Title:
How to make a scene in Waray

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Abstract:

Waray is the sixth most widely spoken language in the Philippines, and is the major language spoken on Samar, Eastern Leyte and Eastern Biliran islands. In this paper we provide a fresh look at the system of verb morphology in Waray, taking a layered perspective, similar to that of DeGuzman (1978) for Tagalog. We identify two sets of morphological categories that are employed to construct a verb functioning as a predicate in Waray. These sets, which we name "Stem-forming" and "Perspectivizing" categories, correspond roughly to the traditional distinction between derivational and inflectional categories respectively, though these traditional labels are problematic for our purposes. Stem-forming categories are non-paradigmatic, i.e., they are functionally diverse, and several may occur simultaneously in a given verb form. Stem-forming categories express such functions as aspect (imperfective, iterative), actionality (pluraction, distributive, attenuative), and valence (causative, applicative, reciprocal), among others. Perspectivizing categories, on the other hand, are paradigmatic, i.e., they are restricted to exactly two well-defined dimensions -- transitivity and modality, and one and only one Perspectivizing category completes a fully independent verb. This approach precludes the necessity of positing circumfixes, ambi-fixes, or multifixes, with such forms as ginhatagan 'gave to' consisting of a root hatag, plus a Stem-forming suffix -an, creating a stem hatagan 'give to'. This stem then receives the Perspectivizing prefix gin-, thus forming a complete verbal predicate. While certain combinations of Stem-forming and Perspectivizing categories are more common than others, there are few absolute cooccurrence restrictions. What restrictions do exist are semantically motivated (e.g., a requirement that imperfective aspect be accompanied by iterativity for inherently punctual events). We document, exemplify and argue for thirteen Stem-forming and thirteen Perspectivizing categories based on a large corpus of natural spoken and written discourse. Together, these sets of morphological categories provide a rich and very efficient communicative resource for Waray speakers and writers.