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The Use of the Focusing Modifier *Only* in Philippine English and American English: An Intercultural Rhetoric Study

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Abstract

Background: *A prescriptive argument holds that the focusing modifier (FM)* only *should be pre-adjacent to its focus. This study investigates the non-prescriptive usage of* only *in Philippine English (PhE). It analyzes such an FM in PhE writing, following Huddleston and Pullum's types of* only-*construction. In light of Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) research, it also compares the PhE result with the parent variety, American English (AmE).*

Methods: *This study is a corpus-based investigation, using corpora of PhE and AmE. The analysis is done through a concordance tool to reveal the usage of the FM* only. *Intercoder agreement is employed for the reliability of the findings.*

Results: *Both Englishes dominantly use* only *within a verb phrase construction, while variations are seen in focus-construction types. This study shows that using the FM* only, *PhE has not deviated much from AmE, so there is little cultural influence in both Englishes. This suggests a shared grammatical intuition despite the differences in context.*

Conclusion: *This study contributes to the literature on FMs about IR's aim to consider similarities and differences in contrastive studies particularly in the context of the Philippines. It is recommended for future studies to use larger corpora of PhE.*

Keywords

focusing modifiers, Intercultural Rhetoric, contrastive rhetoric, Philippine English, American English, language

INTRODUCTION

Focusing modifiers (FMs) are adverbs that modify the focus of a syntactic head (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). There are two types of FMs: (1) restrictive modifier, which "[restricts] the truth value of the proposition either primarily or exclusively," and (2) additive modifier, which "show[s] that one item is being added to another" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 556). In the following example, the word *only* functions as an FM where the square brackets enclose its constituents, and the syntactic head is underlined.

(1)   You can [only <u>exit from this lane</u>].

A problem arises when determining the focus of the FM, depending on its linear position. To illustrate, in (1), the following interpretations can be drawn. Based on interpretation (1a), the focus is *exit*, while in (1b), the focus is *lane*.

(1a) "The only thing you can do from this lane is exit."
(1b) "This is the only lane from which you can exit."

The FM *only* functions as a restrictive modifier (sometimes called exclusive modifier), together with other modifiers like *alone, but, exactly, exclusively, just, merely, precisely, purely, simply,* and *solely*. In speech, it seems easier to interpret *only* given that a speaker can stress the word that it modifies, as in "They only gave me a *sandwich* for lunch" (the focus is *sandwich*).

This study focuses on using the said FM in writing. It is centered on the FM *only* because it tends to be "notorious" when it comes to ambiguities in its interpretation, especially in writing, as seen, for example, in (1a) and (1b). There is a prescriptive argument on how *only* should be positioned in the sentence: *only* must be placed right before its focus (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). The argument extends to the idea that there can be no ambiguity in the FM's meaning (concerning the focus) through this prescriptive position. However, this prescriptive argument can only go so far. As stated by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), the position of *only* is "massively at variance with actual usage, including the usage of the best writers" (p. 590). Thus, in such cases, the interpretation of the FM *only* may necessitate more context, either through other items in the sentence or through adjacent sentences.

Many investigations of FMs have been done in several languages, and these studies have focused on their properties. For example, in De Cesare's (2015) study, she worked on FMs in English, German, French, and Italian. She described the properties of FMs and asserted that FMs focus on a selected part of a sentence and that their main property is semantic. In Crespo's (2017) study of Greek FMs, he found similar findings. Aside from semantic properties, another important property of FMs points to pragmatic aspects; that is, part of the meaning of an FM is attributed to contextual dependence (van Rooij & Schulz, 2007). Aside from these, FMs are also "vague and subjective in their meaning, and it is all too easy to mistake a specific aspect of the context for [their] meaning" (König, 1991, p. 5). Apart from semantic and pragmatic properties, the syntactic properties of FMs are equally crucial. König (1991) stated that the syntax of FMs is one of its most striking properties, mainly because of their positional variability. He presented three syntactic properties of FMs, which coincides with the discussions of Huddleston and Pullum (2002): (1) they focus on a specific part of the sentence, (2) they combine with a specific constituent, and (3) they have a specific semantic scope. Another property that may belong to FMs is their phonological property, which is marked by intonation.

