

THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF *MAKABAGONG BALARILA
NG WIKANG TAGALOG*

by T. A. LLAMZON, F. L. DEL ROSARIO and M. SANCHEZ:
A Reply to Palo's Review of the book in PJJ
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Back in the early 70's, many Tagalog language teachers were voicing the hope that someday someone would come up with a pedagogical grammar of Tagalog which would utilize the latest advances in grammatical theory and make its advantages available at least to college students. Such a task, they realized, would not be easy, since, first of all, the complexities of the model used must be presented in such a way that the students would not be overwhelmed by its formidable formulations; and secondly, technical terms would have to be devised to enable the teacher to explain in clear and plain language how the model worked and could be applied to Tagalog; thirdly, from the pedagogical point of view, copious drills and exercises would need to be provided after each section of the grammar to enable the student to proceed step by step in his effort to master both the model and the structure of the language.

These three felt needs and requirements became the objectives which the three authors of *MAKABAGONG BALARILA NG WIKANG TAGALOG* (MBWT) originally set out to achieve in 1972, when they began work on MBWT. At that time, some doubted that Tagalog could be used at all to explain the intricacies of transformational analysis. Moreover, at that time, the 1965 model of Noam Chomsky's transformational grammatical theories were the latest advances in this area of research; and in 1968, his followers Roderick A Jacobs (of the University of California at San Diego) and Peter S Rosenbaum (of the Teachers College at Columbia University) wrote their book entitled *ENGLISH TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR* (ETG).

The ETG was a pedagogical grammar of English and was based on what Chomsky was to call later the 'Standard Theory'. Under pressure from colleagues and many nagging problems, he was forced to revise the theory in 1969, and designate the revised model 'Extended Standard Theory'. Actually, the 'Standard Theory' was the result of the so-called 'integrated theory', which J. Katz and P. Postal worked out in 1964, after J. Katz and J. Fodor had designed their framework for analyzing the 'structure of meaning' in 1963. Chomsky made use of the results of the work of these scholars, and presented it in his book *ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF SYNTAX* in 1965; and this was the theory that Jacobs and Rosenbaum used for their pedagogical grammar of English, the ETG.

Since the ETG was highly successful in summarizing and presenting the interesting features of English structure, which Chomsky's followers had discovered through the use of the 1965 model, the authors of MBWT became interested in applying the grammatical model to Tagalog. They asked themselves whether it would likewise lead to new insights into Tagalog structure; and they found out that it did. Thus, a better understanding of the relationships in the nominal, pronominal and verbal systems of Tagalog was achieved such as the underlying contrasts between the case markers of the nouns, the oppositions between the different forms of the personal and demonstrative pronouns, and most important of all, the characteristic structures involved in the verbal and syntactic features of 'focus and emphasis' in Tagalog.

It was no secret, therefore, that the authors used the ETG as a model for the transformational component of MBWT. Anyone who was familiar with ETG would recognize the similarities of presentation in these two books immediately. Moreover, the authors had cited the ETG as one of the books that they had used in preparing the MBWT in the section on references that they had used in preparing the book. To say then, as Palo did in her review of MBWT, that 'the similarity in the presentation of Jacobs and Rosenbaum of some transformational rules in English (English Transformational Grammar, 1968) and that of Llamzon et al. in MBWP (1974) is so great that some portions of MBWP are probably a conservative translation of their equivalent portions in English Transformational Grammar', is to give the impression, if not actually to imply, that the authors of MBWT did nothing more than do free translation of ETG to produce MBWT. This is simply not true. Anyone who has read MBWT will agree that the sections on the nouns, pronouns, verbs and focus are strikingly different from their equivalent sections in ETG.

The section cited by Palo on the notions of deep structure, surface structure and transformational rules is an exception. That section involves basic principles of transformational analysis which both books used, and the authors felt that there was no need to recast the presentation in ETG, since it was crystal clear. All that was needed was to say the same thing in Tagalog — and that was precisely what they did. Should there have been quotation marks in the Tagalog version of the presentation? The authors of MBWT did not think so, because the section was not actually an exact quotation from the ETG.

