### Abbreviations in Glosses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2s</td>
<td>portmanteau agreement prefix: 1st person subject, 2sg object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3rd person agreement marked through stem modification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1s, A2s, A2p</td>
<td>person agreement prefixes for the subjects of transitive and some intransitive verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1s, B2s, A2p</td>
<td>person agreement prefixes for transitive objects and some intransitive subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3, B3</td>
<td>3rd person agreement prefixes (unmarked for number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1p.e, B1p.e</td>
<td>agreement for 1pl exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1p.i, B1p.i</td>
<td>agreement for 1pl inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNTR</td>
<td>contrastive focus particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COND</td>
<td>conditional suffix (‘if’, ‘when’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVID</td>
<td>unmarked evidential particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>future suffix (on verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HABIT</td>
<td>habitual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Spanish-derived la — the thing we’re interested in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>negative prefix or suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG.FUT</td>
<td>negative future suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.FUT</td>
<td>future suffix (on nouns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>passive prefix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF</td>
<td>perfective suffix (‘already’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>optional plural suffix on nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROG</td>
<td>progressive particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURP</td>
<td>purposive suffix (‘in order to’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.DIST.PAST</td>
<td>distant past particle in questions, also for past events the speaker infers but didn’t personally witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFL</td>
<td>reflexive prefix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>relative clause suffix (on the verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBRD</td>
<td>subordinate clause suffix (on the verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SER</td>
<td>serial verb suffix (on the secondary verb in some verb+verb constructions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>totalitive suffix (‘all’, ‘completely’, ‘finished’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCERT</td>
<td>uncertain future suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREAL</td>
<td>unreal or counterfactual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Thanks to the Speakers I’ve Worked With:

- **Vicente Cardozo**
- **Luz-María Ojeda**
- **David Barrios**
- **Liza Amarilla**
- **Jazmin Pinazzo**
- **Melki Melgarejo**
- **Evelia Careaga**

The speaker for each sentence is indicated in the right margin.

If the ID code for the sentence begins with T, it’s from a natural conversation or narrative, or (rarely) a written text or movie.
Guaraní *la* — definitely not a definite article

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Paraguayan Guaraní (Tupí-Guaraní subfamily of the Tupian family) is an official language of Paraguay spoken by about 6 million people. Some factoids:

- very free “word order” for major constituents, though most adverbs and grammatical particles are much fussier.
- “polysynthetic”: often very long verbal complexes, not-quite-fossilized noun incorporation, NPs usually optional.
- kinda head-marking: nouns not marked for core cases (except human patients), but incomplete agreement on verbs. Many verbs select postpositional phrases as arguments.
- split-intransitivity — “subjects” of some intransitive verbs/adjectives have the same agreement as patients of transitive verbs.
- no number distinction in third person verb agreement, but optional plural marking on NPs and number marking on demonstratives.

A majority of speakers are bilingual in Spanish. Code-switching and borrowing (in both directions) are common.

By far the most frequent word originally borrowed from Spanish is *la* ‘the’.

(1) **La** óga o- kai -pa -ite.

LA house A3-burn-TOT-very

‘The house burned completely.’

*La* is never modified for gender or number, even when used with Spanish-derived nouns, like *tìpo* < *tìpo* ‘guy’ and *vícho* < *bichos* ‘animals’.

(2) Adio che eìra he’ì **la** tìpo la kuñá =me.

bye my honey 3.say LA guy LA woman=to

‘Bye, honey,” said a guy to a woman.’

(3) **Ha** ymá -va ningo heta -ve **la** vícho -kuéra.

and long.ago-HABIT EVID 3.many-more LA animal-PL

‘And back then there were more wild animals.’

Spanish articles other than *la* are used only in clear code-switches and in the single idiomatic phrase *lo mitã* (*los* child) ‘the guys, people in general’.

(4) **O-** kañy lo mitã =gui.

A3-hidden the.PL child=from

‘He was hiding from people.’
1 Guaraní demonstratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>determiner</th>
<th>pronoun</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pe</td>
<td>pé(v)a</td>
<td>‘that, the’, unmarked (or middle-distance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umi</td>
<td>umi(v)a</td>
<td>‘those, the’, unmarked or middle-distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ko</td>
<td>kó(v)a</td>
<td>‘this’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ko‘ã</td>
<td>ko‘ã(v)a</td>
<td>‘these’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upe</td>
<td>upé(v)a</td>
<td>‘that’ (middle-distance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amo</td>
<td>amó(v)a</td>
<td>‘that, those’ (far-distance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>‘that, those’ (absent, or previously mentioned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aipo</td>
<td>aipó(v)a</td>
<td>‘that’ (unseen but audible, or previously mentioned)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A somewhat common construction uses a demonstrative pronoun followed by the corresponding determiner and the rest of the noun phrase, e.g., péa pe..., kóa ko...:

(5) **Kóa ko** tape ningo Industrial ára =pe guare.  
this one this road EVID Industrial day=to when

‘This road is from the time of Industrial.’

