

# **A Study on the Pragmatic Functions of Parang in Tagalog Utterances**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is a preliminary exploration of the functions of *parang* to understand its usage by Tagalog speakers. The study aims to bring attention to its potential as a discourse marker in the language. The data for the analysis is derived from short interviews which are the basis of the language corpus. The observed multifunctionality of *parang* is categorized into nine main variations: to express comparison, a discourse marker, an evidential marker, as a filler word, approximation, to paraphrase, a quotative device and as a way to soften direct comments or opinions. Frequency and distribution of usage is linked to age and generational differences. Initial hypothesis suggests that discourse markers are predominantly utilized by the younger generation

but it is also being used by older individuals upon closer investigation.

*Keywords:* *parang*, like, discourse marker

## 1 Introduction

The way a person speaks in natural spoken conversations can reveal several pieces of information about one's identities and origins. For instance, a person's dialect and their use of colloquialisms and slang can reveal their background and their language use (Laserna et al., 2014, p. 328). A speaker considers their vocabulary, intonation, and syntactic structuring when speaking. However, the majority of conversations are not completely smooth, as natural speech is spontaneous and usually involves on-the-spot and near-instantaneous decision-making which may result in a lot of fumbling that provokes a speaker to use particular linguistic elements to fill the gaps or pauses in their sentences. A lot of speakers of different languages would regularly produce filled pauses which involve the use of short utterances that usually occur in spontaneous speech. In English, words such as *like* and *you know* are used. There has been particular interest in *like* as a discourse marker since the 1980s (Allen, 1986; Meehan, 1991; Schourup, 1983; Underhill, 1988) and studies have identified a number of functions that *like* takes in sentence constructions.

Over the years, the prevalence of *like* in conversation has garnered the interest of many experts and has undergone investigation of its connotation and usage among speakers. In the literature, there have been a number of ways that experts have classified elements such as *like*. Some

used the term PRAGMATIC MARKERS (Andersen, 1998; see also Brinton, 1996; Fraser, 1996) to refer to a “group of minor linguistic elements at word-level” (Andersen, 1998) which contribute to the relevance of an utterance by serving as signals that tell the hearer how it is to be understood. For Clark (1996), he referred to them as COLLATERAL SIGNALS, which is a broad set of speech phenomena that consists of discourse markers, signs, gestures, pauses and prosodic information that are commonly used in speech. It is also labeled as a DISCOURSE PARTICLE (Kroon, 1995; Schourup, 1983), a DISCOURSE CONNECTIVE (Siegel, 2002), or a PRAGMATIC EXPRESSION (Erman, 1987). The term DISCOURSE MARKER, however, seemed to be more frequent in discussion (Fox Tree, 2006; Fuller, 2003; Jucker & Smith, 1998; Romaine & Lange, 1991; Siegel, 2002) and thus has been adopted in this paper.

The function of *like* that describes or compares things with similar qualities can be comparable to the way *parang* is commonly used in Tagalog. The word *parang* in question would be the one defined as ‘like’ or ‘it seems.’ In their reference grammar, Schachter and Otnes (1972, p. 253) describes it as one type of adjectival phrase that expresses similarity. It is a combination of two morphemes: the word *para* and the linker *-ng*. It is commonly paired with a nominal. It can be used to compare things that are alike:

- (1) *Para=ng* *Maynila ang siyudad na ito*  
**like=LKR** Manila NOM city LKR this.NOM  
‘This city is like Manila.’

As previously mentioned, *like* has been seen to diversify in terms of how it functions in an utterance. Now, there seems to be reason to believe that *parang* has more functions than stated in previous literature.

As this paper elaborates, it can also act as a discourse marker that begins a topic and even connects ideas; it expresses hesitation or uncertainty and is often heard as a filler word that buys a speaker more time to think about what to say next.

As of this writing, there are little to no studies that specifically focus on this particular marker and its apparent multifunctionality in Tagalog. This paper is a preliminary exploration of the seemingly wide range of functions that *parang* has in the language. This paper also intends to investigate its usage by different age groups.

This research offers a descriptive analysis and categorization of the use of *parang* by documenting and examining its occurrence in natural speech. In line with this, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the patterns of occurrence of *parang* in natural conversation?
  - a) What types of sentences does it usually occur in?
  - b) How does *parang* contribute to the construction of these sentences?
2. Are there differences to the use of *parang* in terms of age and gender?

Before we proceed to the functions of *parang*, let us examine the functions of *like* because it has been well-documented in literature. By understanding how *like* is used in English, it can help inform the analysis of *parang*.

## 2 Uses of like

The use of *like* is not new and has been prominent and in consistent use in English. However, it does seem to pose quite a challenge to cover all of its usage accurately because of the flexibility of the marker. Nevertheless, there have been numerous studies that endeavored to describe and analyze the functions of *like* in English utterances.

There are commonly cited functions or “well-received uses” of *like* in English dictionaries. Schourup (1983, p. 28) summarizes these from *Webster’s Third New Dictionary*:

1. as a transitive verb

*Example:* I’d **like** to have my back rubbed.

2. as a noun

*Example:* Everyone has **likes** and dislikes.

3. as an adjective (the same or nearly so; likely)

*Example:* tables of **like** color

4. as a preposition (similar to; typical; such as)

*Example:* His typewriter is **like** a small airplane.

5. as an adverb (nearly; rather)

*Example:* The actual interest is more **like** 18 percent.

6. as a conjunction (as; as if)

*Example:* She holds her pencil **like** most people hold a toothbrush.

These are the uses of *like* that can be found in textbooks, but there are other ways that English speakers use *like* that appear to be outside the scope of these functions. There are a number of studies that detail the non-standard functions of *like*. A key feature of Schourup’s (1983) work is that they explore the many instances where *like* is used in

conversation but could not be categorized by the standard definitions. Similarly, Andersen (1998, p. 154) also shows that there are a variety of elements that can be qualified by the discourse marker, lists those within the pragmatic scope of *like*, and attributes it with the concept of loose use of language. Underhill (1988, p. 234), on the other hand, looks into the particle *like* and is especially keen on investigating the so-called “intrusive and ungrammatical” *like* that makes sentences disjointed. They argue that *like* cannot be placed just anywhere in a sentence and is “closely rule-governed.” Moreover, the non-standard use of *like* is not random and functions with “great reliability as a marker of new information and focus.” They also posit that *like* may have become archaic as they have not seen it as frequently. Meehan (1991, p. 38) contradicts this position, saying that *like* has developed new meaning through the process of grammaticalization.

