Sono onna-**wa** kokoni inai.
 that woman-TOP here NONEX
 C: Na-ge nüren bu zai zhe li.

that-CL woman not be here in

Moreover, the existential construction is also used to express actions of an indefinite entity, as in (19a).

- (19) a. 'There is a guest coming tomorrow.'

T: May bisita-ng darating bukas.

EX visitor-LK AF+arrive tomorrow

J: Asu kyaku-ga/*-wa kuru.

tomorrow guest-NOM/TOP come

C: Mingtian you yi-ge keren yao lai.

tomorrow EX one-CL guest will come

- b. 'The guest is coming tomorrow.'

T: Darating **ang bisita** bukas.

AF+arrive TOP visitor tomorrow

J: Sono kyaku-**wa** asu kuru.

that guest-TOP tomorrow come

C: Na-ge keren mingtian yao lai.

that-CL guest tomorrow will come

As shown in the Tagalog sentences and their corresponding Japanese and Chinese sentences above, the Tagalog sentences without *ang*-phrase correspond to Japanese topicless sentences and Chinese inverted VS order.

2.3.2 Recent perfective sentences

Recent perfective sentences are used to express actions completed just before the time of utterance, in which nominals do not take *ang*-form even if they are semantically definite. Compare recent perfective sentences like (20) with usual perfective sentences like (21).

- (20) a. Kararating lang [ng tren /niya].

RP+arrive just GEN train/3SG:GEN

'The train/He has just come.'

- b. Kabibili lang ng babae ng isda.

RP+buy just GEN woman GEN fish

‘The woman has just bought fish.’

- (21) a. Dumating [**ang tren /siya**].

AF+arrive TOP train/3SG:TOP

‘The train/He came.’

- b. Bumili **ang babae** ng isda.

AF+buy TOP woman GEN fish

‘The woman bought fish.’

- b’. Binili ng babae **ang isda**.

GF+buy GEN woman TOP fish

‘The woman bought the fish.’

In recent perfective sentences like (20), neither actor nor patient nominals occur in *ang*-forms, and thus, the verb takes a recent perfective prefix *ka-*, instead of a focus affix which would mark the semantic role of an *ang*-NP. In perfective sentences like (21), on the other hand, the verbs take a perfective actor focus affix *-um-* or perfective goal or patient focus affix *-in-*. Recent perfective sentences like (20) can be construed as one of the phenomenal sentences, as well as meteorological sentences or temporal expressions that we saw in the preceding section (cf. Noda 1996), in that they both express the events that have just occurred right before the speaker’s eyes. And the corresponding sentences in Japanese, for example, also appear in topicless sentences. Thus, the fact that *ang*-phrases do not occur in these sentences is parallel to the fact that topicless sentences are generally used in other languages, and suggests to the topic-hood of the *ang*-phrase.

2.3.4 Pseudo verb sentences

In Tagalog, among other Philippine languages, there is a category of pseudo verbs which are grammatically adjectives but used as verbs (Schachter and Otnes 1972). An *ang*-phrase does not occur in some pseudo verb sentences that express liking/disliking and necessity. Consider the following sentences (22), (23) and (24).

- (22) Gusto ng babae ng mangga.

like GEN woman GEN mango

‘The woman likes mangoes.’

- (23) Ayaw niya ng durian.

dislike 3SG:GEN GEN durian

‘She dislikes durians.’

(24) Kailangan niya ng pera.

need 3SG:GEN GEN money

‘He needs money.’

In sentences like (22), (23) and (24), nominals denoting an experiencer and a patient do not appear in *ang* forms. On the other hand, in sentences like (25), the patient nominal occurs as *ang*-phrase, when it refers to a specific entity. For example, sentences in (22) and (25) differ in definiteness of the patient nominal *mangga* ‘mango’.

(25) Gusto ng babae **ang mangga**.

like GEN woman TOP mango

‘The woman likes the mango.’

On the other hand, experiencer nominals never occur in *ang* forms, as in (26).⁹

(26) *Gusto ng mangga **si Maria**.

like GEN mango TOP Maria

(For: ‘Maria likes mangoes.’)

The occurrence of *ang* phrases in the pseudo verb sentences is thus conditioned by semantic roles and definiteness of noun phrases, and appears irrelevant to topichood. However, the Philippine pseudo verb construction and the non-canonical constructions used to express liking or necessity in other languages do seem to have something in common in terms of the semantic similarities. For example, the Japanese double nominative construction like “*Titioya-ga yamanobori-ga sukida*” (father-NOM mountain-climbing-NOM like) ‘My father likes mountain-climbing’, and the dative subject construction like “*Kare-ni kane-ga hituyooda*” (he-DAT money-NOM need) ‘He needs money’. They differ in which nominals, experiencer or patient, are liable candidate to become topic: while in languages like Japanese, an experiencer nominal is more likely to

⁹ Schachter and Otnes (1972:265) suggest that in sentences with a pseudo verb *ayaw* ‘dislike’ an experiencer nominal can appear in the *ang*-form if it is semantically definite and the patient nominal is indefinite: e.g. *Ayaw ng mansanas si Juan* (dislike GEN apple TOP Juan) ‘Juan dislikes apples’.

become topic, it is the patient nominal that is more likely to become topic in Philippine languages. The difference lies in the mechanism by which topic is chosen: in languages like Japanese, pragmatic topicality is primarily relevant to the topic choice, while patient-orientedness is primarily concerns the topic choice in Philippine languages.

