

“Gemo Ni”: A Grammar Note on Tagabawa Verbs

Geoffrey S. Marfa¹, Mary Jane A. Cooke²

¹University of Southeastern Philippines, Philippines, ²Philippine College of Technology, Philippines

Corresponding author e-mail: maryjane.cooke@pctdavao.edu.ph

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Abstract: Tagabawa language’s vitality (bgs) is categorized to be institutional, meaning the language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community. However, the language is still not well documented. Some literature available on the linguistic analysis of Tagabawa is scarce and outdated. There are grammatical descriptions written on Bagobo-Tagabawa; but an updated description is offered by this study as a welcome development to continuous discoveries in the language. Although there is the latest available work on Tagabawa, the Tagabawa-English Dictionary by DuBois in 2016 under the Summer Institute of Linguistics, we believe new literature such as grammatical note would be a great addition to it. To provide further pertinent information in keeping Tagabawa as institutional and well-documented language, this paper documents its variety in Malapangi, Marilog by describing and accounting for its basic linguistic features of Tagabawa language. Furthermore, it provides notes on the salient features of Tagabawa verbs, mainly on its voice, aspects, modes, and transitivity.

Keywords: Grammar Notes, Tagabawa, Verbs

A. Introduction

The Tagabawa (ISO 693-3 BGS, Glottocode lang taga 1272) language belongs to the Manobo subfamily of Philippine languages. It is a language of the Philippines spoken by approximately 30,000 people living in southern Mindanao. The language area extends around the southern slopes of Mt. Apo into two provinces, Davao del Sur and Cotabato. Although Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIS) of Ethnologue (2018) considers the language to be institutional, meaning the language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community, the language is still not well documented.

Some literature available on the linguistic analysis of Tagabawa is scarce and outdated. There are grammatical descriptions written on Bagobo-Tagabawa; however, an adequate description is yet to be developed, so a grammar note is warranted.

Although there is available latest work on Tagabawa which was a Tagabawa-English Dictionary by DuBois (2016) under the Summer Institute of Linguistics. We believe new literature such as grammatical note would be a great addition to it.

While it is true that this language is thriving and useful in some pillars of the society, it is still undeniable that it is not considered a mother tongue under DEPED's Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBLE) to uphold its Four Minima for a language to become a mother tongue: weaving to standard orthography, grammar sketch, dictionary, and literacy materials. In this case, this study would address the grammar note requisite specifically on verbs. It suffices to say that in this endeavor of Grammar note of Tagabawa is significant. It is in this cause that this study is pursued.

We have two major goals in writing this Grammatical Note. These are (1) documenting a language that is *Threatened or Endangered* and (2) describing the verbs of Tagabawa through basic linguistic theory. Documentation entails a full description of the linguistic features of the language covering only the verbs of Tagabawa.

The purpose of this study is to provide a description of the verbs of Tagabawa language. The hope is that this grammar note will be of use to linguists in general, regardless of the theoretical frameworks within which they work. Also, offer a note to people having an interest in the grammar of Tagabawa, and grammar in general. This is not complete grammar note but hopefully, this note will help others to learn about Tagabawa verbs. The goal is also to contribute to the overall typological research that requires cross-examination of languages all over the world.

To realize the aims of giving a comprehensive description of Tagabawa verbs and to document the language, this paper had sought answers to the following questions: 1) What are the voices of Tagabawa Verbs? 2) What are the aspects of Tagabawa Verbs? 3) What are the modes of Tagabawa Verbs? 4) How are transitivity of verbs shows in Tagabawa sentences?

Theoretical Lens

The coverage of this Tagabawa study assumed the principles of 'Basic Linguistic Theory', as discussed and described by Robert Dixon (2010) in Basic linguistic theory used for working with language descriptions. One prerequisite for basic linguistic theory is that it should be considered a natural science. This means that human languages are a whole complex system that requires "detailed observation and examination" to form theories and hypotheses about languages, and the relations between them.

The descriptive work is a vital foundation for typological studies and says that basic linguistic theory is to "apply the same labels to similar phenomena in different

languages". The ideas of basic linguistic theory contrast to areas of linguistics where only certain features are compared, without any regard to other features. These 'formal theories' as he describes them, are more focused on specific areas, and more out of context. Dixon claims that instead of analyzing these isolated theories, one should instead acquire the whole concept, by aiming to capture a broad and much more general view of languages.

The aim should then be to describe a language as thoroughly as possible, to enable further typological studies between languages. This, in turn, creates more understanding of the relationship between languages, and linguists can make suggestions as to what separates them and what connects them.

