A Grammar of Ilonggo in Mindanao

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Abstract:- Identified as ISO 639-3 and has an alternate name Hiligainon, Ilonggo is not native of Mindanao but has a significant number of speakers in Mindanao and Visayas Regions. There is some published information about Ilonggo as the native language of Iloilo but scarce data about its different varieties. This study provides a linguistic description of the grammar of Ilonggo in Mindanao utilizing Basic Linguistic Theory and the functional theory of grammar in accounting for the different features of the language. The language consultants employed by the researcher are native speakers of Ilonggo in Mindanao who willingly translated word and sentence lists and voice recorded them for the accurate details of the sounds of this variety. The analysis shows the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and morphosyntactic features of the language and has revealed salient findings such as the limited fricative sounds, affixation by circumfixes, subject-less sentences, and the co-indexing of the verbal affixes and the case marker in verb initial sentences. This description gives concrete documentation of the current status of the language which leads to more studies aiding queries such as dialectal differences in Ilonggo from Visayas and that of Mindanao variety, language contact (with other dominant languages such as Bisaya) or migration, linguistic typology, and even cross-linguistic analysis. Ultimately, this endeavor is of great significance to students and teachers that teach Ilonggo as their mother tongue as it introduces linguistic concepts which are helpful support to pedagogical strategies and references.

Keywords:- Hiligainon, Language Consultant, Linguistic Features, Language Description, Mindanao Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

Languages are carriers of cultures. The information about the lifestyles and customs of an ethnolinguistic community is embedded in its language. The community's shared concepts, thoughts, and beliefs are entailed in the language's vocabulary and the manner of expressing and communicating them is manifested in the arrangement of words in sentences. But languages also change through time and even dies eventually. The change in languages hints at a cultural change. An undocumented language only needs time for it to die and no one would know it ever existed. The undocumented evolution in the languages is a miss on the changes of culture as well.

This grammar description of Ilonggo in Mindanao, utilizing Robert Dixon's "*Basic linguistic theory*" (2010), entails language documentation that is purposive to various reasons for recording languages (Gippert 2006; Woodbury 2003). Documenting languages has even become a linguistic subfield to address the issues of recording languages that are endangered (Schultze-Berndt 2015) and has a significant part in investigating contacts in languages (Seifart 2011). Language descriptions, according to Dingemanse, are done not considering the connection between the structure and semantics, detailing that a change in form is not necessarily implicative to meaning's inconsistency (2015), rather, it is about unbiasedly studying the actual use in the community's speech (Francios and Ponsonnet 2013). Dixon writes that descriptive work is a vital foundation for typological studies and says that basic linguistic theory is to "apply same labels to similar phenomena in different languages" (Dixon 2010).

Languages are effectively described through their components. Any language is considered to have its Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and overlaps of these components such as Morpho-phonemics, and Morphosyntax (Archibald and O'Grady 2008; Aronoff and Fudeman 2022; Blust 2013; Brown 2010; Chomsky 2002; Fromkin et al. 2018; Marantz 2015; Yule 2016). The other components are Semantics and Phonetics although the latter is usually subsumed under phonology. Since grammar sketches are about in-depth descriptions of languages, the thorough investigation of the phonology, morphology, and syntax of any language justifies and is sufficient content of grammar sketch.

➤ *Phonology*

The study of sounds in languages falls under the phonetics and phonology components. Phonetics is the analysis of the sound production of a language while phonology is the analysis of the sound pattern (Archibald and O'Grady 2008; Carr 2019; Fromkin et al. 2018; and Yule 2016). While Phonology is language specific meaning it is unique to each language, phonetics is universal. All speakers of whatever language same sound of consonants and vowels. The phoneme [d] which is voiced, alveolar, stop sound is pronounced the same in all other languages (Archibald and O'Grady 2008; Carr 2019; Fromkin et al. 2018; and Yule 2016) because all speakers of spoken languages have the same faculties for speaking, the lungs and everything that is part of the oral cavity.

Another area in phonology that needs to be described is phonotactics. It is the sequence of phonemes, the order of vowels and consonants, in a syllable allowable in a word of a specific language (Idsardi and Monahan 2016). Some languages permit the successions of consonants in a syllable such as the English language while others only allow a consonant – vowel - consonant order of sounds in a syllable like some Austronesian languages in the Philippines (Blust 2013; Yule 2016). Phonotactics defines and gives constraints to what is only an allowable construct of syllables in a language. This is commonly referred to as phonologicalconstraints (Archibald and O'Grady 2008; Fromkin et al. 2018; Idsardi and Monahan 2016).

