

## Chapter 4

# Introduction to Grammar Essentials

So far we've concentrated on word order and its analysis with a layered structure of linked predicates. Now we're going to talk about other kinds of structure as covered by the outline below, including semantic roles, or "what means what in the sentence". Verbal sentences will be the primary focus throughout this chapter and many others as they are more versatile and complex than the other types of predication.

1. Verb roots, stems, and affixes
2. Mood
3. Voice
  - a. Semantic Role
  - b. Grammatical Relation
  - c. Verb Class
4. Case
5. Derivation and inflection
  - a. Mode
  - b. Tense
  - c. Aspect
  - d. Modality

Verb roots are the simplest, shortest form of a word that can be made longer by affixation. Some verb roots are adjectives or other kinds of words when in root form; Cebuano forms verbs from almost any kind of word. Other verb roots are primarily verbs but can become nouns or adjectives by affixation. Here is a small sample of category switching via affixation:

adjective root: *sukô* angry  
 stative verb: *masukô* get angry

non-volitional verb root: *hulog* fall  
 finite verb: *mahulog* might fall

non-volitional verb root: *tulog* sleep  
 adjective derived from verb root: *katulogon* sleepy

noun root: *sapatos* shoes  
 verb formed from noun root: *magsapatos* wear shoes

Verb stems are roots with one or more affixes (prefixes, suffixes, infixes, circumfixes, or reduplication) added that will still admit another final primary affix. Primary verbal affixes, once added, prevent a verb from taking another affix, but secondary affixes are stem formers, usually to be topped off by a primary affix. The final form of the verb will have primary affixes, if any, on the outside of the word (first or last element in the word), and secondary affixes, if any, buried in the word, adjacent to the root. Example:

*palit*, root of verb meaning "buy"

*-pa-*, secondary affix or stem former (indicated by hyphens on both sides) meaning "cause, allow"

*mag-*, primary affix (indicated by hyphen on only one side), meaning to be explained later  
*siyá*, “he, she, it” (nominative case, used for subjects)  
*kanímo*, “you” (dative case, used for objects)  
*anà, nianà*, “that, it” (dative case, used for objects)  
*Magpapalít siyá kanímo anà.* He’ll get you to buy it.

Prefixes (*mag-*, *-pa-*) are added to the front of the root or stem: *palít* > *magpalít*

Suffixes (*-an*, *-on*) are added to the back of the word: *palít* > *palitón*

Infixes (*-um-*, *-in-*) are inserted into the first syllable of the word after the first consonant if the word starts with a consonant, but used as a prefix if the word starts in a vowel: *Bisayâ* > *Binisayâ*; *ádto* > *um-adto*

Circumfixes (*gi-...-an*) have two parts, a prefix and a suffix: *palít* > *gipalitán*

Reduplication is when part of the word or the whole word is repeated, as is done with *-um-* in one of its usages: *abót* > *umaabót* (the first syllable of the root is repeated when *-um-* is added). Another section will cover reduplication more completely.

MOOD is a classification of sentences according to their reason for being expressed. The moods of language in general could be classified thus:

- indicative, for making statements: *Gahì siyá’g ulo.* He’s stubborn.
- interrogative, for asking questions: *Gahì ba siyá’g ulo?* Is he stupid?
- imperative, for giving commands, and sometimes requests: *Magtsinilas ka!* Put on your slippers!
- hortatory, for making suggestions: *Magsuot kitá og puláng saninà karón adlaw.* Let’s wear red shirts today.
- subjunctive<sup>1</sup>, for talking about possibilities, hypotheticals, conditional statements—things not literally real or true: *Mahulog ka.* You might fall.

Mood is not a formal category within Cebuano as there are not five distinct grammatical patterns to define the five moods listed above. Indicative is default, no particular grammar indicates it. Interrogative is usually indicated by the postposit *ba* in the case of yes/no questions and by intonation and context for all questions. Imperative, hortatory and subjunctive come in many shades, usually indicated grammatically by affix selection. More important to the study of Cebuano is MODE (see below).

VOICE is key to understanding Cebuano. Voice is the assignment of subject status—the grammatical marking that indicates a word is subject of a verbal clause—which is done differently with different affixes added to the verb root. In English we have two voices, active and passive. Active voice makes the doer the subject, and passive doesn’t. For example:

- He will take something. (active voice uses “he”)
- Something will be taken by him. (passive voice uses “him” to say the same thing)

In Cebuano and other Philippine languages the voice system is so unique and interesting that the science of linguistics is forever engaged in trying to describe it and figure out why it is the way it is. We’ll bypass the history of this fascinating topic and try out our new description on you; it’s new because it’s based on the basics of grammatical description and uses mostly standard terminology.

<sup>1</sup> The great grammarian of Cebuano, John U. Wolff, borrowed the term “subjunctive” for something else. We will avoid the term from here on out and replace Wolff’s “subjunctive” with a term of our own; see Modes below.

