

VERB ASPECT IN MASBATENO DISCOURSE

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1. Introduction.

When analyzing a discourse or text it has proven helpful to identify the various kinds of information found in order to distinguish the significant from the peripheral, supporting, information. Grimes (1975) stimulated by Gleason (1968) separates the backbone of the text from everything else and then distinguishes different kinds of non-backbone information such as setting, background, evaluation, collateral, and performative. That speakers usually encode at least some of these types of information in different grammatical constructions has already been demonstrated in a wide variety of languages (cf. Gleason (1968), Grimes (1978), Longacre (1968, 1977), Jones, L. (1979), Errington (1979), Wrigglesworth (1980).

Now, Longacre (1981), following the same line of investigation, suggests that even the differences in verb inflections may be correlated with different types of information in a discourse. He proposes the setting up of a cline of verb relevance for narrative discourse.¹ Most relevant, and therefore occurring highest on the cline, would be the verb forms used in backbone sentences. Other verb forms occurring in the various types of non-backbone sentences would be assigned succeeding lower places on the cline as less relevant. Furthermore, he postulates that different discourse types will have different clines of verb dynamism, which in turn may provide diagnostic clues for distinguishing discourses. This paper reports on a study of verb usage in narrative, explanatory, and hortatory discourse investigating the feasibility of such verb clines for Masbateno.²

1.1 Summary of Masbateno verb aspects.

Verbs in Masbateno are inflected for aspect rather than tense. This means that it is the quality of the action which is signaled by the verb inflection rather than its time. The system is somewhat simpler than in English where regular verbs are inflected for two tenses and, with the auxiliaries and modals, have a multiplicity of tense/aspect/mode/voice forms. By contrast, Masbateno verbs have an uninflected form and four aspect forms. One of the latter is a neutral, or generic, aspect verb-form while the other three are prospective, progressive and perfective aspects. One set of these basic aspects is illustrated by the inflected forms of the root bakal 'buy' in the chart of Figure 1.³

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Verb Form</u>	
uninflected root	bakal	'buy'
generic	magbakal	'to buy'
prospective	magabakal	'is going to buy'
progressive	nagabakal	'is buying'
perfective	nagbakal	'bought'

Figure 1.

Illustration of the aspect inflections of Masbateno verbs.

1.2 Verb aspect and time of an action.

Since the verbs of Masbateno are unmarked for time, they can be used equally well in either past, present, or future time discourse. In present-time passages, that is, in utterances oriented towards the moment of the narrator's speaking, past, present and future time correlate fairly well.

with the perfective, progressive and prospective aspects. Perfective aspect can be understood as referring to past time, progressive aspect to present time and prospective aspect to future time. Generic aspect in this situation functions like imperatives and infinitives. This is the usual situation, for example, in quotations. Note examples (1) and (2).⁴

- (1) "Wara ka matuod makahuyot
not you true to-hold-on
san imo suweldo san usad
of-the your wage of- the one

1. "You truly are not able to hold on (gen-inf) to your salary from a vacation job but count up (gen-impv) how much tuition you paid (perf) at the school.

na bakasyon piro kuwentaha kon
lk vacation but count-up if

pira an tuition na
how-much the tuition lk

ginbayadan mo sa
paid-at by-you to-the
eskwela."
school.

- (2) "Tabangi man niyo
help? also by-you-pl

2. "You all help (gen-impv)
my child lest he drown
(pros) there."

an akon bata kay adto
the my child because there

malulumos."
will-drown.

Though the verb form makahuyot 'to hold on' is ambiguously either generic aspect or prospective aspect, depending on the context, in (1) it is interpreted as generic aspect functioning as an infinitive. The form kuwentaha 'count up' is generic aspect functioning as an imperative and ginbayadan 'paid at' is perfective aspect interpreted as past time. In (2) tabangi 'help' is generic aspect functioning as an imperative and malulumos 'will drown' is prospective aspect interpreted as future time.

In non-present-time discourses ascertaining the time of the verb aspect is more problematical. In narrative discourse which reports past events, for example, the progressive and prospective aspects do not correlate with present and future time at all. So one question we will try to answer is how the forms of an aspectual system correlate with the different types of information in a discourse.