The properties of FMs discussed thus far all point to one related topic: the FM's focus. In other words, an FM's semantic, pragmatic, and phonological properties pave the way to identifying its focus. Several studies have looked into how the focus of an FM is determined, and many factors inform it. There are some ambiguities in using an FM concerning its focus because, primarily, there can be different alternatives to the focus in a given context, which is true not only in English. For example, a similar case can be observed in Mandarin, i.e., varieties of alternatives give rise to systematic ambiguities (Liu, 2017). The ambiguity even increases when the alternatives are not mentioned in the sentence, highlighting the need for context to identify the focus of an FM. Gotzner et al. (2016) did a study along this line and found that the interpretation of FMs involves comparing mentioned alternatives, unmentioned alternatives, and the actual focus.

In another study, Gotzner and Spalek (2016) also found that the retrieval of unmentioned alternatives is done as influenced by FMs. In Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) discussion, ambiguity may be observed simply in the sentence. They stated that there could be different candidates for the focus of an FM. In *only*, for example, the word that immediately follows it is an automatic candidate for the focus, but other subsequent words can also be candidates. Thus, a reader's interpretation of the usage of a particular FM may not be as simple or similar to how the writer meant to use it. Differences in the usage of an FM can indicate a characteristic of a particular language or even a variety of that language. This study is thus conducted from the perspective of contrastive rhetoric (CR), i.e., it compares the usage of an FM in two English varieties.

FMs, as used in different varieties of a particular language, have been the subject of previous investigations. For example, Fuchs (2012) examined the FM *only* in Indian English. The author found a significant difference in the usage of *also* between Indian English (IndE) and its parent variety, British English (BrE). He reported that

the FM *also* in IndE often follows its focus immediately (post-adjacent position), has developed presentational use, and is frequently used in negative contexts. More specifically related to the present study, the FM *only* in IndE has also been analyzed, and similar findings have been reported: *only* has developed an additional use, i.e., presentational (non-contrastive focus marker) (Lange, 2007). This innovative feature has more instances in spoken rather than written usage of IndE.

In another variety, Nigerian English (NigE), Fuchs et al. (2013) looked at the FMs *even* and *still*. Also, comparing it with its parent variety (BrE), the NigE use of *even* has acquired a wider range of pragmatic meanings (e.g., emphatic, affirmative, particularizing, and epistemic meanings); *still* has also undergone meaning extension to express promises and predictions. These innovations are attributed to the native languages in Nigeria. Other new features of the so-called New Englishes include other words now being used as FMs, though not necessarily and traditionally so in inner circle Englishes. Some good examples are the words *like* in Indian South African English (Mesthrie, 1993) and *itself* in Singapore and Indian English (Lange, 2006).

Based on these discussions, it can be inferred that the differences in the use of specific linguistic features like FMs may be attributed to (socio)cultural aspects, as seen, for example, in the influence of native Nigerian languages on the meanings of *even* and *still* (Fuchs et al., 2013). These reflections of culture, as described (and compared) among English varieties, have been of interest to some previous studies, specifically in the Philippines, from a CR perspective. In Tarrayo's (2011) study, he compared Philippine English (PhE), Taiwanese English (TwE), and Iranian English (IrE) writing. He found that all three Englishes prefer a more elaborate and change-oriented rhetorical pattern, but PhE tends to be more writer-responsible than the other two. PhE tends to be more personalized and unconventional in job application letters, while American English (AmE) is more structured and conforms to standards (Dela Rosa et al., 2015).