There are two levels of voice division in Cebuano, and the active/passive alternation is the less important of the two. Generally a verbal clause with a doer expressed is active and one with no doer role expressed is passive. More interesting are the many voices within the “doer” or “undergoer” category, that is the category of affixation which assigns subject to non-doer roles. (Unlike European languages, the Cebuano voice system can make almost anything subject of the sentence.)

- doer voice/active voice: Nagdalá siyá’g bató. He carried the stone. (*siyá* is subj)
- doer voice/impersonal voice: Nahitabò nga... It happened that... (no subj)
- doer voice /active voice: Giadto niya ang libro. He went after the book. (*ang libro* is subj)
- doer voice/passive voice: Libro ang giadto. A book is what was gone after. (*ang libro* is subj)

SEMANTIC ROLES are meaning-related roles played by nominals in the verbal clause. Each predicate selects the complements needed to complete its predication, and these complements will be nominals that fulfill the verb’s communication needs. For example, the verb *hatag* “give” expects to see (calls for, prescribes, selects) a giver, a thing given, and a receiver. The details are to come, but for now we’ll just mention that in Cebuano, one type of affixation on this verb will assign the subject relation ( the “grammatical relation” known as “subject”) to a doer-giver while another type of affixation will assign the subject relation to a thing given or to a receiver. Other books call this the “focus system” but we stick with standard terminology and call it “voices” or “voicing”.

- Ihatag nakò ang ákong baláy kanímo. I’ll give my house to you. (doer voice—subj is the thing given, known as the Semantic Role “Theme”.)
- Akó ang maghatag og baláy kanímo. I’ll be the one to give you a house. (doer voice—subj is the giver, known as the Semantic Role “Conveyor”.)
- Tagai lang siyá sa ímong baláy. Just give him your house. (doer voice—subj is the person given to, the Semantic Role “Recipient”).

GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS are function or grammar-related roles of nominals in the clause. Since almost any noun can be subject of the clause, depending on the affixation or voice used, we have to depart forever from the old schoolroom grammar that says subjects are doers and objects are does. Make a clean break with this Westernized viewpoint and learn Cebuano on its own terms. The grammatical relations are purely functional—they don’t refer to the word’s meaning—and the distinction between them is marked by case, that is, different ways of spelling a word (English: he/him/his, she/her/hers, etc.) The Grammatical Relations of Cebuano are subject (subj), object (obj), and secondary subject (sub2). Cebuano uses subjects a lot more than English so has a secondary subject, while English uses objects more so needs a secondary or “indirect” object.<sup>2</sup> Cebuano will often assign the status or role of subj to a nominal that would be an indirect object or object in English. Sometimes Cebuano will have two objects in one clause, both spelled according to the dative case. Adjuncts, when marked for case, will also be dative.

- subj: marked *ang, si, siyá,* or *(ka)nâ* in these examples:
  - Kaduhá na *nâ siyá* napakità sa akò. That guy was shown to me twice already.

<sup>2</sup> In response to the criticism that I am here seeming to name something “subject”—really secondary subject—because it is a doer role. As a matter of fact, since the modality affixes assign subject role to doers, there doesn’t seem to be anything unusual about calling the genitive doer a secondary subject. Just remember that instead of sub2 we could call this Grammatical Relation whatever we want, because Grammatical Relations are about function not meaning, so the terms “subject, object” etc. are essentially meaningless (as are the case names). Grammar is about function, not meaning. If an architect or engineer renames struts and girders, it doesn’t affect the resulting construction as long as the guy reading the blueprint and the guy making the design know the same terminology.

- Dili, si Mama *ang* mobayad. No, Mama is the one that will pay.
  - this “free relative” construction is important to the study of Cebuano; subj is extracted to an informative clause *si Mama ang* “Mama is the one”
  - *si Mama* is the informant-predicate, *ang* “the one” is the subj
  - *mobayad* is the relative clause which modifies *ang*; rel. clause in Cebuano never contains its own subj but has instead a “subject gap” whose antecedent *si Mama* is in the matrix clause
- Dakóng problema *kanáng ákong utang*. That debt of mine is a big problem.
- Milakaw na *si Dodong*. Dodong already left.
- sub2: marked *sa, ni, or nianà* in these examples:
  - Nakità na *ni Pedro ang* ímong baláy. Pedro has seen your big house.
  - Gipatáy siyá *sa sundalo*. The soldier killed him.
  - *Nianà mgá tawong* gibuhát nâ. It was those folks did that.
- obj: marked *og, ni, (ka)nímo, or sa* in these examples:
  - Ikáw ba ang mobayad *sa ímong utang*? Is it you that will pay your debt?
  - Ipahatag ko *(ka)nímo ang* saging. I’ll have you give me the banana.
  - Nagahuna-hunà siyá *ni Sheila Mae*. He was thinking about Sheila Mae.
  - Gusto kong mosaká’g *bukid*. I want to climb a mountain.
- adjunct (not a complement; omissible; but marked liked an object, usually with *sa* or preposition plus *sa*)
  - Nganong walá ka’y kwarta [*sulód*] *sa ímong kwarto*? Why don’t you have any money in your room?
  - *Sa pagkaupaw* nasubò siyá. On getting bald he became sad.