2. Distinguishing types of information in Narrative Discourse.

Narrative discourse refers to those texts which tell stories, either fiction or real, report current events, personal experiences, or the like. The backbone of a narrative discourse consists of those events which carry forward the action of the story. Events are reported by verbal clauses. Some verbs, however, are considered less dynamic than others. Verbs of motion, sensation, awareness, and psychological states or logical consequences of preceding actions are less dynamic than others since they either bring a pause in the action or are only continuations of earlier actions. On the other hand, comments, conditions, reasons, results and amplifications are background information.

2.1 Backbone information. For a story which occurred, or was completed, prior to the telling of the story by a narrator, the backbone sentences typically have verbs in the perfective aspect although such verbs are not limited to backbone sentences. These verb forms are not an analytical problem in this discourse type. In the accompanying narrative text, "My Personal Experience," the backbone verbs are underlined.

(3)

AN AKON SADIRI NA EXPERENSYA
'My Personal Experience'

1. Nadumduman ko sadto'n
remembered by-me of-that

tulo pa Yang ako ka tuig,
three still only I 1k year

2. gin-upod ako san akon
accompanied I by-the my

ama na magkita sin programa
father 1k to-see of-a program

halapit sa may kapitolyo.
near to-the there-is capitol-

3. Harayo ini sa
building. far this to-the

amon balay kay sadto didto
our house because then there

pa kami nagaistar
still we (exc) were-living

sa halapit sa merkado.
at-the near to-the market.

4. Nagpaaram ako sa akon
informed I to-the my

ama na makita ako sa
father 1k will-see I at-the

halapit san entablado.
near by-the stage

5. Pagkatapos san programma,
after-finish of-the program

nagbalik ako kon hain
returned I if where

nagaingkod an akon ama pero wara
was-sitting the my father but not

5

1. I remember when I was
still just three years old,

2. my father took me with
him to see a program near
the capitol building.

3. This was far from our
house because at that time
we were still living there
near to the market.

4. I informed my father
that I would watch from
near the stage.

5. After the program was
finished, I returned to
where

my father was sitting
but he was not there.

na siya didto. 6. Ginhunga ko
now he there asked by-me

6. I asked his companions where he was but they did not know.

an iya mga kaupod kon hain siya
the his pl companion if where he

pero dili ninda aram. 7. Tungod
but not by-them know about

7. Because it was already dark, I just went home.

kay madulom na, nag-uli
because dark already, went home

na lang ako.
now only I

8. Primero ko pa lang idto
first by-the yet only-that

8. That was just my first time to walk home alone and at night, so I was running and crying because I was

na maglakat na solo kag gab-i
lk to-walk lk alone and night

na, kaya nagadalagan kag nagatangis
already so was-running and was crying

ako kay nahadlok ako na basi
I because afraid I lk maybe

afraid that I might get lost and I was not very sure of the way home.

ako mawara kag dili ko
I will-be-lost and not by-me

masyado kabisado an agihan
very sure the way

pauli. 9. Nakaabot man gihapon
to-go-home arrived also again

9. I finally reached home again.

ako sa balay. 10. Nagparatangis
I at-the house cried-and-cried

10. I cried and cried again because of my fear and I feel asleep without eating supper.

lang gihapon ako tungod sa kahadlok
only again I because of-the fear

kag nakakaturug ako na wara magkaon.
and able-to-sleep I lk not to-eat

The first backbone event verb is gin-upod 'accompanied/took with' in sentence two; it is a perfective aspect verb. The verb nadumduman

'remembered' of sentence one is also perfective aspect but does not qualify as a backbone event because it is a stative verb (marked by the *na-* prefix) and represents a psychological state. This verb sets the stage for the story which is to follow. The rest of the underlined verbs carry the backbone of the story and are all perfective aspect verbs. Two other perfective aspect verbs are not underlined since they are not considered backbone events either. The verb nakaabot 'arrived' in sentence 9 and nagparatangis 'cried and cried' in sentence 10 are reporting background information because (1) nakaabot is a stative verb which is in tight sequence to naguli in sentence 7 and is considered part of that action of returning home; and (2) nagparatangis has back reference to another background action in 8, that of crying.

