Cebuano-fied and Verbified: Tracing the Lexical Journey of *Kolor* in Cebuano Grammar

Danna Karyl Jane C. Talde

Faculty, Department of Languages and Literature, Central Mindanao University, Bukidnon, Philippines

email: f.dannakaryl.talde@cmu.edu.ph

Abstract:

This study examined the linguistic integration of the indigenized English verb "kolor" in Cebuano, focusing on its affixation patterns, grammatical voice and aspect, and communicative functions as used in grade school textbooks. Using a qualitative descriptive design, a corpus of 21 MTB-MLE Cebuano textbooks was taken as sources. All verb forms derived from "kolor" were identified, coded, and examined using frameworks from language contact theory, morphology, and Systemic Functional Linguistics. Findings show that "kolor" is morphologically productive, with forms like "ikolor," "nagkolor," "pagkolor," "kolori," "koloran," "gikoloran," and "nakoloran" reflecting native Cebuano affixation processes. These forms exhibit alignment with Cebuano's voice and aspect system, marking actor, object, and benefactive focus as well as completed and ongoing actions. In terms of communicative functions, "kolor" is used in a variety of contexts including directives, narratives, and explanations, indicating its versatility in instructional discourse. The study concludes that "kolor" is not a mere lexical borrowing but a fully integrated verb in Cebuano, both morphologically and functionally. Its usage in educational texts highlights the natural adaptation of English lexemes in Cebuano language, which reinforces the role of language contact in communication. Future studies may investigate similar borrowings across other content areas to further understand the contribution of indigenized English verbs in curriculum development and learner engagement in multilingual classroom communication.

Keywords:

Cebuano, Indigenized English, Kolor, Affixation Patterns, Language Contact, Morphology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamic interaction between English and Philippine regional languages has produced a rich field of lexical and grammatical innovations. In Cebuano, one of the most widely spoken regional languages in the Philippines, English words are frequently borrowed and adapted, especially in spoken discourse, media, and educational contexts. One striking feature of this contact is the transformation of borrowed English nouns into fully functioning Cebuano verbs through affixation. For instance, the English word color appears in Cebuano as *kolor*, which then takes on verbal forms—morphologically conforming to native grammatical structures. These forms appear not only in everyday speech but increasingly in classroom instructions and educational materials, signalling deeper structural integration.

Several studies have documented the increasing presence and integration of English loanwords in Cebuano, especially in media, education, and everyday communication. Rubino (1998) and Schachter and Otanes (1972) laid the groundwork for understanding Cebuano grammatical structures, particularly voice and aspect, which are key to analyzing indigenized verbs. Abastillas (2015) explored code-switching behaviors in Cebuano-speaking communities, revealing systematic differences in English integration depending on sociolinguistic context. Similarly, Sales (2022) and Justol (2018) found that English borrowings in Cebuano media and youth speech exhibit not just lexical but also syntactic and cultural adaptation. In educational materials, Echavez (2016) noted that loanwords have been morphologically adjusted to reflect native patterns, aligning with Nolasco's

(2005) and Martin's (2014) views on MTB-MLE's role in legitimizing mixed-language forms. Genon-Sieras (2020) further examined Cebuano news editorials, identifying consistent use of affixation and native grammatical rules in borrowed lexemes. Canoy (2023) emphasized how Cebuano retains focus-marking distinctions even when dealing with borrowed pronouns and verbs, while Talde and Lovitos (2023) highlighted semantic shifts in indigenized lexemes. Meanwhile, Bautista (2004), Gonzalez (1998), and Sibayan and Gonzalez (1996) described the broader sociolinguistic environment in which such blending occurs, noting how English evolves in postcolonial multilingual settings. Despite this robust body of work, few have focused on how a single indigenized English verb—like kolor—functions morphologically and communicatively in actual textbook discourse, marking a significant research gap this study aims to address. In other words, there remains a notable gap in exploring the grammatical behavior and communicative roles of these indigenized English verbs in Cebuano textbooks, especially in the formative years of language development. The case of the verb kolor—commonly used in instructions and narrations—presents a rich site for such an investigation.