As an example of voice alternation, with the root *hatag* “give”, if *-AN* is added, the resulting verb will make the Semantic Role “receiver” the subj, but if *MO-* is used, the resulting verb will make the Semantic Role “giver” the subj. More technical names for the Semantic Roles and more complex examples will be given later.

- Tagaan tikáw sa kwarta. I’ll give you the money.
  - informally, the root *taga* is used with the affix set *-AN* instead of *hatag*
  - *tikáw* is *ta + ikáw*
    - *ta* is sub2, short form of *natò* but in this construction it means “I”
    - *ikáw* is subj
- Mohatag akó’g kwarta sa imóha. I’ll give you some money.

Assignment of Grammatical Relation to Semantic Role, which linguists also call lexical mapping, depends on many factors that are individually easy to learn. Affix selection is intuitive based on experience and many interacting guidelines, but once the affix is chosen, rules govern which nominal will be subj, which will be obj, etc. These rules are called a relational hierarchy or in this study “preferarchy” for short. A model of preferarchy rules goes something like this: “If affix X is used, then subj will be assigned to the Semantic Role G; if the clause has no Semantic Role G, subj will be assigned to the Semantic Role N; if the clause has no Semantic Role G or N, subj will be assigned to Semantic Role Q.” Here is the preferarchy for two verb classes (see Semantic Verb Class below); it would be redundant to mention each time that the doer voice always makes doer the subject, and that the *N-/M-/P-* affixes as well as *MO-* are always doer voice; and it would also be redundant to mention in the preferarchy rules that the sub2, when there is one, is always the doer role.<sup>3</sup> Notice the difference between the preferarchy

<sup>3</sup> Except with the very unique Emotive Causative voice in which the sub2 is Experiencer, and subj is Causer, of an emotion.

rules for the two verb classes below, even though they prescribe the same three participants. Instrument is a SPUR (special use role), or adjunct upgraded to participant status by assigning it the subj Grammatical Relation. “Placon” is explained below.

**Communication verbs (CONVEYOR, THEME, PLACON):**

- ON PLACON outranks THEME
- AN PLACON outranks THEME
- I- INSTRUMENT outranks THEME
- THEME outranks PLACON

**Joining & Separating verbs (CONVEYOR, THEME, PLACON):**

- ON THEME outranks PLACON
- AN PLACON outranks THEME
- I- THEME outranks PLACON

A SEMANTIC VERB CLASS is a collection of verbs with similar meanings. For example, verbs meaning “give” and “share” might be in the same verb class. If so, the Semantic Roles prescribed by each verb would be the same, so instead of “giver” we would use a more general term, but usually not as general as “doer”. The important point is that some verbs expect one participant, some two, and some three. Verbs about giving can have three participants, so “share” might fit in this category since there is a sharer, a thing shared, and a person shared with. On the other hand, verbs of motion will tend to be one or two participant verbs; “walk” has only one participant unless you’re walking the dog, in which case it has two. But “carry” has two participants, the one who carries and the thing carried. So two separate verb classes would be designated to cover these two kinds of verb, maybe called “motion verbs” and “conveyance verbs”. The importance of this is that classifying verbs in like categories by meaning will yield a category whose members all follow the same preferarchy rules for assigning Grammatical Relations. When a verb has more than one meaning, it can belong to more than one verb class, following different preferarchy rules for each.

For example, a verb of Doing like *unsa* will have to have rules that cover when to assign subj to the one who does, the act done, and the entity—like the fish below—that the act is done to...

Giunsa nimo kiníng isdà kay kalamî! What did you do to this fish? It’s delicious!

...a very different set of rules will cover verbs about moving or conveying something. This is because unlike western languages, Cebuano and many other Austronesian and especially Philippine languages can assign the subj Grammatical Relation to almost any Semantic Role depending on the affix used on the verb. This “roles system” description of the Cebuano voice system is better than its predecessors because its level of vagueness/specificity is chosen to match that of the language so that once our description is learned, it will always give the right answer. It is more technical than the old “focus system” description because it is more accurate; it is easier to learn for the same reason. Here are some verb roots that occur together as members of the same verb class, and thus follow preferarchy rules common with each other:

Verbs of Communication	Verbs of Joining & Separating
kutana ask	itip put with
tawág call	lakip include with
tubág answer	ubán go with
hulhul bark at	kuyog go along

ingón tell, say	tigom bring together
asoy relate, tell about	tipon mix together
hubit describe	sumpay join together
istorya discuss	ukang separate

GRAMMATICAL CASE is a spelling alternation that marks a nominal as one thing or another with the most important of its functions being the marking of Grammatical Relations. For example, a subj is always in the nominative case or nominative spelling pattern (like “they” in English); a sub2 is always in the genitive case (like “their(s)” in English); an obj is always in the dative case (like “them” in English). (Those English examples are not direct correspondences with what Cebuano does but only illustrations of what case is, in general, for students who aren’t familiar with the term.) Marking grammatical functions is only one function of case. For example, the nominative case also marks the predicate of an equational or informative sentence; or the genitive case marks a possessive adjective, which is not a nominal but only part of one. The genitive case also marks the predicate of a genitive predication such as *Akò kanâ*. “That’s mine.” The point is that case has more than one function, not just marking subjects, genitive doers, and objects.

