

Plurality in Tagalog

The Plural Marker MGA

In English when we want to indicate that there is more than one of something, we usually add the letter -s to the end of the word. For example, the word cars (car + s) in English means that there is more than one car. But note that adding an -s is not the only way that English pluralizes a word. For example, the word mouse means there is only one mouse, while the word mice means there is more than one mouse. In this case, changes in the structure of the word show plurality.

Regardless of which approach a language takes, the act of indicating that there is more than one of something is called pluralization. Tagalog is a language that does not use the letter "s" to pluralize. Instead, Tagalog pluralizes by using the marker MGA.

The marker MGA is always placed directly before the word that is to be pluralized. For example, the Tagalog word bato means a stone, but if I want to say that there is more than one stone I add the marker MGA:

bato 'stone' (singular) → mga bato 'stones' (plural)

Here are some more examples:

Titser ang mga magulang namin. Our parents are teachers.

Estudyante sa UP ang mga kasama ko. My companions are students at UP.

Masaya ang mga bata sa park. The kids at the park are happy.

Mabait ang mga kapitbahay niya. Her neighbors are nice.

Dumating ang mga kamag-anak ni Fe. Fe's relatives came.

Nandito ang mga kaklase ni Raymond. Raymond's classmates are here.

Other Indicators of Plurality

Though the use of MGA is the easiest and most common way of expressing plurality, there are other indicators of plurality which make the use of MGA redundant. The obvious one is the use of numbers, as in these examples:

May dalawang kapatid si Rudy. Rudy has two siblings.

May limang estudyante sa klasrum. There are five students in the classroom.

Kakanta ang tatlong artista. The three actors are going to sing.

Lilipad ang sampung ibon mula sa tore. The ten birds will fly out from the tower.

There are words that inherently express plurality of nouns which make the use of MGA unnecessary. Here are some examples:

May grupo ng aktibista sa EDSA. There is a group of activists at EDSA.

Bumili kami ng isang piling ng saging. We bought a bunch of bananas.
 Nagdala siya ng isang bigkis ng kahoy. He brought a pile of wood.
 Binigyan niya ako ng isang dosenang rosas. He gave me a dozen roses.

Noun Modification

Noun modification in Tagalog may be done in a variety of ways. In this section, the most common ways of modifying the noun will be discussed, and examples will be presented.

To modify a noun means to qualify or add some further description to the noun. In grammar, the word modification means to limit the meaning of something. Here is one example from English. Let's say that I want to tell someone that I own a car. However, I don't just want to mention that I have a car, but I also want to say something about the car. So I might say that it is an old car. The use of the word old is a way of modifying the noun car.

Adjectives/Descriptive Words

In Tagalog, the use of adjectives and/or descriptive words is one common way of modifying nouns (for more information about adjectives see the Adjectives section in the main grammar page).

Tagalog adjectives may be grouped into two types according to their structure:

1) the ma-adjectives (ma + root); and 2) the simple adjectives (roots).

There are other descriptive words that are not members of either group.

These descriptors are often formed by combining adjectival affix(es) with root words. Here are some examples of adjectives/descriptive words and sentences where these might be used:

Ma-Adjectives	Simple Adjectives	Other Descriptors
maganda beautiful	payat slim	nakakalito confusing
masipag industrious	luma old	nakakatuwa amusing
magaling great	gutom* hungry	nakakatawa funny
mainit hot/warm	pangit ugly	nakakainis irritating
malamig cold	pagod* tired	nakakapagod tiring
mahangin windy	galit* angry	kahindik-hindik horrible
malayo far	bago new	kaawa-awa pitiful
malapit near	buhay* alive	kagulat-gulat shocking
matangkad tall (pers.)	patay dead	kasiya-siya entertaining
mabigat heavy	pikon touchy	kapana-panabik exciting

The Linker NA

Using adjectives and/or descriptive words to modify nouns may be done by employing one of two ways:

- 1) placing the modifier (the word that modifies the noun) before the noun; or
- 2) placing the modifier after the noun.