Palo asserts that the 'MBWP appears to be a result of an *ad hoc* mixture of different, although not entirely contradictory, principles of language description'. She then proceeds to cite some examples of what she means by an '*ad hoc* mixture of different principles of language description.' Her first example is that MBWP claims phrase-structure rules can be applied to the phonology of a language. This is, of course, untrue. What is true is that without phonological rules, it is impossible to have phrase-structure rules. Hence, any treatment of the phrase-structure rules of a language, must start with a description of its phonological structure. To omit the phonological description of the language is to make it impossible for representations or transcriptions of any kind of the utterances of the language, and for any analysis to be carried out either on the morphological or syntactic level.

The second example that Palo cites is that the classification of the sentence types into monadic, diadic, triadic and quadradic structures is based on intuition, and the notions of what is an obligatory or optional constituent can only be determined on the discourse level and not on the sentence level. Again, this assertion is completely false. When one says that *namulot* is a complete sentence, one means that either it is anaphoric (i.e. the subject and object have been omitted), as Bloomfield does in his description of Tagalog (1917:151), or the sentence is a grammatically acceptable sentence without a subject and object in another language — but not in Tagalog. No native speaker of Tagalog would accept *namulot* by itself as a complete sentence. The sentences of Tagalog have been classified according to the number of their obligatory constituents, and any native speaker of Tagalog need not carry out his analysis of what is an obligatory and what is an optional constituent on the discourse level to do this successfully. Palo claims that if one analyzes the utterances *namulot* and *namulot ng kabibe* on the discourse level, they can be considered grammatically complete sentences. This is true, but even on the sentence level, one can likewise claim that these sentences are grammatically complete, provided one adds that their subjects and objects have been omitted. All that the analysis on the discourse level would add to the result of the analysis on the sentence level is the

specification of precisely what that subject and what that object was. The context on the discourse level would make this possible. This specification of subject and object is, however, not necessary for the classification of the utterance according to sentence types. Hence, the charge that the analysis of the various sentence types is *ad hoc* and relies mainly on intuition is untrue and incorrect.

Palo's third example is *kain ng kain*, which the authors claim is the result of a nominalization transform from *kumakain ng kumakain* and therefore carries the meaning of progressive action which was originally in *kumakain ng kumakain*. One of the cardinal principles of the 'standard theory' is that deep structures are meaning preserving (Katz and Postal 1964). This means that the derivation of the surface structure from the deep structure through a transformational rule or series of transformational rules should not result in the loss on the surface structure of the meaning of the utterance as specified in the deep structure. This is the principle on which the analysis of *kain ng kain* was analyzed by the authors and not, as Palo claims, her strong suspicion 'that the authors have been forced to do this sort of analysis by their phrase-structure claims that verbs in Tagalog do not have cases'. In short, Palo's charges of *ad hoc* mixtures of different principles of language description have no foundation in fact. A consistent model has been used in the formulation of the phrase-structure rules as well as the transformational rules of the language.

It is unfortunate that Palo chooses to write a review of MBWT which consists entirely of negative and meaningless nit-picking, which leaves the reader with the impression that the book being scrutinized is not only not useful, but what is worse, theoretically unsound. A good book review should point out the contributions as well as the genuine defects of a piece of work. Any author would be grateful for constructive criticisms, especially if they are well taken. Such criticisms would then be regarded as helpful suggestions for possible improvement and a better revised version of the book. As it is, Palo's review serves no purpose except to cast unfounded doubts on the usefulness and soundness of MBWT as a textbook for college students.

Fortunately, the authors of MBWT have received many favourable comments from teachers of Pilipino on the college level, who have specifically stated that they have found the book very helpful and practical. To date, it is still the only pedagogical grammar of the National Language which reveals interesting insights into its structure by using principles of transformational analysis.

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