*La never does this: *láva la....*

*La* may come at the beginning of a nominal phrase, before any native demonstratives:

(6) **La pe** mundo o- ìko, nde-gustá =rò térâ  
LA that world A3-exist B2s-pleasing=COND or

na- nde-gustá -i =rò.  
NEG-B2s-pleasing-NEG=COND

‘The world exists, whether you like it or not.’

(7) ... ha che upérô sa’i a- kopi kuri la ko  
and I then little A1s-understand PAST LA this

Ingle- ñe’e =pe.  
English-language=to

‘... and I only understood a little English back then.’

(8) Ai- kuuaa che la umi hénte pueblo-ru -kuéra, ...  
A1s-know I LA those people town.people-pl

‘I know these village people, ...’

2 *La* doesn’t mark definiteness

*La* is often used with indefinite and/or non-specific noun phrases — as found by SaeMi Choi in our 2012–3 field methods course on Guaraní. In elicitation, speakers often prefer the indefinite and non-specific readings, especially if discussing the semantic difference between *la* and a native determiner like *pe* ‘that’

Generic noun phrases are usually preceded by *la*. Native demonstratives can’t occur on a generic noun phrase.

(9) **La jaguarete i- ñarô -iteriei.**  
LA jaguar B3-aggressive-very

‘Jaguars are vicious.’
(10) **Pe** jaguarete i- ñarô -iterei.
that jaguar B3-aggressive-very

‘That jaguar is vicious.’ (not ‘Jaguars are vicious.’)

(11) Nda-i- katú -i ja- je- rovia la politiko =re.
NEG-B3-possible-NEG A1P.1-REFL-believe LA politician=at

‘You can’t trust a politician.’

In negative existential constructions:

(12) Ndaiptóri la tembi’u.
there.isn’t LA food

‘There isn’t any food.’

(13) * Ndaiptóri ko tembi’u.
there.isn’t this food

‘This food is all gone.’

La often occurs before **peteĩ** ‘one’ with referents that the speaker doesn’t believe will be identifiable by the listener.

(14) Tape-hû =gui o- pyta oiméne la peteĩ kilométrro.
road -black=from A3-located maybe LA one kilometre.

‘From the highway it’s about one kilometre.’

(15) Ha o- hechá=ngo la peteĩ provléma o- reko-ha la
and A3-see =EVID LA one problem A3-have-SBRD LA

hapykue goty ládo.
3.behind toward side

‘He [the doctor] saw that he [speaker’s son] has a problem in his back.’

even non-specific and non-existent referents, like ‘(the) my future house’ in:

(16) A- jogua-se la peteĩ che roga -râ, ha
A1S-buy -want LA one my house-N.FUT and

o- je- jogua-pá -ma.
A3-PASS-buy -TOT-PERF

‘I want to buy a house, but they’ve all been sold already.’

or at the beginning of relative clauses, even those modifying non-specific NPs:

(17) Nde-re- juhu-mo’āi peteĩ óga la nde-gustá -va.
NEG-A2S-find -NEG.FUT one house the B2S-pleasing-REL

‘You won’t find a house that you like.’
3 La before adjunct clauses

While almost never showing up here in elicitation, in natural texts *la* is very common at the beginning of a conditional clause marked by *-rõ* or *-ramo* on the verb (the same construction can be used for simple temporal coocurrence):

(18) Ha **la** i-ñañá-rõ la o- heká -a hína pláta and **la** B3-bad -COND **la** A3-look-for-REL **pro** money

yvy- guy, nd- o- topá-i.

‘And if the ones looking for the buried treasure are bad, they don’t find it.’

(19) Ha upé-icha ore ro- japo, **la** ro- ’ú -rõ la and that-like we.EXCL A1P.E-do **la** A1P.E-drink-COND **la**

ka’ay ro- ñe’ë, ro- kasea heta mba’e.

mate.tea A1P.E-speak A1P.E-chat a.lot thing

‘And that’s what we do, when we’re drinking mate we talk, we chat about lots of things.’

(20) … péro **la** rei- puru ramo la pakova rogue o- me’ë chupe but **la** A2S-use **con** la banana leaf **A3-give** to.3

peteĩ savor especial.

one *flavour special*

‘... but if you use them, the banana leaves give it a special flavour.’