Review of Related Literature

Language Death, some good things never last. Either they vanish, perish, extinct, or even die, so as language. Language may meet its imminent death if not preserved and documented. Baines, 2012, Gantt, 2016; Lateu, 2014; Wallace 2009; Thomason, 2007, and Wilford, 2007) reiterated there are approximately 7,000 languages in use today and of those languages, an estimated 50-90% will be extinct by the end of this century. Nearly half are in danger of extinction and are likely to disappear in this century. They are now falling out of use at a rate of about one language becoming extinct every two weeks. It is good to know that there are efforts to revive languages that are no longer spoken or are in danger of being no longer spoken, such as Irish Gaelic, Welsh, and Maori as McWhorter 2009 reported.

Language Endangerment, it is clearly defined by Hoffman (2009) as a language that is at risk of losing all its speakers. This is further expounded by Thomason (2001) as mentioned by van Diermen 2015 that all over the world minority languages are threatened with extinction. Of the circa 6,000 languages that are spoken on earth today, between 600 and 3,000 will still be spoken in the year 2100, depending on which estimate is followed. Predictably an endangered language is one that is likely to become extinct soon as Woodbury (2012) puts it. Many languages are falling out of use and being replaced by others that are more widely used in the region or nation, such as English in the U.S. or Spanish in Mexico.

Language Documentation, it is human nature to keep memories, records, or a souvenir especially if something or an event is implausibly special and worth keeping and treasuring. We record, take photos, or write to document special moments in our lives to simply keep memories or simply pass them on to the ensuing generation. Same as true with the language as it is the mirror of our culture. As Mosel (2006) said that one of the important needs of humans is the desire to preserve the memory of the most meaningful achievements of their lives and to pass on the knowledge about their times, cultures, and civilizations to the next generations.

Tagabawa Language Vitality, in a study of Hall, W., Lobel J., and Zorc, D. (2019) about Philippine languages and their subfamilies, they considered Tagabawa as a Language, a subfamily of Manobo. While The Tagabawa people also refer to themselves as Bagobo, a designation also applied to and used by speakers of Guiangan (Jangan or Dyangan), a different language not belonging to the Manobo subfamily (DuBuis and D DuBuis, 2006).

A graph presented by Ethnologue (2018) summarizes the status of Tagabawa in terms of broad categories of language size and language vitality. The vertical axis plots the estimated number of all users (including both first and second language speakers). Tagabawa's vitality is mid-sized which means that it has 10,000 to 1,000,000 users. Dark green means Institutional (EGIDS 0-4). It means that the language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.

Also, in the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale on Ethnologue (2019), Tagabawa language status is 4 (Educational) this means that this language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.

Language Description, although the importance of language description in applied linguistics has sometimes been questioned because of a perception that the theoretical insights of descriptive linguistics were different from the practical needs of language pedagogy as said by Liddicoat & Curnow (2008), languages are effectively described through their components. Any language is considered to have their Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and overlaps of these components such as Morpho-phonemics, and Morphosyntax (Yule, 2020; Yule, 2010; Yule, 2005; Archibald & O'Grady, 2008; Dobrovolsky, O'Grady, & Katamba, 2016; Archibald & O'Grady, 2015; Radford, Atkinson, Britain, Clahsen, & Spencer, 2009; Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2018; and Radford, 2009). The other components are Semantics and Phonetics although the latter is usually subsumed under phonology.

Morphology, the other component of language that would help describe a language is morphology. This is the analysis of word formation concerning the morphemes which are the smallest unit of language that bears meaning (Yule, 2020; Yule, 2010; Yule, 2005; Archibald & O'Grady, 2008; Dobrovolsky, O'Grady, & Katamba, 2016; Archibald & O'Grady, 2015; Radford, Atkinson, Britain, Clahsen, & Spencer, 2009; Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2018; and Radford, 2009). While phonology is only concerned with the sounds and how they are arranged in a syllable in a word, morphology deals with the meanings of these sounds like words or part of a word.

B. Methods

Presented in this chapter is the methodology used in this inquiry especially the research design, the role of the researcher, the research participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness and credibility, and ethical considerations of the research. Interview and recording were used because this is the most appropriate type of qualitative research method to provide deeper information on phonology. Besides, this method is not commonly used by other research enthusiasts because they would usually prefer quantitative research.

The research design of this paper is qualitative descriptive research specifically descriptive which explored documentary analysis involves gathering data by examining records and documents. To accomplish this, the researcher collected the data from comprehensive interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. One source of information is not enough; hence, the inquirer selected three informants who are Tagabawa native speakers.

The research participants were three Tagabawa native speakers in Davao City. One of the three is one of the researchers. The selection of informants includes two following steps. The first step was when any volunteers contacted the researcher and were asked the following questions: a) Are you a native speaker of Tagabawa?; b) Do you have normal hearing and speech abilities? and c) Can you read Tagabawa? The informants proceeded in translating the 1,000-word list, 700 sentence list, and the tale of the turtle and the monkey to delve into the linguistic features of the Tagabawa language.

