

Resolving the controversy over subject and voice in Tagalog
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1 Introduction

The syntax of Philippine languages, of which Tagalog is the most thoroughly studied, has several unusual characteristics that have challenged common linguistic concepts such as subject, voice, and active voice. This has led to controversies among linguists over the nature of the Philippine voice system that appear to have started with McKaughan (1958), and which have continued into the 21st century (Ross and Teng 2005). The following sentences from Schachter (1976:494–495) have been famously used to illustrate these unusual characteristics in Tagalog (interlinear glosses are mine, as they will be throughout this paper):¹

(1) a. *Active voice*²

Mag-aalis	ang	babae	ng	bigas	sa	sako
Mag-a~alis	ang	babae	ng	bigas	sa	sako
ACT.IRR~NPFV~remove	NOM	woman	GEN	rice	DAT	sack

para	sa	bata
para	sa	bata
for	DAT	child

‘The woman will take rice out of a/the sack for a/the child.’

b. *Direct passive voice*

Aalis-in	ng	babae	ang	bigas	sa	sako
Ø-A~alis-in	ng	babae	ang	bigas	sa	sako
IRR~NPFV~remove~DPASS	GEN	woman	NOM	rice	DAT	sack

¹ Abbreviations in glosses follow Leipzig Glossing Rules. Non-standard abbreviations: AIA = Ability/Involuntary-Action, INT = intensifier, GER = gerund, LNK = linker (see Schachter and Otnes 1972:107–108), R = realis, RPFV = recent-perfective.

² The original example in Schachter (1976) has “mag-salis” instead of *mag-aalis*. According to English (1986:37), it is *mag-alis* that means ‘to remove’; according to Schachter and Otnes (1972:361–363), the corresponding form for irrealis mood, or “contemplative aspect” (Schachter and Otnes’ terminology) would be *mag-aalis*. “Mag-salis” is not found in English (1986). Furthermore, following Tagalog orthography, the hyphen suggests that a vowel is supposed to follow *mag-*. I have therefore corrected it here.

para sa bata
para sa bata
for DAT child

‘A/The woman will take the rice out of the sack for a/the child.’

c. *Indirect passive voice*

Aalis–an	ng	babae	ng	bigas	ang	sako
Ø–A~alis–an	ng	babae	ng	bigas	ang	sako
IRR–NPFV~remove–IPASS	GEN	woman	GEN	rice	NOM	sack

para sa bata
para sa bata
for DAT child

‘A/The woman will take some rice out of the sack for the child.’

In each of the voices in (1), an affix on the verb (*mag-*, *-in*, and *-an* respectively) indicates which of the verb’s arguments must be in the nominative case. The nominative argument, indicated by the preposition *ang*, is the subject. There can be at most one nominative argument, and therefore one subject, in a clause.

To linguists more familiar with Indo-European languages, Tagalog subjects seem unusual because of the variety of their semantic roles; given the flexibility of the voice system, often every argument of a Tagalog verb can be the subject in some voice, as (1a–c) illustrate. In fact, Schachter (1976) believes that an “argument in favor of identifying the actor as the subject may be built upon the fact . . . that the actor” — *babae* ‘woman’ in (1a–c) — “is quite regularly translated by the surface subject of an active sentence in English.” On a more technical level, the subject seems difficult to identify in Tagalog because, in voices such as (1b) and (c), morphosyntactic properties that are commonly associated with subjects are split between the nominative argument (*bigas* ‘rice’ in 1b and *sako* ‘sack’ in 1c) and the actor (*babae* ‘woman’ in 1b and c). Some linguists interpret this to mean that the nominative argument is not the subject; for example, Carrie-Duncan (1985) argues that the nominative NP is a topic, rather than a subject.

Because alternations like (1a–c) essentially differ by assigning the nominative case to different arguments, those who do not agree that the nominative marker indicates the subject relation do not see these alternations as affecting the assignment of syntactic relations at all. And since voice alternations must affect the assignment of syntactic relations, they do not see alternations such as (1a–c) as voice alternations. Even for linguists who identify the subject as the nominative argument, and who recognize (1a–c) as voices, the active voice seems difficult to identify, due to several unusual features. Unlike in most languages, in Tagalog, all voices are expressed by overt morphology; passive voices occur more frequently than the active voice; and, for some verbs, the active voice is either restricted in usage, or absent altogether.

These challenges have led to the use of idiosyncratic terminology specific to the literature on Philippine languages. This Philippinist terminological convention refers to subjects as “focus/topic,” thereby avoiding the term “voice.” It also refers to sentences such as those in (1a–c) respectively as “actor focus/topic,” “patient focus/topic,” and “direction focus/topic,” naming each voice after the semantic role of its subject. These terms replace the more mainstream terms “active voice,” “direct passive voice”, and “indirect passive voice.” Besides being labels for semantic roles, the terms “actor,” “patient,” and “direction” also have a syntactic significance: in the actor focus/topic (1a), “actor” refers to the nominative argument, “patient” refers to the genitive argument, and “direction” refers to the dative argument.

Despite the challenges Tagalog poses to the mainstream syntactic concepts of subject, voice, and active voice, these concepts should not be abandoned in favour of idiosyncratic ones specific to Philippine languages. These challenges have only arisen

because mainstream concepts are ill-defined, and difficult to apply unambiguously to diverse languages. The solution, therefore, is to develop and follow simple, unambiguous definitions of these mainstream concepts. While applying these definitions does require examining the morphosyntax of a language in detail, they provide a clear path in resolving controversies such as those that have plagued the Philippine literature.

In Section 2, I will argue in the following sections that the nominative argument is the subject, that sentences such as (1a–c) are voice alternations, and that the actor focus/topic should be properly identified as the active voice. This analysis emerges when simple, unambiguous definitions of the relevant concepts are followed. The subject should be defined as the grammatical relation with the greatest number of morphosyntactic properties, or the most syntactically-privileged grammatical relation (Manning 1996, Iordanskaja and Mel'čuk 2000). Then, in Section 3, I will define voice as the modification to a verb's *diathesis* (its mapping of semantic arguments to grammatical relations) that nevertheless preserve the verb's propositional meaning (Mel'čuk 2006). Finally, in Section 4, I will define the active voice as the voice with the verb's *basic diathesis*, a diathesis that by some morphosyntactic means differentiates itself categorically as the default diathesis of the verb. With these definitions, Tagalog will emerge as a language with a fairly recognizable syntactic alignment that, while exhibiting some unique features, does not require terminology that is completely different from those used to describe the world's other languages.

2 Subject

2.1 Defining subjecthood

There are three main analyses of Tagalog subjecthood in the literature. These three analyses are best illustrated by referring to (2a–b), which are reproduced from (1a–b), and which I analyzed as the active voice and the direct passive voice:

(2) a. *Active voice*

Mag–aalis	ang	babae	ng	bigas	sa	sako
Mag–a~alis	ang	babae	ng	bigas	sa	sako
ACT.IRR–NPFV~remove	NOM	woman	GEN	rice	DAT	sack

para sa bata
para sa bata
for DAT child

‘The woman will take rice out of a/the sack for a/the child.’

b. *Direct passive voice*

Aalis–in	ng	babae	ang	bigas	sa	sako
Ø–A~alis–in	ng	babae	ang	bigas	sa	sako
IRR–NPFV~remove–DPASS	GEN	woman	NOM	rice	DAT	sack

para sa bata
para sa bata
for DAT child

‘A/The woman will take the rice out of the sack for a/the child.’

The three analyses are as follows (adopted from Kroeger 1993):

1. Tagalog has no subject (Schachter 1976, Foley and Van Valin 1984);
2. Subject is the nominative argument in the active voice, and the corresponding genitive arguments in passives (*babae* in both 2a and b) (Carrie-Duncan 1985);
3. Subject is the nominative argument in both active and passive voices (*babae* in 2a and *bigas* in b) (Bloomfield 1917, Blake 1925, Shibatani 1988).

In order to determine which analysis is correct, it is necessary to settle on a clear definition of subject, a definition that can be straightforwardly applied to any language,

while being consistent with the traditional intuition of subjecthood. The first two analyses arise mainly from a vague characterization of the subject. The subject is often understood as referring to 1) the single core argument of intransitive clauses and the actor argument of transitive clauses, in accusative languages only (Ross and Teng 2005:752); or 2) the grammatical relation that possesses some sufficient number of the morphosyntactic properties typically associated with subjects (Keenan 1976). The first sense is incomplete; as given, it is circular, since a definition of subject is required to identify accusative languages in the first place. The second sense does not specify how many subject properties a subject must have; at best, it produces ambiguous decisions, characterizing grammatical relations merely as more or less subject-like. Specifically, it makes no pronouncements on what to do when some of these typical subject properties are found to belong to one grammatical relation, but other properties are found to belong to another. Such is the case in Tagalog.

Therefore, I will use an alternate definition: the subject of a language is the most syntactically-privileged syntactic relation (Mel'čuk 1988:161–162). This notion of the subject (also known as the “basic” subject) is the syntactic relation with the largest number of morphosyntactic properties in the “most current and simplest type of sentences” in a language, as well as the syntactic relation in other non-basic constructions that shares the most properties with this basic subject (Mel'čuk 1988:162–163). For the purposes of this paper, the subset of the “most current and simplest type of sentences” (also known as the *basic sentence*) that will be considered is the simple, declarative, finite, active voice clause, such as (2a). This definition is a refinement on past definitions of subject. The notion of the subject as the most privileged relation is explained in detail in

Mel'čuk (1988), who calls this the "Surface-Syntactic Subject"; it is also mentioned in Manning (1996:17).³ The practice of defining a basic sentence type in which the subject appears in Keenan (1976). Schachter and Otnes (1972) also refer to a basic sentence to define "topic" (their name for the Tagalog subject).⁴ The definition in this paper does deviate somewhat from Mel'čuk (1988), who describes the most syntactically-privileged syntactic relation as one that has "(roughly) all" the morphosyntactic properties of all other syntactic relations, plus some that belong to it exclusively. This assumes that there will be a syntactic relation that fits this description, and is therefore a less widely-applicable criterion than the requirement to simply have the most properties.

Defining the subject this way has three major advantages: it is unambiguous (leaving little room for uncertainty), backwards-compatible (identifies most of the same subjects that linguists have historically recognized), and widely-applicable (can be applied to every language with grammatical relations). Its unambiguousness is made possible partly by its purely syntactic nature. Its compatibility with previously-identified subjects suggests that it captures the most essential, common aspect of the concept of subject, as it has been generally understood (for example, see its application to French in Iordanskaja and Mel'čuk 2000). Finally, its wide applicability stems both from the fact that it does not stipulate what specific properties subjects should have, and from the fact that there is almost always at least one syntactic relation that is the *most* privileged.

³ Manning (1996:19) believes that "an adequate linguistic theory also needs another notion of subjecthood — the more semantic one." I, however, will restrict subjecthood to the purely syntactic definition, and regard any semantic correlations as merely correlates.

⁴ However, since Schachter and Otnes (1972) do not identify an active voice, they consider passive voices to be basic sentences as well.

2.2 *Evaluating competing analyses of the Tagalog subject*

We can now use this definition of subject to evaluate each of the three analyses. The first analysis claims that Tagalog has no subject. Such claims (e.g. Schachter 1996, Foley and Van Valin 1984) seem to be motivated by the absence of properties typical of subjects, in any Tagalog argument; that is, they adopt the subject definition from Keenan (1976). Linguists who avoid the term “subject” in Tagalog often label the nominative argument “topic” (Schachter and Otones 1972, Schachter 1976) or “focus” (Foley and Van Valin 1984). With our current definition, however, subjects need not have any particular properties, but must simply have the greatest number. Thus, this avoidance of the term “subject” becomes unnecessary. Moreover, calling nominative arguments in Tagalog “focus” or “topic” is inaccurate and misleading; as Kroeger (1993:2–5) shows, they do not correspond to pragmatic focus or pragmatic topic. In any case, even if the nominative argument did resemble pragmatic focus or pragmatic topic, this would not prevent it from being the subject, as they are not mutually exclusive concepts (Mel’čuk 2006:245).⁵ Schachter, who himself uses the term Topic for the nominative argument, points out that he and other Philippinists only use the term consistently to mean that the nominative argument “is always ‘definite’” (1976:496–497). And definiteness, far from precluding subjecthood, is in fact often associated with it (Keenan 1976:319).