This study aims to analyze the linguistic features of the indigenized English verb kolor in Cebuano. It seeks to (1) identify the morphological affixation patterns of the verb kolor; (2) determine its grammatical voice and aspect; and (3) explore the communicative functions that these affixed forms serve in textbook discourse. In doing so, the study hopes to contribute to the broader understanding of language change and educational language use in a multilingual society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The linguistic integration of English into Philippine languages, particularly Cebuano, is a prominent feature of language contact in the Philippines. Scholars like Thomason and Kaufman (1988) explain that lexical borrowing becomes deeper and more structural when the borrowed terms begin to take on grammatical functions consistent with the recipient language. In the case of Cebuano, an Austronesian language known for its rich affixation system, borrowed English words like *kolor* do not simply retain their base meaning but become morphologically and syntactically adapted to fit the language's verb system (Rubino, 1998).

Table 1. Cebuano Verb Affixation by Voice and Aspect *(adapted from Schachter & Otanes, 1972; Rubino, 1998; Nolasco, 2005)*

Voice / Focus	Completed (Past)	Progressive / Incomplete (Present/Imperfective)	Contemplated (Future/Intentive)	Example with *kolor*
Actor Focus	*mi-/ni-, nag-*	*nag-, mag-*	*mo-, mag-*	*nagkolor, magkolor*
Object (Patient) Focus	*gi-* + root	*gina-* + root	*pag-a-* + root	*gikolor, ginakolor*
Locative Focus	*-an, gi- -an*	*gina- -an*	*pag- -an*	*gikoloran, koloran*
Benefactive Focus	*i-*	*gina-i-*	*pag-i-*	*ikolor*
Instrumental Focus	*ipang-, gipang-*	*ginapang-*	*pagpang-*	*gipangkolor* (rare form)
Nominalized / Infinitive	*pag-*	*pag-*	*pag-*	*pagkolor*

Cebuano verbs operate within a **voice-focus system** and an **aspectual framework** that is distinct from Indo-European grammatical systems. As shown in Table 1, Cebuano affixation encodes both the **semantic focus** (e.g., actor, object, location, beneficiary) and **grammatical aspect** (completed, ongoing, or contemplated actions). For instance, the borrowed verb *kolor* can be marked for actor focus with *nag-* or *mag-* (e.g., *nagkolor, magkolor*), or for object focus using *gi-* (e.g., *gikolor, gikoloran*). These affixed forms demonstrate that *kolor* functions like a native Cebuano verb, undergoing productive derivation and appearing in various syntactic environments. This affixal versatility aligns with Aronoff and Fudeman's (2011) argument that a word is fully integrated when it conforms to the morphological rules of the recipient language.

The educational context also plays a key role in the normalization of such indigenized forms. According to Martin (2014) and Nolasco (2005), the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has encouraged the use of localized and familiar lexicon in textbooks, including English borrowings that have undergone morphosyntactic adaptation. In these materials, affixed forms like *kolori*, *pagkolor*, and *nakoloran* serve instructional purposes—either to guide learners (directive), narrate actions (narrative), or describe results (explanatory). Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics further supports this view by framing grammar as a system that responds to social and communicative needs; in this case, verb morphology adapts to support teaching goals.

Several Philippine linguists (e.g., Schachter & Otanes, 1972; Bautista, 2004; Gonzalez, 1998) affirm that the integration of English in local vernaculars like Cebuano is not a marker of linguistic corruption but rather a sign of creative and adaptive multilingualism. The emergence of verbs like *gikoloran* or *ikolor* illustrates how language users apply indigenous grammatical resources to foreign lexical material, creating hybrid forms that are semantically rich and pedagogically effective. The ability of *kolor* to appear in various focus and aspect forms affirms its status not merely as a borrowed term but as a fully indigenized and functional verb within Cebuano discourse.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a **qualitative descriptive design** to examine the morphological, grammatical, and communicative patterns of the indigenized English verb *kolor* in Cebuano. The aim is to explore how this borrowed lexeme functions within the verbal system of Cebuano and how it is used in instructional discourse. The qualitative design was appropriate for uncovering nuanced patterns of affixation, usage, and function that may not be captured through purely quantitative means.

