

NOMINATIVE NOMINALS AND FOCUS CONSTRUCTION IN CEBUANO

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1. Cebuano

Cebuano is the name of the largest ethnic group in the Philippines. It is also the name of the native language spoken by these people who live mainly in the Visayan Islands, Northern and Central Mindanao. There are about seven to ten million speakers of Cebuano. Seven other major languages spoken in the Philippines are Tagalog, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, Waray, Kapampangan, and Pangasinan. Although Tagalog is chief among these languages, since it is the basis of the Philippine national language, Cebuano has the largest number of native speakers. However, native plus non-native speakers of Tagalog outnumber those of Cebuano.

Studies have been done on these languages since as far back as the sixteenth century and many aspects of the languages were covered. However, as was stated by Ernesto Constantino (1971:131-2) in his article on 'Tagalog and Other Major Languages of the Philippines':

...the verbs of the Philippine languages have always attracted great interest among students in Philippine linguistics. The linguists who worked on the Philippine language during the American period recognized fully the important role of the verbs in the languages... This emphasis on the verbs, especially in connection with their role in the syntax of the Philippine languages, has continued until today.

This paper discusses briefly topics on nominative nominals in Cebuano. It also discusses the different ways a verb may be marked to show the relationship between that verb and the topic of the sentences in terms of mode, aspect, and voice.

2. A Typical Cebuano Sentence

A typical Cebuano sentence is one which contains a topic and a predicate. There are two types of sentences in Cebuano: non-verbal and verbal. A non-verbal sentence is one which does not contain a verb of any kind. Such a sentence could consist of a series of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives, but it does not contain a verb. There are many types of non-verbal sentences; namely,

equational, existential, locational, descriptive, interrogative, and possessive. For the purpose of this paper, I shall ignore this type of sentence structure and concentrate only on the verbal type sentences, which are sentences which do contain verbs. Cebuano is a verb initial language. Therefore, a verbal sentence is made of a verb followed by a series of nominal phrases. For example, it could look like this:

V + Actor/Agent + Goal/Object + Beneficiary/Indirect Object + Location + Instrumental

These nominal phrases which follow the main verb are said to complement the verb. An example of what a Cebuano sentence looks like is as shown below:

- 1) Magluto' *ang* babaye ug bugas sa kulon.
ACT-cook NOM woman OBL rice OBL ricepot
'The woman will cook rice in the ricepot'

3. Topic

The topic is that part of the sentence which has the most emphasis. That is:

The topic is characterised as "the thing which the sentence is about" by Bowen (1965, p. 182). It is said to be "high-lighted" (Dean 1958, p. 59) or "foremost in the speaker's mind" (Bowen 1965, p. 182) or even "the most important element in the sentence" (Interchurch Language School 1962), p. 62). (Perlmutter 1983:147)

The topic of a sentence could be the actor of the action, goal or receiver of the action, instrument used to perform the action, or location where the action is performed. A noun phrase which is the topic is indicated by *si* or *ang*. Pronouns used as topics belong to the /ako/ and /kini/ class. First, here some examples of sentences with different kinds of topics indicated by *si* or *ang*. The topics, i.e. phrases in nominative nominal position, are italicized:

- 2) Magluto' *ang babaye* ug bugas sa kulon.
ACT-cook NOM woman OBL rice OBL ricepot
'The woman will cook rice in the ricepot'
- 3) Nakadawat *si Fred* ug libro gikan kang Tomas.
ACT-receive NOM OBL book from OBL Tomas
'Fred received a book from Thomas'
- 4) Luto'on sa babaye *ang bugas* sa kulon.
cook-OBJ GEN woman NOM rice OBL ricepot
'The rice will be cooked in the ricepot by the woman'
- 5) Sulatan ni Inday *si Perla* ug sulat.
write-LOC GEN NOM OBL letter
'Perla will be written a letter by Inday'

As one can see from the examples given, *si* is used for personal names and *ang* is used for other nominals. Nominals are marked for nominative, genitive, and oblique cases. If the subject or actor of the verb is not in the nominative case, in other words, if it is not the topic of the sentence, then it is in the genitive case in the example (4).