2.3.5 Emphatic or exclamatory expressions

An ang-phrase does not occur in emphatic expressions like the sentence (27), in which the focus for emphasis does not occur in the ang-form.

(27) Napaka-ingay nila/***sila** sa klase.

INT-noisiness 3PL:GEN/3PL:TOP OBL class

‘They are very noisy in class.’

Cf. Maingay **sila** sa klase.

noisy 3PL:TOP OBL class

‘They are noisy in class.’

In addition, in exclamatory expressions like the sentence (28), the focus of exclamation does not take ang-form.

(28) Ang/Anong/Kay ganda ni/***si** Maria!

TOP/what-LK/INT beauty GEN/TOP Maria

‘How pretty Maria is!’

Cf. Maganda **si** **Maria**.

pretty TOP Maria

‘Maria is pretty.’

As suggested by Naylor (1995:179), the expression like (28) is semantically equivalent to a sentence, but its structure is not a sentence but a nominal structure. This also parallels to a Japanese traditional nominal construction that expresses surprise or exclamation at events occurring at the time of utterance (Yamada 1908). In that construction, too, no topic occurs.

In addition, Shibatani (1991) suggests that the basic function of the Japanese topic marker *wa* is to separate the elements preceding it and those following it. Accordingly, topic sentences like *Hi wa noboru* (sun-TOP rise) ‘The sun rises’ are used to express objective judgment from experience toward the topic element. On the other hand,

topicless sentences like *Hi ga noboru* (sun-NOM rise) ‘The sun rises/is rising’ are used to express sensational judgment toward the event or state that has newly occurred before the speaker’s eyes, with some exclamatory meaning.

Thus, the constructions exemplified in (27) and (28), with some emphatic or exclamatory meaning can be identified as a kind of phenomenal sentences, the non-occurrence of an ang-phrase in those constructions parallels to the fact that topicless sentences are used in corresponding constructions in other languages like Japanese.

2.3.6 Subordinate clauses

In the subordinate clauses introduced by conjunctions, an ang-phrase obligatorily occurs as in basic sentences. However, the form with a nominalizer *pag-* prefixed to the infinitive form of a verb can introduce an adverbial subordinate clause meaning ‘when’ ‘if’ or ‘after’, in which no ang-phrase occurs.

- (29) [Kung darating **siya**] / [Pag-dating niya / ***siya**], uuwi **ako**.
 if AF+arrive 3SG:TOP NOMI-arrive 3SG:GEN/3SG:TOP AF+go home 1SG:TOP
 ‘If he comes, I will go home.’

As illustrated in (29), even in adverbial clauses with similar meanings, an ang-phrase occurs in a subordinate clause introduced by a subordinator *kung* ‘if’, while there is no ang-phrase in a clause introduced by a *pag*-clause. Although this fact itself appears irrelevant to the topichood of ang-phrases because no ang-phrase occurs in nominalized clauses in general, the point here is that the nominalized clause used as an adverbial has the meaning of “when” or “if”.

Noda (1996) points out that the ways topic occurs inside subordinate clauses are considerably different from language to language, and that its occurrence or non-occurrence is conditioned by the degree of how strong a subordinate clause is bound to its main clause. For example, conjunctive clauses introduced by *-te* ‘and’ or citing clauses introduced by *-to* ‘thus’ are called “weak subordinate clauses”, in which topic can occur, while presumptive clauses introduced by *-tara* ‘if’ or temporal clauses introduced by *-toki* ‘when’ or *atode* ‘after’ are called “strong subordinate clauses”, in which topic does not occur in many languages.

In the case of Philippine languages, when a clause nominalized by a nominalizer

pag- is used as an adverbial clause, it means “when”, “if”, or “after”, corresponding to a strong subordinate clause. That is, the kinds of subordinate clauses in which an ang-phrase does not occur in Tagalog correspond to those in which topic does not occur in other languages like Japanese. This fact also suggests topichood of the ang-phrase.

