

Appendix 4

Filipino Grammar for the Beginning Learner

Even in my conversational Filipino classes, I find that one cannot get away with not learning Filipino grammar. However, the study of grammar can be challenging, or worse, boring.

In these brief notes, I summarize what has been written by grammar experts so that you, the learner, can access that knowledge easily. I start with the verb, easily the most challenging for most learners, and then move on to inflectional features. Towards the end, I also direct your attention to common mistakes and confusing points.

Verb Conjugations/Moods/Tenses

1. Verbs

In Filipino, verbs are conjugated using affixes, with a set of affixes corresponding to active verbs and a separate set corresponding to non-active verbs.

Thus, for active verbs, we use the following affixes:

-um or **-um-**
mag-
ma-
maka

For non-active verbs, we use the following:

-im or **hin**
ma- (transitive)
paki-
i-
-an or **-han**
pa- **-in**

As an example, we can examine the verb **kain**, meaning “eat.”

When the doer is the focus of the action, we use the affix **-um-**, inserted before the first vowel of the root word, and resulting in the verb **kumain** (past tense) or the English word *ate*.

Thus, we say: **Kumain ako ng kanin** (*I ate rice* or, literally, *Ate I the ligature ng rice*).

When the emphasis is on the direct object, in this case the word **kanin** or *rice*, we use the affix **-in**, inserted before the first vowel of the root word, resulting in the verb **kinain** or the English word *ate*.

Thus, we say: **Kanin ang kinain ko** (*Rice is what I ate* or, literally, *Rice the article ang ate I*).

The affix **-um**, like the affix **-mag**, is therefore used in sentences that are similar to the active voice in English because the actor or doer is the subject. However, the translation of the English “active” voice into Filipino is different. The “active” English words are usually translated to the Filipino passive and vice versa. (More explanation on the active and the passive voice later.)

Verbs, however, unlike verbs in Spanish or French, do not change because of gender or formality.

In many grammar reference books, verbs change according to number. However, according to official Tagalog grammar (as noted by Aspillera), not changing the verb does not make the sentence incorrect or ungrammatical.¹

Thus, in everyday Filipino, speakers do not bother to conjugate verbs according to number.

Here is an example of verb change according to number:

Singular : **Umawit ang bata ng Bayang Magiliw.**

The child sang the National Anthem.

(Literally, Sang the child *linker* National Anthem.)

Plural : **Nagsi-awit ang mga bata ng Bayang Magiliw.**

The children sang the National Anthem.

(Literally, Sang the children *linker* National Anthem.)”

2. Voice

The passive voice is more commonly used in Filipino.

For example, in English, one usually says, “I drink coffee every day.” In Filipino, it is awkward to say **Ako ay umiinom ng kape araw-araw**. The direct translation of that is “I am drink *ligature ng* coffee every day.”

Usually, we say, **Umiinom ako ng kape araw-araw**. The direct translation of this is “Drink I *ligature ng* coffee every day.”

The active voice, however, is used in written Filipino, especially when the writer wants to adopt a more formal tone.

3. Tenses/Aspects

a. Basic Tenses/Aspects

There are two views about the tenses/aspects. In Aspillera 1980, which has the clearest and simplest explanation of grammar rules, there are five tenses: imperative, infinitive, past, present and future. In Ramos 1985 and Schacter 1972, as well as in the Southeast Asian Site (SEAsite) project of Northern Illinois University (www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Taglog_mainpage.htm),

1. The grammar books are looking at Tagalog/Filipino from the “linguistic” scholar’s point of view. Aspillera shares the “official grammar rules” according to the Institute of National Language.

however, it is argued that Tagalog² is concerned more with “aspect” rather than “tense.” These three aspects are:

Completed (or perfective)	Incompleted (or imperfective)	Contemplative
similar to the past tense; refers to an action that has started and has finished	similar to the present tense; action that has started and has yet to finish	similar to the future tense; action that has not started

EXAMPLES: **Nanood ako ng sine kahapon.**

I watched a movie yesterday.

Nanonood ako ng sine linggo-linggo.

I watch movies every week.

Manonood ako ng sine bukas.

I will watch a movie tomorrow.