➤ *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 (Archibald & O'Grady 2008; Aronoff and Fuderan 2022; Yule 2016). 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 as words or parts of a word.

Morphemes are categorized into two. The free morphemes are words that have their meaning, a unit that can stand alone as it could be understood as it is. The other category is the bound morphemes. These are the ones that are often regarded as affixes which are attached to a word, or free morpheme, to, in one way or another, alter the meaning of the words to which they are attached (Archibald and O'Grady 2008; Aronoff and Fuderan 2022; Brown 2010; Kornfilt and Whitman 2011; Marantz 2015). The bound morphemes and their behavior as to how they are attached and the condition to where they are attached are the things needed to be observed as languages usually differ in these aspects. These are the things that are integral in the description of the morphology of a language in general.

The same with phonology, morphology has also its processes on how to create words and how to derive words from other words. Different languages have also a different morphological processes. Some known common processes may be found in one language while not present in others. Morphological processes are an aspect of language that must also be described to thoroughly know a language. Some processes that are easily observed in different languages are affixation which is the attachment of bound morphemes or affixes to a root word to create a newly derived word, compounding which is a merger of two free morphemes to come up with a new word related to the two words merged, and clipping which is a way of shortening words (Archibald & O'Grady 2008; Aronoff and Fuderan 2022; Yule 2016).

As this study is one of the few about the language or variety of languages being studied in the Davao region, it could aid the scarce information about this field in language studies.

This would greatly benefit *the Ilonggo Speakers, the Ilonggo-speaking city governments, the Language enthusiast community*, and *Future researchers* as the purpose of this study is to provide a general description of the grammar of Ilonggo in Mindanao which opens the opportunity for more study about this language or variety. One other purpose is to kick start linguistic documentation of this language variation and other varieties of languages which could lead to the making of lexicographic studies. The goal is also to contribute to the overall typological research that requires cross-examination of languages all over the world.

II. METHOD

The research consultants are three Ilonggo native speakers from Mindanao. Before the collection of data started, the consultants were evaluated to fit the criteria of being one. Aside from being a speaker, they are educated, which means could speak the common language or vernacular of the research locale aside from their native tongue. They are also speakers of English and Tagalog which is plus as the research eliciting materials are in both languages. All the consultants are also multilingual. They are speakers Bisaya and Tagalog. Although two among the three are not fluent in spoken English, they understood the word list. The consultants were eager to explain the concept of difference in some words and sentences. The oldest among the informants is a widow who is a mother, unemployed, and supports her children by being the house help in the family. She lives in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. The second to the oldest informant is an employed 43-year-old mother of one. She was raised in North Cotabato but has been recently living in Davao City. She also has a business management degree. The youngest informant has a postgraduate degree in business. He is a 30-year-old bachelor who is the main source of the data due to the nature of the study that focuses on the variety of Ilonggo in Mindanao.

Gathering sufficient data for the study, the researcher was guided with the elicitation technique to collect and utilized for the collection. The Revised 615-Word List and the 775-Sentence List designed and enhanced by the linguistics department of the University of the Philippines (Diliman) are wordlist and sentence lists that have been utilized to collect lexical data (UP Department of Linguistics, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). The word list is sufficient to provide data regarding the phonological properties of the language under study. This was recorded and transcribed. Data on morphological paradigms, syntactic constructions, and the morphosyntactic arrangement was also collected using a 775-sentence list (UPDepartment of Linguistics 2018d). Finally, a follow-up interview was done several times to confirm, clarify and clear out confusion and overlapping concepts with words and sentences. The highly educated consultant was constantly asked. He can explain and give examples that distinguish one concept from another.

For the phonological analysis, after inputting the data, the recordings were jotted down to individual words, tagged, transcribed, and glossed. The segmental phonemes, such as consonants and vowels, were mainly analyzed by the researcher's auditory perception unless ambiguous sounds occurred.

For the morphological, syntactic, and morphosyntactic analysis, elements of each component were described according to the 'basic linguistic theory', as discussed and described by Robert Dixon's work *Basic linguistic theory* (2010). The functional linguistics approach was also employed in giving context to problematic words and sentence features.

The researcher also conducted a meeting with the consultants to triangulate data and to obtain an explicit detailed and clear description of Ilonggo in Mindanao.