Regarding newspaper commentaries, Mabuan's (2017) study revealed that PhE and Sri Lankan English (SLE) have more similarities than differences. However, a distinct variation between them is the former's inclination to a first-person point of view and the latter's preference for a third-person, demonstrating personal involvement and detachment, respectively. Many other studies like these—e.g., Hernandez and Genuino's (2017) analysis of court decisions in PhE, AmE, and Indonesian English (IdE) and Munalim and Lintao's (2016) study on book prefaces by Filipino and American authors—show how a CR lens could reveal specific differences (and similarities) in a given linguistic feature between at least two varieties of English.

Despite this seemingly rich literature on CR research involving PhE, there is a shortage of studies that center on FMs in the context of the Philippines. So far, no study has investigated the usage of FM *only* in PhE. This is an important reason why the present study is conducted. Considering the innovative usage of FMs in other English varieties, PhE may have unique ways of using FMs. The present study thus centers on the non-prescriptive usages (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002) of the FM *only*. In light of CR research, it is likewise interesting to compare these features with the parent variety of PhE, i.e., AmE. There is an assumption that AmE may be more conforming to the prescriptive usage of *only*; PhE as an outer circle English may have "deviations" (features) from the "standard" English.

Following Huddleston and Pullum (2002), this study starts by distinguishing the prescriptive and non-prescriptive positions of *only*, and only considers the latter for a deeper analysis. As such, this paper looks at the linear position of *only* relative to its focus. To illustrate, some examples from Huddleston and Pullum (2002) are reproduced below.

(2) I **only** saw Granny at <u>carefully spaced intervals</u>.
(3) Boris doesn't eat shanks so, of course, I **only** cook them <u>when he's away</u>.

According to the authors, (2) shows that the focus of *only* is the underlined phrase because no contextual indicators would show otherwise; thus, *saw* and *Granny* are not candidates for the focus of *only*. In the same vein, the focus of *only* in (3) is not cook because, together with the connective *so*, the first clause provides the context. It can be seen from the examples that context plays a significant role in determining the focus of *only*. Given this, the analysis looks at the non-prescriptive uses of *only* (i.e., *only* is not pre-adjacent to its focus). PhE

and AmE are compared by looking at these instances. These occurrences are also used to explore how the linear positions of *only* affect the ambiguity of its meaning concerning its focus. When *only* is in its prescriptive use, it is automatically considered as having no ambiguity.

This study adopts an analytical framework based on Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) discussion of the different types of construction of FMs, specifically *only*, reproduced through the table below. This study looks at the dominant types of construction in the two English varieties.

Table 1. *Types of Construction of the FM Only*

Sample Sentence	Construction of FM
He loves **only** <u>his work</u>.	NP
It's the sort of thing that could happen **only** <u>in America</u>.	PP
The problem is **only** <u>temporary</u>.	AdjP
He agreed **only** <u>somewhat reluctantly</u> to help us.	AdvP
He apparently **only** <u>works two days a week</u>.	VP
I regret **only** <u>that I couldn't be there to see it</u>.	Declarative content clause
I need to know **only** <u>how much it will cost</u>.	Interrogative
I remembered **only** <u>what a close shave we'd had</u>.	Exclamative
She forbade **only** <u>his living there</u>, not just visiting.	Gerund-participial
Only <u>to help you</u> would I have anything to do with him.	To-infinitival clause
Things will **only** <u>get worse</u>.	Bare infinitival
We had it **only** <u>checked once</u>.	Past-participial
Only <u>disturb me</u> if there's a genuine emergency.	Imperative clause

Since a significant part of this study also compares PhE and AmE, it is also informed by the Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) framework; it attempts to describe the cultural aspect that may be influencing the usages of the FM *only*. According to Connor (2011), IR is "the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds" (p. 1). IR started from the CR tradition first put forward by Kaplan (1966). The discipline shifted from CR to IR due to the former's inclination towards a deterministic or essentialist view of culture and an overgeneralization of findings based on learners' writing, detached from other factors influencing writing (Xinghua, 2011). As such, IR moves to a more sensitive and contextualized view of culture. Connor et al. (2016) argue that culture *always* influences communication; thus, there is a need to contextualize the analyses of the "text." IR, therefore, assumes that:

> (1) [T]he study of writing is not limited to texts but needs to consider the surrounding social contexts and practices; (2) national cultures interact with disciplinary and other cultures in complex ways; and (3) intercultural discourse encounters—spoken and written—entail interaction among interlocutors and require negotiation and accommodation. (Connor et al., 2016, p. 278)

The first assumption is highlighted in the present study. As hypothesized earlier, the AmE use of the FM *only* may be more conforming to the prescriptive usage. The comparison between PhE and AmE may be informed by differences in (socio)linguistic practices of the two groups. This is because writers *negotiate* the use of their second language (L2)—in this study, English as used by the Filipinos—in various situations for various purposes (Connor, 2008). These situations may include language users merging their L2 with their L1 structurally. Since the aim of IR is to move away from the "contra" in CR (which is frequently interpreted as opposition) to examine both similarities and differences (McIntosh & Connor, 2023), this paper considers both areas in the investigation of the FM *only*. This is done through a corpus analysis since such a method can be a "cornerstone of intercultural textual scholarship" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 275).

This study looks at the usage of *only* in PhE and AmE (considering their linear positions), compares them, and explores potential cultural influences based on the comparison. The study aims to understand how the linear positions of the FM *only* is realized in PhE and AmE, how these linear positions inform the ambiguity of the contextual meaning of *only*, and how the linear positions and contextual meanings of *only* from the PhE data compare with those from AmE.

METHODS

Study design

This study employs a corpus-based analysis. It uses a descriptive method in analyzing the data; as such, it involves recording, describing, analyzing, and interpreting the present nature of a particular phenomenon (Calderon & Gonzales, 1993), i.e., the usage of *only* based on its linear positions found in a dataset of PhE and AmE.

Data variables and data collection

The data come from two corpora: Corpus of Philippine English (CoPE) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). CoPE is a corpus created in 2023 (covering data from 2021 to 2023) by doctoral students in Applied Linguistics from De La Salle University (Manila, Philippines) under their course on World Englishes. The corpus contains 270,00 words of written text and 6,300 minutes of spoken data. The written component comprises the following subcomponents: Press Editorials, Press News Reports, Fictional Prose, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Cellphone Text Exchanges, and Weblog Entries. The spoken component includes Face-To-Face Conversations, Business Meetings, News Broadcasts, Talk Shows, Broadcast Commentaries, Classroom Lectures, Customer Service Encounters, and Formal Speeches/ Lectures. The other corpus, COCA, contains more than one billion words of spoken and written texts. COCA's data coverage ranges from 1990 to 2019. This corpus is divided into different sections: TV/Movies, Blog, Web-General, Spoken, Fiction, Magazine, Newspaper, and Academic. This study focuses only on the written components of both corpora. As such, it excludes all the spoken components of CoPE and the TV/Movies and Spoken components of COCA. This is done since, as mentioned earlier, it is more straightforward to identify the focus of the FM *only* in spoken discourse since the speaker can stress it; there tend to be more ambiguities in the focus of *only* in writing. The difference in the sizes and periods covered by the two corpora could be a factor when the uses of *only* are compared. Naturally, not all instances of *only* (throughout both corpora) can be covered by the study; thus, the findings are limited to the data subjected to analysis. Moreover, since COCA covers data beginning in 1990, it is possible that some uses of *only* in AmE may not be representative of the contemporary usage.