To gather sufficient data for this study, we used elicitation technique to collect the data for the grammar note and utilized the elicitation materials such as The Revised 615-Word List, The 505-Word List, The Body Project, The 775-Sentence List, Tale of the Turtle and the Monkey (Scheerer,1982), and Oral Narratives. Designed and enhanced by the linguistics department of the University of the Philippines (Diliman), the first three materials enumerated above are all wordlists, which have been utilized to collect lexical data from Tagabawa (UP Department of Linguistics, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

Then, the 775-sentence list is to sufficiently provide the data regarding the morphosyntactic properties of the language under study. Finally, to examine the discourse level of the language under study, the last two materials were useful in that matter. Data on morphological paradigms and syntactic structures will be collected using a 775-sentence list (UP Department of Linguistics 2018d). These too were recorded and transcribed.

The following procedures were performed in collecting the data. Foremost, *Permission to Conduct the Study* - These letters were addressed to the informants as language consultants of the study.

Conduct of Interview and Translation – upon approval, the researcher need to validate the interview guide questions and checklists for translation by the panel of experts. When the validity of the questions and checklists was established, it was administered to the informants.

Collection and Analysis of Data – the researcher collected the translated data, tabulated, and analyzed. Lastly, the *Analysis and Interpretation* – a descriptive approach was used to gather the data.

Data Analysis, appropriate qualitative descriptions were used to have a comprehensive analysis of the data. The data was gathered from the informants and properly transcribed.

C. Results and Discussion

Tagabawa verbs are typically composed of a stem & one or more affixes expressing Voice, Aspect, Mode, and Transitivity.

Voice is a verbal feature in which a noun is co-indexed to a verbal affix identifying such a noun as the most affected entity. This noun is preceded by an absolutive case-marker, or it can be an absolutive personal/demonstrative pronoun. Voice also specifies the semantic role of the noun.

AGENT VOICE: MEG-

MEGkan	din	si	Halila.
<irr.cont.av>eat	prt	abs	Halila.

“Halila ate already.”

Megkan din si Halila.

PATIENT VOICE: -AN

PadigosAN	ko	to =bata.
tr.cont.pv- bathe	1.sg.erg	abs= child

“I will bathe the child.”

Padigosan ko to bata.

LOCATIVE VOICE: -AN

PamulaAN	ni	Nena ni	tana e	kasila.
Plant-irr.cont.lv	er	nena prox.dem.abs	land gen	sweet potato

“Nena will plant sweet potato(es) in this land.”

Pamulaan ni Nena to tana e kasila.

INSTRUMENTAL VOICE: -IN

Gamitin ka bata to lapis ko para pambatik.
 irr.cont. iv-use erg child abs pencil 1.sg.gen obl. Write

“The child will use my pencil to write.”

Gamitin to bata to lapis ko para pambatik.

Aspect is the internal temporal shape of events or states (Payne, 1997). In TAGABAWA, there are three, at least: Contemplative, Imperfective and Perfective.

Aspectual Forms				
	AV	PV	LV	IV
CONT	KUMAN	PADIGUSAN	PAMULAAN	GAMITAN
IPFV	EGKAN	EGPADIGUSAN	EGPAMULAAN	EGGAMITAN
PFV	MEGKAN	MEGPADIGUSAN	MEGPAMULAAN	MEGGAMITAN

The table shows the aspectual forms of Tagabawa verbs. In the aspectual forms, the researchers have found out (that the morphological), that verbs of Tagabawa has contemplative, imperfective, and perfective forms. Also, in each form, it has voices, which are agent voice, patient voice, locative voice, and instrumental voice.

The indication of a contemplative agent voice is an infix “-um-”, such an example, kum-an (see 1.1), while contemplative patient, locative and instrumental voices have similar a similar indicator, suffix “-an”, such an example; padigusan (see 1.2), pamulaan (see 1.3), and gamitan (see 1.4).

1.1 Kuman

Kuman ke simag.
 Cont. AV-eat 1.pl.abs tomorrow.

“We will eat tomorrow.”

Kuman ke simag.

1.2 *Padigusan*

Padigosan		ko		to =bata.
Cont.PV- bathe		1.sg.erg		abs= child

“I will bathe the child.”
 Padigosan ko to bata.

1.3 *Pamulaan*

Pamulaan	ni	Nena	ni	tana	e	kasila.
Cont.LV-plant	erg	Nena	prox.dem.abs	land	gen	sweet potato

“Nena will plant sweet potato(es) in this land.”
 Pamulaan ni Nena to tana e kasila.