Lastly, the conduct of this study is strictly guided by the ethical protocols of the University of Mindanao Ethics committee with UMERC Protocol No. UMERC-2012-127 (see appendix K).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. The Vowels in Ilonggo in Mindanao

The phonemes **/a/, /i/, /ɛ/,** /ɔ/**,** and **/u/** are distinctly perceptible in the production of the speakers. The low, central vowel **/a/** has mostly been observed in the distribution. The front, high **/i/** and the back, high, rounded **/u/** sounds are also well represented in the data gathered but have another different vowel sound that could stand alternately in their place. The front, middle **/ɛ/**is a free variation of **/i/** in a few words. Also, the /ɔ/ can be used instead of **/u/** in several cases. The table shows vowel inventory and sample words.

Table 1 The Vowels in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Vowel Sounds	Sample words	Transcription	Gloss
/a/	Katabang	[ka.'ta.baŋ]	Helper
	Mal-am	['mal.ʔam]	Old person
/i/	Bibig	[bi.'big]	Mouth
	Kilikili	[ki.li.'ki.li]	Underarm
/ɛ/	Pader	[pa.'dɛr]	Wall
	Pwertahan	[pwɛr.'ta.han]	Door
/ɔ/	Lolo	['lɔ.lɔ]	Grandfather
	Tito	['ti.tɔ]	Uncle
/u/	Ulipun	[u.'li.pun]	Slave
	Pinunu	[pi.'nu.nu]	Leader

B. The Diphthongs in Ilonggo in Mindanao

The combination of two specific vowel sounds pronounced as one unique sound from the rest of the vowels is referred to as Diphthongs. There are observed diphthongs in Ilonggo in Mindanao. Below are the examples per the diphthong identified.

Table 2 The Diphthongs in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Diphthong sounds	Sample words	Transcription	Gloss
/aw/	Bahaw	['ba.h**aw**]	Leftover rice
	Langaw	['la.ng**aw**]	Fly
/aj/	Laway	['la.w**aj**]	Saliva
	Humay	[hu.'m**aj**]	Rice (to be cooked)
/uj/	Kahuy	['ka,h**uj**]	Tree
	Totoy	['tu.t**uj**]	breast

C. The Consonants in Ilonggo in Mindanao

As shown in the table, the seventeen (17) distinct consonant sounds observed in Ilonggo in Mindanao speech are generally described by the places and manner of articulation. There are seven (7) stop in different places of articulation, two (2) are bilabials, two (2) are dental/alveolar, two (2) are velars and one (1) is glottal. The three (3) nasals are observed, one (1) each for bilabial, dental/ alveolar, and velar. The two (2) fricatives are dental/alveolar and glottal. There are also three (3) approximants detected, one (1) bilabial, alveolar/dental, and velar. The flap and dental/alveolar sound is also common in the pronounced words.

Table 3 The Stop sounds in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Stop Sounds	Sample words	Transcription	Gloss
/p/	Panga	[**p**a.'nga]	Jaw
/b/	Babae	[**b**a.'**b**a.ji]	Woman, girl
/t/	Tubo	[**t**u.'bu]	Sugarcane
/d/	Dug-ab	['**d**ug. ʔab]	Burp
/k/	Kilat	['**k**i.lat]	Lightning
/g/	Baga	['ba.**g**a]	Ember, hot coal
/ʔ/	Atop	[**ʔ**a.'tup]	Roof

The Nasal sounds in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Nasal sounds	Sample words	Transcription	Gloss
/m/	Damo	['da.**m**uʔ]	Many
/n/	Manipis	[ma.**n**i.'pis]	Thin
/ŋ/	Subong	[su.'bu**ŋ**]	Today, now

The Fricative sounds in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Fricative sounds	Sample Words	Transcription	Gloss
/s/	Sulu	[**s**u.'luʔ]	torch
/h/	Baha	[ba.'**h**a]	Flood

The Approximant sounds in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Approximant sounds	Sample words	Transcription	Gloss
/w/	Kawayan	[ka.'**w**a.jan]	Bamboo
/j/	Guya	[gu.'**j**a]	Face

The Liquid sounds in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Liquid Sound	Sample Words	Transcription	Gloss
/r/	Kudkuran	['kud.ku.**r**an]	Coconut grater
/l/	Alima	[?a.'**l**i.ma]	Arm

D. The Phonological Process in Ilonggo in Mindanao:

The difference in the articulation of words in slow (pronunciation of a word in isolation) and fast (pronunciation of a word in a sentence or normal talk) speeches results in the different co-articulations of a word. A reduction or deletion of some sounds, changes of sounds, and even the addition of sounds are observed in languages all for the ease of articulation. Mindanoan Ilonggo speakers can easily say *['tu.bang]* which means front, *[djus]* which means god, and *[taw.ga]* which means an imperative form for the verb "call" instead of [?a.'tu.bang], [di.jus], and [ta.'wa.ga]. Vowels are commonly deleted and the same is observed in this language. Imperative forms of the verbs usually undergo this process such as *['kan.?a]* for *[ka.'?u.na]* (eat) and *[bak.la]* for *[ba.ka.'la]* (buy). The alternate acceptable pronunciation does not affect in any way the meaning of the word. Evidence is easily elicited from the native speakers of the language.

