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How Tagalog (Filipino) Linguistic Markers Affect the Perception of Supernatural Agency

Lyra Joson

University of New Hampshire, USA
lyra.joson@unh.edu

Sean Madigan

University of New Hampshire, USA
sean.madigan@unh.edu

Casey L. Roark

University of New Hampshire, USA
casey.roark@unh.edu

Paul Robertson

University of New Hampshire, USA and
University of Pretoria, South Africa
paul.robertson@unh.edu

This paper analyzes theories of supernatural agent (SA) attribution in the cognitive science of religion (CSR) and tests them through an online survey from 40 native Tagalog (Filipino) speakers who currently reside in the Philippines. Tagalog is linguistically distinct in that it uses linguistic markers (genitives; determinatives) to differentiate between human and non-human entities. Therefore, it provides a real language test case of how cognitive theories around human-like agency manifest in a particular intersection of language and culture. Results indicate that for native Tagalog speakers human markers are generally used for English terms for SAs, while non-human markers are generally used for Tagalog SA terms. Such findings support some of CSR's theories but also problematize the more universalizing claims around cross-cultural supernatural agency attributions at the heart of certain foundational CSR theories.

Keywords: supernatural agency, natural language, linguistics, Tagalog (Filipino), cognitive science of religion

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Abbreviations and Notation

This serves as a guide for transcriptions and translations. Some phonetic transcription systems are based on Bauer, Lieber, & Plag (2013).

/ /	broad linguistic transcription where phonetic detail is not important
[ ]	narrow linguistic transcription that shows alterations and pronunciation
‘ ’	enclosing glosses
*	ungrammatical or unacceptable
Italics	cited words
Bold	mark matters of interest
DET	determiner
CASE/GEN	case marker or genitive marker
-PST	past tense
1SG	first person singular
H-DET	human determiner
NH-DET	non-human determiner
H-GEN	human case marker
NH-GEN	non-human case marker
ENG	English
TAG	Tagalog
ENG CASE	English supernatural agent with case marker or genitive marker
TAG CASE	Tagalog supernatural agent with case marker or genitive marker
ENG DET	English supernatural agent with determiner
TAG DET	Tagalog supernatural agent with determiner
SA	Supernatural Agent

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Introduction

Tagalog is the standardized national language of the Philippines and is generally known in the western world as Filipino. Linguistically, it is distinct from English (and other western languages) in many ways, but this paper focuses on one key feature of Tagalog, namely that it uses linguistic markers to signal whether a subject or object in a sentence is human (Zamar, 2023). In the context of the cognitive science of religion (CSR), this distinct feature allows scholars to explore whether Filipinos linguistically code supernatural agents (SAs) such as God/gods as human or non-human in ecologically valid contexts. This study tests whether native Tagalog speakers understand SAs as human by analyzing how different linguistic markers (human vs. non-human) are perceived in the context of SA terms in both Tagalog and English.

Tagalog displays two linguistic features that are widely found in English as well as other world languages: the genitive (in the sense of the possessive, i.e., "of") and the determiner (in the sense of indicating a subject or object, i.e., "the"). Unlike English and others, however, Tagalog, utilizes these linguistic features in two different ways depending on the context of the conversation (Zamar, 2023). The use of these two markers and their differing forms depend on what we call the "humanness" of the sentence's subject/object. By "humanness," if a subject or object is understood to be a human, it will be preceded by a possessive marker or determiner that marks the subject/object as human; on the other hand, if a subject or object is not understood as human, it will be preceded by a *different* possessive marker or determiner that does not mark humanness (i.e., non-human). Tagalog differentiates humans from all living things along this basis: a person is linguistically signaled via the possessive or determiner as human; all animals, plants, objects, and non-material concepts are signaled as non-human – animate (a cat) and inanimate (a rock) alike. Thus 'the president' (i.e., the person) is signaled as human; 'the presidency' (i.e., the office) is signaled as non-human. This follows for all words in Tagalog as well as loan-words from English, which is commonly used and known as "Taglish."

Notably, the basis of these markers for humanness is reliant on the object's or subject's perceived essence as human, but not its behavior or agency. In other words, Tagalog linguistically differentiates between subjects that are human and non-human, and this differentiation occurs not simply due to human-like activity (which can be approximated or replicated by, say, animals which receive non-human markers or by attaching anthropomorphic qualities to inanimate objects such as cars which also receive non-human markers) but rather whether the Filipino language and culture itself *prima facie* understands the subject as human or not. The fact that this linguistic differentiation occurs between human

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and non-human is therefore relevant to CSR discussions around whether SA concepts are understood as fundamentally human-like or simply agential.

This is a key debate in the literature, especially around the formation of god-concepts in early childhood (Richert & Barrett, 2005; Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016; Lesage & Richert, 2021). The question of what exactly constitutes "anthropomorphism" – for instance whether SA categories fundamentally draw from the "person" ontological category or simply involve some sort of agential or animistic understanding – is still a point of debate. Some proposals have argued for a single "person" type as undergirding SA and MCI concepts, which is perhaps the most traditional view in mind-based theories of CSR (e.g., Atran & Norenzayan, 2004; Boyer, 2001; Barrett, 2000; Guthrie, 1993); another set of proposals sees that two types of SA concepts help simultaneously in a sort of dual-processing of both a formal theological view of non-person SA and a more person-like folk understanding (Bulbulia, 2004; Pyysiäinen, 2004; Slone, 2004); and a third set that divorce SAs from personhood or humanness per se and focus on SA understandings as agential or animistic (Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016). There exist a variety of studies on both sides and a great deal of influence given to cultural influence and developmental trajectories (see review in Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016; Lesage & Richert, 2021). The present study thus contributes to this discussion by providing a set of linguistic data around whether anthropomorphic SA concepts will be understood as human or non-human at this level of basic linguistics. A positive finding – i.e., statistically significant empirical evidence that native Tagalog speakers judge as grammatical phrases and/or sentences where SAs are given human possessives and determiners – would provide support for the mind-based "person" view of anthropomorphism noted just above.

Further, the use of such linguistic data is too rare in CSR discussions since the field's inception, with the most common paradigm being behavioral studies: memory and perception tasks, narratives, conceptual sorting, and the like. Such studies thus tend to test the extent to which participants attribute human-like qualities to SAs (Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016), focusing on whether participants judge that a SA acts, feels, or thinks in human-like ways – all indirect measures for something like theory of mind that have been widely studied elsewhere in CSR (e.g., Banerjee & Bloom, 2013; Barrett & Keil, 1996; Gervais, 2013). Tagalog thus offers an opportunity to study how one particular region and culture understands SAs regardless of these indirect, often more reflective, and typically lab-derived measures, adding both a non-western perspective to the discussion and contributing ecologically valid evidence at the level of basic linguistics which is rarely interrogated in the common CSR behavioral paradigms today.

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The relationship between language and concept-formation itself is complex. It has been long and widely known that language and concepts mutually intersect, but the nature of that relationship has been subject to lengthy dispute. Two poles articulate a linguistic relativity position (more akin to a *tabula rasa* view, e.g., B. F. Skinner) versus a linguistic universalism position (more akin to an evolutionarily constrained view, e.g., Stephen Pinker). If we might posit any consensus today, it would tend toward a neo-Whorfian view – that language influences cognition but is not determinative or wholly constructive (Boroditsky and Furhman, 2012; Lucy, 2013), in other words a middle ground position with tremendous variation among scholars leaning toward either pole. Scholars have shown, for instance, how different languages' linguistic categories and markers differentially influence the attribution of gender and gendered attributes to objects (Boroditsky, Scmidt, & Phillips, 2003; Sera et al., 2002).

Therefore, while language is likely not wholly determinative or constitutive of cognition and concept formation (and vice versa), we nonetheless see that concepts reflect the underlying language at work. English and Indonesian children, for example, differentially understand the concept of "living thing" based on the unique linguistic features of those two languages (Anggoro, Waxman, & Medin, 2008). Such findings have important implications for CSR theorization on key categories that purportedly underpin SA beliefs such as "person" or "animal". The notion of "minimally counterintuitive ideas," for instance, depends on having a cohesive notion of a "person" and especially one that can be compared across cultures to make any sort of universalizing claim for how SA belief operates cross-culturally (Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016; Purzycki & Willard, 2015). Linguistic diversity thus might mask underlying cognitive similarities across human beings (a universalist position) and therefore require clever experiments to overcome, but it equally might constrain our ability to discern any universal cognitive similarities if different languages are to some degree constitutive of thought (a relativist position).