This leaves the second and third analyses. The second analysis claims that the subject is the actor, in all voices, while the third analysis claims that the subject is the nominative argument, in all voices. Since in the active voice the actor is also the nominative argument, both analyses agree that this nominative actor is the subject in the

⁵ To be exact, Mel’čuk (2006:245) only observes that pragmatic focus and subject are not mutually exclusive, and does not mention pragmatic topic.

active voice. However, in passive voices, the two analyses differ: the second analysis chooses the non-nominative actor for the subject, while the third analysis chooses the non-actor nominative argument instead. To resolve this, we must determine which argument in passive voices shares the most syntactic properties with the basic subject. The basic subject is the active voice subject, or the nominative actor, whose properties include all those belonging to non-nominative actors (with the obvious exception of case), and all those belonging to the non-actor nominative arguments; thus, the task simplifies to determining which passive voice argument has the most morphosyntactic properties.

In their attempts to identify the passive voice subject, Schachter (1976), Kroeger (1993, 1993b), and Schachter (1996) have collectively examined 14 morphosyntactic properties. Below, I examine the data and argumentation these studies present for each property, and determine, where possible, which argument has that property:⁶

1. Relativization

An argument in a grammatical relation that is *relativizable* can become the head of a relative clause. When the verb in the relative clause is in the passive, it is its nominative argument, and not its actor, that can be relativized:

- (3) a. *batang* *binigyan* *ng lalake ng isda*
 bata=ng \emptyset ~b<in>igay-an *ng lalake ng isda*
 child=REL PFV~<R>give-IPASS GEN man GEN fish
 ‘the child who was given fish by the man’

⁶ Shibatani (1988:115–130) carries out a similar investigation into the subject of Cebuano, and also determines that the “topic” argument to be a subject.

relative clause is the subject. Each headless relative clause targets the nominative argument of the verb: in (4), the headless relative clause is *ang binili mo*, literally ‘the one you (sg.) bought.’ Thus the nominative argument of *binili* (passive of *bumili* ‘buy’) is relativized, and *ano*, as the nominal predicate, refers to it. Similarly, in (5), the headless relative clause is *ang tinanong niya*, literally ‘the one he asked’; the nominative argument of *tinanong* (passive of *magtanong* ‘ask’) is relativized, and *sino*, as the nominal predicate, refers to it. It is thus the nominative argument that is the target of non-polar questions.

Though far more infrequent, it is also possible in Tagalog for actors to be targets in passive-voice in situ non-polar questions (e.g., 2a–c). Schachter and Otnes (1972:505,512) notes that this question construction is far less frequent than the cleft construction. The following two passive-voice questions illustrate this below:

- (6) a. *Binasa ni Jeff ang ano?*
 Ø~B<in>asa-Ø ni Jeff ang ano
 PFV~<R>read-DPASS GEN Jeff NOM what.NOM
 ‘What did Jeff read?’

(Mayr 2006 example 3, in Gerassimova and Sells 2008:195)

In contrast with the cleft construction of (5), the structure of (6a) is that of a basic sentence (e.g., 1a–c): (6a) begins with a verb *binasa* ‘read’, followed by the verb’s arguments. And, also in contrast with the cleft construction, the genitive agentive complement can also be the target of non-polar questions in this basic sentence syntax, as can be seen in (6b):

- b. *Ginawa nino ang sapatos na iyon?*
 Ø~G<in>awa-Ø nino ang sapatos na iyon
 PFV~<R>make-DPASS who.GEN NOM shoe REL that
 ‘Who made those shoes?’ (lit. ‘those shoes were made by whom?’)

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:512)

In (6b), the target is expressed by the interrogative pronoun *nino*, which is the genitive-case actor. This is not an option for non-polar questions with the cleft construction. Thus, questions in the declarative word order do not uniquely target actors or nominative arguments, and are therefore irrelevant to our current task of determining whether actors or nominative arguments are subjects. Only non-polar questions in cleft construction, whose usage appears to be more general, differentiate between the actors and the nominative arguments for their targets, and there it is the nominative arguments that are always the targets.

3. *Quantifier float*

An argument in a grammatical relation with the property known as “quantifier float” in Kroeger (1993b:22) is an argument that can be modified by a quantifier that is not adjacent to any argument, but is adjacent to the verb. In Tagalog, the quantifier *lahat* ‘all’ can sometimes appear separate from all noun phrases, as in (7):

- (7) Sinusulat lahat ng mga bata ang mga liham
 S<in>u~sulat-Ø lahat ng mga bata ang mga liham
 <R>NPFV~write all GEN PL child NOM PL letter
 ‘The/Some children write all the letters.’
 *‘All the children are writing letters.’

(Schachter 1976:501, in Kroeger 1993:5)

In (7), *lahat* ‘all’ is separate from both *mga bata* ‘children’ and *mga liham* ‘letters’ (its separation from *mga bata* is evidenced by its position in front of the genitive marker *ng*; see Schachter and Otnes 1972:147–148 for details). However, *lahat* can only be interpreted as a modifier of the nominative argument *mga liham*, and not the actor *mga bata*. Schachter and Otnes (1972:148) also state that *lahat* always refers to the

nominative argument, despite being a syntactic modifier of the verb. This is therefore another property that belongs to the nominative argument in a passive voice.

4. Control of secondary predicates

“Secondary predicates” (Kroeger 1993b:30) refer to adjectives that are not adjacent to the nominal arguments they modify, but follow the verb and the linking particle *na*. A grammatical relation has this property — which Kroeger (1993b:30) refers to as “control of secondary predicates” — if its argument can be semantically modified by a secondary predicate. Kroeger (1993:7) gives the following examples of secondary predicates:

- (8) a. Inihain na hilaw ni Maria ang isda
 I-ni-Ø~hain na hilaw ni Maria ang isda
 DPASS-<R>-PFV~serve LNK raw GEN Maria NOM fish
 ‘Maria served the fish raw. (The fish was raw)’
- b. #Inihain na lasing ni Maria ang isda
 I-ni-Ø~hain na lasing ni Maria ang isda
 DPASS-<R>-PFV~serve LNK drunk GEN Maria NOM fish
 #‘Maria served the fish drunk. (The fish was drunk)’

The secondary predicates in these examples are *hilaw* ‘raw’ in (8a), and *lasing* ‘drunk’ in (8b). Both follow the verb *inihain* ‘served’ and the linker *na*. In both sentences, the secondary predicates apply to *isda* ‘fish,’ the nominative argument, and not to *Maria*, the actor. This is true even when the secondary predicate can only modify the actor without resulting in a strange meaning; thus, in (8b), *lasing* cannot be interpreted as modifying the actor *Maria* (i.e. Maria is drunk), even though it would make sense. Instead, the only possible interpretation is the strange one, that *lasing* modifies the nominative argument

isda (i.e. the fish is drunk). This shows that it is nominative arguments, and not agentive complements, that can be modified by secondary predicates.

5. Subject elision in coordinate clauses

An argument in a coordinate clause can undergo subject elision in coordinate clauses — what Kroeger (1993b:33) refers to as “conjunction reduction” — if it can be elided in one of the clauses, with the resulting gap referring to an argument from the other clause (Kroeger 1993:8). This is illustrated in (9a–b):

- (9) a. Huhugasan ko at pupunasan
 H<Ø>u~hugas-an ko at p<Ø>u~punas-an
 <IRR>NPFV~wash-DPASS 1SG.GEN and <IRR>NPFV~wipe-DPASS
- mo ang mga pinggan
 mo ang mga pinggan
 2SG.GEN NOM PL dish
 ‘I will wash and you will dry the dishes.’
- b. ?*Niluto ang pagkain at hinugasan ang
 Ni-Ø~luto-Ø ang pagkain at Ø~h<in>ugas-an ang
 R-PFV~cook-DPASS NOM food and PFV~<R>wash-DPASS NOM
- mga pinggan ni Josie
 mga pinggan ni Josie
 PL dish GEN Josie
 ‘The food was cooked and the dishes were washed by Josie.’
- (Kroeger 1993:8)

In (9a), the nominative argument *ang mga pinggan* ‘the dishes’ can be elided in the first component clause, *huhugasan ko* ‘I will wash’; however, in (9b), the actor *Josie* cannot be similarly omitted from the clause *niluto ang pagkain* ‘the food was cooked.’ Kroeger (1993) therefore concludes that this property belongs to the nominative argument.

Kroeger (1993) argues that this is not simply an instance of pro-drop, a general phenomenon in some languages where, instead of being referenced by a pronoun,

“virtually any” argument can be optionally elided. He argues that conjunction reduction differs from pro-drop in that a conjunction reduction can occur before or after the argument it refers to, while pro-drop requires an elision to occur after the argument it refers to — that is, pro-drop must be anaphoric and conjunction reduction can be cataphoric. Thus, Kroeger (1993) claims that (9b) cannot be an example of pro-drop, and must be an example of conjunction reduction, because the actor *Josie* is elided before it is expressed. Since he claims (9b) is ungrammatical, conjunction reduction cannot apply to actors.

Schachter (1996:11), however, disputes Kroeger’s (1993) grammaticality judgment, claiming that (9b) is grammatical for his consultant. He also appears to disagree with Kroeger’s (1993) distinction between conjunction reduction and pro-drop, contending that the elision of arguments occurs quite generally in Tagalog. Schachter therefore considers this property irrelevant for Tagalog subjects.

Schachter’s (1996) grammaticality judgment of (9b) has two possible implications: either conjunction reduction is allowed for all arguments, nominative or not; or pro-drop is allowed even before the reference argument is expressed — that is, pro-drop can be cataphoric — thus implying that the sentences in (9) do not illustrate anything about conjunction reduction. In either case, Schachter (1996) and Kroeger’s (1993) disagreement on grammaticality judgment precludes making any decision about whether or not this property, if it exists, singles out any particular grammatical relation.

6. Subject elision in subordinate clauses

An argument in a subordinate clause undergoes subject elision in subordinate clauses — what Kroeger (1993b:31) refers to as “subject obviation” — if it is obligatorily or optionally elided, with the resulting gap referring to some argument in the independent clause. This is illustrated in (10a–b):

(10) a. Tinanong ni Derek si Marvin, bago umalis
 Ø~T<in>anong-Ø ni Derek si Marvin bago um-Ø~alis
 <R>PFV~ask-DPASS GEN Derek NOM Marvin before ACT-PFV~leave
 ‘Derek asked Marvin before (he) left. (Marvin left)’

b. Nagtanong si Derek kay Marvin, bago umalis
 Nag-tanong si Derek kay Marvin bago um-Ø~alis
 <R>PFV~ask-DPASS NOM Derek DAT Marvin before ACT-PFV~leave
 ‘Derek asked Marvin before (he) left. (Derek left)’

(Kroeger 1993b:31–32)

Here, Kroeger (1993b:31) claims that the implied argument of *umalis* ‘left’ is optionally elided. The resulting gap refers to the nominative argument, *Marvin*, and not the actor, *Derek*, in both (10a) and (b). Thus, he argues that this is another property of the nominative argument.

However, Schachter (1996:10) reports that his consultant interprets (10a) and (b) as being actually ambiguous about who left. Furthermore, Schachter (1996) claims that the optional elision is due to pro-drop (or “zero anaphora,” as he calls it), which he understands to be applicable to any argument. This implies that subject obviation is not a separate syntactic property.

As with conjunction reduction, Schachter and Kroeger’s disagreement about the data precludes a decision on whether subject obviation, if it exists, applies to the nominative argument or the actor.

7. *Equi/Control*

An argument in a complement clause has the property known either as *equi* (Kroeger 1993b:38) or *control* (Schachter 1996:21), if it can be controlled by some argument in the matrix clause. This is illustrated in (11):

- (11) Nag-atubili siyang hiramín ang pera
 Nag-Ø~atubili siya=ng hiram-in ang pera
 ACT.R-PFV~hesitate 3SG.NOM=COMP borrow-DPASS NOM money
- sa bangko
 sa bangko
 DAT bank
- ‘He hesitated to borrow money from the bank.’
- (Schachter 1976:514)

In (11), the actor argument slot of *hiramin* ‘to be borrowed’ is controlled by *siya* ‘3SG.NOM’; this means that *siya*, already expressed in the matrix verb, *nag-atubili*, is also automatically interpreted as the actor of the complement clause verb, *hiramin*, but is not repeated in the complement clause. Thus, as Schachter (1976) argues, *equi* is a property of the actor argument irrespective of its (potential) morphological case in the complement clause.

However, there is a type of verb which, as the head of a complement clause and in a passive voice, can allow its nominative argument to be controlled by an argument of the matrix verb. These are what Schachter and Otnes (1972:330) call “ability/involuntary-action verbs,” and what Kroeger (1993b) calls verbs in “non-volitive mood;” Schachter (1996) calls these “resultative verbs.” Here, they will be referred to as AIA verbs, as the abbreviation of the original term in Schachter and Otnes (1972). AIA verbs can differ semantically from non-AIA verbs in various ways, but they generally differ by expressing an action which may be intentional or not, but which is certain to occur (Kroeger 1993b).

