0. Introduction

Grammatical voice has traditionally been understood in terms of the category of subject. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines grammatical voice as follows:

> the form of a verb by which the relation of the subject to the action implied is indicated; one or other of the modes of inflecting or varying a verb according to the distinctions of active, passive, or middle. (V281/3650)

As a wider variety of languages has become better known, the universality of subjects has been called into question. Many languages exhibit little internal evidence of a grammaticized subject category (Li and Thompson 1976; Mithun 1991; and others). If languages can differ so fundamentally in their case systems, then they must differ substantially in their voice systems as well.

One set of languages known for their rich voice alternations are the Austronesian languages of the Philippines. There has been a long history of discussion of the classification of their case systems, as nominative/accusative, as ergative/absolutive, or as neither. In what follows, it will be suggested that at least for one of these languages, Kapampangan, once the functions of the case categories are understood, the voice alternations can be seen to be straightforward, motivated both grammatically and pragmatically. If the case system is misinterpreted, however, the function of voice is obscured, adding an unnecessary puzzle to our understanding of voice systems in general.
Kapampangan is spoken by nearly a million people, principally in the central plain of Luzon. The data upon which this discussion is based come from the speech of a family: a father, a mother, their three adult daughters, and occasionally other relatives, recorded over a period of several years. The material consists of extensive spontaneous conversation during a variety of activities, interspersed with personal narratives, reminiscences, stories, etc., as well as some letters written by the parents to their daughters. The transcription covers over two thousand pages. I am especially grateful to Bernadette Mangaser, the oldest daughter, for her help with transcription and translation.

1. Formal Case Marking

Case marking in Kapampangan is formally ergative/absolutive: agents or experiencers of transitive clauses appear in one form (ergative), while patients of transitives and the single core arguments of intransitives both appear in a second (absolutive). Compare the forms of the pronouns in (1). The patients of the transitive clauses in (1a) match the single arguments of the intransitive clauses in (1b-d), whether they are agents as in (1b), patients as in (1c), or middles, i.e. simultaneously agents and patients, as in (1d).

(1)  

a. Ikit da ka.  
saw 3PL.ERG 2ABS  
‘They saw you.’

b. Tinerak ka.  
danced 2ABS  
‘You danced.’

c. Malumud ka.  
drown 2ABS  
‘You’ll drown.’

d. Ma·ndilu ka.  
bathing 2ABS  
‘You’re bathing.’

Although traditionally written separately, these pronouns are enclitics. They constitute a phonological unit with the first element of the sentence for stress placement and internal sandhi processes. Compare the verbs [ma·ndi·luʔ?] ‘bathing’ and [ma·ndi·lú·ka] ‘you’re bathing’. The addition of
the enclitic =ka ‘you’ results in a shift in stress and replacement of the glottal stop with vowel length. Certain combinations of enclitics exhibit further phonological fusion, as can be seen in (2). In glosses, portmanteau combinations of cases will be indicated by a slash.

(2) Ikit ku + ya > Ikit ke.

saw 1ERG + 3ABS saw 1ERG/3ABS
‘I saw him’

Since Kapampangan is basically a verb-initial language, the pronominal enclitics often follow verbs, as above, but they may be cliticized to other sentence-initial constituents, as in (3).

(3) E la mekapandilu.

not 3PL.ABS managed.to.bathe
‘They were not able to bathe.’

As in many languages of the world, though not most other Philippine languages, the pronominal enclitics representing core cases (ergative and absolutive) appear whether coreferent noun phrases are also present or not.

(4) a. Nyang kai adakap ne.

sometime later managed.to.catch 3ERG/3ABS
‘Sometime later, he caught her.’

b. Nyang kai adakap ne

sometime later managed.to.catch 3ERG/3ABS
ning matying ing pau.
C.ERG monkey C.ABS turtle
‘Sometime later, the monkey caught the turtle.’

Full noun phrases are also marked for case. Compare the two words corresponding to ‘the’ in (4b) above. The determiner ning identifies the monkey as ergative. The determiner ing identifies the turtle as absolutive. The determiners further distinguish common (c) from proper or uniquely referring nominals (p), and singulares from plurals.

A third syntactic case in Kapampangan, the oblique, is used for most other arguments: recipients, beneficiaries, instruments, locations, directions, etc. There is a separate set of free oblique pronouns. The pronoun keka in (5) is part of this set.

(5) Pisali mi ya keka.

sell 1EXCL.ERG 3ABS 2OBL
‘We’ll sell it to you.’
Case is marked on oblique noun phrases, as on ergative and absolutive noun phrases, in the determiners. In the sentences below, the market is identified as oblique by the article *king*, the Aunt by *kari*, and the teachers by *kareng*. (The differences in the forms of these articles reflect common/proper and singular/plural distinctions.)

(6) *Minta ya king palengki.*
    went 3ABS C.OBL market
    ‘She went to the market.’

(7) *Makatuknang ya kari Inda Maryang Tungul.*
    stays she PR.PL.OBL Aunt Maria Tungul
    ‘She stays with the family of Aunt Maria Tungul.’

(8) *Madagul ya pa, kareng mestra.*
    big 3ABS even C.PL.OBL teacher
    ‘He was even bigger than the teachers.’

Note that there are no oblique enclitics comparable to the ergative and absolutive enclitics. Obliques are represented only once, either by free oblique pronouns or full oblique noun phrases. The presence of enclitic pronouns referring just to core (ergative and absolutive) arguments in every sentence does give us an advantage: the core arguments are easy to identify. The grammatical transitivity of each clause is thus obvious: clauses with only an absolutive enclitic are grammatically intransitive, while those with both ergative and absolutive enclitics are transitive.

The basic order of noun phrases is the same as that of enclitics: ergative then absolutive. Obliques follow.

(9) *Anya inatya ne*
    that’s why threw 3ERG/3ABS
    ‘That’s why the monkey threw
    ning matying ing pau king danum.
    C.ERG monkey C.ABS turtle C.OBL water
    the turtle into the water.’

The ergative and oblique cases are also used to show possession. In order to avoid confusion in discussions about voice here, ergative and oblique markers indicating possession will be translated ‘POSS’ rather than labeled with their actual cases.