2.2 Non-backbone information.

Besides the setting information in sentence 1, there are several other kinds of information in this text. In sentence 2 the generic aspect verb, magrita 'to see' functions as an infinitive and gives a reason for the action of the backbone event gin-upod. So, it is background information. Sentence 3 is another piece of setting information given as a Descriptive clause. The progressive aspect verb, nagaistar 'were living', is the main verb of the embedded clause in the middle of sentence 3 and it also reports background information as a reason for the setting given in the first half of this conjoined sentence. The progressive aspect verb naga-ingkod is the main verb of a dependent clause attributive to the backbone event verb nagbalik 'returned and indicates the goal of that verb's action.

At the end of sentence 6 is a conjoined negative verbal clause with a simple root as the main verb. The verb, aram 'know', is interpreted as perfective aspect in harmony with the aspect of the backbone event verb⁶ at the beginning of the sentence. Negated clauses give collateral information since it is action which never actually occurred. There is more non-backbone information in the remainder of the story but this much will suffice to give a sample of such information and some of the grammatical devices used to report it.

2.3 A cline of verb dynamism for narrative discourse.

Having summarized the interpretation of the verb aspects for backbone and non-backbone information we can now proceed to construct a cline of verb relevance for narrative discourse. The most dynamic verbs will be those used in the backbone of the story. The least dynamic will be those used only rarely and then only in non-backbone information. Based on an analysis of fourteen texts a cline of verb dynamism for Masbateno narrative discourse is given in Figure 2.

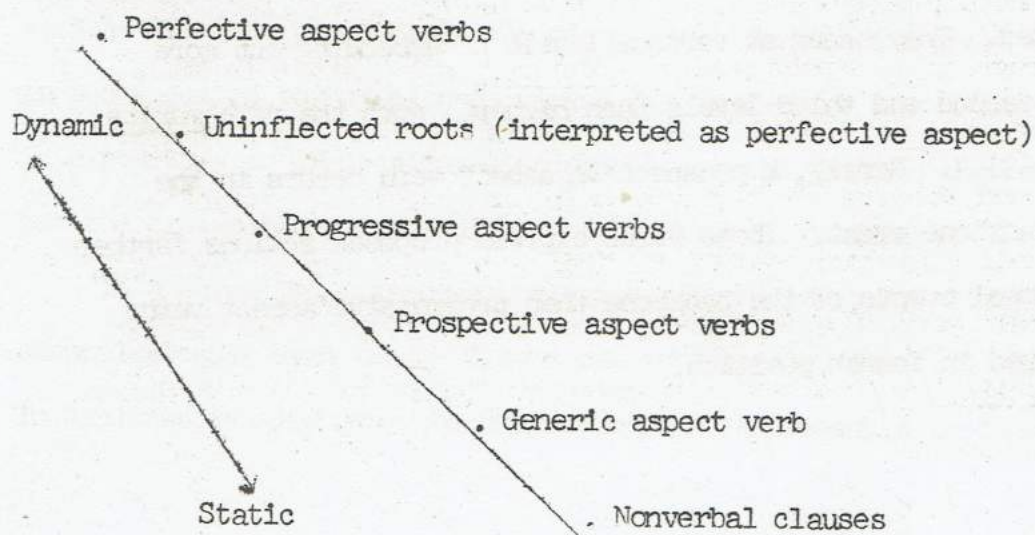


Figure 2.

Ranking of verbs in Masbateno narrative discourse.

In narrative discourse the perfective aspect verbs are the most dynamic because they appear regularly in the backbone sentences as well in some setting and background information. The uninflected roots are a step down on the cline because their grammatical status as perfectives depends on the presence of a dominating, inflected, perfective aspect verb. Though these uninflected verb roots occur in both backbone and non-backbone sentences, they are much less frequent than the perfective verbs.

Progressive aspect verbs appear in the third position on the cline because they still represent real actions involving the main participants although the actions mark background information of reason, result, or participate in tight script sequences giving expected follow-up action rather than new information. They often occur also in first level embedding more frequently than any of the other remaining verb forms. Note, for example again, the verb nagaistar 'were living' in (3).3 of the illustrative text.

Prospective aspect verbs report collateral information, that is, actions not yet realized. They occur at various levels of embedding but more frequently at second and third levels than higher. Note the verb makita 'will see' in (3).4. Rarely, a prospective aspect verb occurs in the setting of a backbone event. These verbs express proposed actions farther away from the real events of the backbone than progressive aspect verbs and so are ranked in fourth position.