The present paper explores the relationship between Tagalog linguistic markers and notions of SA humanness with these constraints and enablements in mind. On the one hand, there is a real extent to which this language's markers do indeed reflect how people understand a given subject or object. Namely, if a SA is linguistically coded as a human, then it is fair to conclude that Filipinos generally understand SAs as such. On the other hand, however, we should be attentive to the bidirectionality of the cognition-language relationship. It may be that understanding SAs as human led to the development of these distinct features in Tagalog, but as noted above many different languages have very different linguistic features around categories ranging from basic biology to gender. In such cases, the language categories are somewhat arbitrary (e.g., the different

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grammatical genders in English, Spanish, French, and German analyzed in Sera et al., 2002), which therefore should preclude us from making any totalizing claims. Along these lines, we should be especially attentive to any differences in how Tagalog understands SA words and concepts in its own language versus loan words from English, which is a key feature of the present study.

Tagalog's Human vs. Non-Human Markers: Genitives and Determiners

This study analyzes two notable features of Tagalog, the genitive case marker ("of") and the determiner ("the"). In Tagalog, each of these linguistic features have two forms: one type of genitive marker is used when the subject or object is human, while another type of genitive marker is used when the subject or object is non-human. The same is true for determiners: one type is used with a human subject or object, while another type is used for non-humans. We outline these linguistic features in turn, before turning to our study design and its relationship with existing questions in CSR.

We begin with the genitive. Tagalog, like many other languages such as English, uses a genitive case marker to show possession. This is commonly known as the apostrophe *s ('s)* in English, and is often referred to as the possessive marker in English grammar. For example, *lady's purse* denotes a genitive possession using the apostrophe *s*. Sometimes genitive possession is indicated by using *of*, i.e., *the purse of the lady*.

Tagalog uses the genitive as a possessive marker like English but uses two different genitive markers to denote whether the subject is understood to be a human or a non-human. The Tagalog possessive marker is a free morpheme, unlike in English when it can simply be denoted by an apostrophe. These Tagalog genitive case markers are *ni* pronounced as [ni] for human subjects/objects and *ng*[1] pronounced as [naŋ] for non-human subjects/objects.[2] Throughout this paper, we will specifically label these markers for a clearer understanding of their roles. The genitive case marker *ni* will be referred to as ***human case marker*** and will be labeled as H-GEN (human-genitive) in the translation gloss, while the genitive case marker *ng* will be referred to as ***non-human case marker*** and will be labeled as NH-GEN (non-human-genitive) in the translation gloss.

To further understand the nature of these genitive case markers and the relationship between the *possessor* and *possessee*, examples are given below. In example (1), *Jenny* is a human name and is therefore preceded by *ni*. While in

1 In Tagalog, *ng* has various functions in the language such as a linguistic feature that marks and precedes different types of verbal focus and aspect in a sentence (Zamar, 2023). However, in the case of this paper, we will only focus on one of the functions of *ng* which is to mark and precede the possessor of the noun.

2 All pronunciation notation follows the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

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(2), *the cat* is non-human (despite being animate and agential) and therefore preceded by *ng*.

(1) Human case marker (ni)
Purse ni Jenny.
purse H-GEN Jenny
'Jenny's purse'

(2) Non-human case marker (ng)
Pagkain ng pusa.
food NH-GEN cat
'(the) cat's food'

In addition to Tagalog's genitive case markers, the language has an additional linguistic feature known as determiners. This is known as the determiner '*the*' in English which usually marks the noun and/or subject of a sentence. Unlike possessive case markers, the determiner in both English and Tagalog is a free morpheme. In Tagalog, as with genitive case markers, the language also distinguishes the use of determiners depending on the humanness of the subject. The determiner that precedes a non-human noun is *ang* [aŋ] which will be referred to as ***non-human determiner*** and glossed as NH-DET in translations. On the other hand, the determiner that precedes a human noun is *si* [si] and will be referred to as ***human determiner*** and glossed as H-DET in translations.

In example (3), *Jenny* is a human name, therefore the human determiner (*si*) precedes the subject. In (4) *cat* is non-human and therefore preceded by non-human determiner.

(3) Human determiner (si)
Si Jenny
H-DET Jenny
'Jenny'

(4) Non-human determiner (ang)
Ang pusa
NH-DET cat
'The cat'

The behavior of genitive case markers and determiners seems to follow certain conditions to determine whether a subject will be preceded by a human or non-human case marker or determiner. So far, the examples above show us a certain pattern in utilizing these linguistic features. These conditions are given below:

(5) a. if the subject has a human name, then a human case marker and/or determiner precedes it (i.e., Jenny (*human*) = Si Jenny / ni Jenny)

b. if the subject has a non-human name or is understood to be non-human, then a non-human case marker and/or determiner precedes it (i.e., cat (*common name*) = Ang cat / ng cat)

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These conditions hold true throughout the language (Zamar 2023, esp. p. 20).

However, there is one outlier, namely the involvement of religious deities or supernatural agents (SAs) in the linguistic and conceptual context. Interestingly, in some cases SAs are understood to be human and linguistically tagged as such, while in other cases SAs are understood to be non-human and linguistically tagged as such. This disjunction is not only linguistically notable but also has relevance for theories in CSR which explore the extent to which SAs are understood to be human or simply have anthropomorphic-like qualities.

To further understand the relationship between these linguistic features and SAs, we must first understand the country's history. Along with Tagalog, the Philippines also uses English as the official language of the country. There are also over 170 other languages spoken across more than 100 million people – indeed roughly six in ten Filipinos speak languages other than English and Tagalog at home (Ethnologue, n.d.), with Tagalog being especially dominant in the capital Manila and northern regions. The role of Tagalog and English can be traced in the country's history with its colonizers, specifically Spain and the United States of America. Despite being initially colonized by the Spaniards before the Americans, the English language flourished more in the country's culture compared to Spanish. As a result, English was recognized as one of the official languages alongside Filipino in 1972 (Cornell University, n.d.). The Filipino people adapted to this change in the country's culture and especially language, where many began to use Tagalog and English in their daily discourse. Eventually, this interchange led to a fusion of both languages, later known as "Taglish," resulting in a situation where English, Tagalog, Taglish, and dozens of other languages are regularly spoken and heard across the country.

Religiously, meanwhile, the Philippines historically contained a host of native traditions that were eventually superseded by Spanish Catholicism, continued under English colonialism, which remains the dominant religion today (Arvilla, 1999; Roces, 1977–1978). Catholicism was both historically dominant during the 19th and 20th centuries and maintains high cultural salience in the Philippines today even among young people (Cornelio, 2016). It is an important and active social force with high church attendance, frequent and public religious festivals, and strong relevance in social issues such as gender and politics (Ochoa et al., 2016; Reyes et al., 2024). Over 90% of the population is Christian, with 79% of the population reporting as Catholic compared to just 2% practicing indigenous religions (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023). SA terms are thus widely present in Filipino religious and daily life, with English, Tagalog, and Taglish all used within Catholicism depending on the context, formality, and local cultural context in a large and diverse country. Formal and western style masses in Manila, for instance, are more likely to be given in

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English, while Tagalog is more common in rural areas and less formal contexts, though these are over-generalizations of a complex, geographically and ethnically diverse, and shifting socio-linguistic landscape.

Within this linguistic and cultural reality, Filipinos constantly use Tagalog and English terms for supernatural agents interchangeably in daily discourse. Despite the interchange of language terms, Tagalog speakers seem to have a shared judgment of whether a string of phrases/sentences (i.e., SA term + case marker) sounds natural (i.e., grammatical). In daily speech, this means that there are specific cases where, for instance, speakers might combine a human case marker (*ni*) with a SA term because they intuitively judge it to be natural both linguistically and conceptually, whereas in other cases they would not use the same human case marker with a SA term, giving it a non-human marker case marker instead (*ng*). Importantly, this behavior occurs in both types of markers (genitives and determiners).

Notably, native judgment generally follows a bimodal pattern: English terms for SAs (Lord, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit) tend to be assigned human case markers (H-GEN, H-DET), whereas Tagalog terms for SAs (Panginoon, Diyos, Hesus, Banal na Espiritu) tend to be assigned non-human case markers (NH-GEN, NH-DET). It is worth mentioning that the SA terms chosen here could be generally understood as reflecting a doctrinal religion (Whitehouse, 2002; cf. Barrett & Keil, 1996): certainly in the case of the English terms and the formal Christianity practiced in the Philippines, but also the Tagalog terms which are simply a different language equivalent for the same Christian terms and used in similar contexts. In this context, we attempted an "apples to apples" comparison between English and Tagalog terms, selecting an equivalent set of four words used in formal Christian contexts, which highlights the difference in linguistic markers between the two. While other native words are possible for SAs, and might highlight other analytic possibilities (e.g., *Tikbalang, Kapre, Mananggal, Berberoka, Diwata*, etc.), our analysis focused on four equivalent Christian-doctrinal terms in each language.