E. The Morphemes in Ilonggo in Mindanao:

Morphemes have two general categories, the free and bound morphemes. The bound morphemes have also two subcategories, the derivational and inflectional. These typologies give two kinds of words we can find in languages. One is the bare words often referred to as root words, stems, and function (close) words. The other kind is the affixed, the words that are the product of derivations or inflections. Words in languages could either be bare or affixed.

Table 4 The Forms of Words in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Bare	Meaning	Affixed	Meaning
Tanum (n)	Plant	tanum**an** tam.nan (v)	To plant
Kudkud (v)	Grate	kudkud**an** kudkuran (n)	Grater
Utud (n)	Sibling	*ka*utud**an** kauturan (n)	Siblings
Tanum (v)	Plant	*gi*tanum**an** gitamnan (v)	Was planted with
Gwapa (adj)	Beautiful	*naga*gwapa (v)	Be more beautiful
Balhas (n)	Sweat	Balhas**unon** (adj)	Sweaty
Mango (adj)	Stupid	Mangu**on** (adj)	Not really stupid

F. The Affixation in Ilonggo in Mindanao

The attachment of bound morphemes (derivation or inflection) before (prefix) or after (suffix) to a root or a stem is generally the concept of affixation. Some affixes require other affixes to be attached at the same time to a word to complete the

inflection or the derivation intended, referred to as circumfix. Unique to Austronesian languages are the infixes. They are inserted after the initial sound of a root word. Evidence is also found in the Philippines' languages. The presentation below is proof of affixation in Ilonggo in Mindanao arranged by the kind of affix attached.

Table 5 The Affixation in Ilonggo in Mindanao

PREFIX			
Word (ROOT)	**Meaning**	**With Affix**	**Meaning**
Bakal	Buy	*nag*bakal	bought
Tindug	Stand	*ma*tindug	to stand (CONT)
Kaon	Eat	*ga*kaon	eating
SUFFIX			
Word (ROOT)	**Meaning**	**Affix**	**Meaning**
Luto	Cook	lutu**on**	to cook (CONT)
Kawayan	Bamboo	kawayan**an**	place of the bamboos
Pugad	Nest	pugad**an**	place of the nests
CIRCUMFIX			
Word (ROOT)	**Meaning**	**Affix**	**Meaning**
Sadya	Joyous	*ka*sadya**han**	enjoyment, celebration
Utod	Sibling	*ka*utur**an**	siblings
Tuon	Learn	*ka*tulud**an**	learnings

The insertion of affixes could be before, after, and both. The distribution of the sample words is grouped according to the kind of affix attached: *nag*bakal, *ma*tindug, and *ga*kaon for prefixes; lutu**on,** kawayan**an,** and pugad**an** for **suffixes;** and *ka*sadya**han,** *ka*utur**an,** and *ka*tulud**an** for circumfixes.

G. The Transitivity in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Transitive verbs take objects (or patient) while intransitives don't. These transitive and intransitive constructions are depicted in Ilonggo in Mindanao. The transitivity determines how many obligatory noun arguments can a verb take for a grammatical construction.

Table 6 The Transitive and Intransitive Constructions in Ilonggo in Mindanao

Transitive constructions	Translation
Gin-uyatan niya ang kahoy.	She/he held the tree.
Gina bisita nila kami.	They visit us.
Gintawag ko nila.	They called me.
Intransitive constructions	**Translation**
Natulog ako.	I slept.
Gapangisda sila.	They are fishing.
Gatrabaho kami.	We are working.

The table differentiates the needed arguments of the verb used in Transitive and Intransitive constructions. The sentences in transitive construction required two while the intransitives have only one. The translation in English also emphasizes the concept. The subject is a staple for both constructions while transitive sentences have an extra noun, the object of the verb.

H. Subject-less Sentences in Ilonggo in Mindanao

It is common in languages having different syntactic constructions. One uncommon construction that is observed in a language is the sentences that do not have a subject. They still convey a complete thought. Most of them are sentences that talk about the weather. They are also referred to as meteorological sentence construction. Other forms of this kind of sentence are the ones that are a response to a question. The discourse is not mentioned.