Generic aspect verbs are ranked fifth on the cline because, as infinitives reporting reason, result, or application information, they are well in the background. As imperatives and in negated predicates they report collateral information several steps away from the backbone events.

Nonverbal clauses are included in the ranking as representing a zero verb occurrence. On this cline for narrative discourse nonverbal clauses are the most static and therefore least dynamic because they do not express actions at all. They describe, identify, or state the existence of something and usually report setting, comment, and application information. Note the Descriptive clause of sentence 3 which reports setting information. There are no other types of non-verbal clauses in the narrative text "My Personal Experience."

3. Distinguishing types of information in Expository Discourse.

Expository, or explanatory, discourse has a very different grammatico-semantic structure than narrative discourse. In narrative discourse the participants in the story or event are prominent and their actions form the backbone of the discourse. These actions are expressed in sequences of verbal clauses marked for perfective aspect in Masbateno. In expository or explanatory discourse it is not the participants in a plot but the explanation of a subject matter which is prominent.

In a narrative discourse the events of the story are linked together chronologically even though events can be presented out of sequence. In explanatory discourse the subject matter is presented through a series of

points which develop the explanation or argument logically rather than by a sequence of time-based actions. Finally, a salient feature of most narrative discourses is the climax or peak of the story which is preceded by a build-up of tension or excitement. Expository discourse characteristically lacks that build up of tension leading to a peak of excitement. It is instead a rather level presentation of facts. These may be interspersed with illustrations which add some color or excitement but they are always peripheral to the main purpose of the discourse.

3.1. Backbone information in expository discourse.

The backbone of an expository discourse is carried by clauses which describe, explain, or identify in present time. There is relatively little fluctuation to past and future time. In Masbateno this distinction is marked by regular use of nonverbal clauses or progressive aspect verbs in backbone sentences. Example (4) is an excerpt from an expository text and illustrates the marking of backbone information in such texts.

(4) 1. Kada 'summer nagatukdo
each summer am-teaching

ako sin 'First Aid' sa mga
I a first aid to-the pl

eskwela nga nagabarakasyon didi
student lk are-vacationing here

sa Masbate. 2. Sakop ini san
in-the Masbate part this of-the

akon trabaho sa Red Cross.
my work in-the Fed Cross

1. Each summer I am
teaching First Aid to
the students who are
vacationing here in
Masbate.

2. This is a part of
my work in the Red
Cross.

3. Parte san trabaho san Red
part of-the work of-the Red

Cross an magpaaram kag magtukdo
Cross the to-inform and to-teach

sa mga tawo na magin andam pirmi
to pl person lk become ready always

sa anuman na aksidente o emergency
in whatever lk accident or emergency

na pwede mangyari sa inda. 4. Dili
lk can to-happen to them not

ta masabi kon san-o
we-inc can-say if when

mangyayari o kon kanay
is-to-happen-pros or if to-whom

mangyayari an aksidente,
is-to-happen-pros the accident

kay sa uruadlaw ta na
because in daily our-inc lk

pagpangabuhay dili gayod maiwasan
livelihood not really can-avoid

an mga remalaso na dili man
the pl misfortune lk not also

untani ginatuyo. 5. Amo ini
really is-purposing it-is this

an rason kon nano kay an Red
the reason if why the Red

Cross nagatalinguha gayod sa
Cross is-striving really in-the

pagtukdo sin kaaraman sa
teaching of-the knowledge in-the

"First Aid", kay agod an
First Aid because so-that the

tawo dili natataranta kag
person not are-panicing and

3. Part of the work of
the Red Cross is to
inform and teach people
who will always be
ready for whatever
accident or emergency
might happen to them.

4. We cannot say when
or to whom an accident
will happen.

because we really cannot
avoid unfortunate in-
cidents in our daily
work which are really
unintentional.

5. This is the reason
why the Red Cross is
really striving in
teaching the

knowledge of First Aid,
so that people are not
panicing or being con-
fused when accidents
have happened.

nagririsang kon naabot an
being-confused if has-arrived the

mga remalaso. 6. An "First Aid"
pl unfortunate the First Aid

amo an simple na pag-agap kag
it-is the simple lk rescuing and

pagbulig sa mga naaksidente o
helping of-the pl victims or

magkakasakit sin biglaan na dili
made-sick of-a sudden lk not

nanginginahanglan sin mga medisina
needing of-a pl medicine

hasta nga mag-abot o madara
until lk to-arrive or to-be-carried

sa doktor an pasyente.
to-the doctor the patient

6. First Aid is the simple immediate rescuing and helping accident victims or the sick who are not needing medicine until the doctor arrives or the patient can be taken to the doctor.