The aspects are difficult only because of what has been discussed as the intrinsic character of Filipino verbs—that their suffixes change depending on the focus. The question that immediately confronts you as a learner is this: Which suffix should I use? Let us take, for example, **-mag** and **-um** verbs. There is no clear explanation as to when to use **-mag**, when to use **-um**, and when one can use both. Aspillera only clarifies that in cases when a verb can use both, **-mag** verbs usually clarify frequency of action. Thus, the learner has to memorize which suffix matches with a particular verb.

However, there is a “formula” for conjugation corresponding to each suffix enabling you to easily navigate the conjugation process.

As an example, let us look at the **-um** suffix as used with the root word **langoy**, “to swim”:

For completed or past tense/form, we use the formula:

-um before the first vowel of the root word + the root word =
lumangoy

For incomplete or present tense/form, we use the formula:

First two syllables of completed or past tense/form + root word =
lumalangoy

For contemplative or future tense/form, we use the formula:

First syllable of root word + root word =
langoy

2. Note that in these books the language being taught is called Tagalog. This is because the grammatical rules for Tagalog were standardized first. Filipino is considered to be an “evolving” language, and it is only in recent years that linguists in the Philippines have been working on its standardization. However, Filipino learners are advised to learn the grammatical rules of Tagalog.

b. Using the Imperative and Infinitive Forms of the Verb

Like the aspects and tenses above, the conjugation of the verb depends on the suffix used, so the difficulty lies in choosing the suffix. However, there are “formulas” that we can use.

For example, for the suffix **-um**, the formula is:

-um before the first vowel + root word.

Thus, the verb **langoy** “to swim” becomes **lumangoy** in both the imperative and infinitive forms.

Note also that in Filipino, the verb should be accompanied by a pronoun.

EXAMPLE: **Lumangoy ka!** *Swim!* (Literally, Swim you!)

The infinitive, however, is used only with helping verbs or when preceded by the marker **ang** to form a subject.

c. Recent Perfective Aspect of the Verb

The recent perfective aspect expresses action completed just before speaking. It is equivalent to both the past perfect and present perfect tense. However only actor-focus verbs are inflectable for the recent perfective aspect and only if they use one of the following suffixes: **-um**; **ma-**; **maka**; **mag-**; **magpa-**; **mang-**. Again, each suffix has a corresponding formula. For example, for the suffix **-um** illustrated above, the formula is:

ka + first syllable of root word + root word.

Thus **langoy** becomes **kalalangoy**.

Inflectional Features

1. Case Systems

For clarity, this explanation is divided into the following sections: verbs, pronouns, nouns, adjectives, and case markers. Of the following sections, perhaps the most helpful is section “e” on case markers. Although case systems usually refers to nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, I include here a discussion of Ramos’s approach to the case system of Tagalog verbs because the verb is considered to be “central” to all discussions on Tagalog/Filipino grammar.

a. Verbs

The study which has the most impact on case systems with regards to verbs in the Tagalog language is Teresita Ramos’s “The Case System in Tagalog Verbs” (Pacific Linguistics Series B 27). Linguists Joseph Kess, Paul Schachter, and Paz Naylor Buenaventura have published reviews that have praised the study,

but have also pointed out its limitations. I share the study here because it does allow the Filipino learner to understand Tagalog grammar.

According to Kess, Ramos's use of the term "case" derives from Blake's use of the same term to point out syntactic-semantic relations which are not directly tied to the formal means of expression. Ramos identifies two types of case: the inherent and the non-inherent. The inherent type is determined by the central meaning of the verb, resulting into a classification of verbs: the agentive, the objective, the directional, the locative and the instrumental cases. Moreover, she breaks down the cases into sub-classes. For example, the agentive case is broken down into the agent as undergoer and the agent as non-undergoer. The objective case, meanwhile, has ten subcases. This, in Kess's point of view, is most productive because we understand better what were previously considered overlapping types.

Kess gives an example (2000): "Thus certain verbal sentences like '**Nagutom ang pusa**' [meaning "The cat got hungry" or, using the word order of this sentence, "Got hungry the cat"]³ can be construed as exhibiting an objective case, but [-patient] and [+ experiencer]. '**Ang pusa**' is considered as the referent which actually appears carrying these objective feature designations, even though it appears as the surface subjectalized item. On the other hand, in an actor focus or active voice analysis, one could not explain this semantic fact. There was no such way that one could bend the interpretation of such sentences to see their subjects as agents or agent-like subjects in any 'active' or 'focus upon the actor' 'sense.'"