From an autobiographical text in the grammar of Gregores and Suarez (1967: 210–214, orthography standardized), probably narrated by Miguel Azuaga, who was 21 in 1959.

(21) “Ha guéno, **mi** hijo,” he’i chéve, “ché=ko ro- gratifika and good **my** son 3.say to.me I =EVID 1.2s-reward

porã varã **la** nd- o- jahoga-mo’ãi ramo.”

good should **la** NEG-A3-drown-NEG.FUT **con**

““Oh, okay, son,” he said to me, “certainly I will have to reward you well if they don’t get drowned.”’

Before other adjunct clauses of time:

(22) **La** ja- karu rire, ja- há-ta. **la** A1P.I-eat after **A1P.I-go-FUT**

‘After we eat, we’ll go.’

(23) **La** tuicha rire mba’e riré =ko i- jetu’u -ve mo’ã a large after what after=EVID B3-difficult-more **UNREAL**

hína kuri.

**pro** past

‘After it got bigger, it would have been more difficult.’

(24) Upéa o- jehu raka’e **la** a- nasë mboyve. **that.one** A3-happen Q.DIST.PAST **la** A1S-born before

‘That happened before I was born.’
Before a (pseudo-relativized) adjunct clause of place, marked as the focus of a yes/no question:

(25) Ha \textit{la} ha’e o- mba’apo-há =pe pio ja
and \textit{la} she A3-work -SBRD=to Q already
o- konsegi=ma la i- permíso o- u hañua.
A3-get =PERF LA B3-permission A3-come PURP
‘Did she already get permission to come from where she works?’

4 \textit{La} in the middle of main clauses

A sentence spontaneously volunteered by Vicente at the very end of the first session we tried to figure out why \textit{la} was showing up on ‘if’-clauses in his and David’s conversations:

(26) A- há-ta \textit{la} a- jogua.
A1s-go-FUT LA A1s-buy
‘I’ll go shopping.’

In the following sentence, \textit{hasy} is a verb inflected for a third-person subject; it can’t possibly act as a noun.

(27) Péa \textit{la} hasy.
that.one LA 3.sick
‘That person is sick.’

Two almost adjacent sentences from the Guaraní/Spanish movie, \textit{7 cajas}. Guaraní proper names are \textit{not} normally preceded by \textit{la}:

(28) Máa=pio \textit{la} Liz.
who=Q LA Liz
‘Who’s Liz?’

(29) Péa pe ñorsa pio \textit{la} Liz?
that.one that girl Q LA Liz
‘\textit{That} girl is Liz?’

This kind of \textit{la} can’t come initially in a sentence.

(30) O- hó-ta \textit{la} o- karú-vo.
A3-go-FUT LA A3-eat -SER
‘He will go to eat.’

(31) * \textit{la} o- hó-ta o- karú-vo.
LA A3-go-FUT A3-eat -SER
‘He will go to eat.’
4.1 Structural *la* and second-position particles

(32) Some “second-position” particles/clitics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particle</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pa</td>
<td>unmarked question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piko, iko, pio</td>
<td>politer question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiko, tio</td>
<td>reminder question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pipo</td>
<td>exclamative/rhetorical question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niko, ko</td>
<td>(unmarked?) evidential (also ningo, ngo, nio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndaje, je</td>
<td>reportative evidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nipo, nimbo</td>
<td>dubitative evidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>another evidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nga’u</td>
<td>counterfactual wish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mo</td>
<td>speculative modal/evidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katu</td>
<td>contrastive focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voi</td>
<td>a mild emphatic (often non-second)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of sentences in natural discourse have at least one of these, though completely unmarked sentences are also common.

It’s possible for these particles to be stacked, as contrastive *katu* and interrogative *pa* are in:

(33) — Mba’ère **katu pa** ne- rasë upéicharô che rajy.  \( T_{18.017} \)
    — why **CNTR=Q b2s-cry** then my daughter  \( T_{18.017} \)

    “Then why are you crying, my daughter?”

The most frequent position for this kind of *la* in natural discourse is immediately following a second-position particle.

(34) **Tuichá pa la o- ky.**  \( T_{18.017} \)
    big =Q LA A3-rain  \( T_{18.017} \)

    ‘Is it raining really heavily?’

But *la* can also occur after something that simply *could* have been fronted before a second-position particle, like *upéi* ‘and then next’ in:

(35) **A- karu, upéi la a- mba’apo.**  \( T_{18.017} \)
    A1S-eat then LA A1S-work  \( T_{18.017} \)

    ‘I ate, then I worked.’