There are some similarities to their findings on the uses of *like* and those have been consolidated into the 10 functions that will be discussed.

## 2.1 Preceding Numeral Expressions

*Like* precedes numeral expressions or descriptions of exact numbers, particular time and amount and estimations.

He’s **like** ninety, y’know.

**like** every other night

**like**—it’s right behind (us) in a way (Schourup, 1983, p. 32)

According to Andersen (1998), it could also precede other measurable units that can express a vague approximation of the amount the speaker is pertaining to.

and there's **like** [that much] gap between the earth and the top of the thing. (p. 154)

## 2.2 Introducing Reported Speech and Internal Speaker Reaction

It introduces a direct quotation. *Like*, in this sense, is similar to *say* that indicates a reported speech.

Both sides of the street can hear her yelling at us and she's **like** "Come in here and have a beer" y'know? [LAB-A, 61].  
(Schourup, 1983, p. 32)

Sometimes, speakers use this kind of construction not for retrospective reports of speech but for internal speaker reactions or attitude. It indicates not just what others have said but can also be used to convey what the speaker said or would have said.

he goes "I'm sorry but you've only got seventeen dollars in here"—and I'm **like** "WHAT I!! I THOUGHT I HAD SIXTY DOLLARS IN THERE! I!" [laughs] [LAB-A,21]  
(Schourup, 1983, p. 33)

Additionally, Andersen (1998) explains that the quotative usage is a special case because what is reported may not be the thought of the

speaker at the moment of the conversation but the thought attributed to another person or the speaker themselves.

but I stand up here, when I see him I'm **like** oh yeah ha  
ha you know laugh along with his jokes and... (p. 154)

Looking at it closely, “oh yeah ha ha” might not be something that was explicitly said during the conversation but is a more or less precise rendering of what the speaker might say when she sees the person she is referring to. In Schourup's (1983) words, it is the “internal speaker reaction” or the “speaker's attitude” (p. 33). *Like*, in this case, is used to render what someone is thinking.

## 2.3 Asking for Clarification

Schourup (1983) says that *like* is used after questions. It can be used to clarify something that has been said. *Like* is usually attached at the end of a question.

SUE: What radio station do you listen to?

EVA: When I'm down here I listen to Dayton. When I'm at home I listen to Akron.

SUE: Yeah but which one **like**...

EVA: W. oh! W.N.Q.X... [LAB-B,27] (p. 35)

Schourup (1983) notes that there is a “possible discrepancy between the questioner's proposed formulation and what the questioner feels the previous speaker meant” (p. 35). By placing *like* at the end, the one asking allows the second speaker to continue her statement and wishes for them to specify their answer.



## 2.4 Introducing Examples

*Like* can be a marker that enumerates examples or could carry the meaning ‘for example.’

SUE: I mean you don't have to get something really expensive. Just go ta um—**like** Petric's. Or that's not what that's called. (Schourup, 1983, p. 36)

## 2.5 Interjection

*Like* occurs pre-clausally and is often observed in so-called empty slang use. However, in Schourup's (1983) data, they found that *like* is not in the initial position and could be found in between words.

I'm just wondering **like**—if somebody can

but I found **like** that helped me a lot (p. 39)

Additionally, *like* can be found “pre-clausally but after prefatory material; before filled and unfilled pauses; and before restarts” (p. 40). Schourup (1983) explains that the position of *like* could be evidence that the marker can function as a pausal interjection, which would explain why it is often followed by filled and unfilled pauses.

It could be classified as hesitant but Schourup (1983) suggests that a speaker may utilize *like* because they wish to preserve their turn by signaling their intention to continue. Moreover, the use of *like* seems to be a regular mechanism used by speakers when they are having difficulty in formulating the continuation.

## 2.6 Introducing New Concepts or Entities

Jucker and Smith (1998) have also considered *like* as a discourse marker and have categorized it as an information centered presentation marker. This is similar to the idea that Underhill (1988) proposed in their paper. This means that *like* can introduce a new topic or information to the conversation and can also modify the information itself.

Student asking teacher a question in psycholinguistics class: Do we have to read **like** the chapters covered on the midterm for the final? (Underhill, 1988, p. 236)

## 2.7 Marking Focused Information

Underhill's (1988) discussion is centered primarily on the function of *like* to mark focused information. They define FOCUS as the most significant new information in a sentence or in a question, it is essentially the point of the sentence.

Student coming in for help on a homework assignment: I had problems **like** on the second question. (p. 238)

*Like* here points to *on the second question* because this is the specific question the student was having a hard time with and is the focus of the utterance.

In relation to this, *like* also frequently marks the focus in questions as it is the kind of sentence that always has a point to make when asking one.

(Apartment manager on the phone to a person interested in one of his places)

Caller: How much are your two-bedrooms?

Manager: They're six-fifty and six seventy-five.

Caller: Are you open tomorrow?

Manager: Yes, from ten to five.

Caller: Could I **like** drop by tomorrow around four forty-five and see an apartment? Manager: No problem. (p. 240)

Since questions do tend to have a focus, the answer to them also focuses on new information.

A student giving directions to another student: You **like** turn left at the end of the hall. (p. 240)

Siegel (2002) argues with Underhill's (1988) concept of *like* as a marker of new information and focus. Since *like* does not directly mean approximately or about, Siegel (2002) explains that there are plenty of sentences where *like* appears with a constituent but is not the main focus.

