

# Verbal Function and Valency in Kinamayu Dialect of Surigao del Sur, Philippines

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**Abstract:** *Function and valency of verbs are two of the unexplored features of Kinamayu dialect in Surigao del Sur, Philippines; hence, this study attempts to analyze and describe the syntactic structure and features of sentences in Kinamayu by focusing on the interface level between the verb and its syntax. This corpus-based study is qualitative in nature. It examines the corpus taken from legitimate key informants who were chosen through purposive sampling procedure. Data were sourced out through interviews, focus group discussion and direct elicitation. Findings revealed the distinctive syntactical features of Kinamayuw which are dictated by the verbs used. One of which is that Kinamayu is a verb initial language with the verb functioning as the head of the structure placed in the initial position of the sentence. Kinamayu also allows a verbless sentence structure particularly in sentences linking the subject to its complement. Kinamayu is also unique as it is one of the few languages in the world which can be classified as pro-drop or null subject languages allowing the dropping of subject, and whereby verbs can appear alone in the sentence. This is made possible through one of the types of valency of verb known as avalent. Other types of verb valency also uncovered in Kinamayu are monovalent, divalent and trivalent. The study concludes that Kinamayu verbs as the head of the structure exhibit lexicosyntactic property which dictate the existence and number of arguments in the sentence.*

**Keywords:** Kinamayu, Syntax, Valency, Verbal Function, Verbs

## 1. Introduction

The advent of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippine educational setting calls for a comprehensive and refined documentation of the local languages spoken in various regions and provinces in the country specifically in terms of its grammatical and orthographic rules. However, problem arises as most minor languages in the Philippines remained unexplored and barely studied (Dumanig, 2015). This problem pervades in the province of Surigao del Sur where plurality of languages is very prevalent and documentation of such languages is deemed scarce. It is in this context that the researcher is prompted to analyze and describe the syntactic structures in Kinamayu language, one of the minor languages spoken in certain places in the aforesaid province.

Kinamayu is considered to be a distinct dialect. Bucjan, M. (2017) who analyzed the morphemes and phonemes in Kinamayu words concluded in her study that the dialect is distinct and has its own characteristics. As a matter of fact, Kinamayu as a dialect has also different variations as used in the different municipalities in Surigaodel Sur. Saranza (2014) noted variations in Kinamayu dialects in terms of phonological and morphological processes. She also added that the areas of peculiarities are primarily associated to geographical distribution. Meanwhile, in another study conducted by Bucjan, E. (2017) on Kinamayu verbs, he described the dialect as unique and dynamic.

While the above-cited studies have established the distinctness and uniqueness of Kinamayu language, its conclusions however are only limited to the premises of phonology and morphology. It did not cover the dynamics of Kinamayu language on the basis of its syntactic structures

through an analysis of a much lengthier discourse as compared to mere phonemes and morphemes. This syntactic analysis of Kinamayu dialect is the primary intent of this study.

A comprehensive analysis of the syntactic features of Kinamayu language would be very essential for two equally important reasons: pedagogical and cultural. Pedagogical as the results of this study would serve as baseline data for curriculum planning and instructional decisions relevant to the implementation of the MTB-MLE in the landscape of basic education. Specifically, a research-based instructional material in the teaching of Kinamayu could be designed and developed through this study. Finally, in the cultural aspect, apparently, the analysis and documentation of this language would be instrumental for the preservation of the culture of the Kamayu community and strengthen the people's socio-cultural awareness.

## 2. Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework

This study theorizes that Kinamayu language is linguistically describable through the interface level between its verbs and its syntax. This means to say that the verb used in the lexicon subsequently dictates the syntactic structure of Kinamayu sentences through the type of verb used in the sentence.

This assumption is mainly anchored on valency grammar theory as proposed by Tesniere (1953). This theory holds that many lexical items exhibit a particular kind of dependency properties. This kind of lexicosyntactic property involves the relationship between the different subclasses of word-class such as verb and the different structural environments including the types of elements required by

those subclasses. Valency, therefore, is the capacity a verb has for combining with particular patterns of other sentence constituents.

The theory of valency is also related to dependency grammar theory by the same author which assumption states that a sentence is an organized whole; its constituent parts are the words and these words are no longer isolated but have certain connections. The structural connections establish relations of dependency among words.

Another important theory where this study is pegged is Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory which argues that all human languages have a common structural basis. This set of rules are known as universal grammar. Thus, the syntactic structure found in many languages across the world may also be true in Kinamayu. Relevant to this theory on the universal sentence structure in many languages is the X-bar theory. This theory simply proposes that every phrase in every sentence in every language is organized the same way. According to this theory, the maximal projection is composed of a minimal projection headed by a certain syntactic unit. In the case of the present study, the head of the minimal projection is the Kinamayu verb.