Case and voice have to be studied together since the voice system, which is so crucial to learning Cebuano, is a matter of assigning the subj Grammatical Relation to a variety of case-marked nominals, depending on what affix is added to the verb as well as what semantic class the verb belongs to.

A NOMINAL is anything that serves a nounlike function, whether noun, noun phrase, or pronoun. A nominal includes its head noun—a noun or pronoun is head of a noun phrase—and there can be modifiers included in the nominal (phrase) such as adjectives, gerunds (verbs acting as adjectives), or even relative clauses comprising a number of words that as a unit modify only a single noun. Sometimes there can be two pronouns combined as one nominal, like *nâ siyá* “that guy”. In general the noun phrase is something that can be replaced by a pronoun.

Marking of nominals is done by a variety of phrase-introduction particles, or in the instance of pronouns, by the spelling of the pronoun. See the chart for all the particles and pronouns. Personal pronouns are the only instance of three separate cases with distinct spelling; demonstrative pronouns and PHRASE MARKERS have only two distinct spellings, such that the genitive case and dative case look the same and have to be distinguished by context. Phrase markers are the particles that mark the case of nouns and noun phrases. They are also used to mark the “free relative” clause in which the head noun is omitted, as in this example where *ang* marks the relative clause by directly preceding a verb instead of a noun, and is translated as the English relative pronoun “what” or “the one that”, etc. When we say “directly precede a verb” that includes the sub2 (possessive pronoun/genitive doer) as bonded to the verb:

Gihatag nakò sa iyáha *ang* íyang gusto. I gave her *what* she wanted. pj

Examples of nominals as pronouns, single nouns, and phrases:

- Ihatag kanakò ang bula. Give me the ball.
  - nominals are *kanakò*—a pronoun—and *ang bula*—a phrase marker and noun
  - Replacing all nominals with single words we get *Ihatag nâ kanakò*. “Give me that.”
- Ákong puláng bula ang gihatag níya kanakò. A red ball is what he gave me.
  - nominals are *ang*—a relativizer meaning “the one, something”; *ákong puláng bula*—a noun phrase including a noun modified by two adjectives; *níya*, a pronoun, and *kanakò*,

- a pronoun. The relative clause *gihatag níya kanakò* serves as an adjective modifying *ang*.
- Replacing nominals with pronouns: *Kanâ ang gihatag níya kanakò*. “That’s what he gave me.”

While the personal pronouns have three separate and distinct case spellings, the dative case has two completely different versions. The formal Cebuano version of *sa iyáha* in the above example is *kaniya* or *níya* for short. In Cebu, this form is not considered formal but in many other places, it will be heard mainly in church.

The personal name marker has three forms but with a twist:

- *si* can only mark nominative (except frozen forms where *si* becomes part of the name, which you’ll occasionally encounter, and a few idiomatic expressions)
- *ni* can mark either genitive or dative names if both do not occur in the same clause
- *kang* (or *kay* in many places outside of Cebu) can mark only dative
- if the clause contains both a genitive and dative nominal, *kang* has to be dative and *ni* has to be genitive

The phrase markers have a variety of functions. They are phrase markers because they are the first word in their nominal phrase, and are considered by some linguists to be the head of the phrase (no comment). They are articles like “the/a/an/some/any” when they mark a noun. They are indefinite pronouns and/or relativizers of some kind (I call this function “vestigiad<sup>4</sup>”) when marking free relative a.k.a “headless” relative clauses. They are called “case markers” by some teachers while others say this is not technically correct. We are going to call them “definite articles” (*ang* and *sa*) or “indefinite articles” (*ing* and *og*) while also using the terms “phrase marker” and “vestigiad” for special functions. The personal name markers will just be called “name markers”. The names of places use the common articles, not the name markers. The archaic article *ing* is always contracted with another word in its modern usage, and spelled *y*.

The linking particle *nga* is in some ways part of the same category but with the function of always marking two things as “the same” in some way. This is one of the most important words in the language. It marks certain kinds of clausal complements, relative clauses, and finite gerunds (which modify a nominal like an adjective), adjective/noun pairs (in either order), appositives (two nominals that name the same referent), becoments (such as what someone becomes, what rank one holds or is elected to, etc; similar to appositive). A separate chapter with many examples will illustrate the usages of *nga*. We have already met its function of linking predicators in a clause with a complex predicate. Here are examples of some other functions:

- *Isulti namò kaniya nga molakaw mi unyà*. We’ll tell him that we want to leave soon. (*nga* is a complementizer, introducing a clause that takes the place of the first clause’s complement, “the thing told”.)
- *Moanhi ang ákong higala nga kanunayng maghangyò*. Here comes my friend that always has a favor to ask. (*nga* is a relativizer, introducing a subjectless clause that modifies a nominal preceding it (*ang ákong higala*).