Examples (6) and (7) below show the relationship between religious agents and these linguistic features in Tagalog. Here and below such unnatural/ungrammatical constructions are marked with an asterisk (*). We provide a short phrase with our key SA terms and the relevant linguistic marker, both human and non-human, indicating which is ungrammatical.

(6) Tagalog Supernatural Term

(a)	**Ang** Diyos **NH-DET** Lord	(c)	**ng** Diyos **NH-GEN** Lord
(b)	*__Si__ Diyos **H-DET** Lord	(d)	*__ni__ Diyos **H-GEN** Lord

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The example seen in (6) is a Tagalog supernatural agent term *Diyos* [dijos] / [dʒos] that roughly translates to *Lord*.[3] In (6a) and (6c), a non-human case marker and determiner precedes the Tagalog SA: these constructions are generally understood by native speakers as sounding natural (i.e., grammatically correct). By contrast, (6b) and (6d) are preceded by human determiners and case markers: it is likely that Tagalog speakers would judge these constructions to appear unnatural (i.e., ungrammatical).[4]

In contrast, we see in example (7) below that naturalness is inverted when an English SA term is used. This time, the non-human case marker and determiner are generally understood by Tagalog speakers to be unnatural/ungrammatical (*) (7a and 7c) compared to the human case marker and determiner (7b and 7c).

English Supernatural Term

(7) (a) ***Ang** God
NH-DET God
(b) **Si** God
H-DET God
(c) ***ng** God
NH-GEN God
(d) *ni* God
H-GEN God

Generally speaking, Filipinos use non-human case markers for Tagalog terms for God and other SAs, indicating that they do not conceptualize those SAs as sufficiently human-like to merit the linguistic marker. By contrast, Filipinos do use human case markers for English terms for gods, indicating that they conceptualize those SAs to be sufficiently human-like. Working off a recognition of this difference, this paper examines native Tagalog speakers' perception of the relationship between Tagalog linguistic features and SAs. Given the evidence from the first author's personal experience growing up as a native Tagalog speaker in the Philippines, we hypothesize that Filipinos conceptualize Tagalog terms for SAs in non-human ways, while they conceptualize English terms for SAs in human ways. These two hypotheses (Tagalog vs. human SAs) are born from the author's native experience, whereas a more general CSR paradigm starting from the presumption of strong agency

3 Sometimes used interchangeably with *God*.

4 Our assertions on things like likelihood of perceived ungrammaticality are based on native speaker intuition. Here we follow common practice in linguistic argumentation, especially in Chomskian circles. Even as one could (and ideally would) norm these judgments using experimentation or database analysis, proceeding with this type of analysis based on native judgment is generally seen as appropriate. Regardless of how correct one's initial judgment of the appropriateness or grammaticality of any given statement is, each of these statements in Tagalog can be understood as a test case, with the initial judgment of un/grammaticality functioning as a hypothesis tested through the subsequent empirical portion of our study.

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detection and personhood attribution might hypothesize that *both* Tagalog and English SAs would be given human grammatical terms. This apparent disjunction between native experience and general theoretical model was a key precipitant for the present study, and potential explanations for our findings are discussed at length below.

In addition to coming to a better understanding of these linguistic and conceptual relationships, we consider these contrasts in relation to theories in the field of CSR. Many core theories and findings in CSR claim that agency detection and attribution are human universals (White, 2021), offering an evolved, cognitive explanation for the widespread presence of SAs across the historical and cultural record. The same can be seen in theories and studies focusing on theory of mind, where attributing human-like theory of mind is thought to be a similar universal that results in person-like, intentional agents across the human species' religious historical-cultural record (Banerjee & Bloom, 2013; Barrett & Keil, 1996; Gervais, 2013). If our above hypothesis holds, that native Filipinos do not conceptualize Tagalog terms for SAs as human but do understand English terms for SAs as humans, this would problematize certain CSR theories that would expect a given culture and language to understand SAs as fundamentally human with special qualities (Atran & Norenzayan, 2004; Boyer, 2001; Barrett, 2000; Guthrie, 1993). Furthermore, the difference in these two languages would further support the view that cultural frameworks – such as formal religious beliefs and the complexities of colonial interactions – may be fundamentally constitutive of category formation (Anggoro et al., 2008) alongside the formative influence of different linguistic structures (Sera et al., 2002). Such a finding would be doubly important because it arises from a non-western natural language context that is too rarely included in cognitive theories and/or behavioral studies. It would likely also have cultural, philosophical, and theological implications.

We thus designed an online task that recruited native Tagalog speakers living in the Philippines. These participants read several phrases and sentences with different pairings of SA terms (from both English and Tagalog) and case markers and determinatives (both human and non-human). In the case of phrases, participants rated the extent of their daily use of the phrases. In the case of sentences, participants rated how natural the sentences sounded to them. Our goal was both to test our main hypothesis that Tagalog SAs would be understood as non-human and English SAs as human and to examine the variability in their judgments across individual specific terms.

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Method

Participants

Participants were 40 native speakers of Tagalog currently residing in the Philippines, ages 18–57 years. Participants were required to be currently residing in the Philippines to ensure they were fully connected to the country's culture and language in their daily lives. Thus, we assume their responses were more likely based on local culture and language with relatively less exposure to foreign cultural concepts than native speakers living abroad. Participants were recruited through the distribution of online links for the survey by our Filipino researcher (LJ) who has wide contacts in the Philippines, especially outside the major cities, who further distributed to their native networks (i.e., snowball sampling). Further, we collected demographic information: 19 participants identified as male and 21 as female. For the distribution of religious affiliations, only four participants responded: three reported as Born Again Christian and one as non-denominational Christian. Given the prevalence and pride of religious affiliation in Filipino culture, this low response rate on religious affiliation came as a surprise; perhaps the online nature of an academic study contributed to participant reticence on this issue. Materials used in the study are provided in the appendices; all data is available from the authors upon request.

Stimuli

We tested four linguistic features (two determiners and two case markers) with eight religious supernatural agents (four English terms, four Tagalog near-counterparts; Table 1). The linguistic features vary in use depending on the humanness of the given topic.

Table 1.

Linguistic Features			
Determiners		**Case Markers**	
Human	*Si* [si]	***Human***	*ni* [ni]
Non-human	*Ang* [aŋ]	***Non-human***	*ng* [naŋ]

Supernatural Agents	
English	**Tagalog**
Lord	Panginoon *[paŋinoʔon]*
God	Diyos *[dijos] / [dʒos]*
Jesus	Hesus *[hɛsus]*
Holy Spirit	Banal na Espiritu *[banal na ɛspiritu]*

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Procedure

Participants completed the study through Qualtrics. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of New Hampshire. The survey first asked whether the participant is a native speaker of Tagalog who currently resides in the Philippines. If the participant answered "no" to this question, the survey would end, indicating that the said participant did not meet the pre-defined criteria for participation. If they answered "yes," the participant gave informed consent and completed a brief demographic questionnaire (i.e., age, religious affiliation, and dominant language: Tagalog, English, or mixed – also referred to as *Taglish*; see Appendix A).

Participants then completed the main survey which had three sections (see Appendix B). In the first section, participants were presented with human and non-human *determiners* with religious SAs in word pairs (i.e., '*Si Jesus*,' '*Ang Hesus*'). In the third section, participants were presented with human and non-human *case* markers (i.e., '*ni Jesus*,' '*ng Hesus*'). In the second section, participants presented both determiners and case markers in a more naturalistic full sentence context. These tests were completed in the same order by all participants to avoid the expectation that they would eventually be tested on both determiners and case markers in sentence form. Additionally, all the survey items used in this survey were elicited from the first author who is Filipino and a native speaker of Tagalog, in consultation with a co-author expert in linguistics to map out all the linguistic possibilities and match length and type across "phrases" and "sentences."

In the first (determiners) and third (case markers) sections, participants rated short phrases based on their personal use in daily conversation (1 = lowest or do not use in conversation at all, 5 = highest or use in conversation all the time). In the second section, participants rated longer sentences based on whether they seem natural (i.e., "rate whether the following sentences seem right to you in terms of how natural it sounds: 1 = being the lowest or if you think the sentence doesn't sound natural, and 5 = being the highest or if you think the sentence sounds natural"). For all sections, the options were labeled using a *five-point Likert Scale* using 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree."