2.4 Discourse topicality of ang-phrases

As we have seen, such sentences as phenomenal sentences, existential sentences and recent perfective sentences, in which an ang-phrase does not occur, have much in common with topic less sentences in other languages like Japanese, in which the category topic is well-established. These facts do seem to suggest topichood of the ang-phrase. On the other hand, the ang-phrase seems to exhibit significant differences from topic in other languages like Japanese in terms of its choice, as mentioned earlier. For example, the most liable candidate for topic in Japanese and other topic prominent languages in general is the one that typically has a semantic role of actor, including agent and experiencer. On the other hand, the most liable candidate for the ang-phrase is a patient nominal. It is not clear, however, whether this is attributed to the differences in grammatical characteristics of the languages or to topicality of the NP in question. In this section, we observe how the ang-phrase is chosen in discourse in comparison with topic choice in Japanese discourse.

In Japanese conversations like (30), responses like (30a) is natural, where an actor nominal is topicalized, but (30b) is not, where a patient nominal is topicalized (Noda 1996:5).

(30) Ojiichan: Kodomotati-ga inai-ne.

grandpa: children-NOM not around-MOD

Grandpa: ‘The kids aren’t around.’

Obaachan: a. Kodomotati-wa ima mukooode karee-o tukutteiru-yo.

grandma children-TOP now over there curry-ACC be cooking-MOD

b. #Karee-wa ima mukooode kodomotati-ga tukutteiru-yo.

curry-TOP now over there children-NOM be cooking-MOD

Grandma: ‘The kids are cooking curry over there.’

As the example in (30) illustrates, topic sentences are used to continue the discourse with

something which appears in the previous context or something which relates to it as topic.

Tagalog sentences equivalent to (30) are like the following.

(31) Lolo: Wala ditto **ang mga bata**, di ba?

grandpa NONEX here TOP PL child not Q

Grandpa: 'The kids aren't here, are they?'

Lola: a. Nagluluto **ang mga bata /sila** ng adobo doon ngayon.

grandma AF+cook TOP PL child/3PL:TOP GEN adobo over there now

b.(#)Nagluluto ng mga bata/nila **ang adobo** doon ngayon.

GF+cook GEN PL child/3PL:TOP TOP adobo over there now

Grandma: 'The kids/They are cooking adobo over there now.'

As the most natural response to utterances like "The kids aren't around, are they?", native speakers use actor nominal sentences like (31a)¹⁰. In the sentence, the actor nominal can be omitted, but the verb is still in the actor focus form. Patient focus sentences like (31b) are also grammatical, but it is less natural in that the center of the speaker's attention is felt to be in adobo rather than in where the kids are, though not as unnatural as the corresponding Japanese in (30b).

Note that the first utterance in the conversation (31) itself could be identified as an actor focus sentence in which *mga bata* 'children' is in the ang-form. One could argue, then, that the actor focus sentence (31a) is preferred because the preceding utterance itself is an actor focus sentence, and thus the response just takes over the actor focus sentences. However, in conversations like the following (32)-(35), in which question sentences are in the patient focus form, the natural response in unmarked context is still in the actor focus form.

(32) **Ano ang ginagawa mo?**

what:TOP TOP GF+do 2SG.GEN

'What are you doing?'

(33) a. Nanonood **ako** ng TV.

¹⁰ I hereby express my gratitude to Maureen Joy Saclot and her students at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, for the judgment about naturalness of sentences appearing in this section.

AF+watch 1SG:TOP GEN TV

b. #Pinanonood ko **ang TV.**

GF+watch 1SG:GEN TOP TV

‘I’m watching TV.’

(34)a. Kumakain **ako** ng adobo.

AF+eat 1SG:TOP GEN adobo

b. #Kinakain ko **ang adobo.**

GF+eat 1SG:GEN TOP adobo

‘I’m eating adobo.’

(35)a. Nagbabasa **ako** ng libro.

AF+read 1SG:TOP GEN book

b. #Binabasa ko **ang libro.**

GF+read 1SG:GEN TOP book

‘I’m reading a/the book.’

The question sentence (32) is a goal or patient focus sentence, where the actor is in the genitive form. However, natural responses to it are actor focus sentences like (33a), (34a), and (35a). And the patient focus sentences like (33b), (34b), and (35b) are unnatural, even more unnatural than corresponding Japanese (31b). Notice that the patient focus sentences like (33b), (34b), and (35b) are grammatical sentences, and they are even preferred to their corresponding actor focus sentences when they are used alone.

Thus, as natural responses to neutral questions about the action itself like “Where is...?”, “What is ... doing?”, etc., actor focus sentences are chosen as the first preference, irrespective of the focus form of the questions. On the other hand, once the action is established in discourse, the question sentence which questions the object of the action and its response are in the form of patient focus. Consider a series of discourse through (36)-(39).

(36) **Ano ang ginagawa ni Maria?**

what:TOP TOP GF+do GEN Maria

‘What is Maria doing?’

(37) Nagluluto **siya** ng aming hapunan.