Data analysis

In analyzing the CoPE data, this study employs the computer software AntConc, version 4.2.4 (Anthony, 2023), especially its Key Word in Context (KWIC) feature. This feature shows the position of *only* in the sentence. Since this study looks at the contextual meaning of *only*, the analysis also employs the File View feature of AntConc. This feature allows for an observation of adjacent sentences in which *only* occurs. In the same vein, the analysis of the COCA data also uses its KWIC feature. COCA's Context+ feature, the equivalent of AntConc's File View, is also utilized for more contexts of *only*. In the analysis, the concordances of *only* are thinned at 100 instances, each from all the written components of CoPE and COCA—a total of 200 instances for the whole analysis. This is done since it is "rather challenging or even impossible when working on the total number of occurrences" (Leone, 2023, p. 12). Though a thinned result may have limitations, it is a practical analysis method (Hunston, 2002). These thinned concordances can be representative of the occurrences of *only* and will not be biased as long as they are selected randomly (Sketch Engine, 2013). Hence, the search done in AntConc and COCA are set at random. The only instances subjected to analysis are those that function as an FM based on the definition of Huddleston and Pullum (2002). Instances of *only* functioning otherwise are excluded from the analysis. More specifically, this study only focuses on the non-prescriptive uses of *only,* particularly its different types of constructions.

An intercoder also does the tagging for a more objective analysis. Using the percent agreement, the initial intercoder reliability (ICR) is 96.7% in the *only*-constructions. In cases where there is disagreement in the tagging of the usage of *only*, deliberation is done between the researcher and the intercoder to reach a 100% agreement. For example, in the COCA extract, "Since my diagnosis, I've only become more adventurous," the researcher tagged the *only*-construction as past-participial. In contrast, the intercoder tagged it as a verb phrase. Upon deliberation, both agreed that it should be past-participial given the use of *have*. At least 30% of the total data has been subjected to intercoding. Sample sentences (i.e., extracts from the data) are provided in this study for a broader discussion, where the tokens of *only* are highlighted in boldface, and their focus is underlined.

RESULTS

This section describes how *only* is used in the written components of the corpora. Specifically, the first research question (RQ1) is answered through an analytical framework following the different constructions of focusing modifiers discussed by Huddleston and Pullum (2002). In the second research question (RQ2), an investigation is done to describe how the positions of *only* inform its contextual meaning, i.e., looking at the focus in each sentence where only is used. The focus is analyzed through the context provided in the given sentence (or in adjacent sentence(s)). Lastly, in the third research question (RQ3), a comparison between PhE and AmE is made based on the analyses in RQ1 and RQ2.

Usage of Only in PhE

In the written component of CoPE, 83 of the 100 random hits of *only* function as an FM; the remaining 27 instances function otherwise, e.g., as an adjective. Out of the 83, 22 instances are used in a non-prescriptive way, i.e., *only* does not immediately precede its focus. This is equivalent to 26.5% of the total usage as an FM. Interestingly, 14 instances are within verb phrase (VP) constructions, three within noun phrase (NP) constructions, three within a bare infinitival construction, and one instance each within a prepositional phrase (PP) and adverb phrase (AdvP) constructions. Extracts showing these constructions are provided below.

(1) I technically still worked there since the cafe hadn't opened yet, but my aunt and grandmother **only** called me in <u>on the weekends and the occasional lunchtime rush</u>.
(2) For starters, you have your carrots that <u>provide</u> **not only** a dynamic texture to the dish, but make it more appealing with its bright orange color!
(3) Keep in mind that you can **only** request a birth certificate, a marriage certificate, and a CENOMAR <u>for yourself, your child, or your parent</u>. Meanwhile, you may **only** order a death certificate <u>for your parent or your spouse</u>.
(4) As such, based on the information that people selectively receive and process from both mass and social media, the attitudes that people come to accept are informed **not only** <u>by their sentiments and beliefs</u> but also how the discourse on drug addicts transpires on these far-reaching platforms.
(5) When he opened the door, on the other side was Bantay, their in-building delivery robot. Come to think of it, it **only** really resembled a canine <u>very superficially</u>.

As seen in (1), *only* is found within a VP construction, i.e., it precedes the verb *called*. However, such a verb cannot be the focus of the FM since the first clause already established the context that the actor in the sentence already worked in the café. The semantic content of the VP *called me in* is not specific enough to be the focus since it also talks about reporting to work. Hence, the PP is left as the focus.