Generally, AIA verbs have the same voices as the non-AIA verbs from which they are derived. The following sentences illustrate complement clauses with passive AIA verbs:

- (12) Inutusan ko si Mariang mahalikan
 In-Ø~utusan ko si Maria=ng ma-halik-an
 R-PFV~order-IPASS 1SG.GEN NOM Maria=COMP AIA-kiss-IPASS
- ni Ben
 ni Ben
 GEN Ben
- ‘I ordered Maria (to allow herself) to be kissed by Pedro.’
 (Kroeger 1993b:95)

- (13) Nag-atubili si Mariang mabigyan ng pera
 Nag-Ø~atubili si Maria=ng ma-bigay-an ng pera
 ACT.R-PFV~hesitate NOM Maria=COMP AIA-give-IPASS GEN money
- ni Ben
 ni Ben
 GEN Ben
- ‘Maria hesitated (to allow herself) to be given money by Ben.’
 (Kroeger 1993b:95)

According to Kroeger (1993b), the matrix verb *inutusan* ‘ordered’ in (12) has obligatory control, meaning that one of its arguments always controls an argument in the complement clause; *nag-atubili* ‘hesitated’ in (13), meanwhile, has non-obligatory control, meaning that there may be no controllee in its complement clause.⁸ In both examples, it is the nominative argument in the complement clause that is controlled. Both are controlled by *Maria* in the matrix clause, and neither is the actor.

Schachter (1996) concurs that non-actor nominative arguments can be controllees in complement clauses with AIA verbs. However, Schachter shows that non-nominative

⁸ As an example of a sentence with *nag-atubili* ‘hesitated’ that has no controllee in its complement clause, Kroeger (1993b) gives this example:

- (i) Nag-atubili si Mariang hiram in ni Ben ng pera
 Nag-Ø~atubili si Maria=ng hiram-in ni Ben ng pera
 ACT.R-PFV~hesitate NOM Maria=COMP borrow-DPASS GEN Ben GEN money
- ‘Maria hesitated for Ben to borrow the money.’
 (Kroeger 1993b:92)

actors of AIA verbs can also be controlled, a possibility that Kroeger (1993b) does not acknowledge:

- (14) Inutusan ko si Mariang mailuto
 In-Ø~utus-an ko si Maria=ng ma-i-luto
 R-PFV~order-IPASS 1SG.GEN NOM Maria=COMP AIA-DPASS-cook
- ang pagkain pagdating ko
 ang pagkain pag-dating ko
 NOM food GER-arrive 1SG.GEN
- ‘I ordered Maria to get the food cooked by the time I arrived.’
 (Schachter 1996:24)

Here in (14), in the complement clause, the non-nominative actor of the direct-passive AIA verb *mailuto* is controlled by *Maria*, in the matrix clause.

Finally, there is another type of control that Kroeger (1993b) puts forth as grammatical, but which Schachter (1996) deems ungrammatical. This is the case where the complement clause has a passive non-AIA verb, and where the controllee is a non-actor nominative argument:

- (15) Nagpilit si Mariang bigyan ng pera ni Ben
 Nag-Ø~pilit si Maria=ng bigay-an ng pera ni Ben
 ACT.R-NPFV~insist.on NOM Maria=COMP give-IPASS GEN money GEN Ben
 ‘Maria insisted on being given money by Ben.’
- (16) ?Hinimok ni Maria si Juang suriin
 H<in>imok-Ø ni Maria si Juan=ng suri-in
 <R>PFV~persuade-DPASS GEN Maria NOM Juan=COMP examine-DPASS
- ng bagong doktor
 ng bago=ng doctor
 GEN new=REL doctor
- ‘Maria persuaded Juan to be examined by the new doctor.’

In (15), the controller *Maria* in the matrix clause controls the nominative argument of the passive complement clause verb *bigyan*, and not its actor, *Ben*. Similarly, in (16), the controller *Juan* in the matrix clause controls the nominative argument of the passive

complement clause verb *suriin*. Schachter (1996) reports that his consultant finds (16) ungrammatical; in fact, even Kroeger (1993) notes that its grammaticality has been questioned. However, Schachter (1996) does not address the grammaticality of other such examples, such as (15).

To summarize, in complement clauses with non-AIA verbs, there is consensus, at least between Schachter and Kroeger, that the actor can be the controllee; however, the data showing that the non-actor nominative argument can also be the controllee is in dispute. Meanwhile, in complement clauses with passive AIA verbs, the nominative argument is uncontroversially the controllee, though there is some evidence that actors can also be controlled. It thus appears likely that equi/control cannot be applied to subjecthood in Tagalog, since it does not seem to belong uniquely to either the nominative argument or the non-nominative actor. In any case, at present the validity of some of the data is in dispute, and further study is required.

8. Reflexivization

A grammatical relation has the property referred to as “reflexivization” in Schachter (1996:20) and “reflexive binding” in Kroeger (1993b:36), if its argument can be the antecedent of a reflexive pronoun. Schachter (1976:512) claims that this is a property of the agentive complement:

- (17) a. Iniisip nila ang kanilang sarili.
 In-i~isip-Ø nila ang kanila=ng sarili
 R-NPFV~think-DPASS 3PL.GEN NOM 3PL.DAT=LNK self
 ‘They think about themselves.’

In (17a), a passive sentence, *nila* ‘3PL.GEN,’ which is the agentive complement, is the antecedent of the reflexive pronoun *kanilang sarili* ‘themselves.’ However, as (17b)

shows below, the nominative argument *sila* ‘3PL.NOM’ cannot be the antecedent of a reflexive pronoun; control of the reflexive pronoun is not simply given to the argument that occurs first in the clause.

- (17) b. *Iniisip sila ng kanilang sarili.
 In-i~isip-Ø sila ng kanila=ng sarili
 R-NPFV~think-DPASS 3PL.NOM GEN 3PL.DAT=LNK self
(Schachter 1976:512)

Thus, reflexivization is a property that in Tagalog belongs to the agentive complement.

One counter-example comes from the 1905 Tagalog translation of the bible, *Ang Dating Biblia* (Titus 3:10):

- (18) ... siya’y hinahatulan ng kaniyang sarili
 siya=ay h<in>a~hatul-an ng kaniya=ng sarili
 3SG.NOM=TOP NPFV<R>~judge-IPASS GEN 3SG.DAT=LNK self
 ‘... they are self-condemned.’

In (18), the nominative argument *siya* ‘3SG.NOM’ is the theme, but nevertheless controls the reflexive pronoun, which is the actor and semantic agent. This shows that nominative arguments of passive voices can also control reflexive pronouns. However, further investigation is necessary to establish whether or not this is still possible in contemporary Tagalog (even as a literary usage), and whether or not this is only possible with topicalization.

9. Raising

An argument can undergo *raising* if it can be expressed as a syntactic argument of a matrix clause, when semantically it is an argument of a complement clause embedded inside that matrix clause.

Kroeger (1993b) claims that raising is a property of the nominative argument:

- (19) a. Inasahan ko na awitin ni Linda ang
 In-Ø~asa-an ko na awit-in ni Linda ang
 R-PFV~expect-DPASS 1SG.GEN COMP sing-DPASS GEN Linda NOM

pambansang-awit
 pambansang-awit
 national-anthem

‘I expected the national anthem to be sung by Linda.’

- b. Inasahan ko ang pambansang-awit na
 In-Ø~asa-an ko ang pambansang-awit na
 R-PFV~expect-DPASS 1SG.GEN NOM national-anthem COMP

awitin ni Linda
 awit-in ni Linda
 sing-DPASS GEN Linda

‘I expected the national anthem to be sung by Linda.’

- c. *Inasahan ko si Linda na awitin ang
 In-Ø~asa-an ko si Linda na awit-in ang
 R-PFV~expect-DPASS 1SG.GEN NOM Linda COMP sing-DPASS NOM

pambansang-awit
 pambansang-awit
 national-anthem

‘I expected Linda to sing the national anthem’

(Dell 1981, in Kroeger 1993b:28)

In (19a), the sentence without raising, *pambansang-awit* ‘national anthem’ is the nominative argument of the passive complement clause verb *awitin* (passive of *umawit* ‘sing’). In (19b), *pambansang-awit* is still a nominative argument, but now appears before the complementizer *na*, and thus appears to be a syntactic argument of the matrix verb, *inasahan* (passive of *umasa* ‘expect’). Meanwhile, (19c) shows that *Linda*, the actor of the complement clause, cannot be similarly raised.

As further evidence that the raised argument is a syntactic argument of the matrix clause, Kroeger (1993b:26) cites the following sentence:

- (20) Gusto sila ng Nanay na mag-aral mamayang gabi.
 Gusto sila ng Nanay na mag-aral mamayang gabi
 want 3PL.NOM GEN mother COMP ACT-study tonight
 'Mother wants them to study tonight.'

Schachter and Otones (1972:268)

In (20), *sila* '3PL.NOM,' which if unraised would have been the nominative argument of the complement clause verb *mag-aral* 'study,' is raised here into the matrix clause.

Although *mag-aral* is in the active voice, (20) shows that the raised argument is clearly a syntactic argument of the matrix clause, not of the complement clause. As an argument (as opposed to a predicate), *sila* occupies the second position in the clause it belongs to (Schachter and Otones 1972:183–193). Here, it occupies the second position in the matrix clause, immediately following the clause-initial verb *gusto*, which shows that it belongs syntactically to the matrix clause. In addition, *sila* is separated from the complement clause by the matrix clause actor, *Nanay*, further demonstrating that it is no longer part of the complement clause.

Finally, Kroeger (1993b) concedes that non-nominative actors can be raised, but that they then must leave behind a resumptive pronoun; he calls this *copy-raising*, and does not consider it to be "true" raising:

- (21) a. Gusto ko si Charlie na lutuin niya
 Gusto ko si Charlie na lutu-in niya
 want 1SG.GEN NOM Charlie COMP cook-DPASS 3SG.GEN

 ang suman
 ang suman
 NOM suman
 'I want Charlie to cook the suman.'

- b. *Gusto ko si Charlie na lutuin ang suman
 Gusto ko si Charlie na lutu-in ang suman
 want 1SG.GEN NOM Charlie COMP cook-DPASS NOM suman
 *‘I want Charlie to cook the suman.’

In (21a), *Charlie*, the actor of the passive complement clause verb *lutuin* (passive of *magluto* ‘cook’), is raised to the matrix clause, but leaves behind the resumptive pronoun *niya* in its place in the complement clause. Kroeger (1993b) claims that the sentence is ungrammatical without the resumptive pronoun, as (21b) shows.

Schachter (1996) disputes Kroeger’s (1993b) grammaticality judgment in (19b), claiming that for his consultant, this sentence is grammatical. He also disputes Kroeger’s (1993b) grammaticality judgment in (21b), claiming that it, too, is grammatical for his consultant. These two facts, Schachter (1996) argues, show that the actor of the complement clause can also be raised.

Furthermore, Schachter (1996) suggests that what Kroeger (1993b) considers raising of the nominative argument is not raising, but another phenomenon which has been called “scrambling” (Ross 1968). Schachter (1996) claims that scrambling bears a resemblance to raising, and can easily be confused with it. However, in scrambling, the argument that appears to be raised to the matrix clause remains a syntactic argument of the complement clause, and remains in the same case; it is only the order of the elements in the clause that is changed. Schachter (1996:18) offers the following two sentences to illustrate:

- (22) a. Nagpilit si Joe na magbigay ng pera
 Nag-Ø~pilit si Joe na mag-bigay ng pera
 ACT.R-NPFV~insist.on NOM Joe COMP ACT-give GEN money

kay Bob
 kay Bob
 DAT Bob
 ‘Joe insisted on giving Bob money.’

b. Nagpilit si Joe kay Bob na magbigay ng pera
 Nag-Ø~pilit si Joe kay Bob na mag-bigay ng pera
 ACT.R~NPFV~insist.on NOM Joe DAT Bob COMP ACT-give GEN money
 ‘Joe insisted on giving Bob money.’

In (22a), *Bob* is the dative argument in the complement clause; in (b), *Bob*, still in the dative case, now appears in the matrix clause, being in front of the complementizer *na*. Schachter (1996) suggests that (22b) is the result of the scrambling of the elements in the complement clause of (22a), and not of raising; this is despite the fact that the fronted argument *Bob* is separated from the rest of the complement clause by this complementizer. Since the nominative argument in the raising example cited by Kroeger (1993) (19b) retains the same case marking both inside and outside the complement clause, as does *Bob* in (22a–b), Schachter (1996) argues that (19a–b) may very well not be examples of raising, but of the more general phenomenon of scrambling. He claims that the only true examples of raising are those where a non-nominative actor argument in the complement clause is raised to the matrix clause and becomes a nominative argument, such as in (19c) and (21b), sentences which are judged ungrammatical by Kroeger (1993b).

