**Filipino: A new language excursion**

**By Tom Thompson**

I went to Manila for an important business trip with the stakes, and the associated stress, much higher than other trips abroad. The biggest challenge of this particular trip was an oral presentation of twenty minutes or so to a mixture of high-level government leaders, as well as representatives from business and academics. My comments would be followed by a question and answer period. And I tried foolishly to confidently think that the answers might be good enough to promote collaborative discussion. Nothing, of course, was certain. I would speak in English, but, I’ve always found that a few polite words in the national language can go a long way toward building a good first impression.

I had been so busy to get ready for the trip that what I had done to learn a few whole sentences in Filipino was really minimal. I knew that there was an overabundance of Spanish-derived words due to Spanish occupation from 1565 to 1898, which included naming the islands Las Islas Philipinas after Spain’s King Felipe II. II hadn’t appreciated that many words derived from Spanish have particular meanings different from the original Spanish. An example is *siempre* in Spanish, meaning “always,” but *siyempre* in Filipino, meaning “of course.”

A friend, who is from the Philippines, had told me about “code-switching,” when Filipino and English are mixed, often with the English words Filipinized by using them with ilipino rules, and even verb conjugations. I found the practice to be surprisingly common. An example:

Sino ba ang magdadrive sa shopping center? (“Who will drive to the shopping center?”)

Then there’s the frequent appearance of the word “Ng” in Filipino, which means “of” in English. “Ng” is a letter combination found in lots of words, so the “Ng” sound is of extreme importance, and I’ll show you with an example or two in a minute.

Upon arrival in Manila, I was in a kind of linguistic panic. None of my smarty-pants observations about the language would help me speak even the simplest of sentences. So my solution was to choose a couple of sentences that I would really need for my presentation and memorize them parrot-like so that I could use one at the beginning of my comments, and then end with something else. Then I decided that, since I really liked the sounds of Filipino, I would take an extra day or two to take apart what I had memorized, and in the old-fashion tradition of the beginnings of my own “technical grammar,” I would build a growing arsenal of sentences.

What follows is a schematic of that effort, piece by piece, so to speak, with the sentences I used for my presentation. I owe lots of thanks to many of the warm and loving citizens of the Philippines, who crossed my path (I crossed theirs more often and no doubt got in the way of every- day life), and not once failed to energetically and patiently guide me through a new language. Their greatest gift was to seduce me into wanting very deeply to make great linguistic progress by the time of my next visit in a couple of months or so.

**MAGANDANG UMAGA (Good Morning)**

* **Magandang umaga** is a **direct translation** of **Good morning**.
* The literal translation is **beautiful morning** because **maganda**, Iiterally translated is **beautiful.**
* The breakdown is **maganda (adjective)** + **ng (suffix) umaga**
* **Ganda** is the root word which is a noun.

For example: Nagulat siya sa **ganda (noun)** ng bulaklak

He was surprised by the **beauty (noun)** of the flower

The prefix **“ma”** is added to make it an adjective 🡪 **Maganda**

The suffix **“ng”** is added to **maganda** because **maganda** ends with a vowel. The rule is, *“add* ***ng*** *to adjectives ending with a vowel, wherein the noun that it describes follows it”*

For example: masaya**ng** bata (happy child). The “ng” seems to appear often.

**SALAMAT SA INYONG PAGDALO (Thank you for being here.)**

* **"Salamat sa inyong pagdalo"** is a **direct translation** of **“Thank you for your attendance”**

Thank you for your attendance.

Salamat sa inyong pagdalo

* **Salamat** is used to express appreciation and gratitude towards a person. Though its equivalent in English has two words **“Thank(1) you (2),”** the reference **'you'** is already implied.
* **“For”** in this statement is the counterpart of **"sa"** in Filipino, which is a preposition that varies in different contexts. In this case, **"sa"** is used to show the relationship of purpose between the possessive pronoun **“your”** (plural in context) and the noun **“attendance”**. Although **“your”** is a possessive pronoun, it is used as an attributive adjective to **“attendance”**. Thus, you are thankful because they graced the event.
* The breakdown is:

Salamat sa inyong pagdalo.

Noun preposition inyo (root word) + ng (suffix) pag (prefix) + dalo (root word)

* **“Inyo”**, though possessive, can be used without an object of ownership.

For example: **“Gusto ko pumunta sa inyo”** means **“I want to go to your house / place”.**

As you can see, **inyo** is NOT followed by the noun for **house (bahay)**

By adding the prefix **“ng,”** you can now put the object of ownership. For example:

“Gusto ko pumunta sa **inyong** **bahay**”. Casually, you can say **“iyong”** (remove the letter “n” from “inyong”)

your house

* **“Pagdalo”** can be broken down as **pag (prefix)** and **dalo (root word)**
* **Dalo** when added with the prefix **pag** becomes a gerund. Gerunds are nouns that look like verbs because they end in “ing”.

**AKO AY MASAYA NA MAKASAMA KAYO (“I am very happy to be here with you.”)**

* **"Ako ay masaya na makasama kayo"** is a **direct translation** of **“I am happy to be with you”**

I am happy to be with you

* There are no other variants in Filipino for 'I' but only "Ako," which is a pronoun.
* "Ay" is a “be” verb in Filipino to express your state. It also used as “is”, “are”, “was”, and “were”.

