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Grammatical Patterns in Maranao and English: A Comparative Study of Usage and Structure

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Abstract:

This study explores the grammatical patterns of the Maranao and English languages through a comparative analysis of their usage and structure. It aims to identify both the similarities and differences in sentence construction, verb morphology, pronoun usage, modifiers, and affixation. Using descriptive-comparative methods, data were gathered from native Maranao speakers, English grammar references, and language samples from both oral and written sources. The findings reveal distinct structural patterns in word order and focus systems in Maranao that differ from the syntactic rules of English. Additionally, variations in verb affixation and pronoun systems highlight unique features of the Maranao language that influence second language acquisition among its native speakers. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding these grammatical distinctions for effective language learning, teaching, and translation. Ultimately, it contributes to the documentation and preservation of the Maranao language while providing insights for educators and linguists in multilingual contexts.

Keywords — **Maranao Language, Comparative grammar Analysis, Second Language Acquisition.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Maranao and English serves as a fundamental medium of communication, embodying the culture, history, and identity of its speakers. The Maranao language, spoken by the Maranao people of the Philippines, exhibits distinct grammatical structures that differentiate it from English, a globally dominant language. Examining these differences and similarities provides valuable insights into linguistic patterns and enhances cross-cultural understanding.

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the grammatical patterns in Maranao and English, with a focus on sentence structures, morphological features, and syntactic patterns. By analyzing textual data, this research seeks to identify the unique linguistic characteristics of each language and how they construct meaning. Additionally, the study will explore the variations in Maranao spelling systems, as different publications and sources employ varying orthographic conventions. Previous studies have examined the linguistic features of Maranao and English separately, but limited research has been conducted on their direct comparison. By systematically analyzing their grammatical structures, this study seeks to fill this gap and offer insights into their linguistic functions.

The Maranao language exhibits multiple spelling schemes used across literacy materials and religious texts. Alonto et al. (2009) noted a standardized system composed of 15 consonants and five vowels, excluding the glottal stop, where "e" represents the schwa sound. However, religious texts and Maranao music use an alternative system that includes four aspirated consonants—"ph," "th," "kh," and "z/sh"—to better reflect native pronunciation (Lobel & Riwarung, 2009). Lobel (2013) emphasized that this phonological representation is vital for capturing Maranao's true sound system, especially as it differs significantly from English's less phonemically diverse inventory.

Maranao's structure is shaped by a focus system and affixation. Alpas (1954) was one of the first to recognize that Maranao relies heavily on affixation and verb morphology to signal grammatical relationships, unlike English which depends on word order and auxiliaries. Aragon (2023) further described Maranao as a verb-initial language with rich inflectional and focus markers—features absent in English's more fixed Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure.

Reid (2002) classified Maranao within the Austronesian voice system, where verbs align morphologically with topicalized arguments. In contrast, Quirk et al. (1985) explained that English conveys tense, aspect, and mood using auxiliaries and does not use morphological voice to the same extent. Similarly, Crystal (1997) and Dixon (2010) highlighted that English's minimal inflection makes it syntactically rigid, whereas Maranao's grammatical flexibility stems from its morphological complexity.

Rubino (2001) and Nolasco (2005), studying Tagalog and related Philippine languages, observed comparable uses of affixation and clitics, suggesting a broader pattern in Philippine grammar that Maranao follows. Nordquist (2024) reinforced that English lacks such inflectional tools and thus maintains stricter word order for clarity.

Blust (2013) classified Maranao as part of the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup of Austronesian languages, emphasizing its focus on aspect and voice rather than tense—a contrast to English's temporal framework. Mahowald et al. (2022) supported this by observing that many world languages—including Maranao—use layered grammatical cues such as affixes and focus markers, while English offers fewer and more fixed indicators.

Lobel (2013) underscored the learning challenges for Maranao speakers acquiring English, particularly due to phonological and orthographic differences, such as the absence of glottal stops in English and its complex vowel system. These phonetic mismatches often lead to mispronunciations that obscure meaning.

In terms of pedagogy, Thompson and Kecskes (2010) advocated for contrastive grammar instruction, especially when learners shift between typologically distant languages. Lawless (n.d.) and Jani (2020) demonstrated that English auxiliaries like "will," "have," and "do" simplify grammatical expression, in contrast to the morphologically complex Maranao verb system.

Wikipedia contributors (2024) provided accessible explanations of VSO (Maranao) versus SVO (English) structures and focus systems, stressing the need to base grammar instruction on function rather than rigid memorization.