The corpus consisted of **Cebuano grade school textbooks** currently used in public elementary schools in the Central Visayas region and most parts of Mindanao (Gempeso and Mendez, 2021). Textbooks in subjects such as Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), Mathematics, MAPEH (Music, Arts, PE, and Health), Social Studies, and Values Education were purposively selected, focusing on materials from Grades 1 to 3. Only those texts written in Cebuano and containing verbal forms of the word *kolor* were included. A total of seven instances of *kolor* in affixed verb forms were identified and manually extracted for close linguistic analysis.

The analysis was guided by **Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) Theory of Language Contact,** which explains how borrowed words undergo structural and grammatical integration in the recipient language. To explore morphological adaptation, the study also drew from **Aronoff and Fudeman's (2011) Morphological Theory**, while **Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)** by Halliday (1994) provided the framework for interpreting the communicative functions of each verb form in the textbook discourse. Data were coded according to affixation patterns, grammatical role (e.g., aspect, focus), and pragmatic function (e.g., instruction, narration), and were then thematically categorized to reveal patterns of usage in the educational context.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:
4.1 Morphological Patterns of the Indigenized English Verb *Kolor*

Table 2. Morphological Patterns of *Kolor*

Form	Affixes	Morpheme Breakdown	Affix Type(s)
ikolor	i-	i- + kolor	Prefix
nagkolor	nag-	nag- + kolor	Prefix
pagkolor	pag-	pag- + kolor	Nominalizing Prefix
kolori	-i	kolor + -i	Suffix
koloran	-an	kolor + -an	Suffix
gikoloran	gi- + -an	gi- + kolor + -an	Circumfix
nakoloran	na- + -an	na- + kolor + -an	Circumfix

Table 2 reveals that the English loanword *kolor* has undergone extensive morphological integration into Cebuano, exhibiting productive affixation similar to native Cebuano verbs. Seven distinct affixed forms were identified: *gikoloran, kolori, pagkolor, nagkolor, nakoloran, ikolor,* and *koloran*. These forms reflect common Cebuano verb structures, including prefixation (*nag-, na-, gi-, i-, pag-*), suffixation (*-i, -an*), and circumfixation (*gi-...-an, na-...-an*). This range of morphological constructions indicates that *kolor* functions flexibly within the Cebuano verbal system, adapting to various voices, aspects, and discourse needs.

These findings align with Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) assertion that lexical borrowings, especially in sustained contact situations, can undergo deep structural assimilation, especially when the recipient language has robust morphological productivity. Similar observations were made by Bautista (2004), who noted the full verbal adaptation of English roots in Filipino, and by Sippola and Vaattovaara (2016) in their study on affixation of borrowed verbs in contact languages. In the case of Cebuano, *kolor* clearly behaves as a naturalized verb, inflected for voice (actor vs. object), focus (locative, causative), and aspect (completed, progressive, imperative).

The presence of complex forms like *gikoloran* and *nakoloran* suggests not only surface-level lexical borrowing but also deep grammatical integration. These forms illustrate how Cebuano speakers manipulate the root *kolor* to fulfill specific syntactic and semantic roles, indicating a high level of morphological nativization. Unlike simple borrowings that remain invariable, *kolor* is processed through the full affixational system of Cebuano verbs, demonstrating its legitimacy within the language's grammar.

This degree of morphological flexibility has implications for how contact-induced lexical items evolve in bilingual societies. The case of *kolor* suggests that English loanwords do not merely supplement the lexicon but may become functionally indistinguishable from native vocabulary. Such findings contribute to the understanding of localized Englishes and support the argument that language contact results in dynamic hybridization rather than passive borrowing, particularly in morphologically rich languages like Cebuano.