Tables of the full sets of ergative and absolutive enclitic pronouns, their combinations, the oblique free pronouns, and the basic determiners can be found in the Appendix.
2. Absolutive Status

Absolutives typically represent arguments corresponding to the intransitive subjects and transitive objects of accusative languages. Not all participants that would be intransitive subjects or direct objects in languages like English have absolutive status in Kapampangan, however. In Kapampangan, absolutives are usually definite. The functions served by indefinite subjects and objects in many languages are accomplished by other means.

One major function of indefinite subjects and objects in many languages is to introduce new information. (See among others Du Bois 1987.) In Kapampangan, other devices are used for introducing new participants. The most common, especially for entities that will assume prominent roles in the ensuing discourse, is a presentative construction based on atin ‘there is/are’. The entity introduced is not a case-marked argument. In (10) below, a presentative construction is used to introduce a dog. Note that there is no enclitic referring to the indefinite dog, and no determiner. (a and ng are “linkers” (LK), whose sole function is to connect components of a lexical item or other constituent.²)

(10) Ma:gumpisa no namang mamangan
starting already=3PL.ABS again eating
‘They were just starting to eat again
nyang bigla=ng-bigla ...
when sudden=LK-sudden
when suddenly ...
atin na namang datang ... a asu.
exist already again came LK dog
a big dog came ...

In (11), a presentative construction introduces a cat. The cat would be a direct object in English. In Kapampangan, it has no case.

(11) nyang atin lang biglang damdaman a .. pus.a.
when exist 3PL.ABS suddenly heard LK cat
‘... when suddenly they heard a cat.’

As soon as an entity has been introduced, it can be encoded as a core argument. In the first line in (12), the creatures are presented with atin and have no case; by the second line, they are referred to by an absolutive enclitic, the vowel of do ‘they/Them’.

² For further discussion on the functions of absolutive absolutes, see Section 3.3.1, ‘Existential Themes’.
(12) *Ating magdalang tugak, butiti, itu, licauk, gurami,*
exist=lk bringing frog tadpole catfish licauk gurami
‘They brought frogs, tadpoles, catfish, licauk, gurami,
at dinapuk do caring boting maki-danum.
and placed 3pl.erg/3pl.abs c.pl.obl bottle with water
and they placed them in bottles filled with water.’

Indefinite entities are not always specifically introduced with *atin.* Sometimes they are introduced by another verb. The star in the sentence in (13) was created by the event described there. It had no previous independent existence, and does not have core case status in the clause: it has no determiner, and there is no coreferent enclitic. (If the star were absolutive, the clause would be transitive, and the Auntie would be ergative.)

(13) *Potang kai kanita, i Nanang ku,*
later then to that pr.abs Aunt my
‘Then, my Auntie
*gawa yang ... ugis-batuin a maragul... king palarang.*
make=3abs.lk shape-star lk big c.obl foil
will cut out a big star shape from the foil.’

In many accusative languages, indefinite or nonspecific direct objects form a unit with verbs to describe particular kinds of activities or states, like English ‘have a meeting’ or ‘watch TV’. Kapampangan contains similar constructions that take the form of the predicate in (13) above: a verb linked to a caseless noun by *=ng.* In (14) below, the noun for ‘television’ has no case. It is simply linked to the verb ‘watch’ (with its enclitic pronoun) to form a complex predicate ‘watch television’.

(14) *Neng kai manalbe kung tibi.*
sometimes watch 1abs=lk tv
‘Sometimes I watch TV.’

In (15), the nominal ‘candle’ has no case. It is linked to the verb ‘light’ (with enclitic pronoun) to form a complex ‘light candles’.

(15) *Potang sindi kaming kandila.*
later light 1excl.abs=lk candle
‘Then we light candles.’

Many other activities expressed by verb-object constructions in English are expressed by single verbs in Kapampangan. For ‘take a rest’, the verb
painawa is used; for ‘run an errand’ the verb lumakad is used; for ‘hear mass’, the verb simba is used; for ‘make a noise’ the verb magkaingye is used. Kapampangan has highly productive derivational morphology for creating verbs of this type: magmiryenda ‘have a snack’ (miryenda ‘a snack’); magkamali ‘make a mistake’ (mali ‘wrong’); magbulakbul ‘cut classes’ (bulakbul ‘a fun trip when you should be in school or work’); magbibingka ‘cook a kind of rice cake (bibingka)’, etc. The verbalizer is even productive with borrowed nouns: magsapatus ‘put on shoes’ (sapatus ‘shoe’) magmadre ‘enter a convent’ (madre ‘nun’), magorasyun ‘pray the Angelus’ (orasyun ‘Angelus’).

The major functions of indefinite subject and direct object arguments in accusative languages are thus accomplished by alternative devices in Kapampangan: presentative constructions, caseless nominals linked to verbs, and the lexicon. Indefinite absolutes do appear on occasion with quantifiers like ‘one’, ‘a few’, or ‘many’. Otherwise absolutive arguments are overwhelmingly definite, or independently identifiable.

The enclitic pronouns reflect a further distinction. It will be recalled that ergative and absolutive arguments are normally specified by pronominal enclitics whether full nominals are present in the clause or not. Certain absolutes are not referred to by enclitics, however. Among these are mass entities. We know that the food in (16) is absolute because of the determiner ing. Yet there is no absolute enclitic referring to the food following the verb.

\[
(16) \text{ampong makasawa} (0) \text{ing pamangan.} \\
\text{and lack\textunderscore variety (3ABS) C.ABS food} \\
\text{‘and the food lacks variety.’}
\]

Enclitics do not usually refer to abstractions. We can see that the challenge in (17) is absolute from the determiner ing, but the clause contains no absolute enclitic.

\[
(17) \text{Tatanggapan ku} (0) \text{ing amun mu.} \\
\text{accepting IERG (3ABS) C.ABS challenge your} \\
\text{‘I accept your challenge.’}
\]

Kapampangan contains no nonreferential dummy absolutes comparable to English dummy subjects. When a speaker explained that it was hot, no enclitic appeared.
(18) uling mapali (0).
because hot (3ABS)
‘... because (it) is hot.’
But when she remarked on another occasion that the sun was hot, an absolutive enclitic referring to the sun did appear.