The comparison of grammatical patterns in Maranao and English reveals both structural divergences and linguistic strategies unique to each language. Word order, morphological marking, focus systems, and orthography all contribute to how

each language encodes meaning. These differences have implications for linguistic theory, second-language acquisition, and instructional design. Together, the reviewed scholars offer a comprehensive understanding of how Maranao and English differ yet remain internally consistent systems governed by their respective linguistic rules.

II. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of this study is based on contrastive analysis theory, which examines the structural differences and similarities between two languages to understand their linguistic characteristics. This framework is essential in identifying grammatical patterns in Maranao and English, providing a structured method for analysis. By synthesizing existing literature and linguistic models, this study establishes a systematic approach to examining sentence structure, morphology, and syntax in both languages.

The study also incorporates theories of language typology and structural linguistics to guide the comparison of grammatical features. These theories provide the foundation for analyzing how Maranao and English construct meaning through their respective grammatical rules. Data from existing texts and linguistic references will be used to validate the analysis and support the research findings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of the grammatical patterns of Maranao and English to identify key similarities and differences in their linguistic structures. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. to identify and analyze the similarities and differences in grammatical structures between the Maranao and English languages.
2. To examine and compare the sentence structures of Maranao and English, particularly focusing on word order and the use of focus markers.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in grammatical structures between the Maranao and English languages?

2. How do sentence structures in Maranao compare with those in English, particularly in terms of word order and focus markers?

III. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the systematic procedures undertaken to explore and compare the grammatical structures of Maranao and English. It details the research design, sources of textual data, procedures for data collection and analysis, validation of research instruments, and ethical considerations. By employing a comparative descriptive approach, the study aims to provide a clear and accurate representation of the grammatical patterns found in both languages, based on carefully selected textual materials.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine and compare the grammatical patterns of the Maranao and English languages.

The quantitative aspect focused on identifying and analyzing structural patterns through numerical data. Five published bilingual dialogues, each containing 10 to 20 lines per speaker, were

purposively selected as the primary sources of data. The researchers systematically counted the occurrences of sentence structures such as Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), Verb-Subject-Object (VSO), and Verb-Object-Subject (VOS), as well as the frequency of affixation, sentence focus markers, and the use of pronouns. These data were then tabulated and analyzed to determine the dominant grammatical patterns in each language.

The qualitative aspect involved an in-depth interpretation of the identified structures, particularly focusing on how they function in actual language use. Descriptive analysis was employed to explore how the grammatical patterns convey meaning, considering the syntactic and morphological features unique to Maranao and English. The analysis included an explanation of how affixes, sentence focus, and word order contribute to meaning-making in both languages, providing insights into the structure and usage of each language within its linguistic and cultural context.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed for a comprehensive analysis, enabling the researchers to not only identify patterns but also to understand their functional and contextual significance.

Data Text

Instead of using human participants, this study utilized existing texts in Maranao and English. The Maranao texts are sourced from published materials, specifically dialogues stated in Maranao language and translated into English language. There are 5 different dialogues chosen from the published materials. Each dialogue contains at least 10-20 lines from both parties. The selection criteria for texts ensure that they represent standard and widely accepted grammatical structures in each language.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved gathering texts from credible sources such as linguistic studies, books, and published materials. Maranao texts are selected based on their grammatical richness, while English texts are chosen for their standard usage of grammar. The collected dialogues are then categorized based on sentence structures, morphological features, and syntactic patterns. Each sentence is analyzed and classified according to grammatical components such as subject-verb agreement and/or word order.

Instrument Validation

A structured coding scheme is developed to categorize grammatical patterns systematically. To ensure validity, the coding scheme is reviewed by linguistics experts specializing in both Maranao and English. Reliability tests are conducted through inter-rater reliability analysis, where multiple linguists independently code a sample of texts and compare results to establish consistency.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected for this comparative linguistic study, the researcher utilized a codebook-based qualitative content analysis approach. The codebook was developed to systematically categorize and compare the grammatical patterns in sentence structures between Maranao and English.

The coded data were then tallied and thematically grouped, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, similarities, and contrasts between the two languages. For example, codes related to focus markers in Maranao were compared with auxiliary verb usage in English to determine their syntactic roles. Word order patterns were also compared to assess structural tendencies.

The frequency and distribution of each code were interpreted in light of grammatical theories and prior linguistic research. Visual representations such as tables and charts were also used to clearly present the comparative data and support the emerging themes in the discussion.