Verbs in various languages demonstrate certain valency. This means that the lexical items found in a particular structure is dependent upon the type of verb used in the sentence. Similarly, in the case of Kinamayu language, this study proposes that verbs in this language in Mindanao exhibits lexicosyntactic property that allows the structural patterns that exist within the sentence. This goes to show that certain structural combinations occur within a sentence because of the type of verb used in the Kinamayu discourse.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

This linguistic study aims to analyze and describe the syntactic structure and features of sentences in Kinamayu language focusing on the interface level between the verb and its syntax. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1) Describe how verbs function in Kinamayu sentences; and
- 2) Identify the type of valency used in the sentence.

### 4. Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. Chambers (1985) argues that for in-depth information on a phenomenon, qualitative approach is the best. Thereby, in order to draw the valency of Kinamayu verbs, this study employed content analysis requiring a thorough and exhaustive analysis of the transcribed responses of the key informants. This research is a corpus-based study which utilized a corpus of the Kinamayu language collected from field report via interview, focus group discussion and elicitation from the Kinamayu people.

The study included the locals of the Kinamayu speaking municipalities of San Agustin, Lianga, Barobo, and Hinatuan as key informants in the study. According to Creswell (2006) and Polkinghorn (2008), a qualitative data can be taken from a research participants from 5-25. This sample size is enough basis for analysis especially when you

reach to saturation of data. Kombo and Tromp (2006) also point out that, linguistic studies do not require the statistical analysis of hundreds of speakers' records. They say that variation can emerge even from samples as few as twenty five speakers.

To pick the initial subjects, purposive sampling was employed as part of a multistage sampling procedure. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define purposive sampling as a sampling technique that allows researchers to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of the study. In the selection of participants, a set of criteria was used to achieve the purpose of the study. Participants of the study were those living in the community for fifty years and above and speak Kinamayu fluently. From the purposively selected sample, snow ball sampling technique was then employed to arrive at the exact sample; in snow-balling, the few subjects already identified, name others that they know have the required characteristics until the data are already saturated. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) say that snowball technique is useful when the population that possesses the characteristics under study is not well known. Aside from that, convenient sampling was also employed by selecting the recommended participants whom the research have direct access with. Thus, for direct and easy access, all the participants included teachers; all of whom are fifty years old and above, and speak Kinamayu fluently.

In collecting the data to meet the objectives of the study, the researchers used three data collection techniques: interview, focus group discussion and elicitation. The informants in their groups participated in narrations, dialogues, descriptions of events among other activities about their daily routine as teachers. The researcher used field notes and audiotape recording to collect raw data as the activities progress. Tape recording reduces the tendency of selective data collection, and also allows for play back which facilitates better data analysis.

Use of more than one data collection method is in accordance with a data collection principle which states that inclusion of multiple sources of data collection in a research project is likely to increase the reliability of the observations. Denzin (1989) coined the term triangulation to refer to the use of multiple methods of data collection. The underlying assumption is that, because various methods complement each other, their respective shortcomings can be balanced out. Hence, this study employed not only interview but as well as focus group discussions and direct elicitation. Elicitation refers to the process of collecting linguistic data by asking native speakers to produce words, phrases or sentences that can serve as data for analysis of a particular linguistic phenomenon. It is often used in broader sense to mean generally making data available for collection. Since linguistic elicitation is artificial even under the best of circumstances (Samarin, 1967) for purposes of this study, it was used as a backup method, a means of filling in gaps in the data. The researcher prepared a list of specific questions that he wanted to ask the key informants in order to obtain data for hitherto unexplored areas of grammar or to clarify problems that had come up when analyzing the results of

preceding sessions.

Data collected from the interviews, focus group discussions and elicitation were transcribed and sentences with syntactic relevance to the present study were extracted and subjected to exhaustive analysis. Analysis included identification of the verb in the structure and its arguments and proceeded to the identification of its valency. The findings gleaned from the data were then put vis-à-vis with the structure of English sentences to deduce differences and distinct characteristics of Kinamayu.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### Function of Verbs in Kinamayu Sentences

Just like any other languages in the world, verbs are also considered as the nucleus in Kinamayu sentences. In most Kinamayu sentences, its structure is dictated by the type of verb used. In the following examples, it could be seen that verbs head the structure of the sentence.