We interpret judgments of both daily use and naturalness to reflect speakers' perceptions of grammaticality. If participants use phrases frequently in daily conversation or rate the sentences as natural, we infer that they would judge these instances to be grammatical. If participants do not use phrases frequently in daily conversation, this may not necessarily mean that they would judge the phrases as *ungrammatical*, but if they judge the sentences as unnatural, we can infer that they would judge these instances to be ungrammatical. This slight difference in phrasing allows us to understand the practical application of participants' linguistic knowledge (daily use) as well as their overt judgments (naturalness).

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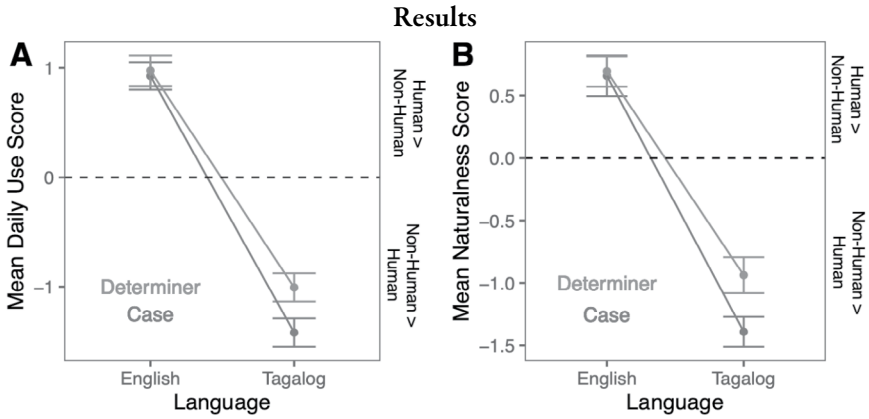

Figure 1. Daily Use and Naturalness Judgments for Human and Non-Human Markers

Note. For both, difference scores between human minus non-human marked sentences or phrases. Negative numbers indicate more daily use or naturalness for *non-human* compared to human markers. Positive numbers indicate more daily use or naturalness for *human* compared to non-human markers.

We first examined the reports of *daily use* for case and determiner phrases (Figure 1A). We calculated a *daily use difference score* by subtracting each individual's mean judgment of their daily use for the non-human markers (i.e., *ang, ni*) from their judgment of their daily use for the human markers (i.e., *si, ng*). In this difference score, positive values indicate that participants reported using human markers more in their daily use than non-human markers and negative values indicate that participants reported using non-human markers more in their daily use than human markers. Using a repeated-measures ANOVA, we compared the daily use difference scores across Language of the SA terms (Tagalog [i.e., *Diyos, Panginoon, Hesus*, and *Banal na Espiritu*], English [i.e., *God, Jesus, Lord*, and *Holy Spirit*]) and Marker Type (Determiner [i.e., *ang, si*], Case [i.e., *ni, ng*]).

There was a significant main effect of Language, such that participants reported using human markers with English SAs (*God, Lord, Jesus*, and *Holy Spirit*) more frequently than non-human markers, but *non-human* markers with Tagalog SAs more frequently than human markers ($F(1, 39) = 116.8$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = 0.64$). However, there was a significant interaction between Language and Marker Type ($F(1, 39) = 4.21$, $p = .047$, $\eta_G^2 = 0.012$). Post-hoc comparisons indicated that for English SAs, there were no significant differences in reported daily use for genitive case markers and determiners ($p = .68$), but for Tagalog SAs, participants reported using non-human Case markers more frequently than non-human Determiners ($p = .001$).

We next examined the judgments of *naturalness* for sentences that contained either case or determiner markers (Figure 1B). Just as with the daily use score, we

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calculated a *naturalness difference score* by subtracting each individual's mean judgment of naturalness for the non-human markers from their judgment of naturalness for the human markers. In this difference score, positive values indicate that participants judged human markers as sounding more natural than non-human markers and negative values indicate that participants judged non-human markers are more natural than human markers. Using a repeated-measures ANOVA, we compared the naturalness difference scores across Language of the SA terms (Tagalog, English) and Marker Type (Determiner, Case).

There was a significant main effect of Language that had the same pattern as the daily use measure – participants judged human markers with English SAs as more natural than non-human markers, but *non-human* markers with Tagalog SAs as more natural than the human markers ($F(1, 39) = 93.9$, $p < .001$, $\eta_G^2 = 0.53$). There was also a significant main effect of Marker Type such that there was a larger difference in naturalness judgments between non-human and human Case markers relative to Determiner markers ($F(1, 39) = 4.74$, $p = .036$, $\eta_G^2 = 0.020$). While the interaction between Language and Marker Type was not significant ($F(1, 39) = 3.96$, $p = .054$, $\eta_G^2 = 0.014$), because it was very near significance threshold and to be consistent with the daily use measure, we report the post-hoc comparisons. As with the daily use pattern, these comparisons indicated that for English SAs, there were no significant differences in naturalness judgments for Case and Determiner markers ($p = .81$), but for Tagalog SAs, participants judged non-human *Case* markers as more natural than non-human *Determiners* ($p = .007$).

Together, these results indicate that native Tagalog speakers in the Philippines are generally sensitive to the human or non-human markers in language when depicting supernatural agents. English SA terms paired with human markers had higher reported daily use and were judged as more natural sounding compared with English SA terms paired with non-human markers. In contrast, Tagalog SA terms paired with non-human markers had higher reported daily use and were judged as more natural sounding compared to Tagalog SA terms paired with human markers. For both daily use and naturalness judgments, there was some evidence that in Tagalog, the differences were larger for Case markers than Determiners, but in English, there were no differences based on whether Case or Determiner markers were used.

Next, we sought to better understand whether these daily use and naturalness judgments differed based on the particular SA terms. There are some differences in the use and naturalness judgments depending on the specific SA terms in English (Figure 2) or Tagalog (Figure 3) when they were paired with specific determiners or case markers. For the sake of visualization and analysis, we collapse the two responses that agree ("Agree", "Strongly Agree") and the

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two responses that disagree ("Disagree", "Strongly Disagree"). We compared the percentages of participants responding that they agree (vs. disagree or neutral responses) using Fisher's exact tests.

In English, the majority of participants responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed (collapsed into Agree category) that in their daily life (Figure 2A), they would use terms with a human case marker (*ni*) paired with *God* (75%), *Jesus* (88%), and *Lord* (87%). In contrast, only 30% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would use the human case marker paired with *Holy Spirit* (significantly lower than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not different from each other *p*s > .75). Instead, 73% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would use the non-human case marker (*ng*) with *Holy Spirit* and only a minority agreed for the other terms (*God:* 33%, *Jesus:* 10%, *Lord:* 33%; *Holy Spirit* was significantly higher than all other terms *p*s < .0033, which were not different from each other *p*s > .081).

For English terms, a very similar pattern emerged in reports of daily use for determiners. The majority of participants responded that the Agreed or Strongly Agreed that in their daily life, they would use terms with a human determiner (*si*) paired with *God* (65%), *Jesus* (79%), and *Lord* (80%). In contrast, only 38% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would use the human determiner paired with *Holy Spirit* (significantly lower than *Jesus* and *Lord p*s = .0013 but not *God p* = .099, which was also not significantly different from the other terms *p*s = .63). Instead, 59% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would use the non-human determiner (*ang*) with *Holy Spirit* and only a minority agreed for the other terms (*God:* 23%, *Jesus:* 5%, *Lord:* 48%; *Holy Spirit* significantly higher than *God* and *Jesus p*s < .0053, but not *Lord p* = .37; *Lord* significantly higher than *Jesus p* < .001 but not *God p* = .10).

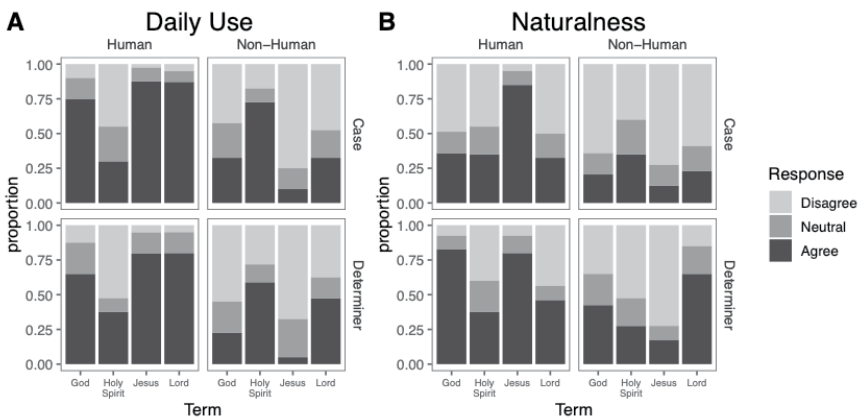

Figure 2. Proportion of Naturalness Judgments of English SA Terms as Human

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We also compared participants judgments of naturalness of English SA terms in the different contexts (Figure 2B). The patterns differed somewhat from the daily use judgments, indicating that the two ways of forming the questions may be tapping into distinct understandings of the linguistic distinctions.