(19) Oneng mapali ya ing aldo.
but hot 3ABS C.ABS sun
‘But the sun was hot.’

Embedded clauses follow the same pattern. The complement clause ‘he was tired’ in (20) clearly functions as an absolutive: it is marked with an absolutive determiner ing, and the other argument of the main clause, ‘he’, is ergative. Yet there is no absolutive enclitic.

(20) Apansinan na (0) [ing mapagal ne].
noticed 3ERG C.ABS tired already-3ABS
‘He noticed [that he was already tired].’

In sum, the Kapampangan absolutive category corresponds to the union of intransitive subject and transitive object in accusative languages, with the refinement that absolutes are usually independently identifiable, or definite. Such a tendency is not unusual cross-linguistically. In Kinyarwanda for example, a Bantu language of Rwanda and Zaire, “subjects, datives and benefactives are always either definite or generic; in other words, they are always familiar (known) to both hearer and speaker ... Indefinite subjects, benefactives and datives are introduced by the existential hari plus a relative clause formation.” (Kimenyi 1980:59) Turkish has a similar restriction on accusatives. Lewis notes that the accusative case “marks the definite object of a verb” in Turkish (1967:35). Indefinite objects are not categorized as accusatives; they bear no case ending at all. As Hopper and Thompson 1980 have pointed out, clauses with definite, referential patients are more highly transitive than those with indefinite or nonreferential patients. Kapampangan has grammarized this higher degree of transitivity. Only those transitive events with definite or referential patients are classified grammatically as transitive.

Hopper and Thompson note as well that the countability and concreteness of patients further increase the transitivity of clauses. This even higher degree of transitivity has been grammarized in the Kapampangan enclitic system. Only those absolutive participants that are countable and concrete, i.e. highly individuated, are represented by enclitics.
3. The Functional Basis of Ergativity

If the function of voice is to manipulate the case structures of clauses, we could hardly hope to understand the motivation behind a particular voice system without first understanding the functions of the case categories it manipulates. In ergative/absolutive systems, the principal case is generally recognized as the absolutive. The citation forms of nouns are usually absolutive. If one case is formally unmarked, it is typically the absolutive. If a clause has only one core participant, it is normally the absolutive.

Absolutives share a crucial functional feature: they represent the participant that is the most immediately or directly involved in an event or state. Consider, for example, the two sentences in (21).

(21) a. Herb planted the roses.
    b. Sam ran off.

In (21a), the most immediately involved participants are the roses. In (21b), the most immediately involved participant can only be Sam. Both of these arguments, the roses and Sam, would be categorized as absolutives in an ergative/absolutive system. Absolutives are not simply patients, as has sometimes been suggested. Although many absolutives are indeed patients, like the roses, a substantial proportion are not patients at all, like Sam. The characteristic they all share is most direct involvement. This unifying feature has been noticed before. Kibrik (1979: 66) points out for example that this category (termed by him "factitive") designates "the closest participant in the situation ... an actant who directly takes part in it".

Speakers can often select the participant whose involvement they wish to highlight. The two sentences in (22) could both be used truthfully after the same event.

(22) a. She's eaten the last cookie.
    b. She's eaten.

A speaker who wished to depict the fate of the cookie would choose (22a). (22b) focuses on the involvement of the eater. These are of course the participants that would be categorized as absolutives in an ergative/absolutive system: the cookie in the first and the eater in the second. Similarly, the two sentences in (23) could describe the same actions.

(23) a. George is cooking the turkey.
    b. George is cooking.
The first highlights the immediate involvement of the turkey, while in the second, the involvement of the turkey is bypassed in order to highlight that of George, scurrying around the kitchen. The turkey would be the absolutive of the first sentence, and George the absolutive of the second. Alternative structures such as those in (22) and (23) allow speakers important options for construing events.

The role of the absolutive as the most immediately involved participant has ramifications in the lexicon. Special semantic relationships are especially common between verbs and their absolutive arguments, whether or not a language has otherwise grammaticized an absolutive case category.

First consider the absolutes of transitive verbs. Only certain kinds of patients appear with the verb ‘ask’: usually questions, directions, permission, etc., or a source of information. The absolutive of the transitive verb ‘drink’ is usually liquid, and of ‘pour’ or ‘spill’, liquid or particulate; solids are laid, set or dropped. Absolutes of verbs of speaking are usually words, sentences, speeches, etc. Absolutes of ‘sing’ are usually songs (hymns, ditties, arias, etc.) or words. Absolutes of ‘wear’ are typically clothing, although certain other objects are possible, such as decorations, hairstyles, and facial expressions. Absolutes of ‘scatter’ are multiple objects or particulate matter. Absolutes of ‘melt’ must be solid. Absolutes of ‘wag’ are usually tails, tongues, or fingers. The choice of a transitive verb can significantly delimit the set of appropriate absolutes. By contrast, the ergatives appropriate to transitive verbs are usually considerably less restricted. Sometimes transitive agents must be animate or human, capable of instigating actions, but restrictions are seldom much more specific. Even wind can scatter leaves, and the sun can melt crayons.

Now consider the absolutes of intransitive verbs. Their single core arguments are often just as limited as the patients of transitive verbs. Not just anything rings: usually bells and things with bells, like telephones and alarm clocks, ring. Only multiple entities or particulate matter scatter. Only solids melt. Such restrictions apply to agents of intransitives as well as patients. Only dogs and seals bark; if others do, they are assumed to be somehow doglike. Only snakes or beings with similar shapes slither. Horses or horselike creatures gallop. Only creatures with beaks peck, or those somehow like them.

The privileged semantic relationship between verbs and their absolutive arguments was pointed out by Moravcsik (1978) and further discussed by Keenan (1984). Citing Moravcsik, Keenan notes, “predicates in a lan-
language may impose highly specific selectional restrictions on absolutive arguments but typically only impose weak and rather general restrictions such as humanness, animacy, or concreteness on S's. Moreover, the restrictions imposed on S and DOs are highly similar. Perhaps this is at least part of the reason so many verbs in English can be used both intransitively and transitively.” (Keenan 1984:204)

This special qualifying relationship between verbs and their absolutes has important implications in the Kapampangan voice system.