For example:

Siya ay naglalaro (He/she is playing)

Sila ay naglalaro (They are playing)

Siya ay naglalaro kahapon (He/she was playing yesterday)

Sila ay naglalaro kahapon (They were playing yesterday)

* **"Masaya,"** is an adjective that is the counterpart of **“happy”.**It can be broken down as: “**Ma” (prefix)** and “**saya” (root word).** When the prefix **“ma”** is added to a root word (noun), it becomes an adjective.

For example:

Ma (prefix) + ganda (noun) = maganda (adjective)

Ma (prefix) + saya (noun) = Masaya (adjective)

* **"Na"** can be very confusing as it functions in so many ways in Filipino. Commonly, **"na"** is used either as an adverb of time or as an “adjective linker”. **“Kumain na siya”** 🡪 **“na”** further indicates that it happened in the past, apart from the *“mid-fix”* (suffix in the middle) “um” that also indicates that it happened in the past (In English grammar, there is no such thing is *“mid-fix.”)* An example of **“na”** as an “adjective linker” is “**Maganda na bata” (beautiful child)** which can also be said as **“magandang bata”**
* **"Makasama”** can broken down as **maka (prefix)** and **sama (rootword).** “Maka” when added to a rootword, especially a verb changes the meaning of the verb to mean specifically that the verb is done with another person.

For example:

**Laro** (play –noun/verb)

**Maglaro** (to play). For example: **“Gusto ko maglaro”** is **“I want to play”**

**Makalaro** (to play with). For example: **“Gusto ko makalaro si Tiger Woods”** is **“I want to play with Tiger Woods / I want to be able to play with Tiger Woods”**

* **"Kayo"** is the plural form of the pronoun “you”.

For example:

**Gusto ko makasama ikaw** means **I want to be with you (singular)**

**Gusto ko makasama kayo** means **I want to be with you (plural)**

**MAGANDANG ARAW SA INYO (“A good day to everybody”).**

* The explanation for the word **maganda** is already stated above (See explanations and examples).
* **Araw** is the **direct translation** of **day**. Its **literal translation** is **sun**. Clearly, the presence of the sun during daytime explains why the word day is the counterpart of **araw** in Filipino. This Filipino word is used as a noun in this sentence.
* As mentioned above, **“sa”** varies in different contexts. **“Sa”** in this statement is a preposition that means towards another. It should link with a point of reference in Filipino context.

For example:

Pupunta ako sa iyo (I will come to you)

Pupunta kami sa Maynila (We are going to Manila)

* Consequently, since **“sa”** should have a point of reference for this particular statement, the word **“inyo”** is used once again in reference to the people you are talking to. Again, **“inyo”**, though possessive, can be used without an object of ownership (as abovementioned). Inasmuch as we are not talking about ownership here but only point of reference, we use **“inyo.”**

**HANGGANG SA MULI NATING PAGKIKITA (“Until we meet again”).**

* **Hanggang sa muli nating pagkikita** is the direct translation of **Until we meet again**. There is no literal translation for this statement in Filipino as the intended meaning will be changed. ***(Warning: This is a complex one to explain.)***
* The sentence structure of this statement is different from that in English and in Filipino. Comparing the two, they are both not in a normal sentence order and either follows the inverted sentence pattern.
* **Hanggang** is a preposition that is the counterpart of **Until,** which means up to a point in time. These two are both used first in the order.
* **Sa muli** is the equivalent of **again** in English. Though two words are equal to just one word ***(“Sa” is for ‘to’ while “muli” is for ‘again’)***, we cannot literally translate **“sa muli”** into ***‘to again’*** as it will appear incorrect in English. Instead, we omit the ***‘to.’*** It may be implied in English to use only ***‘again’*** but in this Filipino statement, **“sa muli”** is preceded by **“hanggang”** which makes it imperative to still include **“sa”** in order to link it to **“muli.”**
* **Hanggang sa** always go together in different ways in Filipino. Normally, this double preposition ***(Hanggang = Until, Sa = to)*** speaks of direction or extent that functions as one. However, in English, both may be used in different ways.

For Example:

Lumakad ka hanggang sa dulo ng linya (Walk until the end of the line) - ***Direction***

Ang bata ay sumigaw hanggang sa mawalan siya ng boses (The girl shouted until she lost her voice) – ***Extent***

* **Natin** is a possessive pronoun that is a counterpart of **ours** in English.
* **Natin** is like **inyo.** The only difference is **natin** refers to *you and many people* whereas **inyo** refers to *only the many people you are referring to.* Apparently, both **natin** and **inyo** are in possessive pronouns.
* However, since the sentence order is changed from English to Filipino, we did not use ***our*** to refer to **natin**, but we used we that is followed by the main verb meet.
* Similar to **inyo**, **natin**, possessive in nature, functions as an attributive adjective to the noun **pagkikita**. Thus, reviewing the use of **“sa”** above, it shows the relationship of purpose between the possessive pronoun **“natin”** (plural in context) and the noun **“pagkikita”**. Although **“natin”** is a possessive pronoun, it is used as an attributive adjective to **“pagkikita”**.
* **Pagkikita** is a direct and literal translation for **meeting**.
* **Pagkikita** is a noun that is broken down into:

**Pag** – a Filipino prefix that is used to express a future condition (only in this case)

**Kita** – the root word that means meet

**Ki** – is a Filipino mid-fix taken from the first syllable of the root word to put emphasis on a future condition

* Going back to the Filipino sentence, **pagkikita** is attributed by and owned by **natin**. But since the sentence order is changed to express the intended meaning upon translation, it probably should be **Hanggang sa muli nating pagkikita.**

**Tom Thompson writes frequently on language-related topics.**