The majority of participants responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed that sentences with the human case marker (*ni*) sounded natural when paired *Jesus* (85%), but only a minority agreed for the other terms (*God:* 36%, *Holy Spirit:* 35%, *Lord:* 33%; *Jesus* significantly higher than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not different from each other *p*s > .999). This diverges sharply from the daily use results for the terms *God* and *Lord*. It is interesting that many participants agree that they use the terms in their daily life, but when encountered in different full sentences, it did not seem natural to them. Further, very few participants reported that the sentences with the non-human case marker (*ng*) paired with any of the terms sounded natural (*God:* 21%, *Holy Spirit:* 35%, *Jesus:* 13%, *Lord:* 23%; no significant differences: *p*s > .20). This starkly contrasts with the pattern for daily use with the term *Holy Spirit*. Though many participants reported using *Holy Spirit* paired with the non-human case marker in their daily lives, few reported sentences using this pairing as natural.

A different pattern emerged in naturalness judgments for determiners. A majority responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed that sentences with the human determiner (*si*) paired with *God* (83%) or *Jesus* (80%) sounded natural, but only a minority of participants agreed for *Holy Spirit* (38%) and *Lord* (46%). There were no differences in percentages between *God* and *Jesus* (p > .999) or *Holy Spirit* and *Lord* (p > .999), but all other comparisons were significantly different (*p*s < .0012). These results align with daily use reports for the terms *God, Holy Spirit, and Jesus*, but not *Lord*. While participants report often using the human determiner with *Lord*, they do not always view the pairing as natural. For the non-human determiner (*ang*), a majority Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they found the sentences natural when paired with *Lord* (65%), somewhat aligned with the daily use data), but only a minority for *God* (43%), *Holy Spirit* (28%), and *Jesus* (18%). Percentage agreeing for *Lord* was significantly higher than *Holy Spirit* (p = .0076) and *Jesus* (p < .001), but was not significantly different from *God* (p = .22). No other comparisons were significant (*p*s > .10). While the patterns are aligned with the daily use reports for *God* and *Jesus*, they diverge for *Holy Spirit*. While a majority report using the non-human determiner with *Holy Spirit* in their daily life, only a minority reported this pairing as sounding natural.

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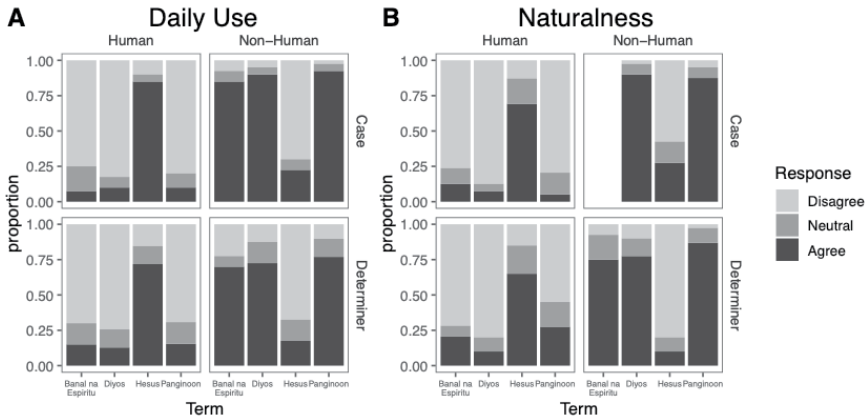

Figure 3. Proportion of Naturalness Judgments of Tagalog SA Terms as Human

In Tagalog, the majority of participants responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed (collapsed into Agree category) that in their daily life (Figure 3A), they would use terms with a human case marker (*ni*) paired with *Hesus* (85%). In contrast, a very small minority agreed with the other terms (*Banal na Espiritu:* 8%, *Diyos:* 10%, Panginoon: 10%; *Hesus* significantly higher than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .999). Instead, a majority Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would use the non-human case marker (*ng*) with *Banal na Espiritu* (85%), *Diyos* (90%), and *Panginoon* (93%), but only a minority agreed for *Hesus* (23%; significantly lower than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .999).

A very similar pattern emerged in reports of daily use for determiners. The majority of participants responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed that in their daily life they would use terms with a human determiner (*si*) paired with *Hesus* (72%), with only a minority for the other terms *Banal na Espiritu:* 15%, *Diyos:* 13%, Panginoon: 15%; *Hesus* significantly higher than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .999). Instead, a majority Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would use the non-human determiner (*ang*) with *Banal na Espiritu* (70%), *Diyos* (73%), and *Panginoon* (77%), but only a minority agreed for *Hesus* (18%; significantly lower than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .999).

We also compared participants' judgments of naturalness of Tagalog SA terms in different contexts (Figure 3B). In contrast to the English terms, the patterns were very similar to the daily use judgments. The majority of participants responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed that sentences with the

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human case marker (*ni*) sounded natural when paired *Hesus* (69%), but only a minority agreed for the other terms (*Banal na Espiritu:* 13%, *Diyos:* 8%, Panginoon: 5%; *Hesus* significantly higher than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significant different from each other *p*s > .999). Further, many participants reported that the sentences with the non-human case marker (*ng*) paired with *Diyos* (90%) or *Panginoon* (88%) sounded natural, but only 28% reported that the non-human case marker paired with *Hesus* sounded natural (significantly lower than the other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .999). We do not report judgments of naturalness for *Banal na Espiritu* paired with the non-human case marker as we neglected to include this condition in the survey.

The naturalness judgments for determiners were very similar to both the daily use judgments for determiners and the naturalness judgments for case markers. The majority of participants responded that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed that sentences with the human determiner (*si*) sounded natural when paired *Hesus* (65%), but only a minority agreed for the other terms (*Banal na Espiritu:* 21%, *Diyos:* 10%, Panginoon: 28%; *Hesus* significantly higher than all other terms *p*s < .0061, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .24). Further, many participants reported that the sentences with the non-human determiner (*ang*) paired with *Banal na Espiritu* (75%), *Diyos* (78%) or *Panginoon* (87%) sounded natural, but only 10% reported that the non-human determiner paired with *Hesus* sounded natural (significantly lower than all other terms *p*s < .001, which were not significantly different from each other *p*s > .999).

In both English and Tagalog, three of the four terms are aligned with the language-specific pattern observed in the averaged judgment data – English terms *God, Jesus*, and *Lord* tended to be reported more in daily use and naturalness when paired with human compared to non-human markers and Tagalog terms *Banal na Espiritu, Diyos*, and *Panginoon* tended to be reported more in daily use and naturalness when paired with non-human compared to human markers. There were exceptions to this in both languages – *Holy Spirit* in English tended to be more associated with non-human than human terms and *Hesus* in Tagalog tended to be more associated with human than non-human terms.

Overall, there were diverging patterns for English SA terms across the daily use and naturalness questions, which indicates that these questions index distinct concepts in English, but similar ones in Tagalog. While participants may report using English SA term pairings in their daily life, this is not always related to those pairings appearing in sentences being judged as natural. Participants may use pairings that to themselves would sound unnatural or not use pairings that would sound natural.

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Discussion

Overall, by examining Filipino native Tagalog speakers' judgments of their *daily use* and *naturalness* of phrases and sentences with English and Tagalog SA terms, we uncovered two main patterns of results. First, we found that native Tagalog speakers understood human linguistic markers to be grammatical for three English terms for SAs (*God, Jesus, Lord*), reflected in their higher reported daily use and naturalness judgments when these terms were paired with human markers compared to non-human markers. Second, we found that native Tagalog speakers understood non-human linguistic markers to be grammatical for three Tagalog terms for SAs (*Banal na Espiritu, Diyos, Panginoon*), reflected in their higher reported daily use and naturalness judgments when these terms were paired with non-human markers compared to human markers. These two main findings bore out our hypothesis derived from our general knowledge and familiarity with the Tagalog language and Filipino culture, namely that human markers are typically used for English terms for SAs while non-human markers are typically used for native, Tagalog terms for SAs.