4. Voice in Kapampangan

There has been extensive discussion in the literature concerning the nature of case in Philippine languages. (See especially Shibatani 1988 for references.) All single out the same case as syntactically preeminent, although some identify this as the “subject” (Bloomfield 1917; Blake 1925; Mirikitani 1971; Richards 1971; Schwartz 1976; De Wolf 1988; Durie 1988; McGinn 1988; and others), some as the “absolutive” (Givón 1981; Payne 1982; De Guzman 1988; Gertz 1988; and others), and some as the “topic” (Schachter 1972, 1976, 1977; and many others). This is the case cognate with that marked absolutive in the Kapampangan examples here. Those familiar with the conventional Philippine terminology can mentally substitute the term “topic” in its specialized sense there for “absolutive” in the following discussion.

Kapampangan has a rich derivational verbal morphology that has resulted in numerous sets, of varying sizes, of morphologically related verbs. One way in which related verbs may contrast is in their argument structure. Transitive verbs most often appear with ergative agents and absolutive patients, as in (24a).

(24) a. (I)buklat ne. (Transitive)

open 3ERG/3ABS

‘He’ll open it.’

Many of the world’s languages have applicative affixes that derive transitive verbs with beneficiaries, instruments, locations, etc., as core arguments. Many verbs in Kapampangan have similar derived forms, like those meaning ‘open-for’ in (24b) and ‘open-with’ in (24c). Such verbs appear with ergative agents and absolutive recipients, beneficiaries, instruments, directions, locations, etc.
In many languages, transitive verbs have intransitive counterparts whose only core argument is the agent. Most Kapampangan transitive verbs have such antipassive counterparts. These appear with an absolutive agent, as in (24d).

(24) d. *Mamuklat ya.* (Antipassive intransitive)

\[
\text{open} \quad \text{3ABS}
\]

'He'll open up' (as a shop or house)

Transitive verbs in many languages have intransitive counterparts of another kind, passives, whose only core argument is the patient. Kapampangan also contains such derived forms. These appear with an absolutive patient, as in (24e).

(24) e. *Makabuklat ya.* (Passive intransitive)

\[
\text{open} \quad \text{3ABS}
\]

'It has been opened/is open'

Many verbs also have intransitive middle counterparts, in which the roles of agent and patient are fused. Their absolutes function simultaneously as agents and patients, as in (24f).

(24) f. *Mibubuklat ya.* (Middle intransitive)

\[
\text{open} \quad \text{3ABS}
\]

'It's opening.' (as a door by itself)

Alternations like those above are pervasive and highly productive in Kapampangan but clearly derivational. A given verb root will not necessarily have all of the possible counterpart morphological forms. The same form is not necessarily derivationally basic in all sets. Sometimes the most basic form is transitive, other times intransitive.

Such alternations affect the argument structure of clauses in ways that seem very similar to voice in languages with clear subject categories. We can now ask whether the functions of these alternations are in fact equivalent.
4.1 *The syntactic function of voice*

The category of absolutive has privileged status in a set of syntactic constructions in Kapampangan based on relativization. As in other Philippine languages, relativized arguments always function as absolutes within relative clauses.

In many sentences, this pattern is hardly remarkable. The arguments would naturally be absolutes anyway. Consider the first relative construction in (25): ‘the cement [they are mixing [...]’. The cement, patient of the transitive verb ‘mix’, would be absolute even if the clause were independent: ‘they are mixing cement’. The second relative construction, ‘the stones [they are stacking [...]’ shows the same pattern. (Kapampangan relative clauses contain no relative pronouns.)

(25) *Yabe ra keng [pamangawa rang] morta*

add 3PL.ERG C.OBL making 3PL.ERG cement

‘They add it to the cement [they are mixing]’

*karing [sasalasan dang] batu.*

C.PL.OBL stacking 3PL.ERG stone

for the stones [they are stacking].

(26), from a letter, contains the construction: ‘their relative [who works for the ship]’. The relative, the only core argument of the intransitive verb ‘work’, would be an absolute even if the clause were independent: ‘**their relative** works for the ship’.

(26) *Mapna mu kakilala ne*

good just know 3ERG/3ABS

‘It was a good thing

*nitang camaganac dang [ma:gobra keng barku].*

that relative their working C.DEF.OBL ship

their relative [who works for the ship] knows her.’

Often, however, the case organization of a relative clause is different from that of an independent clause. Consider the relative construction in (27): ‘the servant [who was going to help Ara]’.

(27) *Dinatang ne ing ipus*

arrived 3ABS C.ABS servant

‘The servant arrived
In an independent clause, 'the servant was going to help Ara', the servant would usually be ergative, agent of a transitive verb saupan 'help'. Ara, highly identifiable, would be absolutive. In the relative clause, however, the servant must be absolutive, so an intransitive form of the verb 'help' appears and Ara is oblique.

The fact that relativized arguments are always absolutes of their relative clauses affects the shape of several other constructions. Relatives are frequently used as nominals.

(28) ... ding [mate kabukasan]
   C.PL [die the.next.day]
   '...those [who will die the next day]'

The voice of the relative clause in (28) is unremarkable. The verb 'die' is intransitive, and the ones who will die absolutive. Often a less usual voice must be used to cast the referent of the nominal as absolutive of the relative clause. In an independent sentence 'they are striking the clay pots', 'they' would normally be ergative, agent of the transitive verb papaluan 'strike'. In the relative clause in (29), 'they' must be absolutive, so an intransitive (antipassive) verb papalu 'strike' is used, and the clay pots are oblique.

(29) Retang [papalu... karetang banga]... dakal la.
    those.ABS striking those.OBL clay.pots many 3ABS
    'Those [who are striking the clay pots] are many.'

Referents of nominalized relatives may be semantically beneficiaries, instruments, locations, or directions. Consider the relative construction 'this (person) we bought the ticket from' in (30), from one of the mother's letters. The referent is the source of the buying, so an applicative transitive verb 'buy.from' was used in the relative clause, casting the semantic source as a syntactic absolutive.