The last two chapters in Ramos's book deal with Surface Case Forms in Noun Phrases and Surface Manifestations of Tagalog Cases. In the sixth chapter, Ramos discusses case-marking particles. In the last chapter she points out that the "choice of a particular noun as subject is restricted to the inherent cases that occur obligatorily with the verb."

b. Pronouns

As in English, there are three general case forms: the nominative, the possessive and the objective. However, for clarity, I am inclined to draw from Schachter and Otnes (1972). Their book *Tagalog Reference Grammar*, lists eight different categories of personal pronouns:⁴

- First person singular (**ako/ko/akin**), the only category that corresponds with the English (I/me/my/mine);
- Dual non-plural (**kata/nita/kanita**) corresponding to the English (we/us/our/

3. Translation mine.

4. The discussion on pronouns comes from Schachter and Otnes 1972.

ours) when the latter is used to refer to the speaker and a single individual addressed. However, note that this category is used in Tagalog, and not in contemporary Filipino as spoken by majority of the Filipino people.

- Second person singular (**ikaw/ka/mo/iyó**) used when addressing a person familiar to the speaker, or someone of the same age or stature.
- The special composite pronoun **kita** that combines the meanings of a first-person singular **ng** form and a second-person singular **ang** form. **Kita** occurs in the non-occurring sequences **ko ka** or **ka ko**. For example: **Mahal kita** (*I love you*) instead of saying **Ako mahal ka** (literally, I love you).
- Third person singular (**siya/niya/kanya**) used for both the masculine (he/him/his) and the feminine (she/her/hers) third-person singular when referring to people or pet animals.

Tagalog has no inanimate third-person pronoun and none which refers to animate creatures that are not human beings or pets. For example, in English we say: “The horse isn’t there. It is missing.” In Filipino, we say: **Wala roon ang kabayo. Nawawala.** (Literally, Not there the horse. Missing.)

- Both the first-person plural (**kami/namin/amin**) and the dual plural (**tayo/natin/atin**) correspond to the English first-person plural (we/us/our/ours). The difference in meaning between the two Tagalog categories is a matter of the composition of the groupings they designate. Thus the former may also be called the exclusive first-person plural, and the latter, the inclusive first-person plural, because it includes the person addressed.

For example, in Filipino, we say: **Nahanap namin ang susi.** and **Nahanap natin ang susi.** Both sentences can be translated as: “We found the key.” However, the literal translations of these two sentences are *Found us the key* and *Found we the key*.

- The second person plural (**kayo/ninyo/inyo**) corresponds to the English you/your/yours. This is also considered to be a “polite” form, used by children addressing adults, students to their teachers, superiors at the workplace, and strangers to each other. In informal conversation, **ninyo** is contracted to **n’yo**. Thus, this appears frequently in dramatic texts. However, when a person wants to be very formal, he/she should use **ninyo**. For example, this dialogue would occur between a student and a teacher (formal):

STUDENT : **Tingnan po n’yo ang libro.**

Look at the book. (Literally, Look *polite form po* the book.)

TEACHER : **Salamat.**

Thank you.

And this dialogue might occur between a senator and another senator in the Senate:

SENATOR 1 : **Tingnan po ninyo ang dokumento.**

Look at the document.

SENATOR 2 : **Salamat.**

Thank you.

The third-person plural (**silang/nilang kanila**) corresponds to the English (they/them/their/theirs). Like the third-person non-plural, it is strictly animate in reference.

To summarize, the most important points to remember are the following: First, that there is no equivalent for the English word “it.” In Filipino, we use **siya** when we refer to pets, or simply do not use a pronoun in the sentence. Second, that “we” in English corresponds to both **namin** and **natin** in Filipino. Third, that the plural form is used also to indicate respect for and unfamiliarity with a person.

c. Nouns⁵

Nouns, according to Alejandro (1947), are used in the nominative case as: subject, an attribute complement; an appositive modifier of a noun in the nominative case, a nominative of address; and as an exclamatory nominative.