Sentence 3 is an Equational clause giving backbone information by stating what part of the work of the Red Cross is. Sentence 6 is another Equational clause giving backbone information by giving the definition of first aid. These are the only two backbone sentences in this excerpt.

3.2. Non-backbone information in Expository discourse.

Non-backbone information in expository discourse is of the same sort as for narrative discourse but its specific content is different and its surface structure is also different. Sentence 1 of excerpt (4) is setting information. It is a progressive aspect verbal clause in which the narrator sets the stage for the explanation of first aid.

Sentence 2 is an equational clause giving background information as amplification of the first statement. Sentence 4 is a negated stative verb

clause reporting customary action as collateral information. Sentence 5 is an equational clause giving background information which specifies another reason why the Red Cross teaches first aid. We may note in passing how the statements are linked logically as points in the on-going explanation rather than being linked chronologically.

3.3. A cline of verb dynamism for expository discourse.

In comparison with the cline of verb ranking for narrative discourse we note that the cline set up for expository discourse is roughly the reverse of the former. See Figure 3.

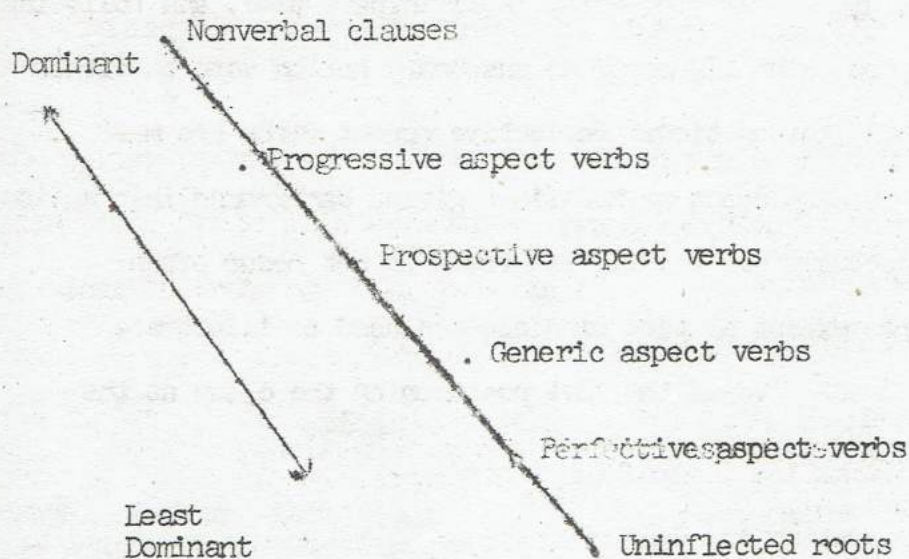


Figure 3.

Verb ranking for subject-matter oriented explanatory discourse.

Nonverbal clauses are the predominant clauses of this expository discourse. They carry most of the backbone information as well as much non-backbone information. The non-verbal clauses which are significant.

in Masbateno expository texts are equational, descriptive, and existential.

Progressive aspect verbal clauses rank below the non-verbal clauses. Progressive verbs carry setting, and various background information. In expository discourses on subject matter progressive verbs occur only rarely in backbone clauses. Prospective aspect verbs carry collateral information. They also occur in explanatory statements as part of background information, usually in dependent clauses. Prospective aspect verbs are ranked below nonverbal and progressive aspect verbal clauses since they are also less frequent.

Generic aspect verbs are ranked next on the cline functioning as infinitives which are complements giving collateral information. They also are the automatic verb form following *wara*, 'not' in past time, and following time particles. They occasionally occur as customary action verb as either collateral or background information. Perfective aspect verbs are most commonly found in embedded clauses as modifiers giving background information but they are rare in occurrence. Uninflected roots do not occur often in expository discourse except as part of dialogues used to illustrate explanatory points, so they are in the last position on the cline as the least prominent form of all.