Gabagyo.
Typhoon (IMPF)   *Eng: no specific translation.*
Currently experiencing a Typhoon

Maulan   bwas/buwas.
Rain (CONT) tomorrow   *Eng: It will rain tomorrow.*

I. The Verbal Affixation and Case Marking in Ilonggo in Mindanao

One very evident morphosyntactic feature of Austronesian languages in the Philippines is the co-indexing of the absolutive markers to the affixation of the verb in the sentence. This feature is also generally observed in the Ilonggo in the Mindanao language. The **"ang"** which is the absolutive marker in Ilonggo in Mindanao takes different voices or focuses depending on the verbal affixation. A change of affixes in a verb of a sentence does not only change the aspects of the verb but the verb's requirement for a voice to be taken by the absolutive case. Take the sentences below.

Makaon   **ang bata**   *sang pancit.*

The sentence has a **MA-** affixation to the verb **kaon** which means eat. The absolutive case marker ang introduces the argument bata which means child and another marker (*sang*) and argument (**Pancit**). The inflection of **ma-** changes the verb to a contemplative aspect and requires an agent or actor voice for the absolutive case. The noun **bata** in the sentence should be the agent or the actor of the verb since it is introduced by the marker **ang** dictating that the noun it introduced is the absolutive case presented below as

Makaon   **ang bata**   sang pancit.
Eat (Cont, AV) ABS child   GEN pancit

Tag: Kakain ang bata ng Pancit.
Eng: The child will eat Pnacit'

The contemplative and agent voice are features under the verb since these are brought about by its inflection of the affix **Ma-** to the verb **kaon** (eat). The **ang** is marked as an absolutive marker as it has no translation in other languages and the **sang** for the genitive case; and child for **bata** and **Pancit.** Translation in Tagalog and English is also provided.

Table 7 The Verbal Affixations in Ilonggo in Mindanao

	Agent Voice	Patient Voice	Instrumental Voice	Locative Voice
Contemplative	*MA-*	*-ON*	*IPANG-*	*-AN*
Imperfective	*GA-*	*GINA-*	*GINAPANG-*	*GINA- -AN*
Perfective	*NAG-*	*GIN-*	*GIPANG-*	*GIN- -AN*

Table 7 presents the affixation of the prefix **ma-**, the suffix **-on**, the prefix **ipang-**, and the suffix **-an** makes the verb into a contemplative aspect but requires different voices. The **ma-** needs an agent voice; **-on**, patient voice; **ipang-**, instrumental; and **-an**, locative voice. The imperfective inflections affixes are the prefixes **ga- or naga-, gina-, ginapang-,** and the circumfix **gina- -an**. Each requires different voices, agent, patient, instrumental, and locative respectively. The attachment of **nag-, gin, ginpang-, and gin—a**n to verbs turns them into perfective aspects. Furthermore, these affixes require different voices, agent voice for **nag-**, patient for **gin-**, instrumental for **ginpang-**, and locative for **gin—an**.

Ilonggo in Mindanao, like other Philippine languages which belong to the typology of the Austronesian language, has a feature called verbal affixation and its relationship to its arguments in sentences. This morphosyntactic feature is a great way of analyzing these languages and provides a relatively comprehensible description of the languages' typology.

IV.   CONCLUDING REMARKS AND IMPLICATIONS

Grammar description of Ilonggo in Mindanao gives a localized Ilonggo grammar in Mindanao to document the variety of Ilonggo language. The study has not focused on giving the difference between Ilonggo in Visayas and the one from Mindanao; rather it deals with giving proof in Mindanao Ilonggo the salient concept in language description utilizing the Basic Linguistic Theory. This documentation through description is a concrete reference for future grammar studies especially involving comparison of languages or cross-linguistic analysis. The result of the study is a strong basis for dialectology, establishing whether the variety of Ilonggo in Mindanao is a dialect of the one in the Visayas.

Revitalization could also not be counted out as an implication of this study as translations of a younger Ilonggo in Mindanao speaker have shown a significant degree of lexical attrition. Though this is beyond the context of the study, it is noteworthy to state that lexical attrition is also happening in the language. As to its causes, these could be the possible future direction and recommendation of the researcher for interested language enthusiasts to purpose with the results of this study as one of the references. Hints of language contact can also be one of the implications of this study.

An opportunity for theoretical linguistic research such as grammar notes, grammar sketches, and even grammar references especially so that Mindanao's native languages are less studied could be opened with the introduction of this kind of study at the University of Mindanao. And when partnered with NCIP, the languages in Mindanao which are endangered and threaten to die could be documented through these kinds of typology descriptive studies.

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➢ *Bionotes*
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