In the objective case, they are used as: a direct object; as the object of a preposition; as an objective complement; and as an appositive modifier of a noun in an objective case.

Looking through the examples (which are my own but patterned after examples given by Alejandro), however, I believe that the sentences, although grammatically correct, seem awkward, and seem to be the “Tagalog” that is used in in old written texts or that which can be heard in films made in the 1950s. This could be because of the date his book was written. Thus, I have included with the following examples, more common sentence structures.

Informed by the discussions found in Kroeger, 1993, I wrote the examples bearing in mind that nominative case marks (**ang** and **si**) mark the subject (also expressed by Bloomfield, 1917; Blake, 1925; and Bell 1976). I also used examples with the preferred construction of the predicate followed by the subject.⁶

5. The section on nouns draws from the explanations of Rufino Alejandro in *A Handbook of Tagalog Grammar*, 1947. The examples are mine.

6. Schachter calls the subject the “topic.”

EXAMPLES:

1. As subject: **Ang guro ay nagbabasa.** *The teacher is reading.* (Literally, The noun “guro” is reading.)
More common would be **Nagbabasa ang guro.** (Literally, Reading the noun “teacher.”)
2. As an attribute complement: **Si Maria ay abugada na.** *Maria is now a lawyer.* (Literally, Marker noun “Maria” is lawyer now.)
More common would be **Abugada na si Maria.** (Literally, Noun “lawyer” now marker Maria.)
3. As an appositive modifier of a noun in the nominative case: **Si Juan, ang karpintero, ang nagtayo ng bahay.** *Juan, the carpenter, built this house.* (Literally, Marker noun “Juan,” the noun “carpenter,” marker built marker house.)
More common would be **Ang karpinterong si Juan ang nagtayo ng bahay.** (Literally, The noun “karpintero” linker⁷ marker noun Juan marker house.)
4. As a nominative form of address: **Doktor, ano ho ang hinahanap ninyo?** *Doctor, what are you looking for?* (Literally, Noun “Doctor,” what marker polite form **ho** looking you?)
5. As an exclamatory nominative: **Sunog! Sunog! Tawagin niyo ang bumbero!** *Fire! Fire! Call the firemen!*⁸ (Literally, Noun “Fire!” Noun “Fire!” Call you the fireman!)
6. As a direct object: **Naglinis ako ng kuwarto.** *I cleaned the room.* (Literally, Cleaned I marker noun “room.”)
7. As the object of a preposition: **Malinaw ang mga argumento ng kongre-sista.** *The congressman/congresswoman’s arguments are clear.* (Literally, Clear the plural marker arguments preposition marker congressman/congresswoman.)
8. As an objective complement: **Ang Korte Suprema ang nagpalaya sa kanya.** *It was the Supreme Court that set him/her free.* (Literally, The Supreme court marker set free marker him/her.)
9. As an appositive modifier of the noun in the objective case: **Si Maria ang tumulong kay Kulas na kapitbahay ko.** *Maria was the one who helped my neighbor Kulas.* (Literally, Marker Maria marker helped preposition Kulas linker neighbor my.)

7. The term *linker* here is interchanged with ligatures.

8. Literally, **bumbero** means fireman. To make it into the plural form, it should be **mga bumbero**. However, in everyday usage, Filipinos will only use the singular and not the plural.

d. Adjectives

Adjectives are inflected according to the following:

1. Number.

For the plural form, the first syllable of the root word is duplicated. However, in everyday usage, not duplicating the first syllable of the root word is acceptable. For example, **maganda** becomes **magaganda**:

EXAMPLES: **Maganda ang rosas.**

The rose is beautiful.

(Literally, Beautiful the rose.)

Magaganda ang mga rosas.

The roses are beautiful.

(Literally, Beautiful are the roses.)

The root word of the adjective **maganda** is **ganda**, meaning “beauty.” The suffix **ma-** is usually used to make to root word an adjective.

To emphasize the quantity, one repeats the first syllable of the number.

EXAMPLE: **Dadalawa ang rosas ko.**

I only have two roses.

(Literally, Only two *marker* roses my.)

To say “each,” we use the formula:

suffix **tig-** + first syllable of number + number

EXAMPLE: **Tigdadalawa kami ng rosas.**

We had two roses each.

(Literally, Each two we *linker* rose.)