1. *Ingtapusku ingkanakmgatrabahuun.*  
[I finished all my works.]
2. *Gahuya kami duulsaiskuylahan.*  
[We live near the school.]
3. *Mag-iskuylaakunangkanakmasteral.*  
[I will pursue my master's degree.]
4. *Magabaktaslang kami kadaadlawpasingudsaiskuylahan.*  
[We just hike every day going to school.]
5. *Yagbagulbulingupudsamadaigaynatrabahuun.*  
[Others were complaining about the voluminous works.]

In the above sentences, it could be gleaned that the verb as the head of the structure introduces the sentence. The Kinamayu verbs *ingtapus* (finished), *gahuya* (live), *mag-iskuyla* (will pursue), *magabaktas* (hike), and *yagbagulbul* (were complaining) are all placed at the head position of the sentences. This goes to show that Kinamayu language is a verb-initial language where verbs are placed in the initial position of the sentence and precede the subject which appears after the verb. This makes Kinamayu different from that of the normal word order in English sentences where the subject appears before the verb as in the sentence: *I finished all my works*. In this English sentence, the verb *finished* appears after the subject *I*.

From this, it can be deduced that Kinamayu dialect is one of the few languages in the world that follow the verb-initial word order. In syntax, verb-initial word order is a word order where the verb appears before the subject and the object in the sentence. According to Clemens and Polinsky (2015) verb-initial languages constitute a diverse group from different language families including the Austronesian languages in Southeast Asia in which Kinamayu is identified with. Verb-initial languages are estimated to make up 12 – 19% of the world's languages (Russell, 1986). From the given examples above, it can be deduced that Kinamayu is predominantly verb initial. However, verb initial structure is not necessarily obligatory as there are still Kinamayu sentences which do not require this word arrangement.

This verbal position in Kinamayu sentences is similar to that of other Filipino languages like Tagalog and Bisaya. In Filipino, this positioning of the verbs is referred to as *karaniwangayosngpangungusap* or the conventional/typical word order of sentences where the verbs precede the subject like in the following examples:

Tagalog: Tinaposkoanglahatngakingtrabaho.

V S

Bisaya: Gitaposnakoangtanatrabahonako.

V S

In both sentences in Tagalog and Bisaya, the verbs *tinapos* and *gitapos* are all placed before the subjects similar to that of the Kinamayu sentences presented previously. It should be noted however that in Filipino dialects like Tagalog, Bisaya and even Kinamayu, subjects preceding the verbs are also possible as in the following examples:

Kinamayu: Ingtapakmgatrabahuunkayingtapusku.

S vp V

Tagalog: Anglahatngakingtrabahoayintinaposko.

S vp V

Bisaya: Angtanatrabahonakokaygitaposnako.

S vp V

As it can be observed in these three sentences of Filipino dialects, the verbs *ingtapus*, *tinapos*, and *gitapos* are all found after the subject of the sentence. Worth noticing also in these sentences is the use of the verb particle (vp) *kayin* Kinamayu and Bisaya, and *ay* in Tagalog which made the rearrangement of the subject and verb possible. In Filipino, this sentence word order is termed as *di-karaniwangayosngpangungusap*; and although these sentences are acceptable and syntactically correct, this however is rarely and is hardly used in normal conversations. The *karaniwangayosngpangungusap* is the sentence pattern that is often used in actual conversations. But no matter the structure is, verbs are important part in most Kinamayu sentences just like any other language.

Interestingly, what is unique about Kinamayu is that unlike English, a verbless sentence structure is also possible as in the following sentences:

*Maestraaku.* [I am a teacher.]

*Matigamyaannamaestru.* [He is a knowledgeable teacher.]

*Masinabtanuningkanami principal.* [Our school principal is understanding.]

*Cynthia ingkanakngaran.* [My name is Cynthia.]

*Madayawyaansamgaestudyante.* [She is good to her students.]

These sentences link subjects to its complement in the predicate position. As shown in these Kinamayu sentences, they do not contain any verb unlike its English counterpart where the linking verbs *am* and *is* are really required. For example, the Kinamayu sentence *Maestraaku* could be translated in verbatim as *Teacher I*; *Matigamyaannamaestru* as *Knowledgeable he teacher*; *Masinabtanuningkanami principal* as *Understanding the our principal*; *Cynthia ingkanakngaran* as *Cynthia the my name*; *Madayawyaansamgaestudyante* as *Good she to students*.

This structure in Kinamayu sentences does not use any linking verb or verb particle; however, this verbless structure is perfectly acceptable in Kinamayu syntax but is not possible in English syntax which definitely requires a linking verb to combine subject to its complement.