The sentence in (2) shows an example of the usage of *only* in an NP construction. *Only* is negated here as part of the correlative conjunction *not only… but also*, although in this sentence, such a conjunction is incompletely constructed (with the absence of *also*). Nonetheless, as a correlative conjunction, the first part (i.e., *not only*) should go in parallel with the second part (i.e., *but also*), at least in the "standard" usage. As seen in the sentence, the second part precedes a VP (*but [also]* make it); thus, the first part shall precede a verb, in

this case, *provide*. In other words, the structure of the correlative conjunction where *only* is found should be *not only provide…but also make* to observe the parallel structure of the two parts. Examining this is technically not a part of the objectives of the present research; however, it brings about a discussion on the focus of *only* in this sentence. If this "standard" usage of correlative conjunction were followed, then the focus would be the verb *provide*. Disregarding this "standard" usage leaves the analysis to look only at the two other candidates that come after *only*: the NP *a dynamic texture*, and the PP *to the dish*. With this, however, the analysis comes to a dead end. There is no concrete way to determine the actual focus of *only* here; nothing in the context would categorically inform the choice of focus. It would at least be assumptive if the NP is declared as the focus (perhaps due to a need to parallelize it to the NP *its bright orange color* in the second part of the correlative conjunction). At least the prescriptive usage of *only* would dictate that the focus is indeed the NP *a dynamic texture*; otherwise, more context is needed. Thus, in the final coding, instances like this assume the "standard" of correlative conjunctions, tagging the *only*-construction as VP.

(3) shows two examples of *only* in the bare-infinitival construction. They are used in parallel ways. In the second sentence, it is understood that the focus of *only* is the underlined PP. Though the word *order* is a candidate for focus, it cannot be the actual focus because of a lack of context. In other words, it does not need specificity as compared to the PP, which does so since there is a comparison with the PP in the first sentence. For this reason, *only* in the first sentence is understood as modifying the underlined PP. Furthermore, these foci are identified because the PPs are constructed in a parallel manner, i.e., they both start with the preposition *for*.

(4) is another instance of a correlative conjunction. The negated *only* precedes the preposition *by*; however, the PP is not exactly the focus. Instead, the focus is technically the NP within that PP, i.e., *their sentiments and beliefs*. In the absence of the preposition *by* after *but also*, there cannot be a parallel structure in the two parts of the correlative conjunction, thereby dismissing the PP as the focus. In the prescriptive sense, this part of the sentence may be rewritten as *informed by **not only** their sentiments and beliefs*.

In (5), the FM *only* is constructed within an AdvP. Specifically, it precedes the adverb *really*, but this is not the focus of *only*. The focus instead is another AdvP, *very superficially*. Compared with the four previous examples, which have only two other candidates for the focus that come after *only*, (5) is an interesting case since there are at least three other candidates found after *only: really, resembled,* and *a canine*. However, these three candidates cannot be the actual focus since the context of *only* asks about the defining characteristic of the dog robot, Bantay, compared to a regular canine. *Only* here functions as an FM that would provide the distinctive feature of Bantay resembling an actual dog; in this case, this feature is the AdvP *very superficially*.

So far, the analysis has demonstrated five different constructions where the FM *only* can be found. The five examples above show *only* within a specific construction. However, the actual focus is not within the same construction, except (5), where the *only*-construction and the focus are both AdvP. It would be interesting to look at all the non-prescriptive constructions of *only* vis-à-vis the actual focus. Table 2 summarizes the data concerning this.

Table 2. *Usage of Only in PhE*

Only-Construction		Focus-construction					
		N	V	Adj	Adv	PP	To-infinitive
NP	3		1	2			
VP	14	3	1	5	1	3	1
AdvP	1				1		
PP	1	1					
Bare Infinitival	3	1				2	

Based on the data in Table 2, it appears that Philippine English writing has more tendency, in the non-prescriptive sense, to place the FM *only* within a VP construction. However, there is a variety regarding the

actual focus of *only*, though adjectives are the most common, e.g., as seen in (6) below, followed by nouns and PP. Examples like this may not seem confusing since only one word exists between the FM and its focus. In other words, there are only two candidates for the focus. It becomes quite ambiguous if there are three or more candidates, as in (5) above.