In either case the linker NA should connect the two elements.

The linker NA is used to link or hook up the modifier and the noun it is describing. That way you know that the words go together.

The linker NA has three forms:

- 1) -ng following a word ending in a vowel;
- 2) -g following a word that ends in the letter n; and
- 3) na following a word ending in a consonant. -Ng and -g are attached directly onto the end of the word, while the third form na is written as a separate word.

Here is one example. Let's say that I want to talk about a certain land, and that I also want to state that is a land that is far. So I take the word in Tagalog for land (bayan) and I place it next to the word for far (malayo). It's up to me whether I put bayan first or malayo first, so I decide to place malayo first.

malayo bayan

However, my job is not yet done. In Tagalog, I need NA to link these two words together. Since malayo ends in a vowel (o), I need to use the -ng form of NA, and I place the -ng directly onto the end of the word malayo.

malayong bayan

Now let's say that I want to reverse the word order, and I want to put bayan first

bayan malayo

I still need a linker, and because bayan ends in the letter n, I take the -g form of NA and I place the -g directly onto the end of the word bayan

bayang malayo

Below are some more examples:

Modifier+Linker+Noun	Noun+Linker+Modifier	Meaning
malayong bayan	bayang malayo	faraway land
mahanging panahon	panahong mahangin	windy weather
bagong kotse	kotseng bago	new car
pangit na pelikula	pelikulang pangit	trash film
nakakapagod na biyahe	biyaheng nakakapagod	tiring trip
nakakatawang kuwento	kuwentong nakakatawa	funny story
kasiya-siyang palabas	palabas na kasiya-siya	entertaining show

Colors

When colors are used to modify nouns, they function as adjectives. They may also come either before or after the noun(s) being modified. Here are the basic colors in Tagalog, followed by example noun phrases:

PULA, KULAY-KAHEL, DILAW, LUNTIAN/BERDE, BUGHAW/ ASUL
KULAY-UBE/ LILA, PUTI, ITIM, KULAY-ABO, KULAY-KAPE

Color+Linker+Noun	COLOR	Noun+Linker+Color
pulang kamatis	red tomato	kamatis na pula
kulay-kahel na kotse	orange,citrus-color	car kotseng kulay-kahel
dilaw na sisiw	yellow chick	sisiw na dilaw
berdeng puno (or luntian)	green tree	punong berde (or luntian)
asul na barko (or bughaw)	blue ship	barkong asul (or bughaw)
kulay-ubeng basuraha (or lila)	lilac garbage	basurahang kulay-ube (or lila)
itim na payong	black umbrella	payong na itim
kulay-abong telepono	grey-color telephone	teleponong kulay-abo
kulay-kapeng kabayo	coffee-color horse	kabayong kulay-kape

Numbers

When used as modifiers of nouns, numbers behave differently from adjectives in that they can only come before the noun being modified. The linker NA is still necessary. Here are some examples:

Number + Linker + Noun Image

limang lobo

May limang lobo ako. (I have five balloons.)

sampung minuto

Sampung minuto na lang bago mag-alas otso.

(It's only ten minutes before eight o'clock.)

walong bata

Naglalaro ang walong bata sa kalye. (The eight kids are playing on the street.)

dalawang singsing

Bumili siya ng dalawang singsing. (He bought two rings.)

isang milyong dolyar

Nanalo siya ng isang milyong dolyar sa lotto.

(She won a million dollars in the lottery.)