Ethical Considerations IOP

Since this study does not involve human participants, ethical considerations focus on proper citation and acknowledgment of sources. All texts used in the study are obtained from publicly available materials or with permission from authors. The research follows ethical guidelines in linguistic studies by ensuring that sources are credited appropriately and no unauthorized modifications are made to the original texts.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of five dialogues in Maranao and English revealed key differences and similarities in their grammatical patterns, particularly in sentence structure, morphology, and syntactic organization. Through coding and categorization, it became evident that Maranao relies heavily on verb-initial constructions, focus markers, and affixation, while English maintains a fixed Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order, auxiliary-based tense marking, and minimal morphological inflection. The findings are presented according to major linguistic categories observed in the texts.

[1] Sentence Structure: Word Order Patterns

One of the most prominent distinctions is the sentence structure. English consistently follows an SVO word order. For example, the sentence **"You haven't met my family yet"** adheres to this fixed pattern. In contrast, Maranao frequently utilizes Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) or Verb-Object-Subject (VOS) constructions. For instance, **"Somong ta sa walay"** (Let's go to (my) house) begins with the verb *somong* (go), reflecting its verb-initial nature.

This variation highlights how Maranao places emphasis on the verb and its affixation to indicate grammatical function, while English depends on rigid word order for syntactic clarity.

Structure Type	Maranao Example	English Equivalent	Pattern
Verb-Subject-Object	*Somong ta sa walay*	Let's go to the house	VSO
Subject-Verb-Object	*Di ka pekaya*	Don't be shy	SVO
Subject-Aux-Verb-Object	*So manga pipiya a pesowasowaan tano*	The good things that we do	SAuxVO

[2] Morphological Features: Verb Conjugation and Affixation

Maranao exhibits rich morphological marking, particularly through the use of prefixes and infixes to indicate focus, aspect, and actor involvement. For instance, the verb *pen man makilala* (haven't met) combines several morphemes to convey tense and aspect. English, on the other hand, uses auxiliary verbs like "have," "will," and "do" for similar functions.

Feature	Maranao	English	Observation
Affixation	*Pekaya ako* (I'm shy)	"I'm shy"	Maranao verb uses prefix *pe-*
Auxiliary Use	*na ba taro song* (Shall we go?)	"Shall we go?"	English uses modal *shall*

This affix-rich structure in Maranao results in a more flexible syntactic order but requires a deeper understanding of verb morphology, as compared to English's auxiliary-based system.

[3] Pronoun Usage and Sentence Roles

Both languages use pronouns extensively, but their placement and function vary. English typically places pronouns before the verb (e.g., *I eat*, *She goes*), while Maranao allows for greater positional flexibility and uses pronouns that carry morphological markers indicating number, person, and sometimes case.

For example:

- *Pekaya ako* (I am shy) – the pronoun *ako* follows the verb.
- *Ba ka pekamamala?* (Are you nervous?) – the pronoun *ka* (you) appears post-verbally or enclitic.

In English, the corresponding construction is fixed: *"Are you nervous?"* (Aux + S + Adj), showing less flexibility.

[4] Focus and Emphasis Markers

A unique feature in Maranao is the use of focus markers such as *so* (the), *na* (then/so), and *ka* (you). These elements help emphasize or topicalize sentence components. English achieves emphasis through intonation, clefting, or passive voice but lacks consistent grammatical focus markers.

- Maranao: *Kenaba pen, oman aken seka kiran mapanotol…* (When I tell them about you…)
- English: *When I tell them about you…*

Here, *seka* (you) and *kiran* (there) act as locative and pronominal elements with embedded focus, compared to the syntactically linear English equivalent.

[5] Syntactic Complexity and Flexibility

The Maranao sentences demonstrate higher syntactic complexity due to embedded clauses and affixed verbs.

Moreover, tag questions in English ("have you?") are often expressed through adverbs and particles in Maranao such as *pen* or *na*, adding to the differences in structure and tone management.

Frequency Results

Based on the five dialogues coded, the following frequency trends were observed:

Grammatical Feature	Maranao Frequency	English Frequency
Verb-Initial Sentences	42 instances	0 instances
Subject-Verb-Object	18 instances	45 instances
Use of Auxiliary Verbs	2 instances	35 instances
Use of Affixed Verbs	44 instances	3 instances
Pronouns with Flexibility	29 instances	22 instances
Explicit Focus Markers	21 instances	1 instance

These counts emphasize Maranao's morphological richness and syntactic flexibility, contrasting English's reliance on word order and auxiliaries.

V. INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

The findings of this study provide clear answers to the two research questions by highlighting the key similarities and differences in grammatical structures between Maranao and English, as well as comparing their sentence structures in terms of word order and focus markers.