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<sup>4</sup> This is because they are case-marked not for what’s in the relative clause, like relative pronouns in other languages, but for the missing head noun, so they are a vestigial construction. In *Gipalit nakò ang iyang gusto*. “I bought her what she wanted,” *ang* (translated “what”) is short for a nominal meaning “the expensive diamond necklace” with everything left out but the word “the” (which nows means “the one that, what”).

- *Ipasakáy ko nímó<sup>5</sup> ang mgá batà nga naglakaw.* I'll have you pick up the walking children. (*nga naglakaw* can be interpreted as a relative clause or a gerund, either of which are verbal clauses that act like adjectives in the sentence but can have their own verbal complements within their local clause).

Many sections in this study will teach the details of grammatical case, especially as it relates to the dictates of voice, which depend on the verbal affix used.

## DERIVATION AND INFLECTION OF VERBS

Both of those terms refer to adding affixes to verb roots and stems to form the final verb used in the sentence.

Cebuano is more derivational than English. The difference between derivational affixes and inflectional affixes is not very important to master in learning Cebuano, but it is of some interest to this study. This is just to point out one of the main ways that Cebuano differs from English and other European languages.

Some affixes are partly derivational and partly inflectional. English is more inflectional than derivational.

Derivation is a way of forming words that tends to change the meaning of the root or stem and often can even change a noun to a verb, an adjective to a noun, an adjective to a verb, etc. Inflection is a way of forming words in which the change is only grammatical, and in which the word doesn't change category; a verb will still be a verb after it is inflected. An example of inflection in English is “ran/run/runs” in which only grammatical tense changes; the words all mean the same thing. An example of inflection in Cebuano is *nasukò/masukò* which are both verbs that both mean “get angry” but *na-* is for an event already begun and *ma-* is for an event that is not yet begun, thus negative, hypothetical, habitual, etc. (See MODE below.) An example of derivation in Cebuano is *sulát* which is a verb root meaning “write”, and *magsusulat* which is a noun meaning “writer.”

Other than this summary, we are not going to be very concerned with the difference between inflectional and derivational affixes, but to linguists trying to work out the kinks in the description of the Philippine languages, this distinction is under-explored.

## MODALITY AFFIXES AND VOICING AFFIXES

Various terminology schemes have been used in the past to differentiate between two broad categories of voice corresponding to two types of affix.

The “doer voice” affixes all use the N-/M-/P- spelling pattern except MO-. This category has been called “active voice”, “actor focus”, etc. We call these affixes “modality affixes” since their use most often corresponds with the addition of some kind of modality or aspect to the basic meaning of the verb root. (See MODALITY AND ASPECT below).

The “doee voice” affixes—which assign subject relation to a non-doer—have been called “passive voice”, “undergoer voice” and a cluster of so-called “focus” designations like “object focus”, “locative focus”, “instrumental focus”, “beneficiary focus” etc. Forget these terms and speak of these affix sets—

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<sup>5</sup> In this sentence, *ko* is sub2, short for *nakò*, and *nímó* is obj, short for *kanímó*.

-ON/-AN/I- — according to their most obvious characteristic: to assign subj to a variety of nominals other than doer. We will call this broad category of affix set the Voicing affixes. In summary:

- N-/M-/P- affixes including MO- assign subj to doer role: MODALITY AFFIXES
- -ON/-AN/I- affixes assign subj to non-doer role: VOICING AFFIXES

It's unfortunate that there are three terms so similar in grammatical description: mood, mode, and modality. The student has to keep them separate and be aware that the additional term "aspect" is often mixed up with one or more of these. We have tried to stick with the terminology that is most widely accepted among modern linguists.

MODE is a spelling alternation of verbs that indicates whether the verb event is already begun (REALIS MODE), not begun (IRREALIS MODE) or "other" (SURREALIS MODE). Surrealis is used for a variety of things, and varies on some specific points between modality affix usages and voicing affix usages. Since irrealis and surrealis blend into each other somewhat, their usages do too. The outline below will help to keep them in their place:

- Modality and voicing affixes both usually use surrealis for imperative, but irrealis also sometimes fits the bill.
  - modality affix, surrealis used for imperative: Ayáw paglabay nianà. Don't throw that.
  - modality affix, irrealis used for imperative: Mag-ilis ka ron! Change your clothes now!
  - voicing affix, surrealis used for imperative: Tudloi akó og unsaon nâ. Teach me how to do that.
  - voicing affix, irrealis used for imperative: Unsa may ákong buhaton? What do I have to do?
- Non-finite verbs—in which time aspects are irrelevant—are often formed from the surrealis of the modality affix set.
  - Gipugos ko níya sa paghatag anà sa akó-a. I forced him to give it to me. (pag- is the surrealis of MAG- and sa is optionally used as a predicate linker)
  - Gipugos ni Mama kaníya og minyò. Mama forced her to marry. (∅- or the null affix—bare root—is the modern form of the MO- surrealis)
- On the other hand, the habitual aspect (see ASPECT below) is formed from the irrealis of the modality affixes, but from the surrealis of the voicing affixes OR from a special imperfective aspect of the voicing affixes using the stem former *-ga-*, in which case the mode used is not important since it would be redundant to use both *-ga-* and surrealis to indicate the same thing.
  - Sa inig-abót sa putí, magdoble ang tindera sa tanáng prisyo. When the white guy shows up, the clerk doubles all the prices. (*mag-* is habitual aspect)
  - Kutsilyo ang igamit nga magputól og karne. A knife is what is used when cutting meat. (surrealis of I- used for habitual aspect)
  - Kutsilyo ang ginagamit nga magputól og karne. A knife is what is used when cutting meat. (realis of I- or ON- from a special *-ga-* stemmed affix set aside for habitual aspect)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The habitual imperfective used with I- and -ON both use, for realis mode, *gina-* which is *-ga-* infixed with *-in-*; (within the larger context of languages related to Cebuano, specifically Tagalog, *-in-* is equivalent in meaning to *gi-*). Other than this oddball, every other mode of all three affix sets in the habitual sub-set are predictable:

- gina-/paga-...-on/paga-...-a for -ON
- gina-...-an/paga-...-an/paga-...-i for -AN
- gina-/iga-/iga- for I-

- The surrealis of the modality affixes is also used as a stem for the addition of primary voicing affixes.
  - Gipakiggubâ ang pagminyò sa ákong mgá igsoon. My siblings got me to participate in breaking up the marriage.
  - Ipatawág ko nímò ang batà. I'll have you call the child.<sup>7</sup>
- Participles (verbs used exactly like nouns) are formed from pag-, the surrealis of MAG-.
  - Dawata lang ang pasalubong pagkaon. Just accept the give of food.
  - Daotán ang pagbiya'g mgá batà. The abandonment of children is evil.

This is just a quick breeze through the topic of mode; study the affix chart many times as you work your way through this study and take on reading assignments of your choice.

All of the p- forms (the surrealis of the N-/M-/P- affixed verbs in the modality affixes) have special uses related to the main use of the affix set but the connection is not always obvious (-pa-, -pag-, -paka-). On the other hand, some p- forms have identical meaning to their n-/m- forms (-pang-, -paga-, sometimes -pag-).

## RELATIVE TENSE

You have to realize that mode is not tense, in spite of the many coincidental correspondences. Mode is what we have said it is above—"begun", "not begun", or "never mind, it's not about time"—not "past/present" or "future" or "tenseless" tense as has traditionally been taught.

There are two kinds of tense in languages: absolute and relative. In English we have absolute tense: "ran" is past tense, "runs" is present tense, and "will run" is future. These same forms could be used in other constructions such as participles, etc. but in certain constructions these forms definitely refer to specific time sense.

Cebuano has relative tense only. Mode sometimes covers the function of hinting at the time sense, but only by inference. There are other ways of inferring a time sense from context; for example, a cause-effect statement of any kind will refer to two events from separate spots on the timeline, one of which (effect) always follows the other (cause). When context does not give enough information, time sense can be clearly communicated by the use of time words meaning "before, after, during, until, on Wednesday, within the past three months" etc. With the time sense of an event overtly spelled out like this, grammatical tense is not needed.

There are also aspect particles, the most important of which are *na* and *pa*. These two words are of utmost importance. The basic explanation is that *na* pushes meanings backward in time while *pa* pushes meanings forward in time; that is a simplification sufficient for this summary. Separate sections will teach these aspect particles more thoroughly. Time words can often be used as predicate partners, taking first preposit position with postposits therefore sometimes shifted ahead of their main predicate to instead follow the time word. Sometimes, time words are adjuncts following the main clause. *Na* and *pa* are not time words but aspect particles; they are always postposits.

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<sup>7</sup> In this study, we consider the primitive affix set MA- to have a p- form -pa- and another surrealis form -ka-. This interpretation is unique to this study, especially including -pa- with the affix set MA-. See "NA-/MA-/PA-/KA-: the Being Cluster".

Some phenomena that will be found in time-ordered narratives such as short stories; I liken these to dance steps rather than tenses, and it is helpful if you try to avoid ever using the words “past, present, future” until you get used to using and translating relative tense:

- reference point: according to the last clue in the context—or lack of such—this is the time zone being mentioned or inferred by the sentence under consideration
- timeline: the default reference point is the normal forward step of time
- default step: nothing in the text indicates that the story action isn’t just following along with the timeline
- retro step: something is said to shift the reference point backward in time
- posterior step: something is said to shift the reference point forward in time
- static step: descriptive language brings the reference point to a standstill; default stepping forward with the timeline generally resumes when description ends
- causation step; whether cause or effect is mentioned first determines whether a step is being taken backward or forward
  - cause→effect: purpose driven step shifts reference point forward; “I did X in order to Y.”
  - effect←cause: reason driven step shifts reference point backward “I did Y because X happened.”
- double baseline: a reference point is used more than once for a series of jumps to and fro. (Today is the first day of the rest of my life. Today I will quit my day job. Today I will begin my forced crash diet...)