4.2 Affixed Forms of *Kolor* Reflecting Cebuano Grammatical Patterns, Particularly in Voice and Aspect

Table 3. Voice and Aspect Patterns of the Indigenized Verb *Kolor* in Cebuano

Form	Voice / Focus	Tense / Aspect	Conforms to Cebuano Verb System?
ikolor	Object-Focus / Causative	Future-like / Directive	Yes
nagkolor	Actor-Focus	Progressive / Past	Yes
pagkolor	Nominal (gerund)	Infinitive / Action Noun	Yes
kolori	Object-Focus / Imperative	Command	Yes
koloran	Locative	General / Neutral	Yes
gikoloran	Object-Focus / Locative	Past (Completed)	Yes
nakoloran	Object-Focus / Locative	Completed / Involuntary	Yes

Table 3 shows that *kolor*, though borrowed, adheres to Cebuano's system of verbal grammar, particularly its complex voice and aspect system. Each form of the word reflects a specific grammatical role and follows Cebuano morphosyntactic rules. The forms express various actor- or object-focus constructions and grammatical aspects like *completed, progressive,* or *imperative,* showing that the borrowed verb is no longer foreign in usage but fully grammatically domesticated, as shown in the succeeding lines:

This supports the view of language contact scholars like Bautista (2004) and Poplack et al. (1988), who argue that grammatical assimilation is a key indicator of deep borrowing, particularly in languages with rich morphological systems. In Cebuano, voice and aspect are crucial in shaping verb meaning, and *kolor* clearly conforms to these constraints. For example, *gikoloran* shows locative-

object focus in the past, while *ikolor* reflects a causative, directive construction. The verb not only fits these patterns but also shows flexibility across them.

The consistent alignment of *kolor* with Cebuano voice and aspect patterns indicates that the borrowed verb is being used productively within native grammatical frames. This grammatical flexibility implies that speakers recognize and manipulate *kolor* as they would any Cebuano verb, demonstrating linguistic competence and structural assimilation. These uses are not isolated or formulaic but show pattern generalization, even with affix stacking as in *nakoloran*.

These findings suggest that borrowed verbs in Cebuano are not peripheral or constrained to fixed forms but are fully incorporated into the language's morphosyntactic architecture. This has broader implications in understanding the naturalization of English lexemes in Philippine languages: grammatical conformity signals deeper integration than mere lexical substitution. For language educators and linguists, this points to the evolving nature of the Cebuano lexicon and the fluid boundaries between native and borrowed forms.

4.3 Communicative Functions of the Affixed Forms of *Kolor* in Cebuano

Table 4. Affixed Forms of *Kolor* and their Corresponding Communicative Purposes

Form	Typical Function in Textbooks	Communicative Purpose
ikolor	Expressing future action or purpose (e.g., "…**ikolor** usab ang insaktong kolor sa kasunod niini" Grade II, Mathematics, p. 318)	**Command / Projected action**
nagkolor	Narrating example actions (e.g., "…si Tess **nagkolor** ug 4/8 sa laing square…" Grade III, Mathematics, p. 223	**Narrative / Illustrative**
pagkolor	Describing an activity or task (e.g., "Gamit og krayola sa **pagkolor**" Grade III, Mathematics, p. 296	**Informative / Expository**
kolori	Giving step-by-step instructions (e.g., "**Kolori** ang rectangle/square sa gihatag nga area sa square grid" Grade III, Mathematics, p. 296	**Directive / Instructional**
koloran	Talking about the place or scope of action (e.g., "**Koloran** ang hulagway gamit ang husto nga mga kolor" Grade II, MAPEH, p. 282)	**Directive/ Instructional focus**
gikoloran	Showing what was affected (e.g., "**Gikoloran** ni Carol ang ½ sa square…" Grade III, Mathematics, p. 223)	**Cause-and-effect / Emphasis on Object**
nakoloran	Describing result or experience (e.g., "…si Tess nagkolor ug 4/8 sa laing square aron magkapareha ang gidak-on sa ilang **nakoloran**" Grade III, Mathematics, p. 223)	**Outcome-oriented / Passive emphasis**