(6)   It **only** takes <u>three easy</u> steps.

The level of ambiguity thus depends on the number of candidates for the focus found after the FM *only*. Based on the corpus, the number of candidates varies from two to four (If there is only one candidate, it is automatically in the prescriptive usage). Only the actual focus can appear in the last position of all these candidates. For example, in (6), two candidates for the focus of *only* can be found: *takes* (an automatic candidate since it immediately follows *only*) and *three easy*. However, *takes* remains just a candidate, and *three easy* is the actual focus; it cannot be the other way around. No matter how many candidates follow the FM, the same case is observed in all instances of *only*, except for two, which are shown in (2) above and another in (7) below. As discussed previously, the case of (2) must adhere to the parallel structure of correlative conjunctions; however, in this sentence, the FM *only* comes after the focus. In (7), the sentence containing *only* has three candidates for the focus: the verb *adapted*, the NP *the single-step coherence thresholding*, and the PP *by Ishitsuka et al. (2012)*. The context of the previous two sentences shows that the first and third candidates cannot be the focus. The actual focus is the second candidate, *single-step* (a part of the NP), which contrasts *the two-step coherence*.

(7) These two previous studies adapted the two-step coherence threshold workflow by Lu et al. (2018) to refine the coherence difference by utilizing a stack of coherence data from pre-event images. The coherence difference from these studies was calculated similarly by subtracting the co-event coherence from the pre-event coherence. This study **only** adopted the *single-step* coherence thresholding by Ishitsuka et al. (2012).

Usage of Only in AmE

Based on the COCA data, there are 88 instances of *only being* used as an FM. Out of these, 62 instances are used in the prescriptive sense. This means that 29.5% of the total usage as an FM is non-prescriptive. Similar to the PhE data, the highest number of *only*-construction belongs to VP construction (16 instances). There are also instances of *only* within a bare infinitival construction (three instances) and NP construction (one instance). Some constructions not found in the PhE data appear in the AmE data: past participial (three instances) and gerund participial (one instance). Sample extracts of these constructions are provided below.

(8) Since my diagnosis, I've **only** become <u>more adventurous</u>.
(9) But folks like Brooker, a court administrator for the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit, say they are looking for ways to combat the traffic. She says it's **only** going to get <u>worse</u> when more people move to the northern suburbs.

(8) shows an AmE use of the FM *only* within a past participial construction. The focus is the second candidate—*more adventurous*—since it is the defining element that would cater to the focusing function of *only*. The first clause also contextualizes that something should happen after the diagnosis, which is signified by the verb *become*. That something is now more specified by the candidate that comes after *become*; thus, it is identified as the focus.

In (9), the construction of *only* is within a gerund participial. In this sentence, there are four candidates for the focus: the post-adjacent *going to get*, the adverb *worse*, the conditional *when more people move*, and the PP *to the northern suburbs*. (9) is interesting since candidates appear in the last positions. These candidates, however, cannot be the focus given the context provided by the first sentence. The first sentence introduces

the problem with traffic. In the second sentence, the FM *only* specifies this problem, i.e., it will be *worse* if a particular situation arises.

The analysis of AmE data also looks at the focus-construction, vis-à-vis the *only*-construction, summarized in Table 3. As previously mentioned, AmE also tends to have more non-prescriptive usage of *only* within VP constructions, followed by past-participial constructions. The focus-constructions vary, but most belong to AdvP constructions, followed by PP, AdjP, and conjunction phrase (ConjP). The number of focus candidates from the AmE data also ranges from two to four; thus, there are varying levels of ambiguity.