2. Comparison.

To express equality, the suffixes **kasing-** or **magkasing** are used. To express a higher quality, the words **mas** or **lalong**, both meaning “more,” can be added before the adjective. For the superlative form, the prefix **pinaka-** is added. For example:

EXAMPLES: **Kasingganda ng rosas ang sampagita.**

The jasmine is as beautiful as the rose.

(Literally, As beautiful *linker* rose the jasmine.) or

Magkasingganda ang rosas at sampaguita.

The rose and the jasmine are equally beautiful.

(Literally, Equally beautiful the rose and jasmine.)

Mas maganda ang rosas sa bugambilya.

The rose is more beautiful than the bougainvillea.

(Literally, More beautiful the rose *marker* bougainvillea.)

Ang pinakamagandang bulaklak ay rosas.

The most beautiful flower is the rose.

(Literally, The most beautiful flower is rose.)

3. Intensity.

There are two ways of showing intensity. One is to repeat the adjective with the linker **ng** in between. If the adjective ends with a vowel, the adjective and the linker **ng** are contracted and a hyphen is put in between. Second, one can also use the suffix **napaka-**. For example:

EXAMPLES: **Magandang-maganda ang pelikula.**

The film was so good.

(Literally, Very good the film.)

Napakaganda ng pelikula.

(Literally, Very good *linker* film.)

4. Gender.

Some adjectives are inflected because of gender. An example is **ambisyosa** (feminine) and **ambisyoso** (masculine) meaning “ambitious”:

EXAMPLES: **Ambisyosa si Juana.**

Juana is ambitious.

(Literally, Ambitious *marker* Juana.)

Ambisyoso si Juan.

Juan is ambitious.

(Literally, Ambitious *marker* Juan.)

e. Case Markers

According to Kroeger’s *Phrase Structure and Grammatical Relations in Tagalog*, 1993, there are three morphological cases in Tagalog. These are the nominative case, which may be used for any argument role, depending on the affixation of the verb; the genitive case for possessors, actors, instruments, and indefinite objects; and the dative case, for goals, recipients, locations and direct objects.

The noun markers differ for nouns and personal names. Note that this is where Tagalog also differs from English, where there is no nominative marker for personal names.

	Noun	Personal names
Noun	ang	si
Genitive	ng	ni
Dative	sa	kay

Kroeger underscored that each verbal clause must contain only one nominative argument. Moreover, he reiterated what has been expressed previously in another section—that the thematic role of the nominative element is reflected in a verbal affix which he calls the voice marker.

Here are some examples:

EXAMPLES: **Kumain ang bata ng almusal sa kusina.**

The child ate breakfast in the kitchen.

(Literally, Ate *nominative marker ang* child *genitive marker ng* breakfast *dative marker sa* kitchen.)

Binigay ni Juan ang sulat kay Maria.

Juan gave the letter to Maria.

(Literally, Gave *genitive marker ni* Juan *nominative marker ang* *dative marker kay* Maria.)

Sumakay si Pedro ng bus sa istasyon.

Pedro rode on a bus at the station.

(Literally, Rode *nominative marker si* Pedro *genitive marker ng* bus *genitive marker sa* station.)

Possible Difficulties/Major Differences

In this section we'll reiterate some points, and in addition consider the difficulties experienced by my students.

- The existence of the nominal marker **si** for personal nouns.

EXAMPLE: **Matulungin si Ginang Rubin.**

Mrs. Rubin is helpful.

(Literally, Helpful *marker* Mrs. Rubin.)

Note also the absence of the “verb to be” in this sentence.

- Both the first-person plural (**kami/namin/amin**) and the dual plural (**tayo/natin/atin**) correspond to the English first-person plural (*we/us/our/ours*). The difference in meaning between the two Tagalog categories is a matter of the composition of the groupings they designate. Thus, the former may also be called the exclusive first-person plural, and the latter, the inclusive first-person plural, because it includes the person addressed. For example:

EXAMPLES:

Kami as first person plural: **Aalis kami ng bahay ng alas-singko.**

We will leave the house at 5:00.

(Literally, Will leave *marker* house *marker* 5:00.)

Tayo as dual plural: **Aalis tayo ng bahay ng alas-singko.**

We will leave the house at 5:00.