1. What are the similarities and differences in grammatical structures between the Maranao and English languages?

The analysis revealed that while both languages utilize pronouns, subject-verb constructions, and basic syntactic components, they differ significantly in morphological and syntactic

organization. Maranao employs extensive affixation (prefixes, infixes) to indicate verb focus, aspect, and actor roles, whereas English relies on auxiliary verbs (e.g., "have," "will") and fixed word order for grammatical function. For instance, Maranao verbs like pekaya ("I'm shy") incorporate pronominal and tense markers within the verb itself, while English separates these elements (e.g., "I am shy"). Additionally, Maranao allows greater flexibility in pronoun placement (Pekaya ako vs. English's rigid "I am shy"), whereas English strictly adheres to Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order. Despite these differences, both languages share functional similarities in expressing questions, commands, and declarative statements, albeit through distinct mechanisms.

2. How do sentence structures in Maranao compare with those in English, particularly in terms of word order and focus markers?

The study identified a fundamental contrast in sentence structure: Maranao frequently adopts verb-initial (VSO/VOS) patterns (Somong ta sa walay—"Let's go to the house"), while English mandates SVO ("You haven't met my family"). Maranao's flexibility in word order is facilitated by its focus-marking system (e.g., so, na, ka), which emphasizes topics or agents without requiring positional rigidity. English, lacking such markers, depends on intonation or syntactic transformations (e.g., passive voice) for emphasis. For example, Maranao's Kenaba pen, oman aken seka... embeds focus within affixes and particles, whereas English linearizes the same idea ("When I tell them about you..."). These distinctions underscore Maranao's typological alignment with Austronesian languages (morphologically rich, focus-driven) versus English's analytic, word-order-dependent structure.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while Maranao and English share basic grammatical components like nouns, verbs, and pronouns, they exhibit fundamental differences in their structural organization and grammatical strategies. The analysis reveals Maranao's heavy reliance on verb-initial constructions and rich morphological marking through affixation to indicate focus, aspect, and agency, contrasting sharply with English's rigid Subject-Verb-Object word order and dependence on auxiliary verbs. These differences are particularly evident in sentence structure, where Maranao employs flexible word order (VSO/VOS) and grammatical focus markers, while English maintains fixed syntactic patterns and uses intonation or syntactic transformations for emphasis. The findings highlight how Maranao's typological features as an Austronesian language differ from English's analytic characteristics, presenting distinct challenges for language learners. Specifically, Maranao speakers may struggle with English's strict word order requirements, while English speakers face difficulties mastering Maranao's complex verb morphology and focus system. These insights not only contribute to our understanding of the two languages' grammatical systems but also have important implications for language teaching and learning, suggesting the need for pedagogical approaches that address these structural contrasts. The study underscores the value of contrastive analysis in linguistics and provides a foundation for further research into other aspects of Maranao-English grammatical comparison.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

The Based on the study's findings, several important recommendations emerge to enhance language education and preservation efforts. First and foremost, language educators should actively incorporate contrastive grammar instruction when teaching Maranao speakers English or vice versa, with particular emphasis on highlighting key differences in word order, verb morphology, and

focus systems to improve comprehension and fluency. To support this pedagogical approach, there is a critical need to develop specialized bilingual learning materials, including comparative grammar guides that clearly illustrate structural differences between the languages, along with targeted exercises that help learners practice transforming Maranao's VSO sentences into English's SVO structures and vice versa. The research also points to important areas for future linguistic investigation. Scholars should expand the scope of study to include a larger corpus of Maranao texts encompassing both traditional oral narratives and contemporary media, while also examining dialectal variations in spelling and grammar given the language's multiple existing orthographic conventions. Parallel to these academic efforts, concrete language preservation initiatives must be implemented, including supporting comprehensive documentation projects to systematically record Maranao's grammatical structures and promoting bilingual education programs in schools that maintain linguistic heritage while developing English proficiency. In our increasingly digital age, technology can play a pivotal role in these efforts. Developing specialized digital resources such as Maranao grammar-checking tools and translation applications that account for the language's unique grammatical features would provide valuable support to learners and speakers. Additionally, applying corpus linguistics methodologies to analyze larger datasets could yield more comprehensive insights into the language's structural patterns. By implementing these multifaceted recommendations, educators, linguists, and policymakers can develop more effective language learning strategies while contributing to the sustained vitality of the Maranao language in our globalized world. These collective efforts will not only bridge linguistic gaps but also help preserve an important cultural heritage for future generations.

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