Schachter’s (1996) interpretation of (22b) as the result of scrambling is a weak one, in the face of sentences such as (20); in (20), not only is the raised pronominal argument, *sila*, syntactically separated from the complement clause by another argument (*Nanay*), but it is also in its customary second position in the matrix clause, not the complement clause. This shows that *sila* behaves like a syntactic argument of the matrix

clause, and not the complement clause. Thus, Schachter’s (1996) resort to the phenomenon of scrambling does not convincingly counter Kroeger’s (1993b) claim that nominative arguments can be raised.

Unfortunately, based on the available evidence, the result of this debate on raising is inconclusive. Even if the raising of the nominative argument of the complement clause to the matrix clause should not be described as an instance of scrambling, as Schachter (1996) suggests, but rather as an instance of raising, as Kroeger (1993b) argues.

Kroeger’s (1993b) evidence that actors cannot be raised, however, is disputed by Schachter’s (1996) consultant’s grammaticality judgments of (21c) and (23b). Thus, this property cannot be assigned definitively to either the nominative argument or the actor, and further investigation is necessary.

10. *Ay-inversion*

An argument has the property known as “*ay*-inversion” if it can be placed in the front of the clause, followed by the topic marker *ay*. The argument undergoing *ay*-inversion behaves as a pragmatic topic (Kroeger 1993:5), though the construction is often associated with a more formal style. This is a generally a property of the nominative argument (Schachter and Otnes 1972:485), as illustrated by the following sentence:

- (23) Ang sulat ay tinanggap ko kahapon.
 Ang sulat ay Ø~t<in>anggap-Ø ko kahapon
 NOM letter TOP PFV~<R>expect-DPASS 1SG.GEN yesterday
 ‘I received the letter yesterday.’

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:486)

In (23), it is the nominative argument *sulat* ‘letter,’ and not the actor *ko* ‘1SG.GEN,’ that can be topicalized with *ay*.

There is one exception to nominative arguments being the topic with *ay*; a non-nominative actor must be topicalized with *ay* if it occurs with *ni* ‘not even,’ or in the construction *ni ... ni ...* ‘neither ... nor ...’ (Schachter and Otones 1972:492):

- (24) a. Ni si Pedro ay hindi ma-bu~buhat ito.
 Ni si Pedro ay hindi ma-bu~buhat-Ø ito
 not NOM Pedro TOP NEG AIA.IRR~NPFV~lift~DPASS this.NOM
 ‘Not even Pedro can lift this.’
- b. Ni si Juan ni si Ben ay hindi bibilhin
 Ni si Juan ni si Ben ay hindi b<Ø>i~bili-in
 not NOM Juan not NOM Ben TOP NEG <IRR>NPFV~buy~DPASS
- iyan.
 iyan
 that.NOM
 ‘Neither Juan nor Ben will buy that.’

In (24a), *Pedro*, which is the non-nominative actor of the verb *mabubuhat* (irrealis and passive form of *makabuhat* ‘can lift’), appears as the *ay*-inverted topic. In (24b), *Juan* and *Ben* are the non-nominative actors of *bibilhin* (passive and irrealis of *bumili* ‘buy’), but are also the *ay*-inverted topic. Despite the exception of this one construction, it is the nominative argument that can generally be *ay*-inverted, and which should therefore claim *ay*-inversion as a property. This exception can be better described as belonging to the construction itself, rather than to actor arguments in general.

Neither Schachter (1976) nor Schachter (1996) addresses this particular property, and Kroeger (1993b:6) only discusses it in passing.

11. Possessor Topicalization

An argument has the property of *possessor topicalization*, which Kroeger (1993b:32) and Schachter (1996:8) refer to as “possessor ascension,” if this argument can

have a possessor expressed as a preposed topic, while it itself remains in its original syntactic position in the clause. This is a property of the possessor of the nominative argument, as illustrated in (25a–b):

- (25) a. Si Juan, kinagat ng aso ang anak
 Si Juan Ø~k<in>agat-Ø ng aso ang anak
 NOM Juan PFV~<R>bite-DPASS GEN dog NOM child
 ‘Juan, a dog bit the (i.e. his) child.’
- b. *Si Juan, kumagat ang aso sa anak
 Si Juan Ø~k<um>agat ang aso sa anak
 NOM Juan PFV~<ACT.R>bite NOM dog DAT child
 *‘Juan, the dog bit the (i.e. his) child.’

Kroeger (1993:7–8)

The fact that in (25a) the preposed nominal *Juan* is understood to be the possessor of *anak* ‘child,’ and not of *aso* ‘dog,’ means that only the possessor of a nominative argument can be topicalized. In (25b), the topicalized *Juan* cannot be interpreted as the possessor of *anak*, since *anak* is no longer the nominative argument.⁹ Kroeger (1993b) thus claims that the evidence indicates that the property of possessor ascension belongs to the nominative argument, and Schachter (1996:8) concurs with Kroeger (1993b) in this conclusion.¹⁰

⁹ In (25b), *Juan* cannot be interpreted as the possessor of the nominative argument *aso*; this is due to various restrictions on the usage of this syntactic pattern, one of which appears to be that the possessed argument must be in some sense affected by the action (Kroeger 1993b:32).

¹⁰ Schachter (1996:8–9) adds that possessor topicalization can apply to the possessor of nominal predicates:

- (i) Si Juan, kakwarto si Bob
 NOM Juan roommate NOM Bob
 ‘Juan, Bob is his roommate.’

Here, *Juan*, who is the possessor of the nominal predicate *kakwarto*, is preposed as a topic. However, this is not important to the current question of whether the nominative argument or the actor is the subject.

12. Addressee of imperatives

An argument is the “addressee of imperatives” if it can express the second-person addressee in an imperative. In passives, the addressee of imperatives is expressed by the actor, as Schachter (1976:506) shows:

- (26) a. Magbigay ka sa kaniya ng kape
Mag-bigay ka sa kaniya ng kape
ACT-give 2SG.NOM DAT 3SG.DAT GEN coffee
'Give him some coffee.'
- b. Bigyan mo siya ng kape
Bigay-an mo siya ng kape
give-IPASS 2SG.GEN 3SG.NOM GEN coffee
'Give him some coffee.'
- c. Ibigay mo sa kaniya ang kape
I-bigay mo sa kaniya ang kape
DPASS-give 2SG.GEN DAT 3SG.DAT NOM coffee
'Give him the coffee.'

In (26a), an active voice sentence, the addressee is the actor and nominative pronoun *ka* '2SG.NOM.' In (26b–c), the imperatives are in passive voices, with the addressee being expressed by the actor, the genitive pronoun *mo* '2SG.GEN.' This shows that the actor is the addressee of imperatives.

13. Verb number agreement

An argument has the property *verb number agreement* – referred to as simply “number agreement” in Schachter (1976) and Kroeger (1993, 1993b), if it can optionally have its plurality reflected on the verb. Verb number agreement in Tagalog occurs, also optionally, in some adjectival predicates (Schachter and Otnes 1972:235) and active-voice verbs (Schachter and Otnes 1972:334–336). Schachter (1976) uses this property as

evidence that the nominative actor might be considered the subject in Tagalog. The following sentence illustrates this property:

- (27) Nagsipagluto sila ng pagkain
 Nag-sipag-luto sila ng pagkain
 ACT.R-PL-cook 3PL.NOM GEN food
 ‘They cooked some food.’

(Schachter 1976:510)

In (27), the active voice verb *nagsipagluto* ‘cook’ has the plural prefix *sipag-*, which agrees with the plurality of the nominative actor *sila* ‘3PL.NOM.’

However, Kroeger (1993b) claims that passive verbs can also agree in number with their nominative arguments, and that (28a) is an example:

- (28) a. Pinagbubuksan niya ang lahat ng mga bintana
 P<in>ag-Ø~bu~bukas-an niya ang lahat ng mga bintana
 PL<R>-PRF~PL~open-DPASS 3SG.GEN NOM all GEN PL window
 ‘She had opened all the windows.’

(Aspillera 1969:123, cited in Kroeger 1993:6)

Kroeger (1993:6) claims that in the verb *pinagbubuksan* ‘open,’ the prefix *pag-* and the reduplication of the first syllable of the verb (*bu-*) together indicate agreement in plurality with the nominative non-actor, *lahat ng mga bintana*, the only plural argument in the sentence.

Schachter (1996), however, counters that the morphology on *pinagbubuksan* that Kroeger (1993:6) claims expresses plurality actually expresses intensive action. This is supported by the fact that it can be used even with a singular nominative argument:

- (28) b. Pinagbubuksan at pinagsasara
 P<in>ag-Ø~bu~bukas-an at p<in>ag-Ø~sa~sara-Ø
 INT<R>-PRF~INT~open-DPASS and INT<R>-PRF~INT~close-DPASS

niya ang bintana
niya ang bintana
3SG.GEN NOM window
‘She kept opening and closing the window.’

(Schachter 1996:12)

In (28b), *pinagbubuksan*, the same verb in (24) that Kroeger (1993b) claims to have plural agreement with the nominative argument, now takes a singular nominative argument, *bintana* ‘window.’

Optional number agreement also occurs in adjectival predicates (Schachter 1972:229–231). Schachter (1996:14–15) offers the following examples:

- (29) a. Napakatalino ni Armand
Napaka-talino ni Armand
INT-bright GEN Armand
‘Armand is very bright.’
- b. Napakatalino ng mga batang Intsik
Napaka-ta-talino ng mga bata=ng Intsik
INT-PL~bright GEN PL child=LNK China
‘The Chinese children are very bright.’

Schachter claims that in (29a–b), the subjects¹¹ (*Armand* in 31a, and *mga batang Intsik* in b) are actors. Semantically, he claims this because he understands the term “actor” to be a “macrorole” that encompasses the subject of adjectival predicates, in the same way that they include the subjects of intransitive verbs; morphologically, he claims this because actors also appear in the genitive case, in passive voices.

Schachter’s (1996) example, (28b), does clearly show that the verb *pinagbubuksan* in (28a) does not actually agree with plural nominative arguments. However, he fails in his argument that the plural subject in (29b) is an actor, and in his implication that its ability to trigger agreement on the adjectival predicate *napakatalino*

¹¹ I refer to these arguments as subjects here without justification, since they are arguments of adjectival predicates, which have no voice alternation.

can therefore be generalized to the behaviour of actors in passive voices. First, adjectival predicates do not have voice alternation, and are therefore irrelevant to the current comparison between the nominative argument and the actor in passive voices. Second, his decision to consider the subjects of adjectival predicates as actors in the semantic sense does not imply that their number agreement property can be generalized to actors of passive voice verbs. Finally, the genitive case is not unique to actors, and the fact that the genitive argument in (29b) triggers number agreement does not mean that other genitive arguments will have the same property.

Therefore, the evidence shows that number agreement only occurs in adjectival predicates and active-voice verbs, constructions where the identity of the subject is not in dispute; as for the identity of the subject in passive voices, which is the task at hand, this property is irrelevant.

2.3 Summary

The results from the assessments of each property, in Schachter (1976), Kroeger (1993, 1993b), Schachter (1996), as well as this current study, are given in Table 1:

Table 1: Morphosyntactic properties in Tagalog, and the passive voice argument they belong to

Property	Schachter (1976)	Kroeger (1993, 1993b)	Schachter (1996)	Current study
1. relativization	NOM	NOM	NOM	NOM
2. target of wh-questions				NOM
3. quantifier float	NOM	NOM	NOM	NOM
4. control of secondary predicates		NOM	NOM	NOM
5. subject elision in coordinate clauses		NOM	—	?
6. subject elision in subordinate clauses		NOM	—	?
7. equi/control	ACT	ACT,NOM	ACT,NOM	?
8. reflexivization	ACT	—	—	ACT
9. raising		NOM	ACT	?
10. <i>ay</i> -topicalization		NOM		NOM
11. possessor topicalization		NOM	NOM	NOM

Property	Schachter (1976)	Kroeger (1993, 1993b)	Schachter (1996)	Current study
12. addressee of imperatives	ACT			ACT
13. verb number agreement	— ¹²	NOM	ACT	—

The label ‘NOM’ indicates that a particular study (indicated in the column heading) concludes that the property (indicated by the row) belongs to the nominative argument; ‘ACT’ indicates that the study concludes that the property belongs to the actor; and ‘ACT,NOM’ indicates that the study concludes that property belongs to both arguments in different constructions. A question mark (‘?’) indicates that the possessor of the property cannot as yet be decided, due to conflicting data; a dash (‘—’) indicates that the study considers this property irrelevant for the purposes of this section; and blanks indicate that the study does not take that property into consideration.