(30) niting [pisaliwan ming ticket]
    this bought.from 1EXCL.ERG=LK ticket
    'this (person) [we bought the ticket from]'

(Note that the ticket is caseless, even though it is identifiable from the previous sentence.)
Kapampangan contains a third construction based on relativization, a kind of cleft. A common clause type in Kapampangan is an equational construction, in which constituents are simply juxtaposed.

(31) Problema na king pamilya.
    problem her = in family
    ‘Her problem is in the family.’

Similar juxtaposition is used for clefting. The second member of the equation has the form of a relative clause.

(32) (Sige na mo) ikang [mangisa].
    all right 2CONTR=LK = saute
    ‘(All right,) you be [the one who saut€s].
    Aku na mung [mangaying bawang].
    lCONTR just=LK = do.what garlic
    I’ll just be [the one who does the garlic].’
    = ‘All right, you saute. I’ll just do the garlic.’

If the head of the cleft is an agent, the relative clause must be intransitive, so that the agent is absolutive. This means that even definite patients appear in the oblique case, like the mudfish below.

(33) Akung [menikua king bulig].
    lCONTR=LK = able.to.get c.OBL mudfish
    ‘I was [the one who caught the mudfish].’

Cleft constructions, like other relatives, frequently exhibit otherwise unusual voice. In the cleft below, part of a description of the mortar and pestle, the head is semantically the instrument of the relative clause, but syntactically the absolutive.

(34) Itang alung ita yapin
    that pestle that really
    ‘That pestle
    ing babayu mu ketang asung.
    c.ABS pounding.with 2ERG that.OBL mortar
    is what you are pounding with on the mortar.’

Finally, a fourth construction also involves relativization. When agents or patients are questioned, they appear as absolutes. Often the voice is unremarkable, as in (35) where the question word nanu ‘what’ refers to the patient of transitive buri ‘want’.
Where the questioned argument would not otherwise be absolutive, a less common voice is used. In (36), the question word *ninu* 'who?' refers to the agent of a usually transitive event 'hit'. The agent is cast as a syntactic absolutive by means of the antipassive intransitive verb form *mikpuk* 'hit'. The patient is oblique.

(36) *Ninung mikpuk keka?*  
*who=LK hit 2OBL*  
'Who hit you?'  

In (37) the questioned element is a location. So that it will be absolutive, an applicative transitive verb form is used: 'put-in'.

(37) *Nanung pilu:lanan mu?*  
*what=LK put.in 2ERG*  
'What did you put it in?'

These question-word questions have the same form as clefts: 'What is it that you want?', 'Who is it that hit you?', 'What is it that you put it in?'. Their heads are simply interrogative pronouns instead of contrastive pronouns. (There are also other sets of question words meaning 'to whom?', 'where?', 'why?' etc. that do not have absolutive status.)

Why should absolutives have privileged status in relative clauses? The function of a relative clause is to distinguish, restrict, or further qualify a particular participant. Each of the relative-based constructions described above does just that. Recall the special qualifying relationship that exists between verbs and their absolutes. The argument most narrowly restricted by the verb is the absolutive. It is not surprising that the arguments distinguished by relative clauses should be cast as absolutes. This choice is convenient, since the absolutive is the only case that appears in every clause.

4.2 The discourse function of voice

As described above, absolutive arguments of main clauses are most often the single core arguments of intransitive clauses or the patients of transitive clauses. Sometimes, however, other participants are encoded as absolutes in Kapampangan because of their pragmatic status in the discourse.
4.2.1 Obliques and absolutes

A number of verbs have two forms such that the oblique argument of one corresponds to the absolutive of the other. The verb root lawe 'look', for example, typically appears in intransitive constructions with an oblique noun phrase indicating direction. Sentence (38) is from a story about the adarna bird.

(38) Linawe ya king babo da ring sanga,
looked 3ABS C.OBL top their C.PL branch
‘He looked up at the top of the branches
at akit ne ing ayup a adarna.
and saw 3ERG/3ABS C.ABS bird of adarna
and he saw the adarna bird ...’

The same root can appear in a transitive verb with an absolutive noun phrase indicating direction. The sentence in (39) comes from a legend about the origin of the moon and the stars.

(39) Nyang lawen ne ing biga,
when look.at 3ERG/3ABS C.ABS sky
‘When she looked at the sky,
ala na yu..
not more 3ABS
it (the sky) was not there anymore,
ne mababa.
not already.3ABS low
it was not low ...’

The function of this difference is clear: the oblique direction in (38), 'at the top of the branches' is incidental to the story of the adarna bird, but the absolutive direction in (39), 'the sky', is central to the origin of the moon and the stars.

Similarly, the verb 'go' typically appears in intransitive sentences with an oblique noun phrase specifying the direction.

(40) Minta ya king ardin da.
went 3ABS C.OBL garden their
‘She went to their garden.’

The same verb root also appears in transitive constructions with the direction encoded as an absolutive. The passage in (41) described the actions of a naughty child.
The garbage bins were centrally involved in the sequence of events. The same alternations appear in writing. The father wrote of a visit to the parents of his daughter’s husband, here classified as oblique.

(42) *Cabucasan minta cami caring balae.*
the.next.day went 1EXCL.ABS C.PL.OBL co-parents-in-law
‘The next day we went to your husband’s parents’.

A discussion followed of the good time they had. In another letter, the father again used the verb root ‘go’ when the couple went to a doctor. Here the doctor was categorized as absolutive, not surprising in light of the discussion that followed about the doctor.

(43) *Pintalan miya y Agustin*
went.to 1EXCL.ERG/3ABS P.ABS
‘We went to (see) Dr. Agustin
*Miercoles 3:00 P.M.*
*Wednesday at 3:00 P.M.*
*Yari ya U.P. 1964.*
finished 3ABS
*He graduated from the University of the Philippines in 1964.*
*(He underwent training ... He is now President of the ... He is a member of the International Congress ... He charges ...)*

The functional differences among these derived forms are similar to those among the English verbs ‘go’, ‘approach’, and ‘visit’. The verb ‘call’ often appears as an intransitive with the person called encoded as an oblique.

(44) *Minaus ya kanaku ana.*
called 3ABS 1OBL QUOT
‘She called *me* up and said ...’
But sometimes the person called is encoded as an absolutive.

