

Contemporary Spelling Rules

for the

Cebuano Language

by

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An Introduction that just might be the longest one in the history of any subject matter anyone has ever introduced

The best government is no government. Therefore the best spelling rule for a language might also be to have none, you simply would know what is wrong and what is right. English words are not ruled by hard and fast rules of orthographic prescription yet no one is at a loss on how incorrect spelling can be determined. If you've had the correct education you will know if a word is spelled wrong and when in doubt, English has hard and soft tools to consult. When reading something in English you are not reading a pronunciation guide. Literacy in it requires serious effort from an early age.

Achievement of literacy in Cebuano should be automatic for those whose families protect them at an early age from the noise pollution of other languages and for whom exposure to the accepted written form is jealously ensured. In 2017 all children are incompetent in Cebuano as a result of houses allowing the intrusion of too many languages that are foreign to our Visayan heritage. One foreign language at their age is enough. Should be enough as they grow older. I'd say choose wisely but like the vampire invited to enter a house, the wrong language proceeds to take away your life.

Bisaya Magasin, the Akademiya and DepEd (under the baton of KWF, the agency of the Philippine government tasked with the destruction of the non-Tagalog languages). Recent memory has them publishing definitive rules of their own for Cebuano spelling and certainly so have many other institutions and

regional bodies who follow different sets. Nothing wrong as long as we are talking about native stakeholders who seek to advance their own notion of how Cebuano orthography should be applied by Cebuanos spelling the words of their language. But if it is the national government seeking to fix spelling rules for us to follow then we should be suspicious because Cebuano is certainly not the language of the Imperial Manila government.

That government's KWF is pushing for a uniform spelling standard that will be consistent with its cherished Tagalog national language. It is also creating a separate department of culture which points to an intent to converge all existing culture groups (over a hundred since culture corresponds to language) into a Tagalog monolith encompassing the archipelago. The obvious reason they need orthographies to be uniform (Tagalog-patterned is another way of saying it) is that the schoolchildren of K-3 who are allegedly beginning academic life with vernacular or mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) would henceforth already be familiar with the spelling system for Tagalog national language. The easier will it be for the young ones to transition fully to immersive Tagalog instruction perhaps even as early as Grade One. Nothing new there since the earliest proponents of "multilingualism" in early elementary meant it as an irreversible pathway to Tagalog "education" or rather indoctrination. But if the vernacular system that in theory is being learned first bears no similarity to Tagalog, transition gets less help from their victim. Though this program is still the bridge that the child crosses to become Tagalog and on this bridge there is no turning back.

Cebuano has been spelled many different ways over the centuries, some of you may have encountered samples with Q and special characters on top of vowels. Diacritical markings are impressive if you know how to use them or strike the appropriate keys. To

simplify matters let's make these optional and at the same time adjust our regular spelling to match the 26 English letters and to reduce homonym instances. I cite the Bisaya Magasin solution for Ug and Og. Usa (one) and Osa (yet) should be another. Give thought too to the revival of Umari and Umabot and how to permanently banish pinaka, ate and kuya from our nation. A self-respecting writer of Cebuano will not trouble himself with the spelling of Tagalog words, he won't use them, period.

To cut this long story short before proceeding to the meaty part below, here are three points of concern:

1. No more hyphens. Or at the very least keep them to a minimum. The average texter takes five seconds to enter a hyphen on a cellphone and three seconds on a smartphone. It's much less time than that on an actual keyboard but if you are following any of the usual conventions, every paragraph you type will have around a dozen hyphenated words and eliminating most of these means time savings. Which will also encourage texters and the not casual writers to use Cebuano as much as they can, come up with longer verses with less effort and with maximum impact. We want more output and more than that we want these to be of the kind that Cebuanos everywhere will actually want to read or hear.

2. Short and abrupt O, long and a bit softer U. For the most part I position those two vowels the same way the magazine beloved by the Cebuano world for several decades now does at present. Take the English words for hole and cooking rice or corn. Lungag is hole. Longag is the cooking word instead of the hyphenated one, Lung-ag, whose obsolescence is humbly proposed before the court of public opinion.

3. As much as my preference is for re-adopting the Spanish alphabet because of its historical relevance, all of the physical and virtual keyboards in use today (polymer QWERTY or capacitive touchscreen) are American English. So I use all 26 characters even as I stick to the Spanish spelling or original Spanish words as much as I can. You cannot possibly mistake Sto. Nino for anything else, I do not know of a living person born to the Cebuano nation who will but you have my undying admiration if enye is just a fingertip away. If I have to borrow a foreign word I will borrow only from Spanish and almost never from English because I want to respect English as a separate language that should not be mixed carelessly with formal Cebuano. The presence of Spanish spelling will also be a constant reminder to me that this here is a terminology we have yet to come up with a suitable indigenous equivalent for. By suitable I mean it should not be contrived for the sake of contriving, it should be something you know a fellow Cebuano will not be able to refuse when he first encounters it. Formal Spanish has disappeared from our local context so making use of its technological terminology is a safe and completely harmless recourse. But formal English should be learned and should be used separately by Cebuanos if they have ambitions to be competent in both their native language and the only global worldwide international language there is. And you are free to learn the Tagalog national language if you desire useless things in life. And be balla (the other word is ammunition in Spanish so the latter and not the former is the one that gets to be the one with one L).

Simple instructions on how to successfully encode a Cebuano word

True to the introductory title, nothing on earth will be briefer than this portion inasmuch as everything that needs stating is already expounded above. A few example words are the only additions I need make.

tobo

(cane)

tubo

(tube)

tubu

(grow)

cuarta

(this is considered by many materialistic human beings to be the most precious object in the universe after the Tagalog national language; needs to be contextually distinguished from the gear in between tercera and quinto)

tu

(three)

to

(drip)

'to

(*that* may not exactly mean that but a Cebuano ought to figure it out)

tuo

(believe)

tu-o

(right)

wala, wa

(none)

wa-la, wa-

(left)

ba-ga
(ember)

baga
(lung, this is the more commonly used term so this is the one with no hyphen)

bagga
(thick, notice the double G?)

lata
(tin, Spanish terminologies take precedence or else the more prevalent word gets the simplest spelling which means the other one that many spell with the same letters, la-ta, gets a hyphen. Or spell it as latta, I don't care, as long as it is not lata then I will know it to be the Cebuano word for rot.)

But it need not even be a hyphen. I'd use whatever one press punctuation or connective is available on your mobile gadget. So it could be / . , * or -.

Here is the key chart from one phone to illustrate this.



Ug dinhi nahuman ang hamubong pamalandong nako sa pamaagi nga maoy akong gisunod ubos sa tinguha nga ang matag gipanglalang sa pinulongang Cebuano pagabilihonon sa mapahitasong garbo ug nga sa samang higayon kitang tanan makabaton sa kahigayonan pagmamugnaon sa sinultian nga dinhi niining kalibutana kita ray kamao molitok.