The assessment in this section shows that the majority of the examined morphosyntactic properties in passive voice clauses belong to the nominative argument. Of the 13 properties, eight belong to either the nominative argument or the actor: of these, six belong exclusively to the nominative argument, while only two belong exclusively to the actor. Among the remaining six properties, four are deemed inconclusive due to conflicting data, while one is deemed irrelevant in Tagalog passives.

Of the five properties that have been ascribed to the actor argument in at least one study, two (equi/control and raising) are inconclusive, while one (verb number agreement) have been found to be irrelevant to Tagalog subjecthood; only two (reflexivization and addressee of imperatives) has been found to firmly belong to the actor argument. The problematic properties, most of which are typically associated with subjects in other

¹² Schachter (1976) considers verb number agreement as a property for the “actor-topic,” which refers to the nominative argument in the active voice.

languages (Keenan 1976), have been the main source of the confusion over subjecthood in Tagalog.

Thus, the nominative argument emerges clearly as the subject in passive voices. Such clarity is possible thanks to the simplicity in defining the subject as the most syntactically-privileged relation.

3 Voice

In addition to the controversy over the identity of the subject in passive voices, there is also disagreement in the literature over the nature of the verb alternations in (30a–c, reproduced from 1a–c), which were presented in the introduction, and which are reproduced below:

(30) a. *Active voice*

Mag-aalis	ang	babae	ng	bigas	sa	sako
Mag-a~alis	ang	babae	ng	bigas	sa	sako
ACT.IRR~NPFV~remove	NOM	woman	GEN	rice	DAT	sack

para sa bata
para sa bata
for DAT child

‘The woman will take rice out of a/the sack for a/the child.’

b. *Direct passive voice*

Aalis-in	ng	babae	ang	bigas	sa	sako
Ø-A~alis-in	ng	babae	ang	bigas	sa	sako
IRR~NPFV~remove~DPASS	GEN	woman	NOM	rice	DAT	sack

para sa bata
para sa bata
for DAT child

‘A/The woman will take the rice out of the sack for a/the child.’

c. *Indirect passive voice*

Aalis–an	ng	babae	ng	bigas	ang	sako
Ø–A~alis–an	ng	babae	ng	bigas	ang	sako
IRR–NPFV~remove–IPASS	GEN	woman	GEN	rice	NOM	sack

para sa bata
 para sa bata
 for DAT child

‘A/The woman will take some rice out of the sack for the child.’

While there are linguists who analyze (30a–c) as voices (e.g., Kroeger 1993, Katagiri 2005, Mel’čuk 2006), many follow the Philippinist tradition of avoiding the term “voice,” referring to them instead as “focuses” or “topics” (e.g., Schachter and Otnes 1972, Schachter 1996, Foley and Van Valin 1984, Carrie-Duncan 1985). This is often not merely a difference in terminology, but can affect the analysis as well. For instance, Carrie-Duncan (1985) analyzes the nominative argument as the topic, not the subject, and therefore considers the grammatical relations to remain unchanged in all three sentences (30a–c): in her analysis of these three sentences, *babae* would be the subject, *bigas* would be the direct object, and *sako* would be the indirect object.¹³

Just as the identification of the subject in Section 2 required a simple, unambiguous definition of subject that is easy to apply, a similar definition of voice is also required here. I will define voice as a phenomenon where a verb’s *diathesis* — the mapping between a verb’s semantic arguments and their syntactic relations — is modified, but where its *propositional meaning* — the event expressed by the verb — remains unchanged (Mel’čuk 2006). With this definition, the establishment of voice requires showing two things: that the diathesis of the verb in each voice is different, but that the propositional meaning of the verb in each voice is the same. Before

¹³ This follows the analysis illustrated in examples (7a–c) in Carrie-Duncan (1985:4–5).

demonstrating that both are true for the verb alternations in Tagalog, I will first present the concepts of a diathesis and propositional meaning in more detail.

3.1 *Diathesis*

As mentioned above, a *diathesis* is a mapping between the semantic arguments of a lexical unit (specifically in this paper, a verb) and their syntactic relations. It is an integral part of the lexicographic definition of a verb, since it describes what semantic arguments are required by the verb, as well as how they must be expressed. The notion of diatheses is explained in detail in Mel'čuk (2004, 2006); their usage in this paper will be primarily based on Mel'čuk's formulation, though there are a couple of differences, which will be highlighted.

As an example, here is the definition of a Tagalog verb root, *mag-alis* 'take out'¹⁴; its irrealis form, *mag-aalis*, appeared in (1a):

(31) *mag-alis*: 'X takes out Y from source Z'

This definition in (31), which Mel'čuk (2006:174) calls a *propositional form*, gives a description of the situation expressed by the verb root *mag-alis*, or its *propositional meaning* (Mel'čuk 2006:184). The verb *mag-alis* expresses a situation where a person removes something from somewhere. The propositional form makes references to the verb's semantic arguments and the role they play in the propositional meaning, representing them with letters; thus, X is the person doing the removing, Y is the thing being removed, and Z is the place that Y is being removed from.

¹⁴ In Tagalog, where verbs always take a non-zero voice marker, the root will be taken to be the active voice form of the verb.

Next, each voice of the verb has a different mapping between the verb’s semantic arguments and syntactic relations; this is represented by the voice’s diathesis. The diathesis of the active voice *mag–alis* is given below:

(32) *mag–alis* (active voice)

X	Y	Z
Subject	Direct Object	Indirect Object

The diathesis in (32) shows the semantic arguments of the verb in the top row, each represented by a letter variable from the propositional form above, and each with its language-specific grammatical relation in the cell directly below, in the bottom row. For the active voice *mag–alis*, X is expressed as a Tagalog subject, Y as a Tagalog direct object, and Z as a Tagalog indirect object. The variable name assigned to each semantic argument will be based on the argument’s grammatical relation in the verb’s basic diathesis, the active voice, which will be identified in the next section. For now, we can assume that *mag–alis* is the active voice. So, the subject argument of *mag–alis* is labeled X, the direct object labeled Y, and indirect object labeled Z. This way, verbs with similar syntax have similar diatheses, making them more comparable.

The term “semantic argument” is commonly used, and has been used throughout this paper. However, thus far we have yet to examine its definition, and in describing the diathesis, it is now necessary to do so. For the sake of simplicity, I will employ a definition that is somewhat narrower than the one given in Mel’čuk (2006), and include only the most typical instances. I will define semantic arguments as the essential participants in the verb’s propositional meaning, and which can be expressed as a syntactic dependent of the verb.¹⁵ There are three obligatory participants in *mag–alis*, and

¹⁵ The semantic arguments defined here corresponds to a subset of the semantic actants defined in Mel’čuk (2004:33). In particular, Mel’čuk includes “optional participants” in his definition of semantic actants

all appear in the propositional form in (29): X the remover, Y the object removed, and Z the source. In (30a–c), these correspond to *babae* ‘woman,’ *bigas* ‘rice,’ and *sako* ‘sack’ respectively. All of them appear as a syntactic dependent of the verb *mag–alis*. The propositional meaning does not include a beneficiary who the action of removal is being performed for, however, and the propositional form makes no mention of such a participant. Thus, even though the beneficiary can be expressed as a syntactic dependent of *mag–alis* (as *bata* ‘child’ is in 30a–c), it is not one of its semantic arguments, and is therefore not included in the diathesis.

The syntactic relations in the diatheses in this paper are distinguished from each other by their relative degree of syntactic privilege, or the number of morphosyntactic properties they possess. The most privileged is the subject, followed by direct object, indirect object, and oblique object. As described for subjects in Section 2, all syntactic relations are first identified in the basic sentence of a language. Then, in all other non-basic constructions, the syntactic relation that shares the most properties with a relation in the basic sentence is identified with it. The syntactic relations in this paper are based on (though not identical in all details to) what Mel’čuk (1988, 2006) calls Surface-Syntactic Relations. In contrast, in his diatheses, Mel’čuk (2006) uses what he calls “Deep-Syntactic Relations,” which in general make fewer distinctions than Surface-Syntactic Relations, and include syntactic relations in non-verbal constructions as well as verbal ones. See Mel’čuk (1988:63–67) for more details on Deep-Syntactic Relations.

(Mel’čuk 2004:20–33), as well as participants that are not expressed as a syntactic dependent of the verb, but are nevertheless expressible in other ways (Mel’čuk 2004:14–20).

3.2 Modification of the Diathesis

Having defined the diathesis, we are now ready to show that Tagalog verbs have voice alternation. Voice alternation is found in most multi-valent verbs in Tagalog; however, to analyze it in adequate detail, I will focus on the diatheses of the various voices of one example, *magbayad* ‘pay.’ The following sentences illustrate its three voices:

(33) a. *Active voice*

Nagbayad	ako	kay	Juan	ng	limang	peso
Nag-Ø~bayad	ako	kay	Juan	ng	lima=ng	peso
ACT.R~PFV~pay	1SG.NOM	DAT	Juan	GEN	five=LNK	peso

‘I paid Juan 5 pesos.’

b. *Direct passive voice*

Ibinayad	ko	kay	Juan	ang	limang	peso
I-Ø~b<in>ayad	ko	kay	Juan	ang	lima=ng	peso
DPASS~PFV~<R>pay	1SG.GEN	DAT	Juan	NOM	five=LNK	peso

‘I paid Juan the 5 pesos.’

c. *Indirect passive voice*

Binayaran	ko	si	Juan	ng	limang	peso
Ø~B<in>ayad~an	ko	si	Juan	ng	lima=ng	peso
PFV~<R>pay~IPASS	1SG.GEN	NOM	Juan	GEN	five=LNK	peso

‘I paid Juan 5 pesos.’

(author’s fieldnotes)

The voices are the same as those in (30a–c): the active voice (33a, *nagbayad*, perfective aspect of *magbayad* ‘pay’), the direct passive voice (33b, *ibinayad*, perfective aspect of *ibayad* ‘be paid to someone’), and the indirect passive voice (33c, *binayaran*, perfective aspect of *bayaran* ‘be paid something’). In each voice, the verb is accompanied by three arguments: *ako/ko* ‘1SG.NOM/GEN,’ the payer; *limang piso* ‘five pesos,’ the payment;¹⁶ and *Juan*, the person being paid. *Magbayad* ‘pay’ has a fourth semantic argument, the

¹⁶ This theme may also be seen as an instrumental; in addition to being the subject of *ibayad*, it can also be the subject of *ipambayad*, which is the instrumental passive voice.

product or service being paid for, which does not appear in (33a–c). This argument is preceded by *para sa*, as this example sentence from English (1986:181) illustrates:

(34) Kaya niyang magbayad ng hanggang tatlung pang piso
 Kaya niya=ng mag-bayad ng hanggang tatlung pang piso
 May 3SG.GEN=COMP ACT-pay GEN up.to thirty=REL peso

para sa mga mangga.
 para sa mga mangga
 for DAT PL mango

‘He can give as much as thirty pesos for the mangoes.’

In (34), the item being paid for is *mga mangga* ‘mangoes,’ whose relation to the verb is marked by the preceding preposition *para* ‘for’ and the dative marker *sa*.

First, we give the propositional meaning of the root of the verb. As with *mag-alis* ‘take out’ in (31), we will take the root to be the active voice form of the verb, *magbayad* ‘pay,’ which appeared in (33a):

(35) *magbayad*: ‘X pays Z amount of money Y for goods or services W’

This is followed by the diathesis of the active voice form, *magbayad*:

(36) *magbayad* (active voice)

X	Y	Z	W
Subject	Direct Object	Indirect Object	Oblique Object

As with *mag-alis*, each semantic argument mentioned in the propositional form for *magbayad* appears in the diathesis, and is mapped to a syntactic relation below it. In addition to subject and agentive complement, syntactic relations which were identified in Section 2, the diatheses for the different voices of *magbayad* will also have direct object for the syntactic relation of genitive argument, indirect object for the relation of its dative argument, and oblique object for the relation of its dative argument that follows the preposition *para*. These relations will be used without an analysis of their relative

syntactic privilege; for the purposes of demonstrating voice, it is only important that they are distinct syntactic relations, a fact that can be readily seen from the different ways in which they are indicated.

The diatheses for the three voices illustrated in (33a–c) are then given below in (37a–c) respectively, with (37a) repeated from (36):

(37) a. *magbayad*: X pays Z amount of money Y for goods or services W.