AF+cook 3SG:TOP GEN our supper

‘She is cooking our supper.’

(38) **Ano ang niluluto niya?**

what:TOP TOP GF+cook 3SG:GEN

‘What is she cooking?’

(39)a. #Nagluluto **siya** ng adobo.

AF+cook 3SG:TOP GEN adobo

‘She is cooking adobo.’

b. Niluluto niya **ang adobo.**

GF+cook 3SG:GEN TOP adobo

‘She is cooking adobo.’

c. Adobo (**ang niluluto niya**).

adobo TOP GF+cook 3SG:GEN

‘(What she is cooking is) adobo.’

Notice that the forms of question sentences (36) and (38) are the same: they are both goal focus sentences in which the actor is in the genitive form, not in the ang-form. But the forms of their response sentences are different. A natural response to neutral questions like (36), which questions the action itself, is expressed in the actor focus form, as in (37). But if utterances like (38), which questions the object of the action, continue after the action itself is established in discourse, the response to it appear in the patient focus form like in (39b) and (39c) (a basic sentence and an equational sentence, respectively), and actor focus sentences like (39a) is not natural.

Thus, in neutral context, actor nominals seem to be the most liable candidate for the ang-phrase, and then the nominal denoting the center of attention such as the object of the action is chosen. On the other hand, an independent grammatical property, i.e. patient-orientedness, seems to affect the choice of the ang-phrase in languages like Tagalog, often more strongly than discourse topicality does. For example, with verbs of high transitivity, such as “kill”, “break”, “bite”, etc. in Tagalog, actor focus sentences are grammatically possible, but avoided, and patient focus forms are chosen, irrespective of

definiteness of nominals. This is not only when they occur alone, but even in neutral context or where an actor nominal has been established as discourse topic. Compare the discourse through (40)-(41) with the one in (31) above.

(40) Wala dito **ang mga bata**, di ba? (= (31))

NONEX here TOP PL child not Q

‘The kids are not here, are they?’

(41) a. #Pumapatay **nila** ng daga sa bakuran.

AF+kill 3SG:TOP GEN rat OBL backyard

b. Pinapatay nila **ang daga** sa bakuran.

GF+kill 3SG:GEN TOP rat OBL backyard

‘They are killing a rat in the backyard.’

While in (31) above the preferred response is in actor focus form, with verbs of high transitivity like “kill”, patient focus sentences like (41b) are chosen and actor focus sentences like (41a) is very unnatural.

Thus, patient-orientedness characteristic of Philippine languages in general and discourse topicality can affect the choice of ang-phrases. But the balance between the two factors, in other words, which factor primarily affects the choice or how strong patient-orientedness works seem to be different among Philippine languages. For example, in languages like Tagalog, patient orientedness affects the choice primarily over discourse topicality, as illustrated in (40), but in languages like Cebuano, the actor focus sentence corresponding to (41a) is not only grammatical when it occurs alone, but possible in discourse like (41) (Katagiri 2002). Thus, the choice of the ang-phrase is made in terms of sentential or discourse topicality and an independent grammatical constraint of patient-orientedness, and also in terms of their balance between them, which can vary depending on language or transitivity of verbs, etc., which makes identification of the nature of the ang-phrase difficult.

3. Concluding remarks

In this paper, we discussed topichood or topicality of the ang-phrase in Philippine languages in terms of its distribution and occurrence in various constructions and in

discourse, in comparison with those of topic in other languages like Japanese. We have seen that occurrence of ang-phrases in the environment in which an ang-phrase obligatorily occurs such as in basic sentences and equational sentences is strongly affected by patient-orientedness, characteristic of Philippine languages in general, and thus exhibits little similarity with that of topic in other languages. On the other hand, in the environment in which an ang-phrase does not occur has significant similarity with the one in which topic does not occur in other languages. In discourse, actor-orientedness is observable in neutral context in which discourse topic is yet to be established, but patient-orientedness also affects here, depending on transitivity of verbs, etc.

Thus, one of the difficulties in identifying the nature of the ang-phrase lies in the fact that its choice is made not only in terms of topicality itself, but also of patient-orientedness, and the relational balance between these factors. Also, the degrees of how strong these factors work seem to be different among Philippine languages, depending on the degrees of patient-orientedness, of grammaticalization into subject, etc. In languages like Cebuano, for example, patient-orientedness does not work as strong a grammatical constraint as in Tagalog, and thus, topicality rather than patient-orientedness might play a central role in the choice of the ang-phrase.

Since the notion topic itself is vague one, there is limitation in identifying a certain category as topic within the language(s). Rather, it will be more useful and fruitful if we compare it with prototypical topic in other languages in terms of its distributions, behaviors, meanings, etc. not only in sentences but also in discourse. The variations and typological differences among more different languages as well as different Philippine language await further studies.

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