3.4. Variations of the cline for expository discourse.

There are some variations in the cline of relevance for expository discourse which are correlated with differences in the theme of the discourses. Figure 4 gives a cline of relevance for person-oriented expository discourse.

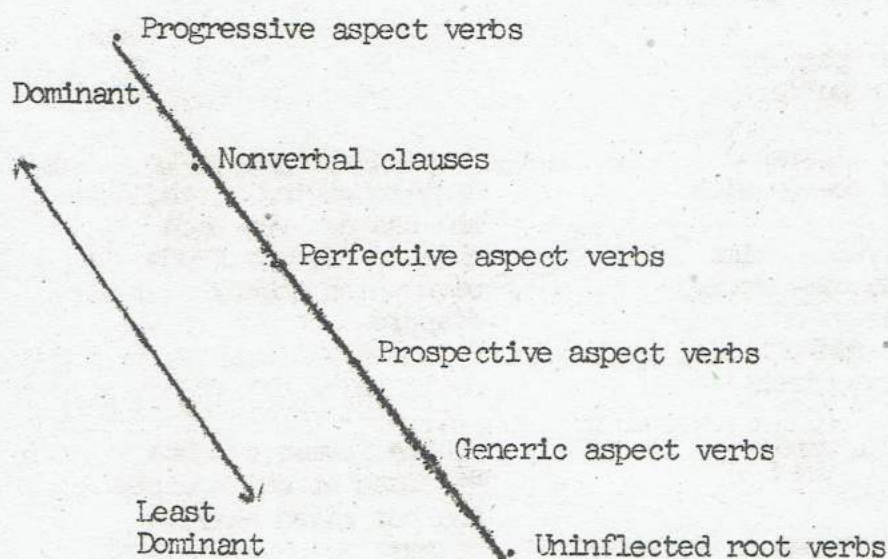


Figure 4.

Verb ranking in a person-oriented expository discourse.

One of the texts used for this study is an explanation of a person's situation. It is told as a third-person oriented expository discourse. An excerpt of that text is given in (5).

(5) 1. Aga na nagsusuay na
morning yet is-arguing now

naman an mag-ilog kay
in-turn the mother-son because

ginapatrabaho san iloy
is-sending-to-work by-the mother

an iya anak agod igwa
the her child so-that there-is

man lang ikabakal sin pan-
also only to-buy-with of-a

talon. 2. Nababatyagan san
pants is-being-felt by-the

iloy an inda kawarad-on kay
mother the their hardship because

1. While still early in the morning, the mother and son were already arguing again, because the mother was sending her son to find a job so that he would have money to buy pants with.

2. The mother is feeling their poverty because never before have they lacked like their present distress.

tunatuna wara pa sinda matikapo
from-beginning not yet they lack/short-

na pareho san inda pagtios
of lk like of-the their suffering

niyan. 3. Maski ngani ibarakal
now even indeed to-buy-with

sin lampin wara pa siya makatima
of-a diaper not yet she can-prepare

na halapit na siya mag-anak.
lk near lk she to-give-birth

4. An dati niya na mga gamit
the former her lk pl used

sa pag-anak naipanghatag
in-the giving-birth was-given-away

na niya sa iba. 5. Kag
already by-her to-the other and

datidati harayo pa an iya
usually far still the her

anakan preparado na gayod
birth-date prepared now really

siya san iya mga "baby's layette".
she of-the her pl baby's layette

6. Niyan kay mawalo na an iya
now because eight now the her

anak kag igwa pa sin
child and there-is yet of-the

nagaadal sa kolehiyo na
is-studying in-the college lk

duha, medyo iwat siya sin
two somewhat scarce she of-the

pagpaigoigo san kuwarta.
sufficient of-the money

7. Usad pa siya san mga na-
one yet she of-the pl

3. Even though she is
near to giving birth,
she has not yet been
able to prepare funds
with which to buy
diapers.

4. The former clothes
she used at child birth
she has given away to
others.

5. And previously she
had really prepared
her baby's layette well
in advance of the birth.

6. Now, because she
has eight children at
home and two others
studying in college
it was rare that she
had sufficient funds.