X	Y	Z	W
Subject	Direct Object	Indirect Object	Oblique Object

b. *ibayad* (direct passive of *magbayad*)

X	Y	Z	W
Agentive Complement	Subject	Indirect Object	Oblique Object

c. *bayaran* (indirect passive voice)

X	Y	Z	W
Agentive Complement	Direct Object	Subject	Oblique Object

Thus, the voices in (37a–c) each has a different diathesis, assigning the subject relation to the arguments X, Y, and Z respectively: the payer X in *magbayad*, the payment Y in *ibayad*, and the payee Z in *bayaran*. Each argument, when not the subject in a particular voice, consistently takes on another grammatical relation: agentive complement for X, direct object for Y, and indirect object for Z. *Magbayad* is the active voice because its diathesis is the basic diathesis of the verb; this will be explored in greater detail in the next section. As for *ibayad* and *bayaran*, the type of voice alternation they represent is fairly simple to identify. Passive voices are defined as modifications of the basic diathesis involving the subject (based on Mel'čuk 2006:187). Since both *ibayad* and *bayaran* assign the subject relation to different arguments compared to the active voice *magbayad*, this makes them both passive voices of *magbayad*.

The second and last part of the definition of voice requires that the propositional meaning of the verb remain unchanged in all the voices. That Tagalog voices fulfill this requirement has not, in fact, been a major point of contention in the literature. Previous analyses that identify these voices as “focuses” or “topics” (e.g., Schachter and Otones 1972, Foley and Van Valin 1984, Carrie-Duncan 1985) do not imply that they signal any semantic changes to the verb.¹⁷ This is further supported by lexicographic resources, such as English (1986). In English (1986:180–181), both *magbayad* and *bayaran* have the definition “to pay”. The entry for *ibayad* has the definition ‘to use something specific in paying,’ which at first appears slightly different. However, this still describes the act of paying; the word “specific” most likely refers to the fact that for the verb *ibayad*, the payment, which is the nominative subject, receives a definite interpretation (Schachter 1976). Thus, English (1986) provides evidence that *magbayad*, *ibayad*, and *bayaran* share the same propositional meaning.

We have now seen that certain alternations of Tagalog verbs, which have previously been referred to as “focuses” or “topics,” are indeed voices. This clarity is only possible because of the definition of subject in the last section, which led to the establishment of the nominative argument as the subject. Since it is the nominative argument that changes from one voice to another, identifying it as the subject has led to the recognition of a voice system in this section. In the next section, we will determine which voice, if any, has a diathesis that is distinguished among others as basic, and can therefore be referred to as the active voice.

¹⁷ In fact, conventional analyses have tended to err in the other direction: modifications of the diathesis that do modify the verb’s argument structure have generally not been described as doing so. Verbs like (1d) (in Footnote 1), for example, are better analyzed as applicatives, not voices; see Ross and Teng (2005) for arguments in support of identifying applicatives in Philippine-type languages.

4 Active Voice

Tagalog voices have several characteristics — such as the high frequency of occurrence of the patient voice, and the overt marking of all voices — that have made many linguists reluctant to analyze the actor voice as the active voice, and the non-actor voices as passives. Instead, some have claimed that Tagalog has a symmetrical voice system, where no voice is more basic than any other (e.g., Foley and Van Valin 1984); others, meanwhile, argue that the patient voice is the active voice, with the actor voice being an antipassive (e.g., Cena 1979, Cooreman, Fox and Givón 1984, De Guzman 1988). In this section, I will show that, upon closer examination, the characteristics of Tagalog often cited in arguments against the view that the actor voice is the active voice do not stand up to scrutiny. Once we adopt a definition of active voice that is based on clear, categorical morphosyntactic properties, it will be clear that, despite superficial differences that may suggest otherwise, [what?].

4.1 *Previous Objections to Identifying Actor Voice as Active*

Of the arguments against the accusative analysis for Tagalog, many refer to the absence of the kind of characteristics that are typically associated with active and passive voices in other languages; however, none of them are reasons to discount the analysis of the actor voice as active voice. Below, I will examine some of these arguments against this analysis.

1. High frequency of non-actor voices

Siewierska (1984:82–86) cites three problems with recognizing non-actor voices in Tagalog as passive voices.¹⁸ The first of these concerns their high frequency: in most languages the active voice is the most frequent voice, and in Tagalog it is the patient voice that appears to be the most frequent. In support of this, Cooreman, Fox and Givón (1984) find that in one Tagalog corpus, 76% of verbs are in the patient voice, compared to 24% in the actor voice.

However, while this may be unusual, frequency does not necessarily reflect the morphosyntactic structure of a language. Instead, frequency can often be a reflection of extra-linguistic factors. In the case of Tagalog, the direct passive voice is often chosen to express events of high semantic transitivity (Katagiri 2005). Therefore, in genres where such events are frequent, the direct passive voice can become frequent, but this does not indicate that it is the basic voice. Factors such as semantic transitivity are unrelated to morphosyntax, and should have no bearing on whether or not a voice is active (see Beck 2002:22 for a more detailed argument on the problems of using frequency as an indicator of markedness).

2. High semantic transitivity of events in non-actor voices

Siewierska's (1984:83) second point, which perhaps partly explains the high frequency of the patient voice, is that the patient voice tends to be used for the more highly semantically-transitive clauses, in the sense described by Hopper and Thompson (1980) (Katagiri 2005). Some of the characteristics of high semantic transitivity that are

¹⁸ Interestingly, Siewierska (2011) comes to a different conclusion than in Siewierska (1984), while citing the same characteristics in Tagalog. While Siewierska (1984) concluded that voices with non-actor subjects should still be considered passive, Siewierska (2011) does not consider them as such.

associated with use of the patient voice are high degrees of affectedness and referentiality of the patient, as well as realis mood and perfective aspect. In contrast, high semantic transitivity is not normally associated with more typical passives in other languages, such as the English passive (Siewierska 1984:83–84).

However, as with the objection about frequency, this should not affect whether or the patient voice can be a passive. Although the passive voice's association with high semantic transitivity may be typologically unusual, this is a feature of its usage based on semantics, and should have no bearing on a morphosyntactic concept such as active voice.

3. Syntactic prominence of actor in non-actor voices

Siewierska's (1984:83–84) final objection is that the agentive complement in Tagalog's non-actor voices is syntactically more prominent than agentive complements in typical passives in other languages, where they tend to be more syntactically peripheral. While in the passive constructions of most languages the agentive complement is often omitted, and usually made syntactically oblique when present, in Tagalog it is not only typically present, but also displays at least one syntactic property (say which one) normally associated with subjects in other languages (see Section 2 of this paper).

However, while the higher syntactic prominence of agentive complements in Tagalog may be somewhat unusual, this, like Siewierska's (1984) other objections, is irrelevant to whether or not the patient voice can be a passive voice. As defined in the last section, a passive voice is a voice alternation that assigns a different subject from the active voice. The definition makes no mention of the syntactic prominence of the

demoted subject, and passive voices can have agentive complements with varying degrees of syntactic prominence.

4. Overt affixation of all voices

Tagalog voices are also unusual in that every voice is expressed by overt voice affixes. This prompts some linguists, such as Siewierska (2011), to claim that Tagalog has no passive voice. Other linguists, such as Blake (1990), go even further and argue that since one of the patient voice affixes, *-in*, has a zero allomorph in realis mood, it is actually the patient voice that is the active voice. The following table shows all the affixes used for indicating actor voices and non-actor voices in Tagalog, with their different forms in infinitives, realis mood, and irrealis mood:¹⁹

Table 2: Actor and non-actor voice affixes, in infinitives, realis mood, and irrealis mood (compiled from Schachter and Otones 1972)

In Infinitives	In Realis Mood	In Irrealis Mood
Actor voice affixes		
<i>ma-</i>	<i>na-</i>	<i>ma-</i>
<i>mag-</i>	<i>nag-</i>	<i>mag-</i>
<i>mang-</i>	<i>nang-</i>	<i>mang-</i>
<i>maka-</i>	<i>naka-</i>	<i>maka-</i>
<i>-um</i>	<i>-um</i>	<i>-Ø</i>
Non-actor voice affixes		
<i>-an</i>	<i>-an</i>	<i>-an</i>
<i>-ka-...-an</i>	<i>-ka-...-an</i>	<i>-ka-...-an</i>
<i>-in</i>	<i>-Ø</i>	<i>-in</i>
<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>
<i>ipa-</i>	<i>ipa-</i>	<i>ipa-</i>
<i>ipag-</i>	<i>ipag-</i>	<i>ipag-</i>
<i>ipang-</i>	<i>ipang-</i>	<i>ipang-</i>
<i>ma-</i>	<i>na-</i>	<i>ma-</i>
<i>ma-...-an</i>	<i>na-...-an</i>	<i>ma-...-an</i>
<i>pa-...-an</i>	<i>pa-...-an</i>	<i>pa-...-an</i>
<i>pag-...-an</i>	<i>pag-...-an</i>	<i>pag-...-an</i>
<i>pang-...-an</i>	<i>pang-...-an</i>	<i>pang-...-an</i>
<i>pang-...-in</i>	<i>pang-</i>	<i>pang-...-in</i>

¹⁹ The voice affixes are divided into actor voice and non-actor voice affixes to avoid repetition, since many non-actor voice affixes are used for multiple non-actor voices.

Table 2 shows the various forms of every voice affix used in Tagalog. No voice affix is zero in all circumstances; however, the suffix *-in*, which mainly expresses patient voice but also sometimes expresses directional voice, is realized as $-\emptyset$ in realis mood. Blake (1990) uses this fact to argue that the patient voice is the active voice. However, the actor voice infix *-um-* is also realized as $-\emptyset$, though in irrealis mood. Blake (1990) dismisses this fact for two reasons: first, “the future” — Blake’s term for irrealis mood — “is not the unmarked tense-aspect”; second, in the “large class of stems” that take *mag-* in the actor voice, there is no zero allomorph, an observation that he implies overrides the importance of the zero allomorph of the *-um-* affix (Blake 1990:152).

Blake’s (1990) claim is based on specious arguments. The zero allomorph of the patient voice affix *-in* in realis mood is weak evidence: *-in* is not zero in all circumstances, and is only one of several affixes that can indicate patient voice. Blake’s (1990) reasons for dismissing the zero allomorph of the actor infix *-um-* also rest on shaky ground. He does not explain how irrealis mood is more marked than realis mood in Tagalog. It is not obvious that this is so, since, in Tagalog, irrealis mood does not appear to be any more marked than realis mood, either structurally or distributionally, and any claim that irrealis as a concept is cognitively more complex than realis mood (as described in Givón 1995:28) is difficult to demonstrate empirically (see Beck 2002:21–24 for a more detailed discussion on markedness).

Nor is it true that there are so few verbs that take *-um-* as their actor voice affix that the zero allomorph of *-um-* can be ignored. Schachter and Otones (1972:292) observe that “there are many verb bases that occur with *mag-* or *mang-*, as well as with *-um-*.” There is even evidence that suggests the opposite: in Ramos and Bautista (1986),

which lists voice and applicative forms for a sample of 304 common verbs,²⁰ there are 132 verbs that take *-um-* as the actor voice affix, which is actually more than the 111 verbs that take *mag-*.²¹

Siewierska (2011) takes a weaker position than Blake (1990): she only argues against identifying the patient voice as a passive voice, because it is not morphologically-marked compared to the actor voice. However, while active voices in many languages are zero-marked, zero-marking should not be a necessary feature of an active voice. It is true that the active voice can often be identified by morphological zero-marking; zero-marking implies that a voice's diathesis has not undergone any modification, while overt marking implies that it has. This is unfortunately not applicable in Tagalog, where all voices carry an overt voice affix. However, zero-marking is only one characteristic that can reveal a voice to be basic in some way. There are other characteristics that can reveal this, and we will see later that this is true for the Tagalog actor voice.

5. Patient voice forms with optional elision of voice affix

Cena (1979) (as cited in Foley and Van Valin 1984:137),²² in support of his argument that the patient voice is the active voice, points to verbs whose patient voice can be expressed without any voice (or aspectual) affix. The patient voice forms of some Tagalog verbs, such as *kumuha* 'get,' *magdala* 'carry,' and *humawak* 'hold,' can optionally occur without any voice or aspectual affix. The following examples illustrate this for the verb *humawak*:

²⁰ Some of these verbs are homophonous.

²¹ Some of these verbs can take either *-um-* or *mag-*.

²² Hereafter, references to Cena (1979) as cited in Foley and Van Valin (1984) will be cited simply as Cena (1979).

(38) a. Hawak/Hinahawakan ni John ang libro
 Hawak/H<in>a~hawak-an ni John ang libro
 hold/<R>NPFV~hold-DPASS GEN John NOM book
 ‘John holds the book.’

b. *Hawak si John ng libro
 Hawak si John ng libro
 hold NOM John GEN book
 ‘John holds a book.’

cf. Humahawak si John ng libro
 H<um>a~hawak si John ng libro
 <ACT.R>NPFV~hold NOM John GEN book
 ‘John holds a book.’

(Cena 1977:14–15, in Katagiri 2005:9)

In (38a), the patient voice of *humawak* in realis mood and imperfective aspect, *hinahawakan*, can alternatively occur as *hawak*, which occurs without either the realis infix *-in-*, or, more importantly, the voice affix *-an*. The corresponding actor voice, *humahawak*, on the other hand, cannot occur in this unaffixed form, as (38b) shows; it must appear with its voice and aspectual morphology, as in (38cf.).

However, this alternation is not only found in the patient voice; some actor voice verbs can also occur without any voice or aspectual affix, often in imperative or hortative mood (Katagiri 2005:19):

(39) Hampas na kayo, mga bata, sa mga langgam.
 Hampas na kayo mga bata sa mga langgam
 whip now 2PL PL child DAT PL ant
 ‘Whip at the ants, boys.’

(Bloomfield 1917:221, in Himmelmann 1999, in Katagiri 2005:19)

(40) Umuwi na tayo, Daddy! Uwi na tayo!
 Um-uwi na tayo Daddy Uwi na tayo
 ACT-return.home now 1PL Daddy return.home now 1PL
 ‘Let’s go home, Daddy! Let’s go home!’

(Himmelmann 1999, in Katagiri 2005:19)

In (39), the unaffixed verb *hampas* ‘whip’ occurs as an imperative in the actor voice; *hampas* is an alternate imperative to *humampas*, which does contain a voice marker, the actor voice marker *–um–*. In (40), the unaffixed verb *uwi* ‘return home’ is used as an alternative to *umuwi*, which contains the actor voice affix *–um–*, in the first sentence. Given that some actor voice forms can also occur without voice affixation, the occurrence of this pattern in some patient voice forms does not show that the patient voice is any more basic than the actor voice.

6. Verbs with no actor voice

Cena (1979) points to more evidence that the patient voice is the unmarked voice: the absence of an actor voice in some verbs, and the various restrictions on the usage of the actor voice in other verbs. Verbs with no actor voice include *bagalan* ‘make slow,’ *ikasal* ‘get married to,’ and *hintayin* ‘wait for someone to do something’ (these examples are from Schachter and Otnes 1972:306–307); “symmetrical predicates,” such as *kamukha* ‘resemble,’ *kasingtaas* ‘be as tall as,’ and *kasama* ‘be with,’ whose meanings do not change when their arguments swap syntactic relations; as well as “pseudo-verbs,” such as *gusto* ‘want, like to,’ *dapat* ‘must,’ and *ayaw* ‘not want,’ which are modal-like predicates that do not take aspectual affixes.

However, symmetrical predicates and pseudo-verbs not only do not have an actor voice, but actually have no voice alternation at all. Neither do verbs such as *bagalan*, *ikasal*, and *hintayin*. In fact, it appears that most, if not all, of Tagalog verbs that lack an actor voice also lack any other voice alternation: of the 304 common verbs in Ramos and Bautista (1986), 21 of them lack an active voice, and all of them occur in only one voice.

Without any voice alternation, these verbs lie outside of the voice system, and are irrelevant to the identification of an active voice.

7. *Restricted environments of some actor voice forms*

Finally, Cena (1979) notes that other verbs have actor voices, but only in restricted contexts, such as in headless relative clauses; these actor voice forms include *tumakot* ‘frighten,’ *gumulat* ‘surprise,’ and *gumutom* ‘starve.’ The following pair of sentences, taken from (Schachter and Otones 1972:299), illustrate this for *gumulat*:

- (41) a. *Gumulat siya ng mga kaibigan niya
 Ø~G<um>ulat siya ng mga kaibigan niya
 PFV~<ACT.R>surprise 3SG.NOM GEN PL friend 3SG.GEN
 *‘He surprised (some of) his friends.’
- b. Siya ang gumulat ng mga kaibigan niya
 Siya ang Ø~g<um>ulat ng mga kaibigan niya
 3SG.NOM NOM PFV~<ACT.R>surprise GEN PL friend 3SG.GEN
 ‘He’s the one who surprised (some of) his friends.’

As (41a) shows, *gumulat* ‘surprise’ cannot occur as a matrix clause verb; it can only occur in a headless relative clause, as in (41b). Thus, the actor voice of some verbs occurs in environments that are more marked than others, implying that the actor voice cannot be the active voice.

While this does show that the actor voice has a more marked distribution for some verbs, this restriction is not pervasive enough in Tagalog to affect the characterization of the entire actor voice: in the sample of 304 verbs in Ramon and Bautista (1986), only 23 verbs, or 7.6% of the sample, have actor voice forms that are restricted to relative clauses.²³ Given this proportion, verbs with restricted actor voices

²³ These include verbs that can form actor voices with other actor voice affixes. These other forms may not undergo the same restrictions, e.g. *sumunog* ‘burn’ is restricted, but *magsunog* ‘burn’ is not.

should be analyzed as exceptions, and should not prevent the entire actor voice from being the active voice.

As with the discussion on Tagalog subjects in Section 2, the problem with identifying the active voice in Tagalog lies in the lack of a consistent, reliable way of doing so. What is required is a definition of active voice that is simple and unambiguous. Mel'čuk (2006:187) offers a good starting point: he defines the active voice as the voice with the *basic diathesis*, which he in turn defines as the diathesis that corresponds to the verb's "basic form" (i.e. zero-marked) (Mel'čuk 2006:181).²⁴ Unfortunately, in Tagalog, where all voices carry overt affixes, it is impossible to consider any one voice form as the basic form of the verb on purely morphological grounds. In such cases, the basic diathesis cannot be identified by a zero-marked voice form, but must instead be understood more generally, as the default diathesis of the verb.

Such a default diathesis does in fact exist in Tagalog, and it is that of the actor voice. The diathesis of the actor voice distinguishes itself as the default by being the only diathesis available in two verbal constructions, the gerund and the recent-perfective. This evidence will be examined below in detail.

4.2 *Gerunds*

Tagalog gerunds have no voice alternation, and therefore only one possible diathesis. In this diathesis, all arguments except the actor are coded in exactly the same way as they are in the actor voice. The actor, however, is coded differently: while in the actor voice it is in the nominative case, in the gerund it is either in the genitive case or the

²⁴ Mel'čuk (2006:181) actually defines *basic diathesis* for any "lexical unit," of which verbs are but one type. Here, we will deal solely with verbs.

dative case, as a possessor. The following sentence illustrates the coding of gerund arguments, using the gerund *pagtugtog* ‘playing,’ from the actor voice of the verb *tumugtog* ‘play’:

- (42) a. Tumugtog siya sa piyano ng isang
 Ø~T<um>ugtog siya sa piyano ng isa=ng
 PFV~<ACT.R>play 3SG.NOM DAT piano GEN one=LNK

napakagandang tugtugin
 napaka-ganda=ng tugtugin
 INT-beautiful=REL piece

‘She rendered a beautiful (musical) piece on the piano.’

(English 1984:1468)

- b. Masyadong mabilis ang pagtugtog niya ng piyesa.
 Masyado=ng ma-bilis ang pag-tugtog niya ng piyesa
 too=LNK ADJ-fast NOM GER-play 3SG.GEN GEN piece

‘His playing of the piece is too fast.’ *or*

‘The way that he plays the piece is too fast.’

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:163)

In the actor voice example (42a), the patient *tugtugin* ‘piece,’ being in the genitive, is coded in the same way as the patient in the gerund, *piyesa* ‘piece,’ in (b). However, the actor in (a), *siya* ‘3SG.NOM,’ appears in the genitive case in the gerund, as *niya* ‘3SG.GEN,’ in (b). The genitive case on the actor *niya* in (42b), however, hides the fact that it is actually a possessor of the gerund. We know this because the actor can also be coded in an alternate way, as possessors of nouns can (Schachter 1972:163). As seen in (43), there are two ways for indicating the possession of nouns:

- (43) a. lapis ko
 lapis ko
 pencil 1SG.GEN

- b. aking lapis
 akin=ng lapis
 1SG.DAT=LNK pencil
 ‘my pencil’

(Schachter 1972:136)

The first-person singular possessor of the noun *lapis* can either appear in the genitive case after the noun (*ko* ‘1SG.GEN’, in 43a), or appear in the dative case in front of the noun (*akin* ‘1SG.DAT’, in 43b), followed by the relativizing clitic =*ng*. Likewise, the actor of the gerund can be coded in the same two ways:

- (44) a. pagsusugal niya
 pag–su~sugal niya
 GER– 3SG.GEN
 GER~gamble
- b. kaniyang pagsusugal
 kaniya=ng pag–su~sugal
 3SG.DAT=LNK GER–GER~gamble
 ‘his gambling’

(Schachter 1972:163)

Like the possessor of nouns in (43a–b), the actor can either appear in the genitive case after the gerund, as *niya* does in (44a), or appear in the dative case in front of the gerund with the linking clitic =*ng*, as *kaniya* does in (44b). The dative pattern is mostly used with personal pronouns (Schachter and Otanes 1972:163). Unlike the actor, the patient can only be coded in one way in the corresponding gerund, in the genitive case following the gerund, as it is in (42b).

The coding of subjects as the possessor of the corresponding gerund happens to be quite common in other languages (Beck p.c.). English provides a good example, as can be seen in the English translation of (42b), both as a main clause (45a) and as a gerund (45b):

- (45) a. He plays the piece
 b. His playing of the piece

The subject of the verb *plays* in (45a), *he*, becomes *his* in (45b), as the possessor of the gerund *playing*. Subjects are also realized as possessors of gerunds in languages such as Lushootseed, Uzbek, and Inuktitut (Beck 2000). Since in Tagalog it is the actor voice

whose subject is realized as the possessor of the gerund, this strongly suggests that the diathesis of the gerund is that of the actor voice. In contrast, there exists no typological support for a correspondence between the possessor of the gerund and the agentive complement, which would be expected if the gerund had the diathesis of the patient voice.

4.3 *Recent-perfective*

The recent-perfective construction lends additional support to the claim that the actor voice diathesis is basic, in a fashion reminiscent of the evidence from the gerund. Like the gerund, the recent-perfective has only one diathesis, in which all arguments are coded as they are in the corresponding actor voice, except for the actor: the actor of the recent-perfective appears in the genitive case, instead of the nominative case that it would take in the actor voice. This can be seen with the following pair of sentences, one with the actor voice verb *kumain* ‘eat,’ and one with its recent-perfective form, *kakakain* ‘have just eaten’:

- (46) a. Kumain ako ng karne
 Ø~K<um>ain ako ng karne
 PFV~<ACT.R>eat 1SG.NOM GEN meat
 ‘I have just eaten some/the meat.’
- b. Kakakain ko pa l(am)ang ng karne
 Ka-ka~kain ko pa l(am)ang ng karne
 RPFV~RPFV~eat 1SG.GEN still just GEN meat
 ‘I have just eaten some/the meat.’

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:374)

In both sentences, the patient, *karne* ‘meat,’ is in the genitive case. However, whereas in the actor voice clause in (46a), the actor subject *ako* ‘1SG.NOM’ is in the nominative case, the same argument appears in the genitive case in the corresponding recent-perfective, as *ko* ‘1SG.GEN’ in (46b).

First, we will examine the difference in the coding of the actor. As shown in (46a–b), the actor appears in genitive case in recent-perfectives, while appearing in nominative case in actor voices. On the surface, the actor’s genitive case may cast doubt on its identity as the subject. However, evidence from other constructions with genitive arguments suggests that genitive arguments can be the subject in Tagalog. One such construction is the intensified adjectival predicate, formed with the prefix *napaka-*:

- (47) a. Napakaganda ng baro
 Napaka-ganda ng baro
 INT-beautiful GEN dress
 ‘The dress is very beautiful.’
- b. *Napakaganda ang baro
 Napaka-ganda ang baro
 INT-beautiful NOM dress
 *‘The dress is very beautiful.’

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:232)

The adjectival predicate in (47a–b), *napakaganda* ‘very beautiful,’ takes one argument (*baro* ‘dress’), which must be in the genitive case (47a), and cannot be in the nominative (b). Despite this, it has at least three properties shared by nominative subjects: *ay*-topicalization, targeting in non-polar questions, and number agreement.²⁵ The following sentence illustrates *ay*-topicalization of *baro*, from (47a):

- (48) Ang baro’y napakaganda
 Ang baro=ay napaka-ganda
 NOM dress=TOP INT-beautiful
 ‘The dress is very beautiful.’

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:232)

In (48), the argument *baro* appears in front of the *napakaganda*, and is also topicalized with the clitic *ay*, which attaches to its right. This shows that the genitive argument of

²⁵ As mentioned in Section 2, verb number agreement belongs to subjects only in the active voice, for verbs with voice alternation.

napakaganda can undergo *ay*-topicalization, which appeared in Section 2 as one of the properties belonging to the nominative subject.

The genitive argument of *napaka*-adjectival predicates can also be the target of non-polar questions, as (49) shows:

- (49) a. at ... napakahusay niya sa pelikula
 at napaka-husay niya sa pelikula
 and INT-skilled 3SG.GEN DAT film
 ‘... and she was very good in the film.’
 (“Maja at Matteo, nanganganib ang relasyon!” 2011)

- b. Sino iyong napakahusay sa trabaho?
 Sino iyon=ng napaka-husay sa trabaho
 who.NOM that=REL INT-skilled DAT work
 ‘Who is that one who’s very good at the work?’
 (Schachter and Otnes 1972:247)

In (49a), which has the adjectival predicate *napakahusay* ‘very skilled,’ the argument representing the person who is very skilled appears in the genitive. This genitive argument becomes the target of a non-polar question in (b), expressed by the interrogative pronoun *sino* ‘who’. Like *ay*-topicalization, being the target of a non-polar question appeared in Section 2 as one of the properties belonging to the nominative subject.

Finally, the genitive argument can trigger optional number agreement on the adjectival predicate. The relevant examples are reproduced here:

- (50) a. Napakatalino ni Armand
 Napaka-talino ni Armand
 INT-bright GEN Armand
 ‘Armand is very bright.’
- b. Napakatatalino ng mga batang Intsik
 Napaka-ta~talino ng mga bata=ng Intsik
 INT-PL~bright GEN PL bata=LNK China
 ‘The Chinese children are very bright.’

Schachter (1996:14–15)

The adjectival predicate *napakatalino* ‘very bright’ assigns genitive case to the argument representing the person who is very bright, as (50a) shows. When this genitive argument is plural, *napakatalino* can optionally be pluralized by reduplication, as (50b) shows. As mentioned in Section 2, this optional number agreement is also a property of active voice subjects.

Having seen that the subject can be coded as a genitive argument, let us examine how in the recent-perfective the patient is coded in the same way as it is in the actor voice. The patient in recent-perfectives displays a type of Differential-Object Marking (DOM) that is also found in certain, though not all, actor voice clauses (see Latrouite 2011 for more on DOM in the actor voice). As (51a) shows, in the genitive case, the patient can be interpreted as either definite or indefinite. To ensure a definite reading, it may take the dative case instead, as in (51c), which differs from (a) only in the case-marking of *karne*:

- (51) c. Kakakain ko pa l(am)ang sa karne
 Ka-ka~kain ko pa l(am)ang sa karne
 RPFV-RPFV~eat 1SG.GEN still just DAT meat
 ‘I have just eaten the meat.’

(Schachter and Otnes 1972:375)

This type of DOM also appears in the actor voice, in certain headless relative clauses:

- (52) a. Siya ang nakakita ng aksidente
 Siya ang naka-Ø~kita ng aksidente
 3SG.NOM NOM ACT.R-PFV~see GEN accident
 ‘He is the one who saw a/the accident.’
- b. Siya ang nakakita sa aksidente
 Siya ang naka-Ø~kita sa aksidente
 3SG.NOM NOM ACT.R-PFV~see DAT accident
 ‘He is the one who saw the accident.’

(Latrouite 2011:94–95)

The definiteness of *aksidente* in the genitive case (52a) is ambiguous, while *aksidente* in the dative case (52b) can only be definite. For certain verbs, this pattern is also observed in the actor voice as part of main clauses:

(53) Tumuklaw ang ahas ng/sa ibon
 Ø~T<um>uklaw ang ahas ng/sa ibon
 PFV~<ACT.R>peck NOM snake GEN/DAT bird
 ‘The snake attacked a/the bird.’

(54) Nagdadala siya ng/sa libro
 Nag~da~dala siya ng/sa libro
 ACT.R~ NPFV~carry 3SG.NOM GEN/DAT book
 ‘He is carrying a/the book.’

(Latrouite 2011:97)

As in (52), the main clauses in (53) and (54) both contain verbs in the actor voice (*tumuklaw* ‘peck’ and *magdala* ‘carry’), and both have direct objects that display DOM: in the genitive case a direct object can be indefinite or definite, while in the dative case it can only be interpreted as definite.

This shared DOM pattern between the actor voice and the recent-perfective is not only positive evidence for identifying the diathesis of the recent-perfective as the diathesis of the actor voice, but is also negative evidence against identifying it as the diathesis of the patient voice. To identify it as the diathesis of the patient voice, there would need to be a correspondence between nominative subjects (which is what the patient would be in the patient voice) and arguments with this distinctive pattern of case alternation. There does not appear to be any strong support for such a correspondence, either from other constructions in Tagalog or from other languages.

Thus, the genitive argument of some constructions in Tagalog has several properties that characterize Tagalog subjects: *ay*-topicalization, targeting in non-polar questions, and number agreement. This suggests that genitive arguments can also be

subjects in Tagalog. More specifically, it suggests that the actor of the recent-perfective can be the subject, despite being in the genitive case. This, together with the fact that recent-perfectives share DOM of the patient with the actor voice in certain constructions, provides strong reasons to identify the diathesis of the recent-perfective as the actor voice diathesis.

4.4 *Summary*

Having seen that the only diathesis in both the gerund and the recent-perfective is the diathesis of the actor voice, we arrive at the conclusion that the actor voice diathesis is basic. Since the actor voice diathesis is the basic diathesis, the actor voice should be identified as the active voice. And as was shown in the last section, since all non-active voices reassign the subject relation to a different argument, they all fit the definition for passive voice. As with the identification of the Tagalog subject, the identification of the active voice is possible only after adopting a simple, unambiguous definition of active voice. Once that is achieved, we can see that the characteristics of the voice system in Tagalog that seem peculiar turn out to be inconsequential, and that its basic character is similar to many other voice systems whose analyses are the subjects of far less controversy.

5 **Conclusion**

The goal of this paper was to settle some long-standing controversies among linguists over the status of several cross-linguistic concepts in Tagalog: subject, voice, and active voice. In all these cases, the main cause of disagreement has been the lack of

simple, unambiguous definitions that can be used to identify these concepts. In Section 2, to identify the subject, I first defined it as the most syntactically-privileged syntactic relation. Using this definition, I examined 14 morphosyntactic properties to show that of the two arguments that have been identified as the subject in non-actor voices, it is the nominative argument that possesses more of these properties, not the actor, and hence the nominative argument should be recognized as the subject. Then, in Section 3, to identify voice alternations, I defined them as modifications of a verb's diathesis that do not alter the verb's propositional meaning. Tagalog has verb alternations, each of which assigned nominative case to a different syntactic argument. Since Section 2 showed that nominative arguments are subjects in Tagalog, these verb alternations reassign syntactic relations, and consequently should be characterized as voices. Finally, in Section 4, to identify the active voice, I defined it as the voice with the basic diathesis of a verb — the diathesis that distinguishes itself in some way as the default, unmarked diathesis. I examined previous arguments against identifying the actor voice as the active voice, and put forth criticisms of these arguments. I also showed how in two verbal constructions, the gerund and the recent-perfective, which only have one diathesis, their only diathesis is that of the actor voice. This distinguishes the actor voice diathesis from the diatheses of all other voices, making the actor voice the active voice.

Clarity on the nature of Tagalog's syntactic alignment can reveal other syntactic phenomena whose characteristics have thus far remained obscure amidst uncertainty. One such phenomenon is applicatives. Applicatives in Tagalog have previously been identified as voice (or "focus/topic," in conventional Philippinist terminology), but are in fact distinguished semantically from voices, in that they increase the number of a verb's

semantic arguments by one. While applied arguments occur as syntactic objects in most other languages, Tagalog applicatives occur instead as syntactic subjects. This does not appear to be unique to Tagalog: a construction in Japanese, known as the “adversative passive,” is analyzed by Mel’čuk (2006:242, fn. 21) as an applicative whose applied argument is also the subject. These examples in Tagalog and Japanese motivate a survey of similar constructions, and call for a decision on whether it is more illuminating to characterize applicatives syntactically, as in Peterson (2006) and Beck (2009), or semantically, as Mel’čuk (2006).

In addition to the fact that the analysis given in this paper can reveal unusual characteristics in other Tagalog phenomena, it is more significant that this analysis illustrates the effectiveness of using simple, unambiguous definitions in linguistic analysis. I will therefore end this paper with an argument for the widespread adoption of such definitions in the future.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

As we have seen throughout this paper, the controversy over the analysis of the Tagalog subject and voice system has been primarily due to the continual failure to adopt and agree on simple, unambiguous definitions. Linguistic phenomena such as subjects, voice, and active voice can be challenging to define, because they often have many different characteristics that typically occur together. However, without an agreement on which characteristics of a phenomenon should be considered essential, linguists can argue endlessly over the existence of linguistic phenomena by appealing to different characteristics. This makes it almost impossible to reach a consensus on even the most

basic linguistic analysis, as we have seen in Tagalog and other Philippine languages. And without this consensus, cross-linguistic comparisons become confused, and linguistic typology as a field struggles to move forward.

The solution to this impasse is to develop definitions that are simple and unambiguous, for all linguistic phenomena. These definitions should be simple, because complex definitions not only allow room for mistakes in identifying the phenomenon, but also render the phenomenon difficult to conceptualize, and difficult to use as a building block for higher-level phenomena. Definitions should also be unambiguous, because ambiguous definitions leave room for disagreement on the identification of the phenomenon. By adopting simple and unambiguous definitions, we can ensure that our linguistic analyses are explicit about the theoretical assumptions supporting them, and help to eliminate the kind of disagreement that arises from mere misunderstanding.

This practice by no means eliminates diversity in theoretical perspectives. While the common cross-linguistic concepts of subject, voice, and active voice are useful in describing Tagalog and other Philippine languages, the definitions of them that I have adopted in this paper are by no means necessary in every analysis. Different theoretical perspectives may be based on entirely different concepts, and may offer useful perspectives that complement each other to provide a broader understanding of languages. The purpose of adopting simple and unambiguous definitions is simply to prevent any analysis from hiding poorly-reasoned arguments behind vaguely-formulated definitions, regardless of its theoretical disposition.

Nor does the use of simple and unambiguous definitions force diverse phenomena from different languages together under one overly-simplistic label. The definitions

prescribed in this paper focus on one similarity that is shared by similar phenomena in different languages, but do not hide differences among these phenomena in other respects. These differences can be reflected by other phenomena. A thorough linguistic analysis must combine many different phenomena to provide a detailed picture of a language's morphosyntax.

Despite the complexity of many linguistic phenomena, it is still not only possible, but necessary, to observe them using simple, unambiguous concepts. The complexity of linguistic phenomena can be likened to the complex fractal shapes of islands and continents, with coastal outlines that continue to reveal intricate detail even at smaller and smaller scales. Even with shapes this complex, it is nevertheless possible to delineate them fairly accurately on a map, using conceptual tools such as standard units of measurement, stable directions, and lines of latitude and longitude. So too in linguistics must we develop and use stable definitions to describe linguistic phenomena, so that they can serve as yardsticks by which the great variation of the world's languages can be measured.

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Why is this subject so controversial? Most religions do not argue that species change over time. The overwhelming scientific evidence can't be ignored. However, the controversy stems from the idea that humans evolved from monkeys or primates and the origins of life on Earth. Most famously, this controversy came to a head in Tennessee in 1925 during the Scopes "Monkey" Trial when a substitute teacher was found guilty of teaching evolution. More recently, legislative bodies in several states are trying to reinstate the teaching of Intelligent Design and Creationism in science classes. This "war" between science and religion has been perpetuated by the media. In fact, science does not deal with religion at all and is not out to discredit any religion. How to use controversy in a sentence. Example sentences with the word controversy. controversy example sentences. controversy Sentence Examples. He had been placed in the center of a controversy he couldn't resolve. 1K. 449. The New Testament reflects a controversy. 632. 284. The controversy that ensued made a split in the nonjuring communion. controversy (over/about/surrounding somebody/something) public discussion and argument about something that many people strongly disagree about, think is bad, or are shocked by. to arouse/cause controversy. a bitter controversy over/about the site of the new airport. The controversy surrounding his latest movie continues. Controversy exists as to how safe these drugs are. Controversy is raging over the route of the new motorway. He has resigned amid continuing controversy over his expense claims. His views have excited a lively controversy among fellow scientists. Public funding could resolve the controversy surrounding campaign finance. The book raised a storm of controversy. The controversy centred on the issue of compensation for the victims.