Such findings engage certain influential theories in CSR around cross-cultural understandings of supernatural agency, god concepts, and the nature of anthropomorphism. A great deal of CSR, from its earliest theories and through today, has focused on the importance of understanding gods, spirits, ancestors, and the general objects of religious belief as supernatural agents (SAs) (White, 2021; Shaver, Purzycki, & Sosis, 2016; Knight et al., 2004; Guthrie, 1993). These SAs are generally understood to be notably human-like and therefore assigned uniquely human characteristics such as advanced theory of mind (Atran, 2005; Barrett, 2000). While other core elements of early CSR theories have been challenged by subsequent testing (e.g., HADD, the hypothesized "hyper-active agency detection device," see Hoogeveen & van Elk, 2021), SAs have remained a core tenant such that "belief in SAs" can be fairly understood as a universal working definition of religion in fields ranging from religious studies and philosophy (e.g., Stowers, 2008; Boyer, 2000) to behavioral psychology and CSR itself (e.g., White, 2021; Purzycki et al., 2012; Barrett and Lanman, 2008).

Key to these SA theories is the understanding of SAs as human-like intentional agents (Tremlin, 2006). Yet the nature and extent of this attribution of "humanness" is subject to dispute. Some theories posit a specific use of the "person" category but with special properties (Atran and Norenzayan, 2004; Boyer, 2001; Barrett, 2000; Guthrie, 1993), while other theories understand anthropomorphism in a more general way akin to general agency (Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016), and still others advance a blended view of the bodily anthropomorphic and the abstractly theological (Barrett & Keil, 1996; Bulbulia,

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2004; Pyysiäinen, 2004; Slone, 2004). This study has problematized a stronger version of the first theory listed here – that SAs are simply humans with special properties – given that Tagalog does not understand its own SA terms as sufficiently human to merit a human linguistic marker, occurring in an ecologically valid fashion at the level of basic linguistics. The findings in English, meanwhile, namely that three of the four English SA terms *were* given human labels by contrast, speak to the complexity of cultural findings, and might be surprising: one might expect that a foreign, doctrinal religion with its explicit theological concepts would be understood along those terms as non-human, even if possessing some human properties.

For both Tagalog and English, there also remains the question of where the particular threshold stands to be given a human marker or not. If Tagalog does not understand most of its SA terms to be human, this does not mean that these SAs lack human-like properties. Indeed, previous studies have understood 'humanness' in CSR in a wide-ranging way, including such features as human-like agency, emotions, theory of mind, and/or possession of a human-like body – all of which can change across the developmental trajectory and which also reflect the importance influences of culture both familial and more broadly (Lesage & Rickert, 2021; Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016). These human-like or human-property attributions seem to reflect the innate, folk understandings of physics, biology, and psychology thought to have deep evolutionary-cognitive origins across the species, and which are applied to SAs of highly diverse types (Gelman & Noles, 2011). This line of thought has remained dominant due to its powerful explanatory value in a range of areas, from comparative anthropology to psychology (White, 2021).

Our study highlights some limitations of a highly person-centric view of SAs even as we do not engage the question of human-like characteristics such as whether this involves psychological or physiological properties. A productive follow-up study could interrogate this question, around how human-like an agent would have to be in order to be linguistically marked as human in Tagalog, and which types of criteria would have the most relative influence. Yet for now, in our available linguistic evidence around whether SAs are universally and necessarily conceptualized as human by a given culture, Tagalog indicates that the answer is no. While attributing humanness to SAs is common with foreign English terms, the Filipino language and culture itself generally labels native Tagalog SAs as qualitatively different from humans. What is more, the linguistic evidence is unmistakable and runs deep into Filipino cultural history, unlike CSR work common today that often explores behavioral measures within a western, English-speaking context. A great deal of such modern work is liable to elicit what are known as "shallow inferences" instead of "deep

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inferences," recording evidence of cultural instead of evolutionary influence (Purzycki and Willard, 2015). Our Tagalog findings, we submit, may more so reflect "deep inferences" and therefore deserve special consideration, contra the English words which are more subject to shallow inferences given their historically late, foreign, and missionary-doctrinal introduction to Filipino culture.

Meanwhile, it is certainly possible, and we venture even likely, that native Filipinos understand their SAs as human-like in certain ways such as possessing agency or having internal intentions (reflecting a theory of mind). While this does not cross the threshold to understanding native SAs as sufficiently human-like to linguistically label them as such, such matters and judgments seem to lie on a spectrum instead of a binary. Indeed, religions generally do not understand gods, spirits, and other forms of SAs as humans per se. They are SAs precisely because they are not humans exactly; they are "human-like." SAs are memorable – minimally counterintuitive ideas (MCIs) come to mind here (Boyer, 2001; Barrett, 2008; Upal, 2010) – because they are very close to humans but different in a few key ways that are memorable, important, and often socially salient. MCI theory largely reflects a view that the anthropomorphism attributed to SAs reflects the category of "person," i.e., a human, and thus our Tagalog findings problematize CSR theories of anthropomorphism that assume an "implicit person" view (in Tagalog terms, "humanness") as the base category as opposed to other theories that argue for agentialism/animism as the base category or human-like characteristics (and not "humanness" per se) as the relevant set of properties (see discussion in Shtulman & Lindeman, 2016).

The Tagalog evidence should at least give us pause in understanding SAs as a universally held category developed from distinct notions of "human" that naturally occur species-wide due to shared evolutionary processes and consequent cognitive proclivities. We readily acknowledge that this one cultural-linguistic body of evidence stands against other cross-cultural studies in favor of widespread beliefs that SAs are at least very human-like (White, 2021; Knight et al., 2004) and other studies more narrowly focused on the cognitive template of "person" or "human" (Atran & Norenzayan, 2004; Slone, 2004; Boyer, 2001; Guthrie, 1993). But at minimum we assert that the Tagalog data – especially as qualitatively distinct from other forms of evidence – should caution us against universalizing conclusions of the latter kind.

With these broader findings and discussions in mind, we can proceed to consideration of four more specific findings. The first was that we found differences in patterns of reported daily use compared to naturalness judgments for English SAs (Figure 1). The same linguistic content was judged as more present in daily use than naturalness, although in both cases, participants judged human markers to be used more and sound more natural than non-human markers, in

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marked contrast to the Tagalog SAs. We suspect this may have occurred because the daily use patterns were derived from word pairs, while the naturalness judgments were derived from full sentences (Appendix B). When judging a specific sentence, the context may become more muddled, and perhaps the blending between the two languages ("Taglish") had a greater effect on participants' judgments of naturalness.

A second specific finding was that Tagalog case markers more strongly reflected the non-human nature of Tagalog SAs compared to determiners. Although both linguistic markers demonstrated the conceptualization of Tagalog SA terms as non-human, this effect was stronger for case markers. We suggest this may be due to the fact that case markers (e.g., the genitive) are more closely tied to a subject, while determiners (e.g., "the") are more general. But this is conjectural and requires further study from the perspective of Tagalog linguistics.

There were two final specific findings around the individual SA terms. Among English SA terms, "*Holy Spirit*" was an outlier from the other three (*God, Jesus, Lord*), as Tagalog speakers labeled "*Holy Spirit*" as non-human in both their daily use and naturalness judgments. Meanwhile, among Tagalog SA terms, "*Hesus*" was an outlier from the other three (*Banal na Espiritu, Diyos, Panginoon*), as Tagalog speakers labeled "*Hesus*" as human in both their daily use and naturalness judgments. Both these findings modify our main findings above, as these were clear exceptions to English SAs coded as human and Tagalog SAs coded as non-human.

We suggest explanations for both exceptions in the linguistic and cultural context. "*Hesus*" is a word adapted from Spanish and English, and unequivocally refers to a human name: of course, the religious-historical figure from Christianity, but it is also commonly used as a proper name for Filipinos, often as a last name along with Spanish derivations such as "*Jesus*" or "*de la Cruz*." In this cultural-historical context, "*Hesus*" would have been understood as a name that applied to people, much as it is in Spanish speaking nations today, which is a key feature in Tagalog when using human versus non-human linguistic markers. And indeed, compared to the other Tagalog SA terms (*Banal na Espiritu, Diyos, Panginoon*), perhaps with the exception of *Diyos, Hesus* appears as the most evidently foreign and is clearly derived from the Spanish and English contexts. Recalling that English SA terms otherwise are strongly understood to be human, perhaps this exception should not be a surprise.