(Literally, Will leave *we marker* house *marker* 5:00.)

- Filipino has a dual pronoun—**kita**—used only in the passive form.

EXAMPLE: **Bibigyan kita ng pagkain.**

I will give you food.

(Literally, Will give I you *linker* food.)

- Adjectives are more inflected in Filipino than in English—occurring because of number, comparison, intensity, and even gender. However, in contemporary usage of Filipino, it is acceptable not to change the adjective according to number.

Relationship between Subjects and Objects

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between subjects and objects are shown through markers. However, we should note that the preposition **sa** can be used for the English prepositions *to, from, into, on, for* and *through*.

Language-Specific Possible Difficulties

The following language-specific grammar points, especially the complex system of affixes, are what make the language difficult for learners.

1. Complex system of suffixes.

The Tagalog/Filipino language uses suffixes for verbs, adjectives, and nouns.

Consider, for example, the root word **bili**, meaning “buy.”

As a verb, it is conjugated using the **-um** suffix: **bumili**, **bumibili**, **bibili** (“bought, buying, will buy”) if the focus is on the doer of the action. For the imperative form, we say **bumili**, and for the recent perfective aspect, we say **nakabili**. The prefix **naka-**, however, can also mean “was able to.”

EXAMPLES: **Bumili ako ng kape kahapon.**

I bought coffee yesterday.

(Literally, Bought I *linker* coffee yesterday.)

Bumibili ako ng kape linggo-linggo.

I buy coffee every week.

(Literally, Buy I *linker* coffee every week.)

Bibili ako ng kape bukas.

I will buy coffee tomorrow.

(Literally, Will buy I *linker* coffee tomorrow.)

Bumili ka ng kape.

Buy coffee.

(Literally, Buy you *linker* coffee.)

Nakabili ako ng kape.

I have bought coffee. or I was able to buy coffee.

(Literally, Have bought I *linker* coffee. or Was able to buy I *marker* coffee.)

However, if the focus is on **kape** or “coffee,” as indicated by the marker **ang** and the pronoun **ko**, then the suffix should be **-in**.

EXAMPLES: **Kape ang binili ko kahapon.**

Coffee is what I bought yesterday.

(Literally, Coffee *marker* bought I yesterday.)

Kape ang binibili ko linggo-linggo.

Coffee is what I buy every week.

(Literally, Coffee *marker* buy every week.)

Kape ang bibilhin ko bukas.

Coffee is what I will buy tomorrow.

(Literally, Coffee *marker* will buy I tomorrow.)

To modify the subject “coffee,” we use the suffix **-na**.

EXAMPLES: **Ang nabili kong kape ay masarap.**

The coffee I bought was delicious.

(Literally, *Marker* bought I coffee is delicious.)

Ang nabibili kong kape ay masarap.

The coffee I buy is delicious

(Literally, *Marker* buy I coffee is delicious.)

Ang mabibili kong kape ay masarap.

The coffee I will buy is delicious.

(Literally, The will buy I coffee is delicious.)

To express the means by which an action is brought about, we use the prefix **-i**.

EXAMPLES: **Ibinili ko ng kape ang nanay ko.**

I bought coffee for my mother.

(Literally, Bought I *marker* coffee *marker* mother my.)

Ibinibili ko ng kape ang nanay ko linggo-linggo.

I buy coffee for my mother every week.

(Literally, Buy I *marker* coffee *marker* mother my every week.)

Ibibili ko ng kape ang nanay ko bukas.

I will buy coffee for my mother tomorrow.

(Literally, Will buy I coffee *marker* mother my tomorrow.)

To show request, we use the suffixes **pa** and **nagpa** and the latter's conjugations **nagpabili**, **nagpapabili**, and **magpapabili**.

EXAMPLE: **Nagpabili ako ng kape sa kaibigan ko.**
I asked my friend to buy me coffee.
 (Literally, Asked to buy I marker coffee from friend my.)

To form an adjective, we use the suffix **pam-**.

EXAMPLE: **Ang perang ito ay pambili ko ng kape.**
This money is for buying coffee.
 (Literally, Marker money this is for buying I marker coffee.)

To form a noun, we use the suffix **pag-**.