Reading relative tense is intuitive, because time references are spelled out, often explicitly, rather than grammaticized with formal tense structures. So there are no examples given in this summary, just the above list of features; the detailed analysis of a short story complete with flashbacks and lots of fun switchbacks in time is given in another chapter.

ASPECT is a marking of a verb that gives nuances of time meaning other than the “begun/not-begun” which is conveyed by mode. *Na* and *pa* have already been mentioned. MODALITY is a marking of a verb that is concerned with details about the verb event other than time nuances. We already looked at modal predication in which a two-part predicate could mean “want to walk”, “should walk”, “try to walk”, “need to walk” etc. depending on which modality predicate is combined with the verb meaning “walk”. We are now concerned with modality as added to the verb root by affixation alone or in combination with a context with which that affix is modally compatible. Which means, for example, that a volitional affix such as MO- or -ON used with a dynamic verb will be compatible with an explicit modal operator like *gusto* “want, like” but not with a context indicating accidental or coincidental happenings.

Cebuano doesn’t have a strong delineation, in its affixation schemes, between aspect and modality. It’s enough to know that aspect involves time nuances of verb events such as...

- starting or finishing
- continuing, keeping on at something
- effort involved
- duration: instant action or prolonged, discrete event or generality
- unique event or habitual, etc.

...and modality deals with other nuances that can be added to a verb’s root meaning, in the areas of

- what the speaker thinks of
  - potentialities
  - interpretations
  - evidentiality, etc.
- information about the doer and the verb action regarding
  - ability
  - certainty/uncertainty
  - permission
  - obligation
  - desire
  - intention
  - propriety, etc

In general, aspect and modality have been termed “affix meaning” by other teachers. In other sections we will describe the categories of affix meaning and usage as listed on the affix chart, and you will become familiar with how the modality affixes are selected both according to their main meanings as well as other miscellaneous usages mentioned throughout this study. We will also explore the voicing affixes since “what affix to choose” is really a combination of what aspect, modality, and voice is appropriate to the predication being expressed.

#### AFFIX SETS AND NOTATION

To study Cebuano it is convenient to refer to affixes by set since there are three modes, each having a different affix that conveys the same aspect/modality but a different mode.

In this study, an affix set such as {nag-, mag-, pag-} is called, for short, by its irrealis form (MAG-) in all capital letters. Thus “MAG-” always means “the affix set MAG-”, but to refer to the individual affix *mag-*, lower case letters will be used. For example, -ON means “the affix set {gi-, -on, -a}” but *-on* just refers to the single affix *-on*. Affix sets, when spelled out like {nakig-, makig-, pakig-} will always be in the order {realis, irrealis, surrealis}. For example, the affix set I- uses the same affix for irrealis and surrealis: {gi-, i-, i-}.

All the modality affixes except MO- follow the spelling pattern N-/M-/P-, like MAKA- {naka-, maka-, paka-}. MO- is the only modality affix set not formed from MA-: it is {mi-, mo-, -um-/ø-} but *-um-* is old-fashioned; generally the bare root (no affix or ø-) is used instead for the surrealis of MO-. These details will be taken up later.

As suggested by their names, the *main* purpose of modality affixes is to add aspect and/or modality nuances to a verb’s meaning (while the N-/M-/P- alternation within an affix set is inflectional, indicating mode), and the *main* purpose of the voicing affixes is to indicate which Semantic Role (not doer) will be the subj nominal. That is a simplification but we wanted to get away from the convention of naming these two broad sets of affixation according to English phenomena like “active and passive voice” which aren’t really central to the nature of Cebuano.

#### TERMINOLOGY ASSOCIATED WITH MEANINGS OF PRIMARY AFFIXES

*see the glossary at the end of this chapter for definitions of terminology*

#### Modality Affixes

MO-: attributive<sup>8</sup>, volitional, perfective, inceptive, causative<sup>9</sup>  
 MA-: attributive, stative, inchoative  
 MAK-: perfect, inchoative, potential  
 MAG-: progressive imperfective  
 MAG-: (shortened form of MAGA-) stative progressive, habitual imperfective, progressive imperfective, durative imperfective, conative imperfective, etc.  
 MAGKA-: progressive inchoative imperfective  
 MAG-<: (not related to MAGA-) comitant  
 MAGKA-<: inchoative comitant  
 MAKIG-<: reflexive causative  
 MAKI-: request

Voicing Affixes (most common usages)

-ON: PATIENT, TARGET, EXPERIENCER

-AN: PLACON, EXPERIENCER

I-: THEME, INSTRUMENT, BENEFICIARY

#### GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY ASSOCIATED WITH ASPECT, MODALITY, and VOICE semantic roles are in all capitals in this list