Meanwhile, Tagalog speakers judging the English SA term "*Holy Spirit*" to be non-human seems to follow different logic, we suggest of a more theological nature. The Catholicism dominant in the Philippines seems to provide the possibility that *God, Jesus*, and *Lord* (presumably *Lord God* or *Lord Jesus*) are

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understood to be fully human as well as fully divine. Catholic doctrine holds that *Jesus* is *Lord*, and that *Jesus* is "consubstantial" with *God* (*the Father*). While Catholic doctrine of the Trinity holds that all three members (*God the Father, Jesus the Son*, and *the Holy Spirit*) are consubstantial, the Nicene Creed – the founding theological document that made this theology official and which is often spoken aloud in Catholic Mass – states that *Jesus* was "consubstantial with the father" whereas the *Holy Spirit* receives much less attention in the Creed where it is merely stated that the *Holy Spirit* "proceeds from the father and son." In this way, the *Holy Spirit* might well be understood as less human (e.g., the Pentacost where the Holy Spirit is specifically described as descending as a non-human force or power), whereas the other terms (*God, Jesus, Lord*) could be understood together as sharing essential humanity.

Given how the contextual influence of religious beliefs – of the surrounding culture and family both – plays a clear role in both children's and adults' god-concepts and their developmental trajectories (Lesage & Rickert, 2021), perhaps these exceptions to the Tagalog and English findings should not be a surprise. In this particular case, our proposed theological explanation for the deviations in the overall pattern (especially *Holy Spirit* in English; cf. the different explanation for *Hesus* in Tagalog) seem to reflect how professed theological beliefs can change the level of anthropomorphism granted to SAs, as seen in other studies that attribute significant cultural and individual differences in anthropomorphism (Barrett & Keil, 1998). Ultimately, the findings in both languages highlight the importance of historical and cultural considerations in explaining the particularities and nuances of behavioral and linguistic data.

Conclusion

This study was, to the best of our knowledge, the first ever to apply CSR theories to the Tagalog language, even as Tagalog and Filipinos have been subjects of other research at the intersection of psychology and religion (Sevilla, 1979; del Castillo & Alino, 2020). Broadly speaking, this type of work occurs too rarely – not only linguistically but also culturally – as the field tends to pursue WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic; Henrich, 2020) instead of WILD contexts (worldwide, in situ, local, diverse; Newsom et al., 2021). While the field is improving in this regard, this study underscores how attention to an understudied linguistic-cultural paradigm can provide new approaches and conclusions to both.

We would especially highlight the importance of focusing on native and natural language studies. A great deal of behavioral studies have laudably attempted to capture a greater diversity of global data through cultural-comparative approaches and ethnographic case studies (e.g., Purzycki et al.,

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2022), and we acclaim such work. But linguistics generally is an area of potential innovation for CSR, as it remains significantly under-studied and underutilized in a field whose practitioners tend to come from the backgrounds of philosophy, religion, anthropology, and psychology. Studying how different cultures frame, understand, and express beliefs through the structure of their very language allows for an exploration of how culture and cognition intersect at a deep level. To make broader claims about beliefs (religious or otherwise) and their cultural specificity or their cross-cultural manifestations requires us to analyze how these beliefs are framed at the most fundamental linguistic-conceptual level. Behavioral approaches are useful and help us understand cross-cultural commonalities, but linguistics can help us understand cultural particularities as well.

Within this point, we note that there is much more to study from the perspective of Tagalog and Tagalog linguistics (cf. de Leon et al., 2023). Furthermore, this paper explored just one of several linguistically distinct components of the language, which we believe can be further analyzed for relevance to both cultural and cognitive issues. We hope that such further work also improves on our method of data collection, which relied on the distribution of the study within native networks (i.e., snowball sampling). This distribution method had potential downsides around non-diverse responses from the participants. However, this method ultimately worked well for our study because we succeeded in our aim to only solicit participants who meet all the given criteria fully.

Along these lines, however, only four respondents replied around their religious affiliation. Because our suggested explanation for our data outliers relies on a Catholic-theological framework, we thus have little certainty that this is relevant for this set of participants, even as Catholicism is a dominant cultural-religious presence across the country which implies its influence at least at some level. It is therefore an open question whether or not a different set of participants – Catholics versus Protestants, Catholics versus unaffiliated, etc. – would result in the same findings. A follow-up study could productively select and directly compare different religious groups using this same data set and do so rather easily via an online format such as Prolific assuming that native, locally-residing Tagalog participants could be assured.

Other follow-up studies could further interrogate other historical, cultural, and linguistic components of Filipino culture. As noted earlier, there are other, non-doctrinal Tagalog words for SAs that might result in different findings, i.e., human markers. There is additionally the question of historical development, namely if certain terms were used more often in Philippine history. Given the presence of centuries of colonial records (which admittedly have their own problems and selection biases), a follow-up analysis could machine read digital

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texts to explore if certain types of SA terms were used more often, and in which contexts.

Finally, it is always worth recalling, especially in a field titled "the cognitive science of religion," that culture matters. We noted above that many studies suffered from their inability to separate "shallow (cultural) inference" from "deep (evolutionary) inferences." Yet this is not to say that culture doesn't matter or should be dismissed; in fact, we strongly advocate the opposite. Culture fundamentally matters in terms of how religious terms of belief (e.g., SAs) are understood and therefore cognitive processed. Nurture matters as much as nature in terms of how our brains develop and understand the world around us, and therefore CSR paradigms that focus only on nature and deep inferences will always fall short in terms of full explanatory potential. Especially as the field continues to change and move away from its mind-based original theories toward more behavioral work, attention to the culture, language, and history in any given body of data is paramount. While CSR tends to seek universalist explanations, cultural explanations tend to be particularist, and it is at the intersection of these two that the fullest picture is formed.

In this paper, we gave two examples of how attention to cultural particulars might explain some of our findings apart from evolutionary paradigms. We suggested that Catholicism, which is the dominant religious form in the Philippines both historically and currently, might explain why one English SA term (*Holy Spirit*) was conceptualized as non-human. This suggestion required not just a broad understanding of Catholicism, but an attention to the specific wording and theological meaning of a particular doctrine originating in the 1500-year-old Nicene Creed. Another suggestion found root in culture in a different way, as we proposed that the only Tagalog SA term that was conceptualized as human (*Hesus*) could be explained by the colonial context and historical naming practices of Spanish and English culture. Such explanations are necessary hermeneutics when dealing with any kind of human behavior, and we encourage other CSR researchers to integrate their behavioral, neurological, biomarker, and other data gathering methods with humanistic approaches and collaborations across disciplines.

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Appendix A

Survey and Demographic Section

1. Are you a native speaker of Filipino (Tagalog) who currently lives in the Philippines?
   a. No
   b. Yes
2. CONSENT FORM
3. How old are you?
4. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-binary/third gender
   d. Prefer not to say
5. What is your religious affiliation?
   a. Roman Catholic
   b. Islam
   c. Protestant (Including: Seventh Day Adventists, UCCP, United Methodist, etc.)
   d. Other Christians (Including: Pentecostals, Evangelical, Iglesia ni Cristo, etc.)
   e. Atheist
   f. Agnostic
   g. Other (please specify):

   If you are **not** included in any religious affiliations (you answered Atheist or Agnostic) **skip question 4** and proceed to question number 5. If you are included in any religious affiliations above, **please answer question 4** then proceed to answer the other questions.
6. On a scale from 1 to 5, **1 being the lowest (rarely)** and **5 being the highest (always)**, how often do you practice religion (this includes praying, attending religious services, reading the bible, etc.)?
7. In what region of the Philippines do you live? (i.e., CAR, NCR, Region 1-Ilocos, etc.)
8. In daily communication, what language do you use most often?
   a. Filipino (Tagalog)
   b. English
   c. Taglish (Tagalog and English)
   d. Other (please specify):

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Incentive for Participation

As mentioned in the study's consent form, participating in this survey will grant you, the participant, a $5 Amazon electronic gift card as an incentive of the study.

In this section, you will be asked to provide personal information such as your full name and email address. The purpose of this is for us (the researchers) to help track who will get the electronic gift cards and where to send the code. This section will STRICTLY be for gift card distribution only and will not be used in any part of the study.

Rest assured that your information will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your email address?

Note: The email address provided will be where we will send the e-gift card. Please ensure you have access to this email.

If you have any questions pertaining to the research you can contact Lyra Joson (lyra.joson@unh.edu), Dr. Paul Robertson (paul.robertson@unh.edu), or Dr. Sean Madigan (sean.madigan@unh.edu) to discuss them.