(45) *Inaus da ka nabengi pero ala ka.*

called 1ERG 2ABS last.night but none 2ABS

‘I called you up last night but you weren’t there.’

Again, the reason for the absolutive status is easy to see. The person called in (45) was central to the subsequent discussion.

The verb root ‘open’ often appears in transitive constructions in which the semantic patient, the object opened, is absolutive.

(46) *Saguli mu ne ating kakatuk*

awhile 2ERG already-3ABS exist knocking

‘Wait a minute, there’s someone knocking.

*Buklat mu ne ita Pilar.*

open 2ERG already-3ABS that

Open it, Pilar.’

But even an identifiable patient is sometimes bypassed and a beneficiary expressed as the absolutive. One of the sisters told the story of the grasshopper and the ants. When the rainy season came, the wet and hungry grasshopper knocked on the door of the ants’ house. As the ants opened it, the grasshopper, not the door, was cast as the absolutive.

(47) *Nyang buklattan deng pasbul*

when opened.for 3PL.ERG/3ABS door

‘When the ants opened the door for

*ring Panas ing Lipaktun,...*

c.ABS grasshopper

the grasshopper,...’

Of course the grasshopper was an important figure in the tale, while the door was only there to be opened. Although the door had just been mentioned in the previous sentence, it has no case here. It is linked with the verb to form a unit meaning ‘door-open’.

The selection of an absolutive is more than a simple question of overt mention in surrounding context. Absolutives encode arguments worthy of attention. There was no reason to direct our attention to the door in (47) above, and it was not absolutive. Compare the two uses of the root ‘mount/climb/ride’ in the passages in (48) and (49). A young man was going off on an important expedition. He prepared carefully. He packed bread and water. He got his sword. He mounted his beautiful horse. At this point the horse appears as an absolutive.
When it came time to return home, he simply hopped onto the horse and set off. Here, the horse is oblique.

(49) at sinake ya king kabayu na,
and climbed 3ABS C.OBL horse his
‘and he climbed onto his horse ...’

The difference between the absolutive and oblique encoding of the horse has little to do with its previous or subsequent mention. It indicates the attention the listener should pay to the horse. As an absolutive in (48), the horse was part of a special set of possessions carefully assembled one by one by the young man, each worthy of note. It was described as beautiful. In (49) the oblique horse was just a way home.

The pragmatic function of these alternations between oblique and absolutive case is clear. Arguments are classified as absolutive when they represent significant participants within the discourse as a whole, worthy of attention, but they are categorized as oblique when they are peripheral to the discussion.

4.2.2 Ergatives and absolutes
It has been suggested that in some Philippine languages, the case cognate with that identified here as absolutive is actually a subject, functioning as the discourse topic. The previous section showed that participants central to the discussion are in fact more likely to be encoded as absolutes than as obliques in Kapampangan. If the essence of the absolutive case in Kapampangan is actually to track the most topical participant in discourse, then we might expect to find similar alternations between absolutes and ergatives. Agents might be classified as absolutive when playing a central role in the discourse, but ergative when incidental.
In fact, this is not the case. A continuing topic or central protagonist through a stretch of discourse is usually encoded by a mixture of ergative and absolutive cases. In the description of a spoiled child below, the enclitics referring to the child are in boldface. Note the alternation between absolutive and ergative case.

(50)  
\[ \text{E ya biasang manintun.} \]
not 3ABS knows.how=LK look.for
\[ \text{She doesn't know how to look for things.} \]

\[ \text{Pa:mialungan no reng playulungan na} \]
playing.with 3ERG/3PL.ABS C.PL toy her
\[ \text{She plays with her toys} \]

\[ \text{at potang atin yang e akit,} \]
and later exist 1ABS=LK not able to see

\[ \text{and when she can't find something,} \]

\[ \text{ausan neng agad i Inang na} \]
call 3ERG/3ABS=LK right away PR.ABS mother her
\[ \text{she'll call her mother right away.} \]

Such alternation is usual. Note that no attempt was made to cast the child as absolutive when she was the agent of a transitive event, although the verbs 'play' and 'call' do have intransitive counterparts with absolutive agents. The categorization of the child as ergative or absolutive depends on the grammatical transitivity of the clause, which is largely a function of the identifiability of the associated patient. In the first line, 'things' are indefinite, so the clause is intransitive and the child is absolutive. In the second, 'her toys' are definite, so the clause is transitive and she is ergative. In the third, 'something' is indefinite, so the clause is intransitive and she is absolutive. In the fourth, 'her mother' is definite, so the clause is transitive and she is ergative. The topicality of the child assures that she is expressed with a core case, but the status of the patient determines whether she will be ergative or absolutive.

A frequently occurring device in Kapampangan for highlighting the center of discussion is a topicalizing construction sometimes termed left dislocation. The topicalized nominal appears before the predicate to signal a shift to a different protagonist or discourse topic. This construction is pervasive in natural speech. One of the daughters was discussing Emma and her beautiful garden. She then shifted to a new topic with the noun phrase in the first line of (51).
Interestingly, these topicalized arguments need not be absolutes in the following clause. One daughter was discussing coconuts. She mentioned that the family had many coconut trees, then began to describe what happens when the young coconuts mature. Note the fronted nominals as she shifts to the grandfather and then to the helpers.

The grandfather and the helpers both appear as ergatives in the clauses that follow. No attempt was made to recast them as absolutes. Yet they could hardly be more topical.

Animate agents are not always represented by core cases. Transitive verbs usually have passive counterparts: intransitives whose only core argu-
ments are patients. When these verbs are used, animate agents are generally not mentioned, although it is grammatically possible to cast them as obliques. The primary function of passive verbs is to focus on a resultant state rather than the action that led up to it. One daughter was describing mango season. The sisters and their cousins would go to their grandfather’s house, where the boys would climb the trees and pick the mangoes, while the girls stayed below and emptied the baskets. Note the passive construction in the first line.

(53) Istung mekwa no ṣaŋ deng anggang mnnnga,
when taken already-3ABS all C.PL all mango
’When all of the mangoes have been picked,
i apu ku kanita,
P. grandparent my then
my grandfather
pipitnan na na la.
divide 3ERG already 3PL.ABS
will then divide them.’