(many semantic roles also define a voice; for example, “target voice” means that the Semantic Role “Target” is assigned the *subject* Grammatical Relation; doer roles are just “doer voice” rather than “agent, conveyor, or experiencer” voice; adversative voice is a special instance of a special experiencer-subject with a verb that normally doesn’t expect an experiencer participant)

stative	verbs made from adjective roots and mean “be or become X”
non-volitional	somewhat dynamic verbs involving states and conditions vs. volitional events, from roots naming events rarely done by volition such as falling, falling asleep, crashing into something, etc.
causative	verbs of manipulation (meaning “force, allow, cause, etc.”) or other verbs made into verbs of manipulation (get someone to pay, for example); see causer, causee, subdoee
comitant	event is done together with more than one participant
conative	verb event involves trying, effort
durative	verb names a process, not a single event taking place at a discrete time and place ( <i>nagpatáy</i> , “carry out a program of genocide”, vs. <i>gipatáy</i> , “murder a certain individual”)
habitual	a verb event done by habit, done usually: She shops on Tuesdays.
imperfective	not perfective (see perfective)
inceptive	regarding the beginning of an event
inchoative	explicit extension of a meaning implicit in the “be” of the stative verb: “become” the state or enter into the condition

<sup>8</sup> MO- is only used with attributive meaning when the root itself has a primarily attributive meaning, in which case MO- would not be needed for its more unique volitional meaning. With stative roots, MA- or MO- are often interchangeable since MO- won’t be needed elsewhere.

<sup>9</sup> MO- is sometimes used to extend a stative verb’s meaning into causality since causation is inherently volition and MO- is inherently volition. In such instances, MO- is generally short for MOPA-. With adjective-based verbs, MO-, MAG- or MAK- can express causation but MA- can’t; adding the overtly causative -pa- in such instances is often possible with no change of meaning.

perfect	(not the same as perfective), dual time aspect, a completed event has a bearing on an event ahead of it in time; “has/have/had done” in English
perfective	event is spoken of as taking place at a specific time with definite start and end; imperfective is when the event’s start and end are vague or spoken of that way
potential	events that aren’t real, that are hypothetical, wished-for, accidental, coincidental, conditional, or “just happen”
progressive	event is in progress, ongoing
reflexive	event reflects back on the doer such that two of the verb’s participants are the same entity (“He talked to himself.”); reflexive causative (MAKIG-) has a doer-subj getting a doee-obj to do something with him (the doer). Two of the three participants of the verb are the same person.
request	like causative but the causer requests rather than causes the causee to do something
subdoee	the doee of the other (non-causative) verb in a causative clause
volitional	event is done voluntarily (MO-) or with purpose (-ON)
AGENT (doer)	volitional doer (partners with Patient)
CAUSEE	the doee of causing (see causer) but the doer of the other verb event
CAUSER (doer)	an extra Agent that causes another verb event
CONVEYOR (doer)	doer moves something, communicates something, gives something or causes change in location or ownership (partners with Theme)
DOER	general term for Agent, Causer, Conveyor, and Experiencer (see also Causee)
DOEE	general term for Patient, Stimulus, and Theme
SPECIAL USE ROLE (“spur”)	general term for adjunct made subject, such as Instrument, Target, sometimes Placon, and others
EXPERIENCER (doer)	doer is not really volitional, just absorbing experience vs. causing it (partners with Stimulus)
PATIENT	truly affected doee, changed by the event, even if it’s only a change of state or condition (partners with Agent)
THEME	doee is moved, transferred, bought/sold, changes location or ownership; temporary changes, usually of location or ownership (partners with Conveyor)
STIMULUS	a doee that is a sensory or mental experience rather than a more tangible event; the thing seen, felt, thought, heard (partners with Experiencer)
INSTRUMENT	inanimate doer-surrogate such as a tool or weapon used by Agent (a special use role of I-)
TARGET	PLACON with a purpose; the thing or person one goes somewhere to get (a special use role of -ON)
PLACON <sup>10</sup>	a place or a person that serves as a place; includes LOCATION, GOAL, SOURCE, PATH, BENEFICIARY, RECIPIENT (special use role of -AN)
EMOTIVE CAUSER	the person or thing that causes an emotion, special use role of <i>gika-/ika-</i> etc.
TIME-TO	can be special use role of I- with many, most, or all verb roots but isn’t very commonly done

<sup>10</sup> The term “placon” was invented to substitute for using a large collection of place-related Semantic Roles, since there is only one affix set that normally deals with a “locative” participant in a clause. In those instances when a participant is placon and a separate locative adjunct exists, the more specific term (not placon) is used for the adjunct.

GOAL	(see Placon) a place that is the end point of a motion
LOCATION	(see Placon) general place term including goal, source, path, etc.
SOURCE	(see Placon) a place that is origin of a motion
PATH	(see Placon) a place that is the route of a motion
BENEFICIARY	a person for whom an event is done; can be special use role of I- with many, most, or all verb roots; can also be Placon with -AN
RECIPIENT	(see Placon) a person that is the end point of a motion or conveyance