Tagalog Numbers

Roman Numeral,	Tagalog	Tagalog (Spanish root),	English
1	isa	uno (uno)	one
2	dalawa	dos (dos)	two
3	tatlo	tres (tres)	three
4	apat	kwatro (cuatro)	four
5	lima	sinko (cinco)	five
6	anim	sais (seis)	six
7	pito	syete (siete)	seven
8	walo	otso (ocho)	eight
9	siyam	nuwebe (nueve)	nine
10	sampu	diyes (diez)	ten
11	labing-isa	onse (once)	eleven
12	labing-dalawa	dose (doce)	twelve
13	labing-tatlo	trese (trece)	thirteen
20	dalawampu	beynte (veinte)	twenty
21	dalawampu't-isa	beynteuno (veinte-uno)	twenty-one
30	tatlumpu	trenta (treinta)	thirty
40	apatnapu	kwarenta (cuarenta)	forty
50	limampu	singkwenta (cinquenta)	fifty
60	animnapu	sisenta (seisenta)	sixty
100	isang daan	siyento (ciento)	hundred
200	dalawang daan	dos siyentos (dos cientos)	two hundred
1,000	isang libo	mil (mil)	one thousand
2,000	dalawang libo	dos mil (dos mil)	two thousand
10,000	sampung libo	dies mil (diez mil)	ten thousand
100,000	isang daang libo	siyento mil (ciento mil)	one hundred thousand
1,000,000	isang milyon	milyon (milion)	one million

Shapes

There are very few words referring to shapes of things in Tagalog. When used as modifiers of nouns, these words may come before or after the noun.

Here are some examples:

Shape	Hugis+Linker+Noun	Noun+Linker+Shape	
bilog (round)	bilog na globo	globong bilog	(globe)
parisukat (square)	hugis-parisukat na days	days na parisukat	(dice)
parihaba (rectangle)	parihabang papel	papel na parihaba	(paper)
trayanggulo (triangle)	hugis-trayanggulong tulay		
		tulay na hugis-trayanggulo	(bridge)

In Tagalog the word hugis means shape. When hugis- is added to the front of a noun this expresses the idea that the noun being modified looks like or is similar in

shape to the noun that has hugis attached to it.

Here are some examples:

Shape	Shape+Linker+Noun	Noun+Linker+Shape
hugis-tala (star-shaped)	hugis-talang medalya	medalyang hugis-tala
hugis-peras (pear-shaped)	hugis-peras na bombilya	bombilyang hugis-peras
hugis-pitsel (shaped liked a pitcher)	hugis-pitsel na tropeyo	tropeyong hugis-pitsel

Size and Weight

Tagalog speakers use metric and English system terminologies interchangeably to express size and weight measurements accurately. However, Tagalog also has its own terms of measurement that are not according to the English or metric systems (like 'dangaw'- size of a thumb).

Weight / Volume

Metric System

gramo gram, kilo kilogram, litro liter

English System

libra pound, galon gallon

Tagalog Measurements

Container/Instrument Proximate Measure

balde pail,

bandehado serving-plateful,

basket a basketful,

baso a glass,

bayong bagful, contents normally fill a native bag for shopping called bayong

bigkis a bunch, for bigger objects like firewood, etc.

bilao winnower-ful,

contents fill a winnower, standard size of which is about 1- 1/2 ft. in diameter

bilog appx. 12 oz. bottle,

bloke block, e.g. of ice

bote bottle, buntol a bunch, e.g., of fruits,

kaing a big basketful, contents fill a container made of materials such as rattan, bamboo, etc. called kaing

kaldero pot-ful,

kawali wok-ful,

kurot a pinch,

kutsara a spoonful

kutsarita teaspoonful,

kwatro-kantos appx. 750 ml bottle

dakot a handful,

dram barrel,
ganta appx. 1kilo, measured with a square wooden box called ganta
guhit measurement based on lines (e.g., of the fingers) for volume,
and of measuring instruments such as rulers, weighing scales, etc.
lapad appx. 250 ml bottle
mangkok a bowl,
palanggana basin,
pinggan a plateful
platito a saucer,
sako a sackful (e.g., a sack of rice is 50 kilos)
salop appx. 2 kilos, contents fill a brown bag called salop
sandok serving-spoonful,
tabo appx. 2 pint-container
tali a bunch, e.g. of flowers, tasa a cup