**Verbal Valency in Kinamayu**

Valency or valence refers to the number of arguments controlled by content verbs. Unlike subcategorization and transitivity, valence counts not only object arguments but also the subject as one of the arguments. Verbs in Kinamayo also demonstrate valency, thus controlling the number of arguments in the sentence. This valency of Kinamayo verbs come in several types.

**Avalent**

The first type of valency is avalent or the impersonal verb. In this type of valency, the verb does not require any argument as in the following example.

e.g. *Gauran*. [It rains. / It is raining.]

*Yagtaligsik*. [It was drizzling.]

*Magbaha*. [It will flood.]

In the above sentence, the Kinamayo verb *gauran* can stand alone as a sentence even without a subject argument as compared to its English translation which requires the subject 'it'. The same is true with *yagtaligsik* and *magbaha*. In these expressions, there is a null subject embedded in the verbs; thus, the corpus *gauran*, *yagtaligsik*, and *magbaha* are still considered a complete utterance. With this covert presence of subject in the sentence but is still grammatically acceptable, Kinamayo therefore is one of the languages in the world which can be considered as pro-drop or null-subject languages. Languages classified as pro-drop or null-subject are those which do not require clauses to have an overt subject when the subject is easily inferred, that is, a verb can appear alone in the sentence (Barbosa, 2011).

**Monovalent/Monadic**

Another type of valency is known as monovalent/monadic. This type of valency takes only one argument which is the subject of the sentence.

e.g. *Gatudluya*. [He is teaching.]

*Maturugaku human klase*. [I will sleep after classes.]

*Yagtiyahuingistudyanti*. [The student was crying.]

*Gatrabahuing principal nangmadayaw*. [The principal is working well.]

*Yagbagulbulingupud*. [Others are complaining.]

In the given sentences, the verbs have only one argument which is its subject. *Yaanis* the subject argument for the verb *gatudlu*; *akofor* the verb *maturug*; *istudyantiforyagtiyahu*; *principal for* *gatrabaho*; and *upud* for the verb *yagbagulbul*. These verbs do not require any object argument; thus, verbs which are monovalent are considered as intransitive verbs.

**Divalent/Dyadic**

The third type of valency is referred to as divalent or dyadic. This valency takes two arguments – one is the subject and the other is the object as shown in the following examples.

e.g. *Gatudluakunang science*. [I am teaching science.]

*Yagpabasaingmaistranangmgaisu*. [The teacher let the students read.]

*Ganahan kamimagtudlu*. [We love teaching.]

*Magkamangyaannanglibru*. [He will get the book.]

*Galisudyaanpagtudlu*. [He found it hard to teach.]

In the sample sentences above, all the verbs require both subject and object as arguments for the sentences to be grammatically plausible. *Gatudlu* takes the subject *aku* as one of its arguments, and *science* as its object argument. In the second sentence, *yagpabasa* has the subject argument *maistra*, and *mgaisu* as its object. *Kami* in the third sentence is the subject argument of the verb *ganahan*, and *magtudlu* which functions as a gerund is its object. Meanwhile, *yaanis* the subject argument for the verb *magkamang* while *libru* is its object argument. Finally, the verb *galisud* takes the subject *yaan* and object *pagtudlu*. Verbs of this type of valency require an object to complete the meaning of the sentence. The words *science*, *mgaisu*, *magtudlu*, *libru*, and *pagtudlu* all answer the question what or who to complete the transitivity of the divalent/dyadic verbs which are also called as transitive verbs. As manifested in the sentences above, these transitive verbs are characterized by the obligatory presence of two non-prepositional arguments: a subject and a direct object. This type of verb assigns an accusative case to its direct object while its subject is assigned a nominative case. The verbs in the above sentences not only assign grammatical function to its arguments but as well as thematic roles (TR). The grammatical functions and thematic roles of divalent verbs assign to its verbs are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Grammatical Functions and Thematic Roles (TR) Divalent Verbs Assign to its Arguments

Sentence	Verb	Subject (Nominative)	Object (Accusative)
<i>Gatudluakunang science.</i>	gatudlu	aku TR: agent	Science TR: theme
<i>Yagpabasaingmaistranangmgaisu.</i>	yagpabasa	maistra TR: agent	Isu TR: goal
<i>Ganahan kami magtudlu.</i>	ganahan	kami TR: experiencer	Magtudlu TR: theme
<i>Magkamangyaannanglibru.</i>	magkamang	yaan TR: agent	Libru TR: theme
<i>Galisudyaanpagtudlu.</i>	galisud	yaan TR: experiencer	Pagtudlu TR: theme

Table 1 shows that these divalent verbs assign an *agent* or *experiencer* role to its subject arguments. Meanwhile, its object arguments take a *theme* and *goal* thematic role.