There are many different classes of pronouns in Cebuano but only those which belong to the /kini/ and /ako/ classes may be used as topics. Pronouns from either of these classes could substitute for *ang* and *si* phrases. The tables below show pronouns from both classes and examples respectively:

/AKO/ class

| Person | Singular | Plural |
|--------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| First | ako 'I, me' | kami 'we, us' (excl.) kita 'we, us' (incl.) |
| Second | ikaw/ka 'you' | kamo 'you' |
| Third | siya 'he, him' 'she, her | silá 'they, them' |

Example:

- 6) Mukaon si Pedro. 'Pedro will eat'
ang bata. The child
Mukain siya 'He will eat'

/KINI/ class

| | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| kiri | 'this' | (near the speaker)' |
| kini | 'this' | (near to both speaker and hearer)' |
| kana | 'that' | (near the hearer) |
| kadto | 'that over there' | (far from both speaker and hearer)' |

Example:

- 7) Gisulat nila *ang estorya* 'They wrote *the story*'
Gisulat nila *kadto* 'They wrote *that*'

4. Verb

The verb plays a dual role in Cebuano sentences. It may stand by itself, i.e. it may consist of just a base alone which supplies the meaning, or it could also have one more affixes. One of the kinds of affixes a verb may be marked with functions to indicate the kind of relationship it has with the topic. These markers are called focus markers by some linguists and voice markers by others. Therefore, in Cebuano, one can speak of actor focus constructions, goal focus constructions, instrumental focus constructions, and locative focus constructions. The affixes attached to the stem of the verb show mode: real vs. unreal; aspect, i.e. either volitional, durative, or potential; and voice, i.e. either active, objective, locative, or instrumental. Different linguists have different terms of each of the items I have just mentioned. I have chosen Wolff's (1966) terms for mode, aspect and voice. Definitions and examples for each of these will be given later. Below is a chart to show the affixes that occur with verbs in terms of mode, aspect, and focus (or voice):

VERBAL AFFIXES INDICATING FOCUS, MOOD, AND ASPECT

| Focus/Voice | Active | Objective | Locative | Instrumental | |
|-------------|--------|----------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| ASPECT | MOOD | | | | |
| Volitional | Real | { ni- mi- } | { gi- gi...-an } | gi...-an | gi- |
| | Unreal | { mu- } | -on | -an | i- |
| Durative | Real | nag- | gina- | gina...-an | { gipang- gina- } |
| | Unreal | mag- | paga...-on | pago...-an | { ipag- iga- } |
| Potential | Real | naka- | na- | na...-an | gika- |
| | Unreal | maka- | ma | ma...-an | ika- |

(*Either alternative could be used without change in meaning.)

Bunye and Yap (1971) describe the use of mood as a reference '...to the speaker's attitude toward the action or state expressed, indicating whether this is regarded as a fact or non-fact, a matter of command, or a matter of desire or possibility' (82). Wolff explains that the '...real active form describes affirmative actions or conditions that have already happened and actions in progress (or conditions existing) at the time the speaker speaks' (1966:142). One of the examples that he uses is:

- 8) *Midagan* ang tuntu. 'The fool ran away'
(*Midagan* is a real volitional form).

He further elaborates on the five uses of unreal active verb forms. The first one refers to actions that have not taken place yet, or with 'hortatory meaning' ('let's do' or 'someone should do')' (Wolff 1966:143). Some examples are:

- 9) *Maghuwat* lang kug la-in.
'I will just wait for another'
(*Maghuwat* is an unreal durative form, here with future meaning)

- 10) *Mangutana* ta.
'Let's ask'

(*Mangutana* is an unreal form, here with hortatory meaning)

The second use of unreal verb forms describe habitual or customary actions:

- 11) *Daghan* tu-ung *mangagi* diga'.
'Many go by there'

The third use is for constructions with the prepositives *mahimu* (can) and *gusto* (want). Bunye calls these words pseudo-verbs. An example of such a sentence is:

- 12) *Gusto* siyang mutan-aw run.
'She would like to look at it now'

The fourth use of the unreal form is in negative active sentences as real forms are used in affirmative sentences. The negative *dili* (not) when used with an unreal form refers to future time or habitual actions; and when the unreal form is used with *wala* (not) refers to past time. The fifth and last unreal form use is applied to mean 'be able to' and refers to past, present, or future time. An example of one which refers to past time is:

- 13) *Sa panahun sa manga Katsila*, kasagaran sa manga tawu dili' *makasulat*.
'During the Spanish times, most of the people did not know how to write'

