

On Tagalog *na* ‘already’, *lang* ‘only’, and *na lang* ‘instead’

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1 Introduction

Today: We discuss the Tagalog adverbs *na* 'already,' *lang* 'only,' and their interaction.

Na and *lang* are both second-position clitics, a common feature of the Austronesian languages of the Philippines, including Tagalog.

(1) a. Umi~inom **ka** **na** **rin daw** ng alak.

AV.IPFV~drink 2SG.NOM already also EVID GEN alcohol

'You're also drinking alcohol now (somebody said).'

b. Hindi **ka** **na** **rin daw** umi~inom ng alak.

NEG 2SG.NOM already also EVID AV.IPFV~drink GEN alcohol

'You're also no longer drinking alcohol (somebody said).'

As seen in (1), there are pronominal clitics and adverbial clitics, including the adverbial *na*. All clitics follow negation in (1b). Certain fronted XPs also attract clitics as we will see later.

- The order of multiple clitics within a cluster is (mostly) fixed, based on their type (pronoun vs adverbial) and phonological shape.

(2) **The order of Tagalog second-position clitics:**

1 σ pronouns < 1 σ adverbs < 2+ σ adverbs < 2 σ pronouns

See e.g. Schachter 1973 and Schachter and Otnes 1972 pp. 411–414.

- (3) a. Umi~inom lang **ako** ng tsaa. * ... **ako lang** ...
 AV.IPFV~drink only 1SG.NOM GEN tea
 'I'm only drinking tea.'
- b. Umi~inom **ka** lang ng tsaa. * ... **lang ka** ...
 AV.IPFV~drink 2SG.NOM only GEN tea
 'You're only drinking tea.'

- ▶ The linear position of clitic adverbs is determined postsyntactically based on phonological factors (Richards, 2003; Anderson, 2009; Kaufman, 2010), and therefore does not transparently reflect their interpreted scope.

2 On *na* 'already'

Tagalog *na* appears to parallel the behavior of well-studied temporal particles in many other languages, such as German *schon*, Mandarin sentence-final *le*, and certain uses of English *already*; see e.g. Löbner 1989; Krifka 2000; Soh and Gao 2008.

Schachter and Otanes (1972) describe a number of uses of *na*, which generally fall into two categories:

- (4) a. **Change of state:** Prejacent was false at a prior time
- b. **Scalar:** Prejacent reflects events occurring earlier than expected
- (5) Naglu~luto **na** ako.
 AV.IPFV~cook already 1SG.NOM
- a. 'I cook now.' (habitual) ~ I used to not cook.
- b. 'I'm already cooking now.' (progressive) ~ There was an expectation that I would be cooking later.

2.1 Change of state

We follow Löbner's (1989) analysis for the change-of-state (COS) meaning of *na*:

- (6) $na_{\text{COS}}(p)$:
 - a. Asserts: p is true
 - b. Presupposes: p is false at a (contextually relevant) prior time

- (7) a. Naglu~luto **na** ako.
 AV.IPFV~COOK already 1SG.NOM
 'I cook now.' ~ I used to not cook Imperfective (habitual)
- b. Ma-tanda **na** si lola.
 ADJ-old already NOM.P grandma
 'Grandma is old (now).' ~ she wasn't old before Non-verbal predicate (stative)
- c. [Bukas]_F ka **na** <um>alis!
 tomorrow 2SG.NOM already <AV>leave
 'Leave tomorrow!' ~ e.g., instead of today Imperative with focused adverb

- ▶ The change of state meaning is compatible with but does not require an ‘earlier than expected’ inference:

(7b) Ma-tanda **na** si lola.
ADJ-old already NOM.P grandma
‘Grandma is old (now).’

Non-verbal predicate (Stative)

- (8) Context: We are planning a yearly family vacation and I remind everyone not to schedule too many activities in consideration of our 70-year-old grandmother. ✓ (7b)

2.2 Scalar

For uses of *na* that introduce an ‘earlier than expected’ inference, we propose the following informal analysis, in the spirit of [Krifka 2000](#); [Ippolito 2007](#); [Neeleman and van de Koot 2021](#)

(9) $na_{\text{SCAL}}(p)(C)$:

a. Asserts: p is true

b. Presupposes: p is “low” with respect to a contextually determined temporal ordering

The temporal ordering is induced on a set of alternatives to a focused constituent in the sentence. If no focused constituent is available, we assume that the alternatives vary with respect to a covert time variable, following [Ippolito 2007](#).

The 'earlier than expected' use is compatible with various aspects and predicate types:

- (10) a. Naglu~luto **na** ako.
AV.IPFV~cook already 1SG.NOM
'I am already cooking.' Imperfective (Progressive)
- b. Nag-luto **na** ako.
AV.PFV-cook already 1SG.NOM
'I have (already) cooked.' Perfective
- c. Maglu~luto **na** ako.
AV.FUT~cook already 1SG.NOM
'I'm going to cook (imminently).' Future
- d. Mag-luto ka **na**.
AV-cook 2SG.NOM already
'(Hurry up and) Cook.' Imperative
- e. [Bukas]_F **na** da~rating si Maria.
tomorrow already FUT~arrive(AV) NOM.P Maria
'It's already tomorrow that Maria will arrive.' (There isn't much time left)
Focused point-time adverb

2.3 Summary

Multiple uses of *na* can be categorized into two general core denotations

- (11) a. **Change of state:** Prejacent was false at a prior time
b. **Scalar:** Prejacent reflects events occurring earlier than expected \sim Focus sensitive

3 On *lang* 'only'

Lang (and its variant *lamang*) is a focus particle with both exclusive and scalar uses, similar to English *only* (Schachter and Otones, 1972; Richards, 2019).

Focus association is typically with a fronted focus constituent (12a), otherwise *lang* associates with the predicate or a postverbal argument (12b); see also Richards 2019

- (12) a. [Si Christine]_F **lang** ang k<um>a~kain ng gulay.
NOM.P Christine only NOM AV.IPFV~eat GEN vegetable
'Only [Christine]_F eats vegetables.' (Nobody else eats vegetables)
- b. K<um>a~kain **lang** si Christine [ng gulay]_F.
AV.IPFV~eat only NOM.P Christine GEN vegetable
'Christine only eats [vegetables]_F.' (They don't eat other things)

► *Lang* also has purely scalar uses.

(13) Context: Various kinds of people compete together in this race. There is a unique winner.

{ Di-kilalang tao / #Magaling na atleta } **lang** iyong nanalo sa karera.

unknown person skillful LK athlete only NOM won OBL race

'The winner of the race was only/merely an unknown person.' (scalar / #exclusive)

The felicitous use of *lang* in this context, and its compatibility with 'an unknown person' but not with 'a skilled athlete,' indicates the possibility of purely scalar uses of *lang*, which plays a role in our discussion below.

- ▶ We adopt from Coppock and Beaver 2014 a unified account of exclusive and scalar uses of *only*-like particles:

(14) $lang(p)(C)$

- a. asserts: no true alternative in C is stronger than p ($\neg \exists q \in C [q(w^*) \wedge q >_C p]$)
- b. presupposes: some true alternative in C is at least as strong as p ($\exists q \in C [q(w^*) \wedge q \geq_C p]$)

The two uses vary in the type of ordering used over their alternatives:

(15) Basis for ordering $>_C$

- a. Logical strength \rightsquigarrow Exclusive use
- b. Contextual rank order \rightsquigarrow Scalar use

4 On *na lang* ‘instead’

- The combination of *na* and *lang* can be used in contexts where it invites the English translation ‘instead.’ This use has not been described in prior work to our knowledge.

- (16) [Mag-lu~luto]_F **na** **lang** ako bukas
AV-FUT~COOK already only 1SG.NOM tomorrow
‘I will [cook]_F tomorrow instead.’ (e.g. instead of eating out)
- (17) [Bukas]_F **na** **lang** ako mag-lu~luto.
tomorrow already only 1sg AV-FUT~COOK
‘I will cook [tomorrow]_F instead.’ (e.g. instead of another day)

There are also uses of *na lang* that appear to more transparently reflect the contributions of *na* 'already' and *lang* 'only':

(18) [English]_F **na** **lang** ang alam niya.

English already only NOM know 3SG.GEN

'S/he only knows English now.' (S/he knew additional languages before.)

- We propose that the ‘instead’ use of *na lang* is derived compositionally from the meanings of *na* and *lang*.

Recall that there are two varieties of *na* (na_{COS} and na_{SCAL}) and that their word order does not clearly reflect their scope. We propose:

§4.1 *Na* in *na lang* is always na_{COS} , not na_{SCAL} .

§4.2 *Na* always takes scope over *lang*.

§4.3 *Lang* in *na lang* as ‘instead’ is (scalar) ‘only.’

► This result is predicted by the compositional semantics of focus:

- Recall that na_{SCAL} (9) and $lang$ (14) make reference to C , but not na_{COS} (6). C is the set of focus alternatives.
- Once one focus operator associates with focus, the set of alternatives C above that is “reset,” making association with the same alternatives by a higher focus operator not possible. (A so-called “focus intervention effect” of Beck 2006.)

⇒ na_{SCAL} and $lang$ cannot compose one after another, attempting to reference the same focus alternatives. In contrast, na_{COS} and $lang$ can cooccur, because na_{COS} is not focus-sensitive.

4.2 On the scope of *na* and *lang*

- We propose that *na* always takes scope over *lang* when they cooccur. Evidence comes from examples where their individual contributions are more transparent:

(21) [English]_F **na** **lang** ang alam niya.

English already only NOM know 3SG.GEN

'S/he only knows English now.'

= (18)

- (22) a. Context (lost all but one): This person used to speak several languages, but got into an accident and suffered a brain injury. Because of this, they've lost the ability speak all those languages except for English. (Predicts "*na* > *lang*" true.) ✓ (21)
- b. Context (acquired only one): A child is growing up in a multilingual environment. After some time, they're able to speak English, but not any of the other languages yet. (Predicts "*lang* > *na*" true.) # (21)

4.3 The *lang* in *na lang*

Recall that *lang* allows for both exclusive and scalar readings, which we treat as reflecting different orderings over the alternatives $>_C$, following Coppock and Beaver 2014.

- ▶ Uses of *na lang* which appear to transparently reflect $na_{\text{cos}}>$ ‘only’ as in (21) involve exhaustive ‘only’ ($>_C$ reflecting logical strength).
- ▶ Uses that invite translations into English *instead* appear to involve scalar ‘only’ ($>_C$ contextually determined).

Evidence comes from scalar asymmetries in “desirability” in ‘instead’ uses:

(23) Ang { TA / #propesor } **na lang** ang mag-tu~turo ng klaseng ito.

NOM TA professor already only NOM AV-FUT~teach GEN class this

a. ‘(The professor was supposed to teach this class, but now...) the TA will teach it instead.’

b. # ‘(The TA was supposed to teach this class, but now...) the professor will teach it instead.’

(23b) introduces a strong inference that the change is undesirable, which is not supported by (our own) expectations regarding the relative desirability of professor- versus TA-taught classes, making the use of *na lang* infelicitous.

5 Summary

Today we discussed the fine-grained semantics of *na* 'already' and *lang* 'only,' described in prior work such as [Schachter and Otnes 1972](#), as well as their combination *na lang* which sometimes invites the English translation 'instead,' and which has not been previously described.

- *Na* allows for both change-of-state and 'earlier than expected' uses, the latter especially when some material is focused. We assume this reflects two homophonous senses of *na*.
- ▶ Consideration of semantic composition correctly predicts that *na lang* involves change-of-state *na* and therefore never introduces 'earlier than expected' inferences.
- The relative scope of clitic adverbs in Tagalog can be fixed, with *na* > *lang*, as independently verified by more transparent uses of *na lang*.