Table 3. *Usage of Only in AmE*

Only-Construction		Focus-construction								
		Adj	AdjP	PP	N	NP	ConjP	VP	AdvP	To-infinitive
NP	1	1								
VP	16		2	3	1	1	1	1	6	1
Gerund Participial	1								1	
Bare Infinitival	3			1					2	
Past-Participial	5	1	1	1			2			

This study draws from Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) discussion of the types of construction of the FM *only*. The results show that the highest number of *only*-construction in PhE and AmE is within a VP, with a frequency of 14 and 16, respectively. The instances of only in this construction precede a verb, but it does not necessarily mean that the focus is the said verb. There are varying foci, which is also true with other types of constructions. Of all the *only*-constructions, the most dominant type of focus-construction in PhE is adjective construction, while AdvP construction in AmE. In both English varieties, the ambiguity of the meanings of *only* are practically the same; the number of candidates for the focus can range from two to four, as evidenced by the tokens of the non-prescriptive uses of *only* as an FM.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights two areas in the analysis: the *only*-constructions and the ambiguities in using the FM. Given these areas, it can be deduced that PhE and AmE do not differ so much, suggesting a shared grammatical intuition despite contextual differences. Moreover, when it comes to the prescriptive uses of only, the same can be observed; there is not much difference between their frequency in PhE and AmE (61 and 62, respectively). This study thus argues that PhE has not deviated much from AmE in the use of the FM *only*. The assumption presented in the introduction of this paper that AmE may conform more to the prescriptive usage is thereby dismissed based on the analysis results.

As a study of FM, the findings in this paper do not fully concur with previous FM investigations. These earlier studies (Fuchs, 2012; Fuchs et al., 2013; Lange, 2007) found that differences are present in certain English varieties when compared to their respective parent varieties. It should be noted, however, that these studies focus on the functions and (innovative) meanings of FMs, not necessarily on their formalist (i.e., structural) features in which the present study is centered. To illustrate, *also* (Fuchs, 2012) and *only* (Lange, 2007) in IndE developed a presentational function; *even* and *still* in NigE (Fuchs et al., 2013) also developed various pragmatic meanings.

Concerning cultural aspects, it also follows from the present study's findings that the writing culture of PhE and AmE, at least as observed in the usage of the FM *only*, are not so different. While previous studies revealed that there are points of deviation in PhE writing as compared to other varieties, this study did not yield similar results. Tarrayo's (2011) study of PhE, TwE, and IrE writing; Dela Rosa et al.'s (2015) analysis of PhE and AmE in job application letters; and Mabuan's (2017) investigation of PhE and SLE in news commentaries all found that PhE has features different from other varieties. However, despite the view that culture *always* influences communication (Connor et al., 2016), it appears that PhE does not (and perhaps will not) veer away much from

the parent variety usage of the FM *only*. Although there are minor points of deviations in the findings of the present study, like the presence of a few types of *only*-constructions in AmE that are absent in PhE, it seems that the influences of (writing) culture are not strong enough to develop new and distinctive features in the formalist or structural usage of *only* in PhE. The results show that their linear positions are (still) relatively similar to AmE. Additionally, while other studies found that native languages influence the function of FMs (e.g., Fuchs et al., 2013), there is no basis to claim that Filipinos' first language affects their FM usage *only*.

CONCLUSION

This study is the first to investigate the FM *only* in the context of the Philippines. It offers a contribution to the literature on FMs through an IR lens, especially since the aim of IR (as a move from CR) is to consider not only differences but also similarities in the investigation of specific linguistic features. The analysis done in this paper is not meant to be comprehensive, given the limits of the corpora and the number of instances of the FM *only* included in the study. Future studies may consider other corpora of PhE, perhaps larger ones, to compare their results with the present findings. In consideration of other previous studies on FMs, future research can also look at new pragmatic functions and potential innovative meanings not only of the FM *only* but also of other FMs as used in PhE. An IR lens is also recommended for such studies. There is an assumption that these future studies may yield interesting results when considering cultural influences. New functions and meanings can be attributed to socio-cultural and -linguistic practices. Another direction of FM studies is the inclusion of spoken texts; previous investigations have found that specific meanings are more common in spoken but absent in written corpus components (see, for example, Lange, 2007). This is an interesting direction, given the potential for pragmatic functions to differ significantly between spoken and written discourses.

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