Height/Length/Distance

Metric System	English System
sentimetro centimeter,	pulgada inch,
metro meter,	piye foot
kilometro kilometer,	milya mile

Tagalog Terms

dangaw size of a thumb,
baytang step
dangkal length between tips of stretched index and thumb
hakbang pace,
dipa length between outstreched arms from fingertips
tao measurement based on the number people of average height to scale
a building or structure

When used as modifiers of nouns, expressions and units of weights and measurements behave like numerals in that they can only come before the noun being modified. Here are a few examples:

Tagalog Terms	Borrowed Terms
isang tasang kape	a cupful of coffee
anim na gramong ginto	six-gram gold
dalawang bilaong pansit	two-winnowerful noodles
pitong litrong serbesa	seven-liter beer
tatlong kaing na mangga	three-basketful mangoes
walong kilometrong biyahe	eight-kilometer trip
apat na dangkal* na laso	four-dangkal ribbon
siyam na litrong gasolina	nine-liter gasoline
limang dipang** lubid	five-dipa rope

sampung pulgadang pisi ten-inch string

* dangkal = roughly the distance between the tip of one's middle-finger and the tip of his/her thumb, when the two are stretched out.

**dipa = roughly the distance between the tip of one's middle fingers when both of his/her arms are stretched out (approximately 3 ft or 1 meter)

The Markers ANG and SI/SINA

A. ANG

The marker ANG is one of the markers used to point out the focus of the sentence.

1. ANG marks a word as the focus of the sentence except for nouns that are the names of people (like Bob, Sarah, etc.). Below are some examples:

Abogado ang babae.	The woman is a lawyer.
Masaya ang piknik.	The picnic was fun.
Natulog ang bata sa kwarto.	The child slept in the room.
May isang kapatid ang lalaki.	The man has a brother.
Nasa mesa ang kape.	The coffee is on the table.

In each of these sentences the marker ANG indicates which word is the focus. For example, in the first sentence, babae is the focus of the sentence. We know this because it has ang in front of it.

2. ANG is a noun definitizer (i.e., it functions like the definite article the, as opposed to a or an, in English), especially in sentences using pseudo-verbs. The following examples illustrate the contrast between definite and indefinite noun phrases.

Definite	Gusto ko ang mangga.	I like the mango.
Indefinite	Gusto ko ng mangga.	I like mangoes.
Definite	Kailangan ko ang libro.	I need the book.
Indefinite	Kailangan ko ng libro.	I need a book.

B. SI and SINA

The markers SI and SINA are used to indicate that the name of a person is the focus of the sentence. We already learned that ANG is used to make most words the focus of the sentence. However, ANG is not used with personal names like Bob, Mary, Jose, Rita, etc. In order to indicate that a name is the focus, the marker SI must be used.

If there is more than one name, e.g. "Phil and Tom", then the marker SINA must

be used. SI comes before a single name while SINA precedes two or more names. In sentences where SINA comes before a single name, it implies that there are other (unnamed) people who are included in a group with or are in some way associated with the person that is named. In other words, sina Bill would mean something like "Bill and company".

Below are some examples:

Singular Nouns

Estudyante si Rita sa UP. Rita is a student at UP.

Mabait si Lito. Lito is nice.

Nag-aaral si Fely sa salas. Fely is studying in the living room.

May dalawang kotse si Dolly. Dolly has two cars

Nasa Maynila si Lorna. Lorna is in Manila.

Plural Nouns

Estudyante sina Rita at Fe sa UP. Rita and Fe are students at UP.

Mabait sina Lito at kapatid niya. Lito and his brother are nice.

Nag-aaral sina Fely. Fely and company are studying .

May dalawang kotse sina Dolly at Joe. Dolly and Joe have two cars.

Nasa Maynila sina Lorna. Lorna and company are in Manila.

