

How to Evade a Universal Or Two in Tagalog

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This talk investigates two apparently unrelated universals: (i) That adjectives always project an unergative argument structure and never an unaccusative argument structure (Baker 2003, 2008); and (ii) that existential constructions always involve a “small clause” predication structure (Stowell 1981, Safir 1985). I argue that neither of these proposed universals holds true for Tagalog. Rather than reject the universals outright, however, I aim to show that Tagalog’s exceptionality flows from independent grammatical restrictions on complex predicate formation. I conclude by considering the possible implications for the proper formulation of the universals.