7. She is also one of
those suspended from
work because of her

suspindi sa trabaho
suspended from-the work

being charged in a case.

dahilan san pagkasangkot niya
because of-the being-charged her

sa usad na kaso. 8. Ginaporbahan
in-a one lk case is-being-tried

8. She is really being
tested by the Lord as
to where is her faith
in Him.

gayod siya san Ginoo kon hasta
really she by-the Lord if until

diin an iya pagtuod sa Iya.
where the her believing in-the Him

In this text the progressive aspect verbs occur in most of the backbone sentences and are thus considered to have greater dominance than the nonverbal clauses. Nonverbal clauses do occur in a few backbone sentences, but are used more commonly to describe the situations as they are explained. The perfective aspect verbs, which rank next to the bottom in the subject-matter discourses, rank third in this text. Their higher ranking is based on two factors: they occur as the verb of some independent clauses even though they are carrying background information (usually as verbs of motion, awareness, sensation, psychological states, etc.) and they are more frequent than the lower ranked verb forms.

4. Types of information in a Hortatory discourse.

4.1. The purpose of hortatory discourse is the giving of advice. In this type of text imperative verbal clauses usually carry the backbone information, but if the narrator senses that the blunt commands of imperative verbs would be too harsh he may use other verb forms to mitigate the commands.

The cline of verb relevance shown in Figure 5 for hortatory discourse reflects the verb usage in the accompanying hortatory text of (6) whose theme

consists of personal advice on a medical problem.

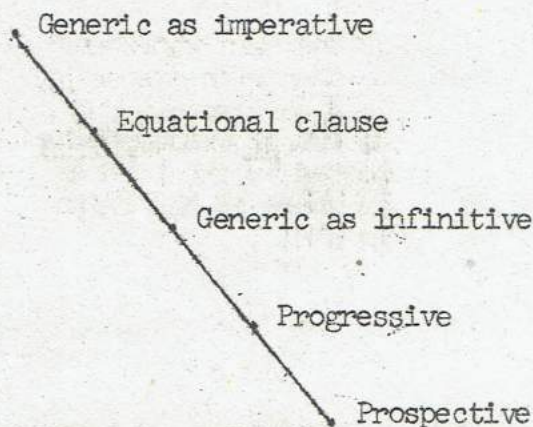


Figure 5.

A cline of verb relevance for hortatory discourse.

(6)

AN MGA PAAGI NA MAHALI AN PONGGOD

'The Ways to Remove Pimples'

1. Kadamuan sa ginaponggod
most of-the having-pimple

idto'n mga dose pabiente anyos
that-lk pl twelve to-twenty years

an edad, piro mawawara
the age but can-be-eliminated

man lang ini. 2. An kinahangalan
also only this the needed

na himuon sa igwa sani amo
lk to-do when there-is of-this it-is

an:
the

3. Maglabar san bayhon sa
wash of-the face in-the

aga kag sa gab-i
morning and in-the evening

pag-abot hali sa eskwelahan
arriving from the school

1. Most of those who
are afflicted with
pimples are between
the ages of 12 to 20
years old, but this
condition will event-
ually disappear.

2. The necessary thing
to do when this con-
dition exists is:

3. Wash the face morn-
ing and evening on ar-
riving home from school
or work.

o sa trabaho.
or the work

4. Mainit-init na tubig an gami-
lukewarm lk water the to-

ton kag magsabon sin sabon na
use and soap the soap lk

ginagamit paglaba o sabon
being-used laundering or soap

na wara'n pahumot.
lk not-of-the perfume

5. Pagkatapos nusunusan sin twalya
afterwards rub-with the towel

hasta na magsara, kag
until lk to-dry and

6. pidlitan para magluwas an
squeeze so-that go-out the

mga puti kag iton na naka-
pl white and black lk is-

bara sa mga pino na
blocking at-the pl tiny lk

buho san panit.
hole of-the skin

7. Mag-ehersisyo sa luwas
exercise at-the outside

agod mainitan san
so-that will-be-heated by-the

adlaw para magbaktak an sa
sun so-that to-peel the on-the

luwas na panit, piro dili mag-
outside lk skin but not to-

pabalhas sin sobra.
sweat in-the excess

4. Use warm water and
soap up with a soap
used for laundry or
one that has no per-
fume.

5. Afterwards, rub with
towel until dry, and

6. pinch the pimple so
that the white and
black stuff which blocks
the tiny pores (holes)
of the skin will come
out.