Nate has terrible taste. He likes ugly clothes with small round objects sewn on them. Yesterday, he even said I should wear a HOT PINK MINI-SKIRT with, **like**, little buttons on it. (p. 41)

What is focused here is the phrase *hot pink mini-skirt* that is a part of the scope of *even*, while *like* marks *little buttons*. Siegel (2002) then proposes that if *like* is used to mark new or focused elements in an utterance, it is because speakers cannot accurately describe it and are more likely to use the marker. However, it appears to be a case-to-case

basis because *like* can be seen to give focus as illustrated by Underhill (1988), but this notion seems to have its exceptions.

## 2.8 Hedging

According to Underhill (1988, p. 240), *like* can stand to mean ‘sort of,’ although it is arguable. It could also leave the statement slightly open, thus it allows the speaker to not be committed to a particular statement.

Two girls taking in the commons; one says: ...and she bought a new dress. It’s pleated. [Pause.] It **like** gathers right here in the back? [Said with rising intonation, as if asking for confirmation that the hearer knew what she was talking about.] (p. 241)

It can also soften requests to make it less imposing and more polite.

One sister asking another: Could I **like** borrow your sweater? (p. 241)

*Like* becomes a tool for the speaker to distance and shield themselves when there is possibility that the request will be denied.

## 2.9 Setting Off Unusual Notions

*Like* also appears in setting off unusual notions that are not meant to be taken literally. It could be presented as a hyperbole and said in jest.

A person who has seen the movie *The Kiss of the Spider Woman* is enthusiastic and feels sorry for anyone who hasn’t

seen it: I think that **like** for those people who haven't seen it we should hold a wake. (Underhill, 1988, p. 242)

## 2.10 Setting Off Stereotyped Expression

The entire expression is also not meant to be taken literally, what is in focus here is the implicit meaning of the expression.

(A daytime TV talk show host talking to a hairdresser as she demonstrates her technique in creating the latest hairstyle)

Host: Why don't you cut one side short and leave the other side long? Do you do that anymore?

Hairdresser: That is **like** so not happening! (Underhill, 1988, p. 242)

## 2.11 Like and the Notion of Loose Interpretation

There are a number of studies that describe *like* as a marker of loose language. In their paper, Schourup (1983) points to the fact that in general, *like* indicates a possible loose fit between overt expression and intended meaning. It demonstrates the “possible discrepancy between what the speaker has in mind and what is overtly said” (p. 46). Fox Tree (2006, p. 729) says that from a precisely-placed functional-like perspective, the use of *like* may be the result of an individual's speaking style because, according to them, speakers will more often use *like* to indicate the discrepancies between what they say and what they are thinking.

For Andersen (1998), *like* seems to be “an explicit signal of a discrepancy between the propositional form of the utterance and the thought

it represents” (p. 153). In their analysis of the pragmatic scope of *like*, they list a number of environments where *like* is used and has found that it nearly always introduces a constituent (the first two have already been discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 but was included in the list below for consistency). In line with this, Underhill (1988, p. 243) also has a similar contribution but adds that *like* can precede embedded sentences and complete sentences.

1. numeral expression and other measurable units
2. direct quotation
3. noun phrase

*Example:* Well I think they must have made it so conscious for **like** fags and booze.

4. verb phrase

*Example:* Scott said to me if Paul **like** tries to take on Ollie he’s just gonna break it up.

5. adverb phrase

*Example:* He lives in Mallorca, **like** really close to my house.

6. adjective phrase

*Example:* But Megadrives do make their game, their games **like** easy as well.

7. preposition phrase

*Example:* and she’ll completely ignore you and you’re left and she’ll do that **like** at a dinner party or something

8. whole declarative proposition

*Example:* **Like** she’s got enough. You don’t show it but **like** she don’t go out and buy new posh clothes and everything.

9. whole interrogative proposition

*Example:* **Like** who was it who reckoned there was a corner on a boat?

10. before an embedded sentence

*Example:* Student studying Spanish with another student: The only thing is **like** gusta is for singular and gustan for plural (Underhill, 1988, p. 234)

11. before the entire sentence

*Example:* One student to another (in response to something the recorder did not hear): **Like**, I don't know. I told you. [Somewhat annoyed] (Underhill, 1988, p. 240)

According to Andersen (1998), when *like* precedes these elements or “objects of loose interpretation” (p. 154), the speaker wishes to signal that their utterance contains a loose rendering of their thoughts or what they want to say. In this case, preciseness is unnecessary and it is expected that the primary thought is understood enough to achieve the intended contextual meaning. They connect this with the relevance-theoretic framework wherein “speakers are seen to aim for optimal relevance rather than literal truth” (p. 156), which would explain why there is a difference between how people think and how they choose to express those thoughts to others.

He also expands Schourup's (1983) idea that *like* can carry the meaning ‘approximately’ or ‘roughly.’ While there are instances where these functions do appear and are congruent with Andersen's (1998) analysis of loose interpretation, there are some constructions where *like* does not denote the meaning of approximation. In some cases “*like* can apply to either the semantic content or the linguistic form of the material that falls in its scope” (p. 158).

I thought it was **like** [the whole cake], not the little  
(Andersen, 1998, p. 158)

With this example, Andersen (1998) demonstrates that *the whole cake* is not a numeral expression but rather it is a concept—the linguistic form. Thus, *like* does not necessarily express approximation in all cases but takes the entire noun phrases in its scope and the underlying extra information that was left unsaid by the speaker. That being said, Andersen (1998) claims that *like* seems to function at some sort of communicative meta-level: *the whole cake* is part of the cognitive environment of the speaker but is not precisely rendered when spoken. This relates back to the function of *like* as a looseness marker because “the analysis of *like* as a looseness marker gives the same outcome whether *like* applies to content or form, by indicating that the utterance is a less-than-literal rendering of a speaker’s thought” (p. 159).

The uses of *like* listed above illustrate its many functions in English utterances that go beyond what is formally documented in dictionaries and grammar books. *Like* as a marker may take on the role of introducing new concepts and examples, as well as reported speech and speaker reaction. It can also act as a means to emphasize particular elements in a sentence to add nuance in a conversation. Moreover, its feature of loose interpretation can be observed as a way for speakers to communicate their thoughts even if their ideas are just an approximation of what they might mean.



## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design and Scope

The study not only employed a qualitative research approach that will be utilizing discourse analysis but also used quantitative methods like frequency analysis. The data that is central to the study are the ways *parang* is used in constructions, as well as what specific elements or constituents are commonly surrounding the marker. The literature on the functions of *parang* in Tagalog constructions are limited, so for this paper the functions of *like* in English will serve as a basic guideline in grouping the functions of *parang* as discussed in Section 2. However, this is not to say that the categories of *like* are automatically or irrefutably applicable to *parang*; rather it is an attempt to see whether the grouping of the functions of *like* that are observed in conversational English can also be used to categorize the variations of *parang* in Tagalog.

### 3.2 Participants

This is a small-scale study that enlisted 20 individuals, 10 women and 10 men, ranging from ages 18–59 years old. They were grouped according to their age (summarized in Section 7.1). There were five groups with four respondents each and were simply labeled as Group A (18–25), Group B (26–33), Group C (34–41), Group D (42–50), and Group E (51–59). They come from different backgrounds in terms of profession and their place of residence. All the participants are able to speak both English and Tagalog, with the latter as the majority's first language, and

were observed to switch between the two languages throughout the interview sessions.

It must be mentioned that the participants were selected through the method of convenience sampling as it was the most feasible and efficient method to gather the data needed during the elicitation process. This was largely due to time constraints and conflicting schedules. The respondents were from a pool of acquaintances, close friends, relatives, and friends of friends. The participants were selected based on their gender, age group, and their willingness to partake in the research. The researcher is aware that there are limitations to this approach and has strived to minimize the effect this has on the data collected and ensure that the variables are evenly distributed as possible.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The elicitation process was a mix of both an online set-up through a Zoom call and in-person meetings that depended on the availability and preference of the respondents. The researcher began by asking participants to fill out a form that contains an information sheet for them to read about the research topic, research background, and its objectives. Along with that, they were asked to provide pertinent demographic details such as age and gender. Afterwards, they were also informed about their voluntary participation and that they were able to withdraw with no repercussions. Moreover, the participants were notified that any of their details will remain protected throughout the duration of the research timeline. The data collected will be handled carefully and will only be used for the purposes of the study.

The interview session was done in a one-on-one setting and was estimated to take around 5–10 minutes, although this was still contingent on the length of the responses. In the interview proper, the questions asked were five deliberately designed open-ended questions.

The design and purpose of these types of questions will be further discussed in the next section. These were delivered in a combination of Tagalog and English to gain a more casual and naturalistic answer. The reason behind the decision to use both languages during the elicitation process was because *parang* and its functions as a discourse marker is easier to draw from casual and informal conversations, where code-switching mostly occurs (Pascasio, 2005).

Pascasio (2005) also mentions that in their research paper, bilingually competent respondents in English and Filipino would code-switch to “establish rapport, to simplify or emphasize a message, to qualify or further explain a previous statement, to make inquiries as well as give information, instructions, or directions for verification or clarification, and to express politeness” (p. 140). Most of these conversational functions coincide with the hypothesized usage of *parang* by the speakers.

Once the data has been gathered and recorded, their responses were transcribed into a text file and plugged into AntConc, an annotation software, to build a corpus to examine *parang* in constructions. The results would reveal its functions and usage which was systematically analyzed to be able to describe *parang* and its multiple functions in Tagalog.

### 3.4 Deliberately Constructed Questions

In order to extract the needed data about the occurrence of *parang*, the interview questions were designed by the researcher to impel the respondent to use the marker. Each question is opinion-based, but they target a specific function related to that of *like* in English so that it might reveal whether those functions also hold true in the use of *parang*. The questions given were:

1. *Ano ang pinakaimportanteng characteristic ng isang kaibigan?*

(What is the most important characteristic of a friend?)

This was used to elicit an explanatory type of answer. It allowed the speaker to explain their choice and was expected to use discourse markers to connect their ideas and try to elaborate on their answer.

2. *Mas gusto mo ba yung ability na mabawi yung mga salitang nasabi mo na o madinig lahat ng sinasabi ng iba tungkol sayo?*

(Would you rather have the ability to retract what you've said before or hear every rumor said about you?)

This type of question primarily seeks an opinionated subjective answer and thus was asked in order to reveal if *parang* can be prompted to express several things: first, hesitation and uncertainty in one's choice; second is to choose an answer but have a loose rendering of it so that the speaker can loosely commit to it.

3. *Paano mo ide-describe ang color blue nang hindi sinasabi ang salitang "blue"?*

(How would you describe the color blue without saying the word "blue"?)

The third question calls for a descriptive response which tries to simply prove that the standard use of *parang* to express comparison is still in prominent use but also to check if the non-standard uses of *like* for approximation and when giving an example are also upheld in the constructions of *parang*.

4. *Magkaiba ba ang pagiging loyal sa pagiging trustworthy?*

(Do you think being loyal is different from being trustworthy?)

Similar to the second question, this was utilized in order to elicit an opinion-based answer which would show how speakers used *parang* to connect and emphasize certain clauses in their explanations.

5. *Ano ang pinaka-memorable compliment na natanggap mo?*

(What is the most memorable compliment that you have received?)

This asks the speaker to recall a particular compliment given to them and through this question, the reportative and quotative function of *like* is put to the test to see whether *parang* can function in the same way.

These questions are not related to each other, this was done with the intention to distract the respondents enough from the initial targeted word to minimize the issue of them being too self-conscious of their usage of *parang* and would just use it as they normally would in real-life conversations. The participants were not able to review the questions beforehand and were only informed that the nature of the questions was open-ended and that there were no right or wrong answers. It was explained why this was a necessary step after the interview and when the audio recording ended.

### 3.5 Analytical Procedure

The bulk of the data comes from the corpus built for the study which consists of 2 hours and 36 minutes of audio recordings from the interview sessions with an average of around 7 minutes per respondent. After these were transcribed into text files, they were inputted into AntConc, a free corpus analysis software created by Laurence Anthony, a professor in the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Waseda University, Japan. This tool is useful in finding clusters and n-grams (sequences of n words within your corpus or document) which is what this study needs in order to process the data. *Parang* was sifted through the corpus and its frequency, commonly occurring patterns and surrounding environments has been considered and examined.