The pickers had just been the center of discussion, but they are not even mentioned in this sentence. The point of the sentence is the current state of the mangoes, not the action that led up to it.

When a sentence does describe a transitive action whose agents are people not central to the discussion, a pronoun like the English authoritative ‘they’ is used: the third person plural ergative enclitic da. In (54) below the speaker was recalling that as children, she and her sisters would fall asleep during the midnight Mass, but when it was over, they would be awakened.

(54) ... gisingan da na kami
wake up 3PL.ERG already 1EXCL
’(as soon as the Mass is over,) they wake us up.’

The clause describes the transitive action, not just the resultant state, so a transitive verb was used. The enclitic ‘they’ here probably refers to their parents or other relatives, ultimately identifiable but not major protagonists.

It has been reported that in other Philippine languages, the case cognate with the Kapampangan absolutive has special referential status: it is the only one that is always definite. (See for example Schachter 1976, 1977 on Tagalog.) In Kapampangan, both absolutes and ergatives are over-
whelmingly definite in natural connected speech. In over two thousand pages of transcribed speech, there were no instances of indefinite or non-identifiable ergatives. Independently established identifiability is a characteristic of both core cases.

The alternation between ergative and absolutive agents in Kapampangan discourse is thus neither a question of discourse centrality nor definiteness. Both core cases represent central participants. When protagonists play a continuing central role in a segment of discourse, no attempt is made to code them as absolutes rather than ergatives. Both core cases represent independently identifiable participants. The distinction between ergative and absolutive agents depends on the immediacy of their involvement in the particular event predicated in the clause. A speaker may wish to highlight the involvement of a significant, identifiable patient (or beneficiary, instrument, location etc.) and categorize this as the absolute; the agent is then ergative. Alternatively, the speaker may focus on the involvement of the agent, either because there is no identifiable patient, etc., or because that participant is not significant to the discussion. In that case, the agent, the only core participant, is cast as the absolute.

5. The Universal and the Particular in Voice

Kapampangan, like other Philippine languages, exhibits pervasive voice alternations. These alternations have both clause-level syntactic and discourse-level pragmatic functions. Syntactically, voice alternations allow speakers to cast relativized arguments as absolutes of their relative clauses. Pragmatically, they allow speakers to categorize significant participants within a stretch of discourse as core arguments, either ergative or absolutive. The motivations behind both the syntactic and pragmatic uses are clear, given the functions of the case categories they affect.

The Kapampangan voice system functions syntactically on the clause level to ensure that relativized arguments have absolutive status within relative clauses. The absolutive case reflects a clause-level distinction: it identifies the participant most directly or immediately involved in the event or state predicated by the clause. This most immediate involvement has an important semantic consequence: the absolutive is the argument most narrowly qualified by the verb. Since the function of a relative clause is to qualify or distinguish the head, it is most appropriate that this head should be cast as an absolutive.
The voice system functions pragmatically on the discourse level to ensure that significant participants within a section of text have core case status. The core cases, ergative and absolutive, share properties of discourse centrality or topicality. Both ergatives and absolutives are overwhelmingly definite or independently identifiable in natural speech. The central protagonist in a narrative is typically encoded sometimes as ergative, sometimes as absolutive. Topicalized arguments can be categorized as ergatives just as well as absolutives. No attempt is made by speakers to recast highly topical agents as absolutives. Voice does function, however, to cast beneficiaries, instruments, directions, locations, etc. as core cases when they are topical, but as obliques when they are not.

As noted above, some analyses of Philippine languages have identified the case termed here absolutive as a “subject”. At least for Kapampangan, such an analysis can render cross-linguistic investigation of the nature of voice problematic. With this approach, the pronoun labeled ‘ABS’ in (55a) would be considered a subject.

(55) a. Miglutu ya.
   cooked 3ABS
   ‘She cooked.’

Under this analysis, the transitive counterpart of (55a) must be a sentence like that in (55b).

(55) b. Miglutu yang sagin.
   cooked 3ABS=LK banana
   ‘She cooked bananas.’

Transitive clauses in this model must have indefinite patients, as in (55b), if agents of intransitives and agents of transitives are to appear in the same ‘subject’ case. When the patient is definite, the cases change, as in (55c).

(55) c. Linutu no reng sagin.
   cooked 3ERG/3PL.ABS 3PL.ABS banana
   ‘She cooked the bananas.’

Because the ‘subject’ (absolutive) of (55c) represents a patient, this sentence is identified in these analyses as a passive. (The case labeled here ‘ERG’ is usually called ‘genitive’.)

Such an analysis of the case system has major implications for the study of voice. Under a subject analysis, sentence (55c) is considered passive. Under the ergative/absolutive analysis, (55c) would be considered active. A
passive would be more like (55d). (The free translations given here were provided by the speakers themselves.)

(55) d. *M*e-lutu no *reng* sagin.
cooked already/3PL.ABS 3PL.ABS banana
'The bananas have been cooked.'

Traditional passive voice, in which a patient is encoded as syntactic subject, has been assumed to occur when the patient of a transitive event is somehow higher in topicality than the agent, when it constitutes a more appropriate mental starting point for a predication. Under the subject analysis of Kapampangan, passivization seems to demote highly topical agents. The agents of these “passivized” clauses (the “genitive” ergatives), are usually highly topical in natural speech, as central to the discussion as the “subject” absolutes. An additional effect of “passivization” under this analysis is to detransitivize just those clauses that would normally be considered the most transitive semantically, those with identifiable patients.

An extra curiosity that emerges from the subject analysis is the fact that the pronominal clitics seem to represent one core case and one oblique case: the “subject” (absolutive) and the “genitive” (ergative). The other core case, the “object” is not represented. In most languages with morphologically bound pronouns, the pronouns represent the core cases.