7. Exercise outside to

get a little sunburn
so that the outer skin
will peel off but do
not sweat too much.

8. Magkaon sin damo na prutas kag
eat of-a many lk fruit and

malikay sa mga matam-is pareho
avoid of-the pl sweet like

sa tsokolate kag iba pa. Amo
the chocolate and other yet it-is

man an asin na 'iodized'.
also the salt lk iodized

9. Dili magbutang sin mga pampatahom
not put-on of-a pl make-up

sa bayhon o polbo kay
on-the face or powder because

makasira ini.
can-damage this

10. Dili mag-inom o maglahid sin
not drink or wipe-on of-a

mga bulong na may asupre kag
pl medicine lk there-is sulfa and

penicilin.
penicilin

11. Maghunga anay sa doktor
ask first to-the doctor

san pamilya bag-o magpakita
of-the family before to-show

sa especialista na doktor sa
to-a specialist lk doctor of-the

sakit san panit.
sick of-the skin

8. Eat lots of fruit
and avoid sweets like
chocolate and the like.
Likewise, avoid iodized
salt.

9. Do not put makeup
on the face or use
powder either because
this can damage it.

10. Do not take or
apply medicines that
contain sulfa or
penicilin.

11. Ask your family
doctor first before
seeing a specialist
for this skin infec-
tion.

The cline of Figure 5 reflects the grammatical prominence of verb usage in the hortatory text given in example (6). In this text, the generic aspect verbs which function as the predicate head word in the backbone clauses are interpreted as imperatives as seems appropriate in the

context. Thus, the generic-as-imperative verbs dominate the text and are assigned the highest position on the cline.

The equational clauses are ranked second on this cline because they are the next prominent form of independent clause. They carry setting information. In the next position are the generic aspect verbs which occur as infinitives. These carry background information of reason and amplification.

Last in the cline are the progressive and prospective aspect verbs, in that order. The progressive verbs occur in nominal phrases as headwords or modifiers of headwords and so are far removed from the backbone information. The prospective aspect verb gives a comment on the setting situation of sentences 1. This comment is collateral information.

Since the text is very short, there are no examples of some of the verb forms, so they are not ranked on the cline.

FOOTNOTES

1

By 'cline' Longacre refers to a ranking of the verbs' inflectional forms according to their importance to a text.

2

Masbateno is spoken in the island province of Masbate in central Philippines. There are approximately 600,000 people in the province and about two-thirds speak Masbateno as their mother tongue; the rest are bilingual in it, but speaking one of the surrounding major languages as their mother tongues.

Data for this study were gathered in Masbate between 1973 and 1979 by the author under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This project was completed at a workshop in the Philippines directed by Robert E. Longacre consultant for the Summer Institute of Linguistics. I am appreciative of the stimulation from his seminars and the helpful comments he made on earlier drafts of this paper.

3

There are three alternate sets of aspect forms in Masbateno. The choice of set is determined by the verb focus. The set given in Figure 1 is the active verb focus set. The passive set is Ø (zero), Ø (zero), gina- and gin-. The stative set has ma- for generic and prospective aspects and na- for progressive and perfective although some speakers add a reduplicated syllable for prospective and progressive aspects.

4

Abbreviations used in the examples are:

lk - linker na/nga connects head words with modifiers;

ka is sometimes used in place of na/nga to

connect count words (e.g. isad 'one', duha
'two, etc.) as modifiers to head words.

pl - plural

gen - generic

impv - imperative

inf - infinitive

perf - perfective

prog - progressive

pros - prospective

5

The text is from Miriam V. Barlet of Masbate, Masbate.

6

Wayne Dye (via Longacre, 1972) reports a somewhat similar situation for the Bahinemo language of Papua New Guinea. There the time of action is set by a dependent verb in the opening sentence of a paragraph which is the only verb in the paragraph which marks real time in relation to the real world situation. The rest of the verbs in a Bahinemo paragraph are independent but neutral in time. Their tense inflection is interpreted in relation to that dependent verb.

7

In an article on the discourse structures of Border Cuna of Panama Keith Forster classifies this type of discourse as Behavioral, rather than Expository, because it has a prominent third person agent. That groups it together with such other discourse types as nominating speeches and employee reference reports. Whether that is true for Masbateno discourse must await further analysis.

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