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Functions of Parang

From previous studies, there has been an abundant exploration of the functions and purpose of *like* in English. However, studies on *parang* are scarce in comparison with regard to descriptive analysis. Nevertheless, its grammatical function in constructions where similar objects are compared or described seems to be well-established. An old entry for *parang* is in the Tagalog-English dictionary compiled and published by Charles Nigg in 1904. He provides these combinations as examples of *parang* (p. 117):

- *parang apoy* ‘fiery’
- *parang bato* ‘stony’

- *parang hayop* ‘brutal’
- *parang hindi* ‘as if not as, if it were not’
- *parang nuno* ‘ghastly’
- *parang langib* ‘scab-like’
- *parang serafin* ‘angelic’
- *parang sutla* ‘silky’
- *parang uhog* ‘slimy’

Interestingly, there is one exception to the entries, *parang hindi* which is listed as an adverb. On the other hand, *para*, without the ligature *-ng*, was also considered as a preposition that means *gaya*, *paris*, *tulad*, which are markers that also indicate similarity (Del Valle & Del Valle, 1969, p. 134). Additionally, as a preposition, it can also mean ‘like’ (English, 1987, p. 1002). *Parang* has also been listed as a conjugation and the provided definition was ‘as if’ (Ramos, 1971, p. 211).

## 4.2 Pragmatic Functions of Parang

The aforementioned dictionaries in the previous section provide a glimpse to the lexical categories that *parang* is categorized into, but it does not completely encompass the functions of the marker. From the data provided by the corpus of this paper and from other studies,<sup>1</sup> this section will discuss the nine functions of the use of *parang* in Tagalog utterances.

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<sup>1</sup>Additional data are from Nagaya’s (2022) article “Beyond Questions” and Cohen et al.’s (2010) paper “Waking the Language of Dreamers.”

#### 4.2.1 Expressing Comparison

Out of the nine categories, this function has been documented and described by Schachter and Otones (1972, p. 253) as being used to compare similar objects.

- (2) *para=ng feeling mo is para=ng malamig at uh para=ng*  
**like=LKR** feeling 2SG.GEN is **like=LKR** cool and uh **like=LKR**  
*fresh*  
fresh  
'it's **like** the feeling is **like** cool and uh **like** fresh'

- (3) *para=ng... para=ng hawak ng tatay ganun*  
**like=LKR like=LKR** hold GEN father like.that  
'**like**... **like** a father's touch (like) that'

- (4) *yung kaibigan is somebody na pwede mo siya=ng*  
NOM friend is somebody LKR can 2SG.GEN 3SG.NOM=LKR  
*para=ng somebody that you can rely on para=ng kapatid*  
**like=LKR** somebody that you can rely on **like=LKR** sibling  
*yan e*  
that.NOM SFP  
'a friend is somebody that you can—**like** somebody that you can  
rely on, they're **like** your sibling'

However, it was observed that this is not the only construction chosen by speakers to make comparisons; some opted to rephrase it using a different marker such as *katulad* as in (5) or just say it in English as in (6). Although, based on a frequency check in AntConc, *parang* seems



to be the most preferred as it pops up 27 times in the recordings of 14 respondents while *katulad* was used by one respondent once.

- (5) *ok siguro ang sa-sabi-hin ko ang kulay na ito*  
 ok maybe NOM FUT-say-PV ISG.GEN NOM color LKR this.NOM  
*ay katulad ng kulay ng langit*  
 COP similar GEN color GEN sky  
 ‘okay maybe I would say that this color is similar to the color of the sky’
- (6) or it looks like uh the color of the sky when it’s morning

#### 4.2.2 Evidential Marker

*Parang* is observed to encode an assumptive quality into sentences. This kind of function did not appear often in the corpus but was included to show that *parang* can also be used in this way.

- (7) *hindi na ako pu-punta kasi para=ng u-ulan*  
 NEG LKR ISG.NOM FUT.AV-go because **like=LKR** FUT-rain  
 ‘I’m not going anymore because it **looks like** it’s going to rain.’
- (8) *Para=ng galit siya sa akin sa video con.*  
**seem=LKR** angry 3SG.NOM LOC ISG.LOC LOC video conference  
 ‘It **seems** she is angry at me at the video conference.’ (Nagaya, 2022, p. 99)

#### 4.2.3 Expressing Hesitation

*Parang* is also seen to precede prefatory material, filled and unfilled pauses, and before restarts. This is similar to the way Schourup (1983)

describes *like* as an interjection. When speakers use *parang*, it could be that they use this as a mechanism when they are having some difficulty in continuing their thought. However, it also leaves an impression of being hesitant or uncertain on how to respond appropriately or whether what they want to say will be received well.

- (9) *so yung loyal siguro ano para=ng—ano ba hindi ko  
so NOM loyal maybe what like=LKR what Q NEG ISG.GEN  
alam!*

know

‘So loyal maybe what **like**—what is it? I don’t know!’

- (10) *um I guess work-related yun na actually I guess  
um I guess work-related that.NOM LKR actually I guess  
yun na yung memorable kasi yun yung  
that.NOM LKR NOM memorable because that.NOM NOM  
naaalala ko yung para=ng ano ba um I guess yung  
remember ISG.GEN NOM like=LKR what Q um I guess NOM  
not really my first job siguro first job as a graphic designer as  
not really my first job maybe first job as a graphic designer as  
in na-compliment ako*

in NVOL.PV.RLS-compliment ISG.NOM

‘**Like**—what is it? Um I guess it wasn’t really my first job, maybe my first job as a graphic designer, as in I was complimented’

- (II) *ma-lambot char... para=ng ano para=ng... para=ng ano...*  
 ADJ-soft \*maybe like=LKR what **like=LKR like=LKR** what  
*unan*  
 pillow  
 ‘(it’s) soft, (maybe) like whatchamacallit **like... like**  
 whatchamacallit... a pillow’

On a side note, it has been brought to my attention by my research adviser that *parang* may bear a close resemblance to the use of *yata* meaning ‘possibly, it seems, maybe, not sure, seems like.’ They are similar in this regard but their difference lies in their linguistic aspect. *Yata* is seen more as semantically restricted and more prominent in declarative sentences and as a response. According to Schachter and Otnes (1972, p. 428), *yata* is used in statements, not in questions or imperatives; *parang* has a more pragmatic function and is used more in explanatory sentences.