Such enigmas are easily resolved once it is realized that Kapampangan absolutes are not functionally equivalent to the subjects of languages like English. Subject is a clause-level category; it has been variously characterized as that of clause topic, or starting point, a hitching post to which new information is attached (Chafe 1976). Unlike subjects, absolutes are not necessarily the most topical elements of their clauses. Topicality is spread over the two core cases: the ergative and absolutive. (It appears that Kapampangan may not be unlike other Philippine languages in this respect. Note Schachter’s observation (1977:305) that Philippine languages have, “instead of subjects, two nonsubject constituent types that manifest subject-like properties”.) Absolutes are the most immediately involved participants in a specific action or state, but not necessarily the most central to the discussion as a whole. Absolutes are also not necessarily patients. The most immediately involved participants in transitive events are often patients, but those in intransitive events are just as likely, if not more, to be agents. Because the functions of the primary cases in Kapampangan do not match those of languages like English, the motivations and effects of par-
ticular voice alternations in the two languages are not isomorphic. Voice in Kapampangan might be expected to share more features with other ergative/absolutive languages. To the extent that their syntactic cases represent similar categories, motivations for encoding participants in these roles might be expected to overlap. In ergative languages where relativized nominals can appear in only one case, for example, it is likely that this case will be the absolutive.

To the extent that their cases represent slightly different categories, the voice systems of ergative languages will probably differ among themselves. Du Bois (1987) has pointed out, for example, that a significant discourse function of the absolutive case in Sacapultec Mayan is to introduce new participants into discourse. Because of the use of presentative constructions in Kapampangan for this purpose, and the corresponding identifiability of core arguments, the introduction of new participants is not a function of Kapampangan absolutes at all. Differences like these will probably have ramifications in the voice system.

Fruitful cross-linguistic comparison of voice systems will ultimately depend on careful considerations of the precise nature of grammatical cases both within and across languages, as well as the many other structures in these languages with which they interact. To the extent that voice encodes the discourse status of participants, it must be studied in the context of spontaneous connected speech. We will have much to learn about the universal properties of case and voice systems as richer documentation and better understanding of particular languages become available.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all material cited here, apart from some paradigmatic examples, comes from spontaneous connected speech. I am very grateful to the Kapampangan speakers who so generously shared their expertise: the father, Clemente D. Roman, the mother, the late Angelita M. Roman, and their daughters, Bernadette R. Mangaser, Osee R. Rull, and Pilar M. Roman. I have also benefited from helpful discussions with Wallace Chafe on a number of the points addressed here.

The transcription used here is a practical orthography often used in print in the Philippines. Since the system is similar to that commonly used for other Philippine languages, this should facilitate comparison with those languages. Unfortunately, glottal stop and vowel length, which are distinctive, are not represented in this system. The digraph ng represents a velar nasal. In passages cited from personal letters, the original orthography of the writer is retained.
Dual number is distinguished only in first person inclusive. Gender is not distinguished at all. When number is not specified within glosses, enclitics and determiners can be considered singular.

Each line of transcription represents a separate intonation unit in the sense of Chafe (1987:22), “a sequence of words combined under a single, coherent intonation contour, usually preceded by a pause”. Two dots .. represent very short pauses, three dots ... longer ones.

Major modern works describing the structure of Kapampangan include Forman (1971a and 1971b), Mirikitani (1971 and 1972), Richards (1971), and Gonzalez (1972). Additional references can be found in these works, particularly in Gonzalez (1972) and Mirikitani (1972).

2. The linkers appear between the elements they relate. The form ng, which follows vowels or n, is encliticized to the preceding element. The form a, which usually follows consonants or a pause, remains a separate particle. The linkers are in boldface italics below.

\[\text{Atm}=o=ng \quad \text{ka-tula}\]
how=3PL.ABS=LK INTENSIVE-happy

‘How happy were
re=ng \quad \text{atu}=ng \quad \text{anak} \quad a \quad \text{salbai}=ng \quad a \quad \text{reni}.
\text{C.PL=LK three=LK child LK naughty=LK LK these}
\text{these three naughty children.}’

The linker in the first line relates the two parts of the predicate: ‘how + happy’. The linkers in the second line relate the elements of the complex noun phrase ‘the + three + children + naughty + these’. The double linkers =ng a joining the final demonstrative to the rest of the noun phrase reflect a regular demonstrative construction. The final ng that appears with most of the determiners, including reng above, probably represents the same linker, relating the determiners to the rest of their noun phrases.

Linkers relate elements of almost any type. In the sentence below, the linker relates the elements of a complex predicate ‘door-open’, consisting of the verb ‘open’ with enclitics, and the noun ‘door’.

\[\text{Buklatan}=ne=ng \quad \text{pasbul.}\]
open-for=he/him=LK door

‘He’ll door-open for him’ = ‘He’ll open the door for him.’

In the sentence below, verbs are related.

\[\text{Subukan} \quad \text{ku}=ng \quad \text{mamulayi}=ng \quad \text{mabilis.}\]
try 1ABS=LK run=LK fast

‘I’ll try to run fast.’

\[\text{try} \quad \text{1ABS=LK} \quad \text{run=LK} \quad \text{fast}\]
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

1. Kapampangan personal pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENCLITIC</th>
<th>ENCLITIC</th>
<th>FREE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRONOUNS</td>
<td>ABSOLUTE PRONOUNS</td>
<td>OBLIQUE PRONOUNS</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>'I'</th>
<th>ku</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>'you'</td>
<td>mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>'(s)he/it'</td>
<td>na</td>
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<td>1DU.INCL</td>
<td>'we'</td>
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<td>1EXCL</td>
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<td>2PL</td>
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<td>yu</td>
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<td>3PL</td>
<td>'they'</td>
<td>da/ra</td>
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The absolutive enclitics are often followed by the linker enclitic =ng. For more about this linker, see Note 2.
2. Fused enclitic combinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERGATIVE</th>
<th>+3ABS.SG (ya)</th>
<th>+3ABS.PL (la)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG ke</td>
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<td>mo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3SG ne</td>
<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>1DU.INCL te</td>
<td>to</td>
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<tr>
<td>1PL.INCL (ta:ya)</td>
<td>(ta:la)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1EXCL mya</td>
<td>(mila)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL ye</td>
<td>yo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL de</td>
<td>do</td>
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Another enclitic na 'already' may appear before the absolutive clitic. It enters into the same kind of phonological assimilation with the absolutive as does the ergative na.

3. Determiners

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<tr>
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