1.4 *Gamitan*

Gamitan	ni	Gina	to	pinggan.
Cont.IV-use	erg	Gina	abs	plate.

“Gina will use that plate.”
 Gamitan ni Gina to pinggan.

The indication of imperfective agent voice is a prefix “eg-”, such an example egkan (see 1.5), while imperfective patient, locative and instrumental voices have similar a similar indicators, prefix eg and suffix an, such an example; egpadigusan (see 1.6), egpamulaan (see 1.7), and eggamitan (see 1.8).

1.5 *Egkan*

Egkan	ke	ka	sidda.
Ipfv.AV.-eat	1.pl.abs	gen	fish.

“We are eating a fish.”
 Egkan ke ka sidda.

1.6 *Egpadigusan*

Egpadigosan	ko	to	bata.
Ipfv.PV. bathe	1.sing.erg	abs	child.

“I am bathing the child.”
 Egpadigusan ko to bata.

1.7 *Egpamulaan*

Egpamulaan	ni	Mario	to	tana	e	saging.
Ipfv.LV. plant	2.sg.gen	Mario	abs	land	gen	banana.

“Mario is planting banana in this land.”
Egpamulaan ni Mario to tana ka saging.

1.8 *Eggamitan*

Eggamitan ni Maria to kutsilyo.
Ipfv.IV. use 2.sg.gen Maria abs knife.

“Maria is using the knife.”
Eggamitan ni Maria to kutsilyo.

The indication of perfective agent voice is a prefix *meg*, such an example *megkan* (see 1.9), while perfective patient, locative and instrumental voices have similar a similar indicators, prefix *meg* and suffix *an*, such an example; *megpadigusan* (see 1.10), *megpamulaan* (see 1.11), and *meggamitan* (see 1.12).

1.9 *Megkan*

Megkan din si Halila.
Pfv.AV.-eat prt abs Halila.

“Halila ate already.”
Megkan din si Halila.

1.10 *Megpadigusan*

Megpadigusan ko to bata bani.
Pfv.PV.-bathe 1.sg.erg abs child yesterday.

“I bathed the child yesterday.”
Megpadigusan ko to bata bani.

1.11 *Megpamulaan*

Megpamulaan den to tana e saging bani.
Pfv.LV.-plant 3rd.pl.erg abs land gen banana yesterday.

“They planted bananas in this land yesterday.”
Megpamulaan den to tana ka saging bani.

1.12 *Meggamitan*

Meggamitan ko to pinggan gena.
Pfv.IV.-use 1.sing.erg abs plate a while ago.

“I used the plate a while ago.”
Meggamitan ko to pinggan gena.

Mode is *the speaker's attitude toward a situation, including the speaker's belief in its reality, or likelihood* (payne, 1997, p. 244), **Realis** (happening or true) and **-irrealis** (not happening or unreal).

		AV	PV	LV	IV
IRR	CONT	KUMAN	PADIGUSAN	PAMULAAN	GAMITAN
RLS	IPFV	EGKAN	EGPADIGUSAN	EGPAMULAAN	EGGAMITAN
	PFV	MEGKAN	MEGPADIGUSAN	MEGPAMULAAN	MEGGAMITAN

The table shows that the contemplative belongs to the irrealis mode since the verbs are still to be done. While the imperfective and perfective belong to the realis mode since the verbs are true or already happening.

Transitivity is **how effectively** the effects of an action are transferred from **an agent-like entity** to **a patient-like one** (Nolasco, 2011). An **intransitive** construction has only one distinct argument: **S**.

Megtindig to bata (**S**).
 Rls.pfv.av-stand abs child

"The child stood up."
 Megtindig to bata.

A **transitive** construction has two distinct arguments: **A & O**.

MEgkan ni Maria (**A**) to mangga. (**O**)
 Rls.pfv.pv-eat erg Maria abs mango

"Maria ate the mango."
 MEgkan ni maria to mangga.

D. Conclusion

A number of languages in the world diminish every day if not being preserved and documented properly so as the Tagabawa language. This concern is not just an issue involving one field, but also includes real people and communities struggling with real social, political, and economic issues. Even the most powerful languages across the globe will die if people fail to document them much more on the indigenous languages which have very limited speakers. This study implicates so much more than just description. It opens more opportunities for language researchers, documenters and preservers alike, to study even further and eventually lead to revitalization. Documentation studies are good indication that language enthusiasts and other concerned agencies have their attention on issues concerning indigenous languages in the Philippines. Aside from encouraging experts to have an updated grammar sketch on Tagabawa, this studies also kickstart various research interest on language such as language contact, lexicology, dialectology and even attrition.

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