#### 4.2.4 Discourse Marker

Discourse markers on their own are fuzzy concepts and difficult to accurately define, but *parang* in this sense does not significantly add to the meaning nor does it alter the truth conditions of the construction (Schweinberger, 2015, p. 53) but acts as a sort of connective marker in a sentence similar to the way *like* or *so* is in English. It has been observed to be used in two ways: (a) help connect ideas and segments of thought and piece them together to form a coherent sentence, as in (I2); or (b) signify that the speaker intends to add to their statement, as in (I3–I4).

- (I2) *Kaya lang yung bata para=ng... meron siya=ng...*  
 but only NOM child **like=LKR** EXIST 3SG.NOM=LKR  
*<um>i-iyak siya, kasi bata... er... para=ng sabi*  
 <AV>RED~cry 3SG.NOM because child **like=LKR** say  
*niya, “Huwag mo ko patay-in.”*  
 3SG.GEN NEG.IMP 2SG.GEN ISG.NOM kill-PV  
 ‘But, the child **like**, she has... she was crying, because she’s a  
 child... **like**, she said, “Don’t kill me.”’ (Cohen et al., 2010,  
 pp. 56–57)
- (I3) *when you use the term kasi=ng k<um>alinga it’s not it’s*  
 when you use the term because=LKR <AV>support it’s not it’s  
*not lang hanggang doon sa mag-turo ng isang estudyante*  
 not just until there.DEM LOC AV-teach GEN one student  
*diba? mag-record ng gawa ng isang estudyante para=ng I go*  
 NEG.Q AV-record GEN work GEN one student **like=LKR** I go  
*beyond sa pagiging teacher*  
 beyond LOC being teacher  
 ‘because when you use the term to support, it’s not, it’s not just  
 (about) teaching a student, right? (or just) recording student’s  
 work, **like** I go beyond (the role of) being a teacher’

- (14) *kung may ma-rinig man ako at least I can have the*  
 if EXIST AV-hear happen to ISG.NOM at least I can have the  
*liberty to justify things justify things na para=ng sa lahat*  
 liberty to justify things justify things LKR **like=LKR** LOC all  
*ng pagkakataon kailangan mo=ng i-justify*  
 GEN instances need 2SG.GEN=LKR CV-justify  
 ‘if I happen to hear something at least I can have the liberty to  
 justify things, justify things to **like** although not all instances you  
 will need to justify’

#### 4.2.5 Filler

There is a bit of an overlap with *parang*’s function as a discourse marker when used as a buffer, but there are some slight differences. The main distinction is that *parang* as a filler word generally do not carry significant meaning nor does it affect the overall construction, but are used for the purpose of buying the speaker time to think. Moreover, it gives the impression that the speaker is at a loss for words but is attempting to complete their thought.

- (15) *uh kasi para=ng uh pag pag isang tao uh iyon*  
 uh because **like=LKR** uh when when one person uh that.NOM  
*na nga in the form of pagiging kaibigan pag*  
 LKR indeed in the form of being friend when

*open-minded ka para=ng for me para=ng uh isang way*  
open-minded 2SG.NOM like=LKR for me like=LKR uh one way  
*iyon para ma-iwas-an ang pagtatalo*  
that.NOM to AV-avoid-LV NOM argument  
‘uh because like uh when, when a person—uh that’s right—in  
the form of being a friend when you are open-minded like for  
me like uh it’s one way to avoid an argument’

#### 4.2.6 Approximation “Something Like That”

This usually occurs at the end of an utterance or after an explanation to indicate that the speaker is referring to something as a comparison but not to anything specific. It could also mean that the statement before it was just an example of the point they were trying to make. The combination of *parang* and the adverb *ganun* can also signify loose use of language (Andersen, 1998, p. 155; Schourup, 1983, p. 46). The function of the marker in this sense is to signal that the interpretation is expected to be understandable enough through context. It can also be surmised that while the speaker may be sure of their statements, most of the time they employ the marker to loosely commit to it.

- (16) *low energy, para=ng low energy ka and para=ng more of*  
low energy like=LKR low energy 2SG.NOM and like=LKR more of  
*like calm yung energy mo, para=ng ganun*  
like calm NOM energy 2SG.GEN like=LKR like.that  
‘low energy, like you have low energy and like more like your  
energy is calm, (something) like that’

- (I7) *dapat open-minded siya na nandun agad yung*  
 must open-minded 3SG.NOM LKR there immediately NOM  
*wala=ng judgement agad pero willing siya*  
 NEG.EXIST=LKR judgement immediately but willing 3SG.NOM  
*na mag-tanong, ma-kinig, intindi-hin, para=ng ganun*  
 LKR AV-ask AV-listen understand-PV **like=LKR like.that**  
 ‘they should be open-minded, there is immediately-no  
 judgement right away but they are willing to ask, listen, and  
 understand, **(something) like that**’
- (I8) *ang nasa isip ko=ng trustworthy more on speak, more*  
 NOM LOC mind ISG.GEN=LKR trustworthy more on speak more  
*on talk, kapag si loyalty more on actions, para=ng ganun*  
 on talk when NOM loyalty more on actions **like=LKR that**  
 ‘in my mind, trustworthy (is) more on speak, more on talk, when  
 loyalty (is) more on actions, **(something) like that**’

#### 4.2.7 Paraphrasing a Point or Explanation

*Parang* occurs in between instances where a person attempts to rearrange their thoughts spontaneously. It signals that the speaker wishes to clarify or organize their thoughts better to get a point across more effectively or would like to say their point differently.