The Markers NG and NI/NINA

A. NG

The marker NG covers a broad range of meanings, and there is no one exact translation of NG in English. In the most general sense, NG indicates that there is some type of relationship between the word that follows NG and another words in the sentence. The exact meaning of NG depends on the situation or context of the sentence.

There is one important thing to note about NG: this marker indicates that the word that follows it is not the focus of the sentence. In that sense it is the opposite of the marker ANG. It's like NG is the "evil twin" of ANG. Or if you like Star Trek, you can think of ANG as "matter" and NG as "anti-matter." If I see a NG in front of a word, then I know that word is not in focus. But if I switch the marker NG to an ANG, suddenly the word is in focus. Let's practice:

Ng house (the house is not in focus)

SWITCH!

Ang house (the house is in focus)

Functions of marker NG in Tagalog sentences

The marker NG has three major functions in Tagalog. They are outlined in this section.

1. NG indicates possession. The possessor noun marked by NG comes after the noun possessed. In other words, the word that comes before NG is the thing that is possessed or owned. The word that follows NG is the possessor or owner. Here are some examples:

bahay ng pamilya Santos	house of the Santos family
kotse ng babae	car of the woman
ang titser ng mga bata	the teacher of the kids
ang hardin ng matandang lalaki	the garden of the old man

2. NG marks the direct object of a sentence if the direct object is not the focus.

What is a direct object? A direct object is the receiver the action (of the verb). Let's look at a sentence in English:

John hit the wall.

In this sentence wall is the direct object. It received the action of the verb. The wall was the thing that was hit.

In Tagalog, NG is used to mark the direct object (when the direct object is not focused). However, if the direct object is the focus of the sentence, then ANG would mark the direct object. Below are some examples:

Bumili si Ana ng lapis sa tindahan.	Ana bought a pencil at the store.
Nanood sina Pedro ng sine kahapon.	Pedro and friends watched a movie yesterday.
Nagbasa ako ng libro sa laybrari.	I read a book in the library.
Naglinis kami ng bahay noong Linggo.	We cleaned a house last Sunday.

3. NG marks the unfocused doer (actor) of the action of the verb.

Let's look at the sentence we used before:

John hit the wall.

In this sentence John is the actor or doer of the action. If the actor is not in focus, then NG marks the actor. If the actor is in focus, then ANG (or SI) marks the actor. Below are some examples of NG marking the doer of action:

Ibinigay ng titser (Actor) ang libro sa estudyante.

The book was given to the student by the teacher (Actor).

Binigyan ng titser (Actor) ng libro (Direct Object) ang estudyante.

The student was given a book (Direct Object) by the teacher (Actor).

Sinulat ng makata (A) ang tula para sa nanay.

The poem was written by the poet (A) for mother.

Sinulatan ng makata (A) ng tula (D.O.) ang nanay.

Mother was written a poem (D.O.) by the poet (A).

Notice that in some of the above sentences there is more than one word marked by NG. Let's take a look at the second sentence:

Binigyan ng titser (Actor) ng libro (Direct Object) ang estudyante.

Notice that both titser (the actor) and libro (the direct object) have NG in front of them. The focus of the sentence is estudyante (it has ANG in front of it). Because titser is not the focus---it has NG in front of it--and because libro is not the focus---it too has NG in front---we can see that NG can mark both the doer of the action and the object that receives the action.

B. NI and NINA

The markers NI and NINA mark personal names (e.g., Bob, Jill, etc.) that are not the focus of the sentence.

You remember how ANG marks the words that are in focus except for names of people? When personal names are in focus, they are marked by SI. In the same way, NG marks the words that are not in focus except for personal names. When personal names are not in focus, they are marked by NI and NINA.

Just as with ANG and NG, you can think of NI as being the opposite of SI. It's like NI is the "evil twin" of SI. If I have a NI in front of Bob, then Bob is not the focus. But if I "flick the switch" and change NI to SI, then (click) I have suddenly made Bob the focus of the sentence.

Functions of markers NI and NINA

NI marks the name of one person, and NINA marks the name of two or more people. These markers basically have some of the functions of the marker NG.

1. NI and NINA indicate possession. The possessor noun comes after the noun possessed. Or in other words, the noun before NI is the noun that is possessed or owned. The noun after NI is the possessor or owner. Below are some examples:

kaibigan ni Juan	a friend of Juan
kaklase ni Maria	a friend of Maria
ang bahay nina Tina	the house of Tina and family
ang libro nina Fe at Kim	the books of Fe and Kim

2. NI and NINA mark the unfocussed actor/agent (when the actor/agent is a personal name). Below are some examples:

Binili ni Rita ang damit sa tindahan. The dress was bought by Rita at the store.
Binigyan ni Jose ng pera si Bob. Bob was given some money by Jose.
Niluto nina Tony ang isda sa kusina.

The fish was cooked by Tony and company in the kitchen.
Itinapon nina Fred at Melvin ang basura sa labas.

The garbage was thrown outside by Fred and Melvin.

The Markers SA and KAY/KINA

A. SA

There is one more set of markers that goes with nouns: SA and KAY/KINA. The marker SA has many different meanings. In the most general sense, SA is a marker that deals with direction and location. It covers the meaning of most prepositions in English.

If we break down the word preposition, we see it is made up of the Latin based component pre which means "before", and position which means "position". So a preposition is a word that is positioned before another word (its like a marker).

For example, in the sentence

Go to the house,

to is a preposition. In English grammar, it is often said that a preposition is anything that a squirrel can do to a tree (it can go through the tree, around the tree, up the tree, down the tree, etc.). Well, in Tagalog, instead of having a whole lot of different prepositions they just have one: SA. The marker SA is a very broad word that is used anytime the speaker is talking about the location or direction of something. The exact meaning of SA depends on the context.

It is important to note that, like NG, the words marked by SA are not in focus.

Functions of the marker SA

1. SA marks location. Most prepositional phrases in English indicating some location are expressed in Tagalog as SA-phrases. Below are some examples:

May party sa bahay ko sa Sabado.

There's going to be a party at my house on Saturday.

Nakatira ako sa San Juan Village. I live in San Juan Village.

Nag-aaral si Maya sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas.

Maya studies at the University of the Philippines.

Nagluluto ang nanay sa kusina. Mom is cooking in the kitchen.

2. SA marks direction. Prepositional phrases in English indicating some direction towards or away from a place, a person, or some other noun are also generally

expressed as SA-phrases in Tagalog. Below are some examples:

Pumunta sila sa Zamboanga noong bakasyon.

They went to Zamboanga last vacation.

Umalis siya sa klase nang maaga. He left (from) the class early.

Ibinigay niya ang bulaklak sa nanay. He gave the flowers to mother.

Kinuha niya ang libro sa akin. He got the book from me.

3. SA marks the beneficiary of an action. It is equivalent to the English for-phrase in the context of doing something for someone/something. Look at the following sentence for example:

I baked a cake for Bill.

In this sentence, I let you know that I baked a cake, and I baked it for Bill. Bill benefits from my action of making a cake, so we say that Bill is the beneficiary of the action. In English, the beneficiary of the action is marked by the word for. In Tagalog, whenever SA marks the beneficiary of an action it always follows the word PARA (from Spanish meaning for). Below are some examples:

Gumawa siya ng eksamen para sa klase. She made an exam for the class.

Naghandala kami ng sorpresa para sa tatay. We prepared a surprise for dad.

Bumili si Ana ng regalo para sa asawa niya. Ana bought a gift for her husband.

Nagdala si Butch ng laruan para sa bata. Butch brought a toy for the kid.

4. SA marks a future time expressed as a specific day/date/season.

Below are some examples:

May trabaho ako sa Lunes. I have work on Monday.