(36) The closest thing I have to a hypothesis:

- Sentences can be structurally (and intonationally) bifurcated into a focused initial element and a tail/remainder.
- Second-position particles usually (but not always) mark the end of the first element in such a bifurcated sentence.
- *La* may optionally mark the beginning of the tail/remainder.

Some degree of focus seems necessary. A simple unstressed subject pronoun isn’t a good enough sentence-initial host:

(37) * Che **la i- katu a- yta.**  \( T_{18.017} \)
    I LA B3-possible A1S-swim  \( T_{18.017} \)

    ‘I can swim.’
But speakers will often accept putting la later in the sentence than after the first element, e.g., after both subject and main verb:1

(38) Che ai- katu la a- yta.  
I 1S-possible LA 1S-swim  
‘I can swim.’

Speakers will sometimes insist on la going later. For example, in the following, the progressive marker hina is an independent sentence constituent, not another second-position particle stacked onto the second-position evidential nio.

(39) * Ko’ág̃a nio la hina a- mba’apo.  
now EVID LA PROG 1S-work  
‘I’m working now.’

(40) Ko’ág̃a nio hina la a- mba’apo.  
now EVID PROG LA 1S-work  
‘I’m working now.’

I still can’t explain all cases where speakers reject the earliest possible placement. But perhaps the option of a later position suggests multiple bifurcations in the sentence, similar to “recursive formation of marked expressions” discussed by Dooley (1982) for the closely related Mbya Guaraní language of Brazil.2

If a vocative phrase interrupts the sentence after a second-position particle, it feels more natural (or less unnatural) for an additional la to group with the second part of the sentence than with the first.

(41) ?? Mba’é=pa, Peru, la re- japo.  
what =Q Pedro LA 2S-do  
‘What are you doing, Pedro?’

(42) * Mba’é=pa la, Peru, re- japo.  
what =Q LA Pedro 2S-do  
‘What are you doing, Pedro?’

5 Native determiners acting weird like la

It’s possible that some of the stranger jobs performed by la used to be performed by native Guarani determiners. Some speakers will judge as (almost) grammatical sentences where la has been replaced by pe ‘that’.

(43) Pe o- ký-ramo, a- pytá-ne che róga =pe.  
that A3-rain-COND A3-stay-UNCERT my house=to  
‘If it rains, I’ll stay home.’

1But the verb katu ‘possible’ is weird in a few other ways that you can ask me about much, much later.
2Paraguayan Guarani la may even be related to (cognate to or calqued on a cognate of) the Mbya marker ma, which Dooley (1982) says “has no lexical content, and can be considered simply as an indicator of pragmatic boundaries”. But of the few examples of this ma I’ve seen in Dooley’s publications, some are clearly cognate to the Paraguayan Guarani perfective suffix -ma and the distribution of the rest doesn’t seem obviously similar to that of Paraguayan la.
Ku is a strange, infrequent determiner that, like la, never varies for number and has no pronominal form (*kúva).

Ku is a strange, very infrequent, old-fashioned second-position modal/evidential.

6 Conclusion

Paraguayan Guaraní, despite not originally having an /l/ phoneme, borrowed the definite article la from Spanish, but

- refused to integrate it into its native system of determiners.
- refused to borrow a plural form.
- refuses to use it to mark definiteness.
- uses it before noun phrases in ways that are impossible in Spanish and probably weren’t calqued on any existing Guaraní morpheme.
- uses it to mark sentence and information structure, even when there’s no noun in sight, in ways that may not have been calqued on any existing Guaraní morpheme.
- never uses it obligatorily.
- speakers still consciously believe la is “Spanish”, despite its frequency of use having no relationship to a speaker’s bilingualism or ethnicity.

A single sentence from a natural conversation, illustrating each kind of la we’ve discussed:

(46) Ha o- japo jey arã chupe hina la estudio-kuéra
and A3-do again should to.him PROG LA study -PL
la o- hecha hağua, la péa =pa ha’e la provléma o
la A3-see PURP LA that.one=Q COP LA problem or
mba’é=pa la o- je- japo arã.
what =Q LA A3-PASS-do should

‘He’s going to have to do more tests on him in order to see if that’s the problem or what can be done.’

la estudio-kuéra basic determiner on a noun phrase
(a borrowing that would have been masculine and plural in Spanish)
la ohecha hağua before an adjunct clause of purpose
la péa on a noun phrase consisting of a native demonstrative pronoun
la provléma basic determiner
mba’épa la structural, after a second-position particle

And a completely artificial, but grammatical, sentence:

La olala la olala laláa la olala lala.

‘The complainer who’s always complaining keeps on complaining.’
References