- (19) *pinag-kalayo para=ng para=ng kahapon lang nag-kita*  
 CAUS-distance **like=LKR like=LKR** yesterday just AV.RLS-see  
*kayo*  
 2PL.NOM  
 ‘**like** there is no distance (between us) **like** we were never apart  
**like, like** we just saw each other yesterday’
- (20) *hindi agad yung mag-co close yung isip niya na*  
 NEG immediately NOM AV-RED-close NOM mind 3SG.GEN LKR  
*um para=ng he or she’s going to para=ng kaagad*  
 um **like=LKR** he or she’s going to **like=LKR** immediately  
*ma-gi ging biased*  
 NVOL-RED-become biased  
 ‘his/her mind will not immediately be close-minded um like he  
 or she’s going to like immediately be biased’

#### 4.2.8 Quotative Device

The usual way to quote in Tagalog would be to use the verb *sabi* ‘to say,’ that can be used both in direct or indirect speech (Cohen et al., 2010, p. 43).

- (21) *tapos sabi, “Kasi ang ibig sabi-hin noon, ano daw,*  
 then **say** because NOM mean say-PV DEM what so.they.say  
*magiging...”*  
 become  
 ‘Then someone **said**, “Because it means, so they say, that it will  
 become...”’ (Cohen et al., 2010, p. 45)



There are few instances of *parang* used in this manner in the corpus, but it does signify that it can also be used to cite reported speech or thought and therefore has been included. The quotative *like* may introduce inner monologue, speaker attitude, or non-verbatim renditions of dialogue (Fuller, 2003, p. 366, as cited in Blyth et al., 1990).

But Debbie’s bawling up into the staircase, and I’m **like**,  
 “God, my family comes to visit me, and Tom and Clotilda  
 are going to want to evict me because they’re so noisy!”  
 I mean just kind of like screaming at each other. (Blyth  
 et al., 1990, p. 222)

*Parang* can also render a quotation that has never been said before. As Andersen (1998, p. 156) mentioned, it was not a thought of the speaker at the moment of speaking but a thought attributed to someone other than the speaker or to the speaker themselves at some other point in time.

(22) IN: how do they say it?

DL: **para=ng** “*uy bro ang ganda ng kick mo*”

**like=LKR** hey bro NOM nice GEN kick 2SG.GEN

**like**, “hey bro your kick is amazing”

This phenomenon is also discussed by Schourup (1983, p. 33), who explains that there are certain constructions that are not “true quotations” and, in fact, the speakers who use them claim that they are referring to internal speaker reactions or the speaker’s attitude (of others and oneself).

- (23) *so kung siguro para=ng ma-tamlay yung kulay nung blue*  
so if maybe like=LKR ADJ-lethargic NOM color GEN blue  
**para=ng “beh dagdag-an mo naman” para=ng**  
**like=LKR endearment add-LV 2SG.GEN indeed like=LKR**  
*ganun*  
like.that  
‘so if maybe like the color the blue is washed out **like “beh add a little more”** something like that’

#### 4.2.9 Softening Direct Comments or Opinions

*Parang* is also utilized in politeness strategies, as it is seen to neutralize potentially face-threatening acts and precedes comments with negative connotations so as not to seem too direct or confrontational, as in (24).

- (24) **Para=ng** *t<um>aba o.*  
**like=LKR <AV>fat SFP**  
‘It **seems** you got fat.’ (Nagaya, 2022, p. 96)

It also precedes negative marker *hindi* to soften the impact. Based on the corpus, it could be argued that by adding *parang*, the sentiment becomes less assertive and potentially offers the speaker a chance to tentatively commit to their statement while also providing some way to detach from it if necessary.

- (25) *para sa akin para=ng hindi tama kasi uh life is about*  
for OBL ISG.LOC **like=LKR NEG right** because uh life is about  
*choices e*  
choices SFP  
‘For me, **like** it’s not right because uh life is about choices.’

- (26) *b<in>gy-an ka ng task tapos oo loyal*  
 <PV.RLS>give-LV 2SG.NOM GEN task then yes RED-loyal  
*ka nga pero tamad-tamad ka para=ng hindi*  
 2SG.NOM indeed but lazy 2SG.NOM like=LKR NEG  
*nag-ma-match diba?*  
 AV.RLS-RED~match NEG.Q  
 ‘You are given a task then yes, you are loyal but you are (also) lazy  
 like it doesn’t match, does it?’

This kind of combination is not new as seen from Nigg’s (1904) Tagalog dictionary. He listed *parang hindi* as an adverb, but did not provide any sample sentences so there is no evidence that indicates that *parang hindi* was used then as it is in recent constructions.

### 4.3 Frequency of the Usage of Parang

*Like* has been consistently presented in literature as a productive marker in discourse while also shedding light into its negative connotations. Underhill (1988, p. 234) initiates that *like* is seen as ungrammatical and that it disrupts the normal flow of sentences. It is also viewed as a symptom of careless speech, lacking cognitive function or just meaningless (Newman, 1974, p. 15, as cited in Schweinberger, 2015). In the case of *parang*, the level of aversion towards its use has not been documented yet, so whether *parang* also garners these kinds of reactions among Tagalog speakers remains to be seen.

*Parang* is still regularly used as a means for comparison just how it has been described in grammar books. The other functions of *parang* are observed to occur the most in casual conversations as explanatory

sentences. Notably, speakers tend to use the marker when they feel the need to reorganize their thoughts or to express that they intend to add something more to their statement. The functions of *parang* could also align with the notion of loose interpretation from Andersen (1998) and Schourup (1983). There were a number of sentences that emphasized that *parang* indicates a difference between what speakers said and what they actually mean. This could be seen in (16–18) and (22–23).

In the studies done by Dailey-O’Cain (2000) and Laserna et al. (2014), they have observed significant intergenerational differences in the use of *like*. They have proven that the younger generation are more frequent in their use of *like* in its non-standard functions. However, as seen in the data, a different case can be argued for Tagalog speakers.