#### Trivalent/Triadic

Other Kinamayo verbs require not only one or two arguments but three arguments. This valency of verb is called trivalent or triadic verbs as in the following examples.

e.g. *Yag-isplikaryaannangkunsiptusamgaisu.*

[She explained a concept to the students.]

*Magpalitingmaistranangt.v. para sakanaanmgaisu.*

[The teacher will buy television for her students.]

*Gahatagingmaistrunangregalusakanaanprinsipal.*

[The teacher gave a gift to the principal.]

*Ingtumannaaningkanaansaadsakanaanmgaistudyanti.*

[He fulfilled his promise to his students.]

*Yakantaingkanaanmgaistudyantinangsunatapara kanaan.*

[Her students sang a song for her.]

As observed in the sentences above, the verbs contain three arguments. Similar to that of divalent verbs, trivalent verbs also assign grammatical functions to its arguments: nominative for its subject argument, accusative for its direct object, and added to these two is the indirect object which takes a dative function. Aside from these grammatical functions, trivalent verbs also assign thematic roles to its arguments. These grammatical and thematic role assignments are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Grammatical Functions and Thematic Roles (TR) Trivalent Verbs Assign to its Arguments

Sentence	Verb	Subject (Nominative)	Direct Object (Accusative)	Indirect Object (Dative)
<i>Yag-isplikaryaannangkunsiptusamgaisu.</i>	yag-isplikar	yaan TR: agent	kunsiptu TR: theme	Isu TR: goal
<i>Magpalitingmaistranangt.v. para sakanaanmgaisu.</i>	magpalit	maistra TR: agent	t.v. TR: theme	Isu TR: benefactive
<i>Gahatagingmaistrunangregalusakanaanprinsipal</i>	gahatag	mastru TR: agent	regalu TR: theme	Prinsipal TR: goal
<i>Ingtumannaaningkanaansaadsakanaanmgaistudyanti.</i>	ingtuman	naan TR: agent	saad TR: theme	Istudyante TR: goal
<i>Yakantaingkanaanmgaistudyantinangsunata para kanaan.</i>	yakanta	istudyanti TR: agent	sunata TR: theme	Kanaan TR: benefactive

As presented in the table, all the verbs have three arguments. One is assigned the nominative case in the subject position; the other as accusative case as direct object of the verbs; and the third argument is the indirect object in dative case. These arguments are assigned thematic roles: all subject arguments as agent and all direct objects as themes. The verbs, however vary in its selection of indirect object. The verbs *yag-isplikar*, *gahatag*, and *ingtuman* select a *goal* for an argument which are obligatory. On the other hand, the verbs *magpalit* and *yakanta* select a *benefactive* argument. These arguments are realized in a prepositional phrase headed by the preposition *para*. This benefactive argument however, is often optional. This type of verbs with triadic valency requiring two object arguments are also called as ditransitive verbs.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the data gathered in this study, the researchers conclude that Kinamayu language is a distinct language which demonstrates unique features which can be observed to only a few languages in the world. One of these distinctive features of Kinamayu is that it follows the verb initial word order where the verb appears before the subject and object in the sentence. The verb also heads the structure of the sentence; however, not all sentences require the presence of a verb. In fact, a verbless sentence is plausible in Kinamayu particularly in a complement – subject combination. This study further concludes that the verb being the head of the structure demonstrate lexicosyntactic property that allows the structural patterns that exist within the sentence specifically the existence and the number of the arguments in the sentence. This property is known as valency. Kinamayu verbs exhibit different types valency. One of these types is known as a valent verbs which requires

zero argument. This valency also makes Kinamayu unique which qualifies it to be one of the few languages in the world classified as pro-drop or null subject languages. Other types of verb valency in Kinamayu noted are monovalent with one argument, divalent with two arguments, and trivalent with three arguments. These findings may be utilized by MTB-MLE teachers for syntactical awareness to better understand Kinamayu syntax, thereby offering a more comprehensive input in teaching proper sentence construction in Kinamayu to its learners. The analysis made in this study however is only limited to the corpus taken from Kinamayu people in the teaching profession; hence, it is hereby recommended that future researchers extend its samples to Kamayu people in different walks of life to record a wide array of experiences as corpus for a richer analysis of Kinamayu syntax.

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