Table 4 showcases how various morphological forms of the indigenized English verb "kolor" serve distinct communicative purposes in Cebuano grade school textbooks. Each affixed form carries not only grammatical variation but also pragmatic intent. This guides learners in how to interpret, respond to, or reflect on the task or concept being taught. The form "ikolor," prefixed with *i-*, projects future or intended actions and is commonly used in instructions where learners are expected to carry out a task. For instance, in the sentence *"…ikolor usab ang insaktong kolor sa kasunod niini,"* the use of *ikolor* signals a required action following a drawing task, making it functionally aligned with commands or sequenced steps in an activity. Next, "nagkolor," using the *nag-* prefix, is employed in narrative examples, particularly in mathematical reasoning, such as showing what a learner or character is doing in a word problem. This form helps in illustrating an ongoing or habitual action, making abstract mathematical comparisons more relatable and concrete for young learners. Also, "pagkolor," the nominalized form using *pag-,* transforms the verb into an activity or concept, as in *"Gamit og krayola sa pagkolor."* This construction is expository, naming the activity itself and often appearing in instructions or lists of materials, emphasizing what is to be done rather than who does it.

Moreover, "kolori" and "koloran" both function as imperatives, yet with subtle differences. kolori, ending in -i, gives a direct command, often used in step-by-step instructions, while *koloran*, ending in *-an*, places emphasis on the location or range of the action, highlighting the target or scope to be affected by the action, such as a face to be shaded to show emotion. On the other hand, "gikoloran" (using *gi-...-an*) describes completed actions and emphasizes what was affected. For example, *"Gikoloran ni Carol ang ½ sa square"* shows which object received the coloring action, often used in scenarios comparing different contributions or outcomes. Finally, "nakoloran" represents a passive or resultative form, where the state or outcome of the

action is the focus, as in *"... aron magkapareha ang gidak-on sa ilang nakoloran."* This highlights the effects or end result of the coloring activity, which is especially relevant in tasks requiring comparison or evaluation.

Overall, these results demonstrate the rich pragmatic and instructional roles of the various affixed forms of *kolor*. These linguistic patterns not only exemplify Cebuano grammar in action but also highlight how pedagogical strategies are embedded in localized educational materials, in line with the principles of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The findings affirm that language contact is not a superficial phenomenon, but one that deeply shapes classroom communication. This reflects Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics, where language is seen as a resource for meaning-making, particularly in educational contexts where lexemes such as *kolor* are employed to instruct, direct, and explain. Moreover, this study illustrates the depth of lexical indigenization and its evolving role in educational discourse. It aligns with Sippola and Vaattovaara's (2016) assertion that indigenized lexemes acquire new communicative functions once fully embedded in local linguistic systems. Similarly, Thomason and Kaufman (1988) argue that contact-induced change may lead to structural integration of borrowed items, especially when they serve functional and communicative needs of the receiving language. The varied and purposeful use of *kolor* in Cebuano textbooks suggests that it has become a fully functional educational resource—integrated not only morphologically but also discursively. This supports the broader perspective found in Poplack et al. (1988) and Shirkhani and Parisa (2011) that borrowed forms, once assimilated, can fulfill native syntactic and pragmatic roles, even in a classroom setting aiming to teach a mother tongue.

5. CONCLUSIONS
The results of this study clearly demonstrate that the indigenized English verb *kolor* has undergone full morphological integration in Cebuano. It was observed that *kolor* is highly productive, forming multiple verb derivatives through affixation patterns typical of native Cebuano verbs. Also, its affixed forms reflect the language's voice and aspect system, with consistent markings for actor, object, and benefactive focus, as well as for completed and ongoing actions. It is further confirmed that these forms serve distinct communicative functions in grade school textbooks, including directive, narrative, and descriptive uses. Collectively, these findings affirm that *kolor* is not only structurally adapted but also functionally embedded in Cebuano educational discourse. Its usage illustrates how English borrowings are localized to fulfill both grammatical roles and pedagogical needs, reflecting the evolving nature of Cebuano in a multilingual learning environment.

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AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr. Danna Karyl Jane Canarecio Talde is currently a faculty member at the Department of Languages and Literature, Central Mindanao University, Bukidnon, Philippines. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics from the University of Mindanao, Davao City, Philippines and has conducted research in areas such as discourse analysis, media and political discourse, sociolinguistics, rhetorical strategies, and language indigenization in Philippine contexts. Her scholarly interests lie in examining how language and communication reflect, construct, and challenge social realities, particularly within Filipino cultural and linguistic landscapes.