Verb affixations which coordinate with mode are those which indicate aspect, i.e. volitional,

durative, or potential. Bunye and Yap define aspect as ‘...the condition of state of an action, i.e. the type of action that is involved’ (1971:83). As can be seen in the column of actor focus, volitional verb forms are prefixed with *ni-/mi-* or *mu-*. Durative ones, with *nag-* or *mag-*, and potential verb forms with *naka-* or *maka-*. The following is a brief summary of what each of the terms volitional, durative, and potential mean. What is meant by volitional is that an action is momentary or that it is an immediately completed action. For example, in the sentence given below, the verb underlined is in the volitional aspect:

- 14) *Midagan* ang tuntu.
‘The fool ran away’

On the other hand, a verb in the durative aspect form would mean that the action is a voluntary durative one or that it lasts over a longer period of time. For example:

- 15) *Nagdagan* ang tuntu.
‘The fool is running away’

A verb in the potential aspect form indicates an action which is accidental, or one that indicates ability, possibility or an opportunity. For example:

- 16) *Bisan sa bata*’ pa *maka-in inglis* na siya.
‘Even when he was a child he was able to speak English’

As I have mentioned before each of the definitions that I have given is a very brief and general summary. Linguists who have done research on this language have found that there are several parts related to each of the different aspects. Two of them are Bunye and Yap who state that there are two major types of aspect in Cebuano. One is the non-causative which fits the definitions that I have given above. The other is the causative aspect where each of the actions I have mentioned above is caused by someone or something.

In the section on Topic, I discussed the ways in which nominative nominals are marked. The nominal or phrase used as topics can be the actor performing the action, the object the action is directed to, etc. In Cebuano, the verbs too are marked to indicate focus (or voice) in relation to the topic. If the focus of the sentence is on the actor, then the verb is in the active voice, and the actor assumes the nominative case. For example:

- 17) *Magluto*’ ang babaye ug bugas sa kulon.
ACT-COOK NOM woman OBL rice OBL ricepot.
‘The woman will cook rice in the ricepot’

Referring to the example above, should the focus be on the ‘rice’, which is the object, the verb is in the objective voice and the ‘rice’ is in the nominative case:

- 18) *Luto*’on sa babaye ang bugas sa kulon.
cook-*OBJ* GEN woman NOM rice OBL ricepot
‘The rice will be cooked in a ricepot by the woman’

There are many instances when the locative voice is used on the verb. One obvious instance is when the focus is on the location of the action. For example, if the ‘ricepot’ (in the examples given above) is in focus, then the verb is in the locative voice:

- 19) *Luto*’an sa babaye ang kulon ug bugas.
cook-*LOC* GEN woman NOM ricepot OBL rice
‘In the ricepot is where the woman will cook rice’

Another use of the locative voice is when the indirect object is the topic. In the active sentence ‘Inday will write a letter to Perla’, ‘Perla’ is the indirect object. But if ‘Perla’ is in the nominative nominal, then the verb takes a locative voice:

- 20) *Sulatan* ni Inday si Perla ug sulat.
write-*LOG* GEN Inday NOM Perla OBL letter
‘Perla will be written a letter by Inday’

If a benefactive is in focus, the verb may be in either in locative or instrumental voice, which will be discussed later. The benefactive ‘Pedro’ in the active sentence ‘Maria will cook candy

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for Pedro', when in focus, will result in the verb marked with the locative voice marker:

- 21) *Luto'an ni Maria si Pedro ug kalamay.*
cook-LOC GEN Maria NOM Pedro OBL candy
'Pedro will be cooked candy by Maria'

The fourth voice in Cebuano is the instrumental voice. As with locative voice, there are several instances when the instrumental voice is used. One of them is when the instrument used for the action is in focus:

- 22) *Isulat ni Linda ang lapis ug sulat.*
INS-write GEN Linda NOM pencil OBL letter
'The pencil will be used by Linda to write a letter with'

As mentioned before, if the benefactive is in focus, either the locative or the instrumental voice could be used. However, the instrumental voice is used mainly in requests.

For example:

- 23) *Itawag dira' mo ako ug taksi.*
INS-call only you-GEN I-NOM OBL taxi
'Please call me a taxi'

The third use of an instrumental voice is when the time for an action is in focus:

- 24) *Igikan sa barko ang alas sayis.*
INS-from GEN ship NOM o'clock six
'The ship leaves at six o'clock'

5. Summary

As a summary, the verb in Cebuano is marked for voice according to the grammatical function of the topic of the sentence. The topic or the focus of the sentence is always in the nominative case. The table below is a summary of the kind of voice the verb takes in accordance with the grammatical function of the topic:

| NOMINATIVE NOMINAL | VOICE |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Actor | Active |
| Direct Object | Objective |
| Location of action | Locative |
| Indirect Object | Locative |
| Benefactive | Locative |
| Instrument use for action | Instrumental |
| Time for an action | Instrumental |

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The aim of this book is to prove that Tagalog with its active codifying system can be seen as representative of so called active language structure. The author tries to show in substance the closeness of the disposition of Klimov (1974) regarding the active language structure with that of *Role and Reference Grammar* (Van Valin and Foley 1980).

