

Association with *lang* ‘only’ in Tagalog

Only in languages like English famously associates with focused material to its right:

- (1) a. I **only** gave MY daughter a cookie.
 b. I **only** gave my DAUGHTER a cookie.
 c. I **only** gave my daughter a COOKIE.

The contribution of *only* is to assert that the alternatives to the focused constituent are false; (1a), for example, asserts that I did not give anyone else’s daughter a cookie, while (1b) asserts that I did not give any other members of my family a cookie.

In English, as (1) shows, association between *only* and focus may take place over some distance. In Hungarian, by contrast, the focused phrase must move to be near *csak* ‘only’:

- (2) a. Mari **csak** A FOGADÁS-RÓL késett el [Horvath 2005]
 Mary only the reception-from late.was away
 ‘Mary was only late for THE RECEPTION’
 b. * Mari **csak** elkésett A FOGADÁS-RÓL

If *csak* ‘only’ were not present, the word order in (2b) would be permissible, but with *csak* ‘only’ included, the word order in (2a) is forced.

This talk has two goals: first, the descriptive goal of establishing that Tagalog patterns with Hungarian, and not with English; and second, the more theoretical goal of using the behavior of Tagalog *lang* to probe the phrase structure of the Tagalog clause.

Tagalog=Hungarian

In Tagalog, the word for ‘only’ is a second-position clitic. Like its Hungarian counterpart, it cannot associate with non-adjacent foci:

- (3) a.* Nagbigay lang ako ng bisikleta kay JUAN.
 NOM.gave only ANG.I NG bicycle DAT Juan
 ‘I only gave JUAN a bicycle.’
 b. Si JUAN lang ang binigyan ko ng bisikleta
 ANG Juan only ANG DAT.gave NG.I NG bicycle
 ‘JUAN is the only one I gave a bicycle to.’

The string of words in (3a) is well-formed, but it cannot have the intended interpretation, in which *lang* associates with the focused *Juan*, and indicates that alternatives to *Juan* make the sentence false. To get this interpretation, *Juan* must be clefted, as in (3b).

The clefted material does not have to be entirely focused; it may contain a focused element which pied-pipes the rest of the phrase, as in (4):

- (4) *Scenario*: I am on a rather peculiar diet that restricts what I can eat; I can have chocolate, bread, and pansit which has been aged for several days after being cooked. Someone offers me some freshly cooked pansit. I refuse, explaining:
 a.* Puwede ko lang kumain ng LUMA-NG pansit
 can NG.I only NOM.eat NG old-LI pansit
 b. LUMA-NG pansit lang ang puwede ko-ng kainin
 old-LI pansit only ANG can NG.I-LI ACC.eat
 ‘I can only eat *old* pansit’

As in (3), the (a) example is ill-formed; *lang* cannot associate with non-fronted material. (4b) shows that the focus may be a subpart of the fronted material; in the scenario described, there are several foods that I can eat besides old pansit, but the only kind of pansit that I can eat is the old kind. Focus is therefore on the adjective, and not on the entire fronted DP.

Lang may also associate with the fronted predicate:

- (5) BIBILI lang ako ng balut (hindi ko kakainin)
NOM.will.buy only ANG.I NG balut not NG.I ACC.will.eat
'I'll just BUY balut (I'm not going to EAT it)'

In other words, the requirement that *lang* be adjacent to the material containing the focus can be satisfied syntactically in several ways, either by clefting as in (3b) and (4b), or by predicate fronting as in (5). We see similar behavior for wh-movement in Tagalog, which involves clefting for DPs (6a) and fronting for non-DPs (6b):

- (6) a. Sino ang binigyan mo ng bisikleta?
who ANG DAT.gave NG.you NG bicycle
'Who did you give a bicycle to?'
b. Kanino mo ibinigay ang bisikleta?
DAT.who NG.you OBL.gave ANG bicycle
'To whom did you give a bicycle?'

See Richards (2010, 2016) for an account in which movement can be driven by the need to create phonological proximity between the Probe and the Goal (rather than, for example, by the need to provide the Probe with a specifier). On such an account, we expect to find examples like these, in which a Probe can have its needs satisfied by any of several different kinds of movement.

***Lang* and phrase structure**

A striking fact about *lang*'s association with predicates is that the predicates with which it associates need not be linearly contiguous. *Lang* can be used to focus VPs, as in (7):

- (7) *Scenario*: Juan is complaining that nothing interesting is happening at his house.
NAGBABASA lang NG LIBRO si Maria,
NOM.reading only NG book ANG Maria
at NAGHUHUGAS lang NG MGA PINGGAN si Pedro.
and NOM.washing only NG PL dish ANG Pedro
'Maria is just READING A BOOK, and Pedro is just WASHING THE DISHES.'

The example in (7) involves focus on VP (and not, for example, on entire coordinated clause. Focus on the first of the clauses would involve a claim that the clause describes the only salient thing which is happening, and this would be inconsistent with the second clause). Since *lang* is a second position clitic, its placement in the middle of the focused phrases in (7) is not surprising. More interesting is the fact that the reading in (7) persists in VSO order, as in (8):

- (7) *Scenario*: Juan is complaining that nothing interesting is happening at his house.
NAGBABASA lang si Maria NG LIBRO,
NOM.reading only ANG Maria NG book
at NAGHUHUGAS lang si Pedro NG MGA PINGGAN .
and NOM.washing only ANG Pedro NG PL dish
'Maria is just READING A BOOK, and Pedro is just WASHING THE DISHES.'

In (7), *lang* associates with a linearly non-contiguous VP; the scrambling operation that produces VSO order does not destroy the VP constituent, from the standpoint of the conditions on *lang*. We can conclude that even VSO sentences contain a VP.

References

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