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Appendix B

Determiner and Case Marker Survey in Phrases and Sentences

DATA COLLECTION

For the following items, on a scale of 1 through 5, please rate whether you use the following words/phrases in daily conversation. 1= being the lowest or you don't use these in conversation at all, and 5= being the highest or you use these in conversation all the time.

Part 1: Determiners

Determiners ***(Ang versus Si)***	**1 Strongly Disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly Agree**
1. Ang Diyos					
2. Si Diyos					
3. Si Hesus					
4. Ang Holy Spirit					
5. Ang Hesus					
6. Si Banal na Espiritu					
7. Ang God					
8. Si Holy Spirit					
9. Ang Lord					
10. Si Jesus					
11. Ang Jesus					
12. Ang Panginoon					
13. Si Lord					
14. Si Panginoon					
15. Ang Banal na Espiritu					
16. Si God					

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Part 2: Sentences

In this section, please rate whether the following sentences seem right to you in terms of how natural it sounds. **1= being the lowest** or if you think the sentence doesn't sound natural, and **5= being the highest** or if you think the sentence sounds natural.

	1 Strongly Disagree	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly Agree**
1. Nag-offer si Jim sa gawain ni Lord					
2. Bumisita ang Jesus sa bahay ni Martha					
3. Dumaan ang Hesus kanina					
4. Narinig ko ang Banal na Espiritu					
5. Pinupuri ko si Jesus					
6. Si Hesus ang salita					
7. Nakakamangha ang miracle ni Banal na Espiritu					
8. Narinig ko ang boses ng God					
9. Si Lord ang nakinig sakin					
10. Malawak ang church ni Panginoon					
11. Maraming himala ang Panginoon					
12. Si Banal na Espiritu ang ating kasangga					
13. Nakita ko ang himala ng Diyos					
14. Naniniwala siya sa power ni Holy Spirit					
15. Mapasensya ang Holy Spirit					

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16. Mahal ko si Diyos					
17. Maraming namangha sa miracle ng Jesus					
18. Unlimited ang blessing ng Panginoon					
19. Nakakamangha ang miracle ni Banal na Espiritu[5]					
20. Nag-pray si Jim sa templo ni Diyos					
21. Ito ang biblia ng Lord					
22. Malawak ang kaharian ni Jesus					
23. Pumunta sila sa lugar ng Holy Spirit					
24. Si Panginoon ang aking tagapag-ligtas					
25. Nakita niya ang shadow ni God					
26. Si God ang nag-bless sakin					
27. Kaibigan ko ang Lord					
28. Ito ang tahanan ng Hesus					
29. Ang Diyos ay naglakad sa pastulan					
30. Kami ang follow-ers ni Hesus					
31. Naramdaman ko si Holy Spirit					
32. Mabuti ang God					

5 Note that 7 and 19 are the same – this was an experimenter error, but responses to both questions are included in the data.

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Part 3: Case Markers

For the last section, on a scale of 1 through 5, please rate whether you use the following words/phrases in daily conversation. 1= being the lowest or you don't use these in conversation at all, and 5= being the highest or you use these in conversation all the time.

Case Markers *(ng versus ni)*	**1** **Strongly Disagree**	**2** **Disagree**	**3** **Neutral**	**4** **Agree**	**5** **Strongly Agree**
1. ng Lord					
2. ni Banal na Espiritu					
3. ng Holy Spirit					
4. ng Jesus					
5. ni Hesus					
6. ng Diyos					
7. ni God					
8. ni Holy Spirit					
9. ni Lord					
10. ni Panginoon					
11. ng Banal na Espiritu					
12. ng Hesus					
13. ng Panginoon					
14. ni Diyos					
15. ng God					
16. ni Jesus					

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Appendix C

Gloss and Translation of Sentences Used in the Survey

ABBV.		
H-DET	human determiner	(Si)
NH-DET	non-human determiner	(Ang)
H-GEN	human case marker	(ni)
NH-GEN	non-human case marker	(ng)
pst-	past tense	
pres-	present tense	
-adj	adjectival mark	
1SG	first person singular; subject/genitive/oblique (ako/ko/sakin)	
3SG	second person singular; subject/genitive (siya)	
3PL	third person plural; exclusive (kami)	

SENTENCES

1. Si God ang nag-bless sakin
   H-DET. God. NH-DET. pst-bless. 1SG
   'God blessed me'
2. Mabuti ang God
   kind. NH-DET. God
   'God is kind'
3. Nakita niya ang shadow ni God
   pst-see. 3SG. DET. shadow. H-GEN. God
   'He/She saw God's shadow'
4. Narinig ko ang boses ng God
   pst-hear. 1SG. NH-DET. voice. NH-GEN. God
   'I heard the voice of God'
5. Si Panginoon ang aking tagapag-ligtas
   H-DET. God. NH-DET. 1SG. savior
   'God is my Savior'
6. Maraming himala ang Panginoon
   many. miracle. NH-DET. God
   'God (has) many miracles'
7. Unlimited ang blessing ng Panginoon
   unlimited. DET. blessing. NH-GEN. God
   'God's blessing is unlimited'
8. Malawak ang church ni Panginoon
   wide. DET. church. NH-GEN. God
   'God's church is wide'
9. Kaibigan ko ang Lord
   friend. 1SG. NH-DET. Lord
   "The Lord is my friend"

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10. Si Lord ang nakinig sakin
H-DET. Lord. NH-DET. pst-listen. 1SG
'The Lord listened (to) me"
11. Nag-offer si Jim sa gawain ni Lord
pst-offer. H-DET. Jim. to. task[1]. H-GEN. Lord
'Jim offered (something) to the Lord's works'
12. Ito ang biblia ng Lord
this. DET. bible. NH-GEN. Lord
'This (is) the Lord's bible'
13. Mahal ko si Diyos
love. 1SG. H-DET. God
'I love God'
14. Ang Diyos ay naglakad sa pastulan
NH-DET. God. is. pst-walk. to. field
'(The) God walked to the field'
15. Nakita ko ang himala ng Diyos
pst-see. 1SG. NH-DET. miracle. NH-GEN. God
'I saw God's miracle'
16. Nag-pray si Jim sa templo ni Diyos
pst-pray. H-DET. Jim. to. temple. H-GEN. God
'Jim prayed in God's temple'
17. Pinupuri ko si Jesus
pres-praise. 1SG. H-DET, Jesus
'I (am) praising Jesus'
18. Bumisita ang Jesus sa bahay ni Martha
pst-visit. NH-DET. Jesus. to. house. H-DET. Martha
'Jesus visited Martha's house'
19. Malawak ang kaharian ni Jesus
wide. NH-DET. kingdom. H-GEN. Jesus
'Jesus' kingdom is massive'
20. Maraming namangha sa miracle ng Jesus
many-adj. pst-amaze. in. miracle. NH-GEN. Jesus
'Many were amazed by God's miracle'
21. Si Hesus ang salita
H-DET. Jesus. NH-DET. word
'Jesus is the word'
22. Dumaan ang Hesus kanina
pst-walk. NH-DET. Jesus. earlier
'Jesus passed by earlier'
23. Kami ang followers ni Hesus
3PL. NH-DET. followers. H-GEN. Hesus
'We are the followers of Christ'

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24. Ito ang tahanan ng Hesus
this. NH-DET. house. NH-GEN. Jesus
'This (is) Jesus' house'
25. Mapasensya ang Holy Spirit
patient-adj. NH-DET. Holy Spirit
'Holy Spirit is patient'
26. Naramdaman ko si Holy Spirit
pst-feel. 1SG. H-DET. Holy Spirit
'I felt Holy Spirit'
27. Naniniwala siya sa power ni Holy Spirit
pst-believe. 2SG. in. power. H-GEN. Holy Spirit
'He/She believed in Holy Spirit's power'
28. Pumunta sila sa lugar ng Holy Spirit
pst-go. 3PL. to. place. NH-GEN. Holy Spirit
'They went to Holy Spirit's place'
29. Si Banal na Espiritu ang ating kasangga
H-DET. Holy Spirit. NH-DET. 3PL. shield
'Holy Spirit is our shield'
30. Narinig ko ang Banal na Espiritu
pst-hear. 1SG. NH-DET. Holy Spirit
'I heard Holy Spirit'
31. Ang katawan ng tao ang tahanan ng Banal na Espiritu
NH-DET. body. H-GEN. person H-DET. house. NH-GEN. Holy Spirit
'The body is the Holy Spirit's house (vessel)'
32. Nakakamangha ang miracle ni Banal na Espritu
amazing. NH-DET. miracle. H-GEN. Holy Spirit
'Holy Spirit's miracle is amazing'

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