Uuwi si Ellen sa Cebu sa Pasko. Ellen is going home to Cebu at Christmas.

Magtatapos siya ng pag-aaral sa summer. She is graduating in the summer.

Kaarawan ni Jun sa Pebrero 16. It is Jun's birthday on February 16.

B. KAY and KINA

The markers KAY and KINA take the place of SA when the noun being marked is a name of a person (like Bob, Jane, etc.). It occurs in the same way that SI and SINA replace ANG, or NI and NINA replace NG when dealing with personal names. KAY marks the name of a person, and KINA marks the names of two or more persons. These markers have some of the functions of SA.

Functions of the markers KAY and KINA

1. KAY and KINA mark location. Here are some examples:

Nandoon kay Rudy ang libro mo. Your book is with Rudy.

Naroon kay Tina ang gamit mo. Your stuff is with Tina.
May salu-salo kina Aida. There's a get-together at Aida's.
Nakatira ako kina Tiya Selma. I am staying at Aunt Selma's.

2. KAY and KINA mark direction. Any prepositional phrase that indicates some kind of movement toward or away from someone is expressed using one of these markers. Here are some examples:

Dadalaw ako kay Lola Sela bukas. I am going to visit Grandmother Sela tomorrow.
Ibinigay ni Ana ang susi kay Sally. Ana gave the key to Sally.
Umalis siya kina Mrs. Santos. He left (from) Mrs. Santos' place.
Itinago ni Luz ang libro (mula) kina Pedro at Juan.
Luz hid the the book from Pedro and Juan.

3. KAY and KINA mark the beneficiary of an action. Just like SA, KAY/KINA-phrases are almost equal to English for-phrases expressing the idea of an action done for someone. The marker is always preceded by the word PARA (from Spanish meaning for). Below are some examples:

Gumawa ako ng cake para kay Kit. I baked a cake for Kit.
Binili ko ang bulaklak para kay Ida. I bought the flowers for Ida.
Nagluto ako ng adobo para kina Rita at Carlo. I cooked adobo for Rita and Carlo.
Itinago ko ang mga sulat para kina Susan.
I kept the letters for Susan and company.

4. KAY and KINA mark the possessor when it comes before the noun possessed. Structurally, the possessor-phrase is used as a modifier of the noun possessed. Thus, the linker NA (i.e., -ng or na) is required between the two nouns. This function is limited to spoken discourse in its use. Here are some examples:

kay Mariang kapatid Maria's brother
kay Bob na kotse Bob's car
kina Litang hardin Lita's family's garden
kina Mr. Ramos na bahay Mr. Ramos' family's house

Putting the pieces together

Now that we have talked about the different types of markers, let's take a close look at how they work.

focused word (ang) relational word (ng) location word (sa)

Dinala ng doktor ang elepante sa ospital.
Carried (verb) the doctor the elephant to the hospital.

The sentence above is saying that the doctor carried the elephant to the hospital.

The word elepante is the focus of the sentence. Elepante is the most prominent part of the sentence. Because of the affix in the verb (don't worry, we will explain this later), we know that the focused word (elephant) is the one being carried. The marker sa let's us know that the elephant was carried to the hospital. Doktor is the relational word. Because of the context, the marker ng indicates that the doctor is the doer of the action (the doctor is the one carrying).

If we switch markers:

Dinala ang doktor ng elepante sa ospital.

Carried (verb) the doctor the elephant to the hospital.

This sentence is now saying that the elephant carried the doctor to the hospital. Doktor is now the focus and is being carried to the hospital and the elepante is now the relational word and is doing the carrying.

And now for one more switch:

Dinala ng ospital ang doktor sa elepante

Carried the hospital the doctor to the elephant

Here, the hospital carried the doctor to the elephant. In order to fully understand how all this works, we need to understand more about verbs first. However, at this point you can see the way that a marker assigns a word its role in the sentence. If you change the marker, you change the whole meaning of the sentence! Cool huh?