EXAMPLE: **Ang pagbili ng kape ay nakagawian ko na tuwing Sabado.**
Buying coffee every Saturday has been a habit of mine.
 (Literally, The buying of coffee has been habit my **na** every Saturday.)

2. Word Order

In Filipino, the more natural way of speaking is to put the predicate before the subject. Thus, we say:

EXAMPLES: **Mataba ang pusa.**
The cat is fat. (Literally, Fat the cat.)

Instead of:

Ang pusa ay mataba.
The cat is fat. (Literally, The cat is fat.)

Or, using a verb:

Natutulong ang pusa.
The cat is sleeping. (Literally, Sleeping the cat.)

Instead of:

Ang pusa ay natutulong.
The cat is sleeping. (Literally, The cat is sleeping.)

Thus, the word **ay**, equivalent to is/are and was/were, is hardly used. Also, note that even in the past tense, should **ay** be used, it does not change. It is only the verb that changes through the suffix. Also, to reiterate, not using the plural form of the verb is also considered grammatical.

EXAMPLE: **Ang mga pusa ay nagsisitulong.**
The cats are sleeping.
 (Literally, The number marker cat are sleeping.)

3. Use of words and specific pronouns for formal and more formal language.

Ho and **oho** are inserted into the sentence to show respect and formality. **Po** and **opo** are considered to be the most formal way to address a person. The plural pronouns **inyo** and **ninyo** are used as well.

For example, when buying fruit at a store, the customer will usually use **ho**, because he/she is not familiar with the seller. A student will use either **po** or **ho** when speaking to his/her teacher. When giving a public speech, a speaker will use **po** to address his/her audience.

4. The Word “Na” as Both Linker and Expression of Time

The word **na** has two uses.

First, as a ligature or linker connecting the modifier to the word being modified. What is unique in the language, is that the modifier and modified can exchange place. When the modifier ends in a vowel it occurs as the suffix **-ng**. For words ending in “n,” **-ng** replaces the “n.”

EXAMPLES: **Pumasok ako sa maliit na gusali.**

I went inside the small building.

(Literally, Went inside I marker small linker building.)

Pumasok ako sa gusaling maliit.

I went inside the small building.

(Literally, Went inside I marker building linker small.)

Pumasok ako sa malaking gusali dahil sa malakas na ulan.

I went inside the big building because of the strong rain.

(Literally, Went inside I marker big linker building because marker strong linker rain.)

Pumasok ako sa gusaling malaki dahil sa ulang malakas.

I went inside the big building because of the heavy rain.

(Literally, Went inside I marker building marker big because marker rain linker heavy/strong.)

Second, **na** expresses the completion of an action or the immediate future completion of the action, similar to the English words “already” and “soon.” It is commonly used to help the verb with the suffix **naka-** to express the recent perfective tense in place of the verb “have,” and the future form of the verb to express the immediate future.

EXAMPLES: **Nakapunta na ako sa Manila Metropolitan Museum.**

I have been to Manila Metropolitan Museum.

(Literally, Have been na I marker Manila Metropolitan Museum.)

Nakaalis na ang bus.*The bus had just left.*(Literally, Had left **na** the bus.)**Aalis na ang bus.***The bus will leave soon.*(Literally, Will leave **na** the bus.) (Note: Because of the word **na**, we know that the bus will leave soon.)**5. Questions and the Word “Ba”**

Questions that can be answered by “yes” or “no” are marked with the word **ba** which changes its place in the sentence depending on the structure used.

In sentences where the focus is on the doer of the action, it comes immediately after the verb or the word **na**. It may or may not come after question words; both are grammatically correct. When **ba** comes between a helping verb and the principle verb, it is formed with a linker or ligature. When there is a pronoun in the sentence, it comes after the pronoun but before the principal verb, except with the pronoun **ka**.

EXAMPLES: **Aalis na ba ang bus?**

Will the bus leave soon?(Literally, Leave **na ba** the bus?)**Kailan ba aalis ang bus?**(Literally, When **ba** will leave the bus? or**Kailan aalis ang bus?***When will the bus leave?*

(Literally, When will leave the bus?)

Aalis ka na ba?*Are you leaving now?*(Literally, Will leave you **ba**?)**Aalis ba sila?***Are they leaving?*(Literally, Will leave **ba** they?)

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