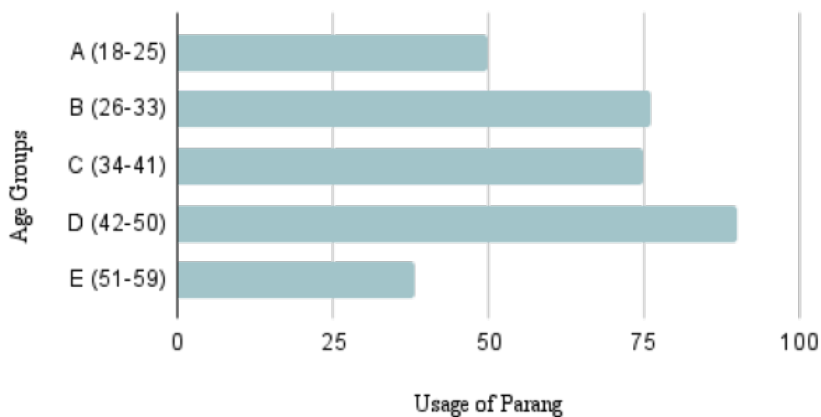
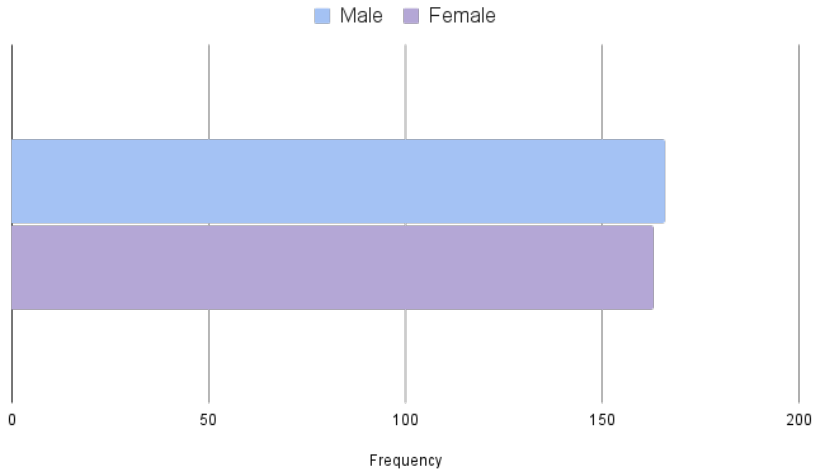


Figure 1. A Frequency Chart Based on the Usage of *parang* Per Age Group

It has been found that, although it is generally more often used by speakers ages 26–50 years old, those from the fourth age group or Group D also use it the most in their sentences. However, the sample

size is limited and conclusive results cannot be provided by this study alone and thus, a more large-scale research is necessary.



**Figure 2. A Frequency Chart of the Usage of *parang* Based on Gender**

According to Figure 2, male respondents said *parang* 166 times while female respondents said it 163 times. Male participants only exceeded by a small margin than their female counterparts, so there were no significant differences between them as they all seemed to use *parang* regardless. This would mean that the use of *parang* in Tagalog constructions from the corpus is contingent on generational differences rather than gender.

## 5 Conclusion

This preliminary study explored the pragmatic functions of *parang* in Tagalog utterances. The data shows that *parang* resembles the pragmatic

uses of *like* and seem to function similarly in sentences. To summarize, *parang* is used in nine different ways: (a) expressing comparison, (b) an evidential marker, (c) a hesitation marker, (d) a discourse marker, (e) as a filler word, (f) approximation, (g) a way to paraphrase, (h) a quotative device, and (i) a way to soften direct comments or opinions. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that gender does not have any significant impact on the distribution of *parang*. The biggest deciding factor was age. It was initially hypothesized that *parang* would be more frequent among the younger generation but data shows that it is more prominent in age Group D (respondents aged 42–50 years old) and is also used quite often by the oldest individuals in the respondent pool.

The functions of *parang* being used in casual Tagalog conversations could be a significant development when it comes to how the marker is used and how its functions have expanded from how it was described and documented in grammar books and dictionaries. Previously, *parang* used to be regarded as just being a grammatical element that expresses similarity. In this study, it has been documented that *parang* can be used in different ways aside from marking comparison. Exploring the small pockets of linguistic patterns, such as *parang* in informal spoken speech, brings attention to the role of interaction in shaping linguistic structure as demonstrated in Nagaya's (2022) paper that explores the non-interrogative uses of *ano*. He adds to his conclusion that there is so much to learn about a language when we analyze it within its everyday context and use, and move past “decontextualized sentence-based linguistics” (p. 108).

The results of this paper is by no means final as there is definitely room for further research with a more refined analysis. Moreover, there

are functions of *parang* as a discourse marker that are yet to be explored. These and other aspects of it need to be re-evaluated in future studies. One possible avenue for research is to investigate how the influence of speakers and their language behaviors as well as their social backgrounds can determine the way *parang* is used and how it proliferates through continuous linguistic exchanges. In addition to this, any significant effects of proximity and exposure to the usage of the marker among speakers can also be examined.

It would also be interesting to conduct a more in-depth investigation on the semantic and morphosyntactic aspect of *parang* in Tagalog, as well as include some judgment assessments with the analysis. Perhaps, studies on the discourse markers of other Philippine languages may also be pursued and will initiate the process of building an initial working analytical framework for future explorations on this particular topic.

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## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Summary of Age Groups

Group	Age Range	Age	Gender	Number of Participants
Group A	18–25	19	F	1
		22	M	1
		23	F	1
		24	M	1
Group B	26–33	26	M	1
		27	M	1
		28	F	1
		30	M	1
Group C	34–41	34	M	1
		34	F	1
		35	F	1
		41	M	1
Group D	42–50	45	M	1
		47	M	1
		49	F	2
Group E	51–59	51	F	1
		55	F	1
		58	F	1
		59	M	1
Total				20

## 7.2 List of Abbreviations

I	first person	LKR	linker
2	second person	LOC	locative
3	third person	LV	locative voice
< >	infix	NEG	negation
=	cliticization	NOM	nominative
~	reduplication	N-	non-
ADJ	adjective	OBL	oblique
AV	actor voice	PL	plural
CAUS	causative	PV	patient voice
COP	copula	Q	question marker
CV	circumstantial voice	RED	reduplicant
DEM	demonstrative	RLS	realis
EXIST	existential	SFP	sentence-final particle
FUT	future	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	VOL	volitional
IMP	imperative		