In five chapters Werner Drossard uses some of Klimov's theses regarding subject-object-structures to demonstrate that Tagalog can be seen as an 'active' language.

In the first chapter the author summarizes the history of active typology. He comments in general on how the main features of active language structure, as stated by Sapir (1917), Fillmore (1968) and Klimov (1974), apply to Tagalog.

In the second chapter the author refers to the most essential grammatical characteristics of Tagalog. Regarding the problems of the focus system, the author states, 'roles and their representatives in the sentence appear in pairs, i.e. in one non-focus and one focus formation'. He suggests starting from this fact in order to determine the number of possible focus formations.

Regarding the subject and genus verbi as central points in the discussion on focus, the author gives an overview of the literature written by linguists who interpret the *ang*-NP as subject. The author briefly describes the grammatical analyses of Blake, Bloomfield, Constantino, Ramos, De Guzman and Bell (*Relation Grammar*). Summarizing he states 'the names linguists avail themselves of a for the most part undefined, subject conception and frequently state a complex "voice" (=passive) system'. The author asserts that in doing this they have a one-sided aim at the nominal constituents of the sentence (convergence only in the *ang*-constituent). He proposes instead that there is a special morpheme or morpheme combination for every role in the verb. He states that this has an importance for the whole Tagalog syntax one should not undervalue.

In the fourth chapter he aims to prove that Tagalog is an active language, and that there is no existence of a uniform subject or promotional passive in Tagalog. Therefore, his main points in this chapter are the distinction of active vs. stative, the question of subject and predicate and the problem of transitivity.

The main points of the book are summarized in chapter five.

The author begins his book by making reference to Sapir's (1917) analysis of five Indian languages, where for the first time a distinction was made between the nominative, ergative and active codifying system. In order to describe these characteristics the author refers mainly to the features of active language structure as stated by Klimov. For this review we will pick out some of the essential theses, claims and conclusions by the author concerning Tagalog.

1. Active vs. stative

It is important to begin with active and inactive semantic classification in order to determine wide areas of the morphology, syntax and lexicography, as well as to determine the separation between active intransitive and stative intransitive. In Tagalog this separation is maintained by the *-um-/mag-* vs. *ma-* verbs.

2. Active vs. passive

Sentences with patient(=object), location, beneficiary and instrument focus are active in character, rather than passive. This is proved by the fact, among others, that the agent remains an obligatory constituent in these focus formations. It is not, as with the current passive, made marginal or even dropped.

3. The subject problem

Referring to Klimov's thesis that in active language structure one cannot speak of subject-object relations, the author tries to show how essential factors for defining a subject are missing in Tagalog.

For example, he opposes the idea that an essential feature of defining a subject in Tagalog is to unify contrary roles (agent vs. patient) in *one* subject or morpheme, as is valid for the structure of many languages. Rather he proposes that defining a subject is a matter of the codifying system of active language structure in which activity and inactivity, and therefore roles like agent and patient, are marked differently in the verb. The Tagalog *ang-* constituent should not precipitately be taken as subject because 'the unification in reference marking (by *ang*) does not correspond with an unification of role marking in the verb'. He states that for defining a subject one must consider factors from the nominal *and* predicative area.

He gives further support to this idea by considering the coordinated sentence in which the agent is always the center of the coordination, even if not in focus. That means that coordination is being made according to *semantic* identity. Furthermore the patient, location, beneficiary or instrument, if in focus, cannot be the subject because as subject these entities should also be the coordinating center, which they are not.

4. The focus marking in Tagalog

Referring to the fact that the different focus formations in Tagalog are not passive constructions, the author states 'the Tagalog focus system has more to do with pragmatic factors (definiteness, emphasis) than with grammatical rearrangement of the sentence in which subject qualities would be newly distributed'.

He goes on to show that in addition to earlier mentioned roles there are distinct focus formations for the following roles: 'cause', 'experiencer', 'mental cause', 'comitative' and 'sociative'. He gives the following summary: