
Revisiting the Morphological Features and Syntactic Constituents of Ibanag Literary Texts: A Meta-Synthesis of Related Literature

Ma. Theresa L. Eustaquio

Isabela State University College of Arts and Sciences Echague, Isabela

Corresponding Author: Ma. Theresa L. Eustaquio E-mail: thessa18e@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Researches on the Ibanag language and literary texts have long been explored by researchers. This paper deals with the meta-synthesis of published and unpublished papers dealing with the grammatical constituents of Ibanag literary texts focusing specifically on its morphological features and syntactic constituents. Using a systematic review of literature employing the inclusion-exclusion criteria, this paper reviewed and assessed the evidence for the existence of these morphosyntactic patterns through explicit review of the accessible documents and information. Hence, it was found that in terms of morphology, vowel loss, vowel change and reduplication were found among the literary texts. As to syntax, it was revealed that in non-verbal clause, the nominal clauses, adjectival clauses, the existential clauses, the locative clauses, and the prepositional clauses are present. As for the verbal clauses, intransitives and transitives are evident. Furthermore, intransitives have monovalent and divalent or bivalent, whereas transitives have divalent and trivalent.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship of language and literature has long been explored by several researchers (Fischer-Starcke, Bettina, 2010; Carter, 2004; Mahlberg, 2009) and attempts to discover the grammatical patterns existing in literary texts have been the subjects of researches by linguists (Stone, 2012; Biber, 2004; McCarthy & Carter, 2006) for several years. Thus, the question if linguistics can be applied in literary analysis have long been answered most specifically using stylistics. However, the rise of the question whether these patterns exist in all languages and in all literary texts gave birth to several researches and several of those focused on the Ibanag language and Ibanag religious and literary texts (Verstraelen, 2014; Tagumasi, 2014; Dita, 2010, 2011; Verstraelen, 2002).

From the northeastern island of the Philippines, the Ibanag people lived in the provinces of Isabela and Cagayan. Within the low ranges of Sierra Madre is on the east, Cordillera Central on the west, and Caraballo on the South, Ibanags are harmoniously living. Ibanag, sometimes Ibanag, Ibanak or Ybannag, literally used to mean the river, and over time Ibanag

eventually became the term by which to refer to the people living along its banks. Hence, the earliest Ibanag speakers are the settlers along Cagayan River who have eventually spread throughout the province. Reid (1974, 2006) classifies Ibanag as a member of the Cagayan Valley sub-group of the Northern Cordilleran Group of Northern Luzon. Older generation resource speakers narrate that Ibanag speakers then enjoyed some sort of supremacy over the non-speakers of the language, specifically, the Itawes group. Ibanag was then considered the prestige language in the province (Dita, 2010). Additionally, it was the 18th most spoken language in the country (Gordon, 2005).

Ibanag is spoken by approximately 500,000 people who come mainly from Cagayan and Isabela. McFarland (1980) reports that Ibanag is the dominant language in Santa Maria and Cabagan and the minor language in San Pablo, Tumauni, Santo Tomas, Reina Mercedes, Ilagan, San Mariano, Angadanan, Gamu, Naguilian, and Magsaysay (Dita, 2010). With the status of Ibanag as a prestige language, it has been taught in school for quite some time. The language was then added as one of the languages being taught

and learned in the Mother-tongue based multi-lingual education subject in the K12 curriculum of the Department of Education, specifically in the towns where the language is widely spoken. This inclusion again made noises on the field of linguistics and literature as experts question the validity of the material and texts being used in the academe. Thus, researchers carried out various studies regarding its background.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies on the Ibanag language has always been conducted. From phonology, articles, and pronouns (Blake, 1906; Conant, 1908, 1912; Viray, 1941; Tharp 1974; Brandes and Sheerer; 1927-28; Dita, 2016); coordinators (Elli, 2012); sentence patterns (Constantino, 1965; Llamzon, 1968); grammatical patterns (Tsuchida, Yamada, Constantino, and Moriguchi, 1989; Bugarin, 1854; McFarland, 1970a, 1970b; Tsuchida, 1962; Tagumasa, 2014); to morphosyntax (Verstraelen, 1973; Bauza, 1972; Bauza, 1996). Likewise, besides the linguistic aspect of Ibanag, the folk and religious literature has also been the subject of studies of theses and dissertations. Bangan (1976) and Del Rosario (2000) explored Ibanag and Cagayan folk literature in general. Dayag (1993), on the other hand, deals with the form and metaphors of *pasyon*, a Filipino Lenten song that depicts the sufferings and death of Christ. Likewise, these works append authentic Ibanag literary pieces in their papers which yield possibilities for investigation of their grammatical features (Dita, 2010).

This study, therefore, is designed to provide a comprehensive systematic review of available data on the morphological features and syntactic constituents of Ibanag literary texts. This paper reviewed and assessed the evidence for the existence of these morphosyntactic patterns through explicit review of the accessible documents and information. This paper therefore answers the following questions: (1) What are the morphological features of Ibanag literary texts; and (2) What are the syntactic constituents found in Ibanag literary texts?. Answering these will contribute to the growing literature on Ibanag grammatical features, properties and categories. Likewise, this will answer to the need of uncovering the relationship between linguistics and literature focusing mainly on Ibanag written literature. Thus, it will provide readers, researchers, administrators, teachers and students with a comprehensive background on the linguistic categories most specifically the morphological features and syntactic constituents of Ibanag literary texts.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on the available literature concerning morphological features and syntactic constituents of Ibanag literary texts. To do so, a wide search range was accomplished. Studies, research articles, theses, and dissertations published in peer-reviewed and reputable journals from the year 2000 to present were reviewed and analyzed. These papers were found in search engines like JSTOR, ResearchGate and IJERN. Papers that do not explicitly state Ibanag literary texts were included as long as there was a clear focus on Ibanag as established in the paper. But the study was limited only to the Ibanag language spoken in the provinces of Isabela and Cagayan. Furthermore, to gather sufficient background on the Ibanag language and its literary texts, researchers conducted and published even in the olden times were also reviewed and analyzed.

Moreover, descriptors (*Ibanag; *Ybanag linguistics and literary analysis; *Grammatical Features of Ybanag texts; *Ibanag Grammar; *Ybanag Orthography; *Ybanag Grammatical Patterns) were encoded and searched in various databases to identify relevant studies. More than thirty (30) articles, researches, theses and dissertations were identified by the search engines. To select the best studies suited for the systematic review, the following were considered in the inclusion-exclusion criteria:

1. Primary research published in peer reviewed journals, scientific papers, theses and dissertations;
2. Research articles, scientific papers, theses and dissertations that dealt with the Ibanag language and Ibanag literary texts/pieces;
3. Research articles, scientific papers, theses and dissertations published/ conducted from 2000- 2018;
4. Research articles, scientific papers, theses and dissertations which focus on the Isabela and Cagayan's Ibanag language and literary pieces;
5. Research articles, scientific papers, theses and dissertations that made use of English as a medium of writing; and
6. Google Scholar, ERIC, EBSCO, Science Direct, Scopus and other databases accessible to the researcher.

After selecting and accessing the literature following the inclusion-exclusion criteria, the need to trim down the searched and downloaded articles was done; the quality of literature included in the review was assessed. From the thirty-five (35) articles, only four (4) met the inclusion-exclusion criteria guidelines.

Since this paper aimed to thoroughly and systematically analyze existing literature on the morphological features and syntactic constituents of Ibanag literary texts, the publication year was modified from 2000-2018 to 1990 to 2016. Thus, twenty (20) papers were analyzed and synthesized to answer the questions posed in the study. Since the available literatures were also found in search engines like JSTOR, ResearchGate and IJERN, these were also included as references and databases of the study. Additionally, qualitative type of research articles and papers were only included in the systematic review.

The studies and results were then thematically coded as to morphological features and syntactic constituents. The morphological features were also categorized into subthemes. These subthemes were vowel loss, vowel change and reduplication. Likewise, the literary texts were categorized as short story. With these, meta-synthesis was employed. Polit and Beck (2006) defined Meta-synthesis as the non-statistical technique used to integrate, evaluate and interpret the findings of multiple qualitative research studies (Polit and Beck, 2006).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Studies reported that Ibanag language shows remarkable morphological features as proved by the results of the studies of Whittle and Lusted (1963); Davis, Baker, Spitz, & Baek (1998); Healey (1960). These reports were greatly supported by the researches focusing on the morphological features found in Ibanag literary texts.

Morphology in Short Stories

Vowel loss was found in the Ibanag literary texts. The researches of Verstraelen, 2016; Dita, 2010; & Bauza, 1972 proved these findings. When prefixes like *ma-* and *ipa-* are attached to base words that begin with the vowel *a-* like *ma-* + *ari* 'remove' = *mari* 'to be removed' and *ipa* + *ala* 'get, fetch' = *ipala* 'to have something fetched' vowel loss begins as explained by Bauza (1972). This was affirmed by Dita (2010) and mentioned that vowel loss happens in the words *ma-* + *awag* 'need' = *mawag* 'needed' and *ipa* + *alsa* 'remove' = *ipalsa* 'to be removed'.

Moreover, **vowel change** is also prevalent in Ibanag texts. Though it is more prevalent in spoken rather than the written (Dita, 2010), evidence can be seen on the words used in the stories (*ma-* + *itol* 'to return' = *metoli* 'to be returned'; *ma-* + *illaw*

'drunk' = *mellaw* 'to be drunk'). According to Dita (2010; 2016), this happens when prefixes *ma-* and *ipa-* are attached to a word base which begins with the vowel *i-*, the combination of *a-* and *i-* thus becomes *e-*. Additionally, according to Tagumasa (2014), Bangan (1976) and Del Rosario (2000), this also happens when the prefixes *ma-* and *ipa-* are attached to a word base which begins with the vowel *u-*, the combination of *a-* and *u-* becomes *o-* (*ma-* + *ulaw* 'dizzy' = *molaw* 'to become dizzy'; *ipa-* + *ufu* 'consume' = *ipofu* 'have something be consumed'). This was also confirmed by Dita (2016) who added words found in the text like *ipa-* + *ulug* 'bring down' = *ipolug* 'have something brought down'; *ma-* + *uli* 'change' = *moli* 'to be changed'.

Furthermore, Dita (2010; 2016), Tagumasa (2014) and Trask (1993) claimed that reduplication is common but a distinct characteristic of Austronesian languages. Reduplication is a morphological process that repeats some parts or patterns of a morpheme to form the plural features of a word (Crystal, 2000). Thus, reduplication suggests frequency and plurality. In the two (2) Ibanag texts, reduplication is evident as analyzed by Verstraelen, 2016; Dita, 2010; 2016; Verstraelen, 1973; Bauza, 1972; Bauza, 1996. According to them, nouns like *tolay* 'person' when duplicated as *totolay* it becomes 'people' and *balay* 'house' when duplicated becomes *babbalay* 'houses'. In terms of adjectives, reduplication is used to encode plurality, intensity, moderation, and superlativity. For example, *abbabba* 'short' becomes *abbarabba* 'short (plural)' and *baddi* 'small' *baraddi* 'small (plural)'.

Syntactic Structure of Ibanag Literary Texts

Bangan (1976), Tsuchida, Yamada, Constantino, and Moriguchi, 1989; Del Rosario (2000); and Dayag (1993) studied the grammatical constituents and syntactic structure of the Ibanag language. They found out that Ibanag is basically a VSO (verb-subject-object) language. Dita (2010) confirmed and explained this by presenting two (2) types of clauses found in the two (2) texts. These clauses were non-verbal clauses and verbal clauses. She (Dita, 2006) further confirmed that since Ibanag sentences constitute subjects and objects that are not

single words, but sometimes phrases or clauses, the term “word order” is inappropriate to use and “constituent order” is more encompassing.

Non-verbal Clauses

In Ibanag, the form of what seems to be a copula verb is *ay* (Dita, 2006) which is patterned to the view of Liao (2004) that it is a topic linker, but Reid (1978) contends that it is an inversion marker. Dita (2006; 2010) proved further that the use of *ay* by the Ibanags is really as a topic linker.

As what were discussed in their papers, the sentences are introduced by *ay*. *Ay* apparently links the previous topic to the present one. This implies that Non-verbal clauses in Ibanag are headed by a constituent which does not belong to the category of verbs. This result was seen by researchers (Reid and Liao, 2004) which was explained by Dita (2006) using the five types of non-verbal clauses namely nominal predicate, adjectival predicate, existential predicate, prepositional predicate and locative predicate.

Furthermore, research findings along this line as was already been confirmed by researchers like Constantino, (1965); Llamzon (1968); Tsuchida, Yamada, Constantino, and Moriguchi (1989); Bugarin (1854); McFarland (1970a, 1970b); Tsuchida (1962); Tagumasa (2014). Thus, the issue on these copula verbs in Ibanag literary texts has long been resolved but because of the need again to revisit the grammatical constituents present in the literary texts gave birth to this subject again.

Verbal Clauses

Clauses headed by verbs occupying the initial position of a sentence are called Verbal Clauses. As Reid and Liao (2004) argue, what determines the transitivity of a

verb is the type of the complement, not the number of the complement. Similarly, Ruffolo (2004) stresses that “complements determine the transitivity of a verb”. But, Dita (2006) contends that the highly complex affixes of Ibanag denotes the aspects and transitivity of the verbs. To prove her claim, she analyzes the following clauses found in the text which was also scrutinized by Tsuchida et al. (1989:37).

With these analysis and contentions by experts, Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000) then mentioned that verbal clauses in Ibanag are either transitive or intransitive, that intransitive constructions can have two types of valency and these are referred as monovalent (monodaic) intransitive and bivalent or divalent or dyadic intransitive.

5. CONCLUSION

Experts on the field of linguistics and literature looked closely in the salient morphological features and syntactic constituents of Ibanag literary texts. Though they have contrasting ideas regarding the morphological features and syntactic constituents present in the analyzed literary texts, they exposed harmonious result after scrutinizing the literary texts.

In terms of morphology, vowel loss, vowel change and reduplication were found among the literary texts. Thus, in teaching the Ibanag language and literary texts to the students especially in their Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) subject, it is deemed appropriate and necessary to introduce first the spelling, pronunciation and formation of the original word and explain how the in the present times the word is spelled, pronounced and formed to avoid confusion among the students.

As to syntax, researchers explained it using grammatical constituents present in the literary texts. The result was interspersed in two (2) types of clauses. It was revealed further that in non-verbal clause, the nominal clauses, adjectival clauses, the existential clauses, the locative clauses, and the prepositional clauses are present in the short stories. As for the verbal clauses, intransitives and transitives are present. Furthermore, intransitives have monovalent and divalent or bivalent, whereas transitives have divalent and trivalent. Hence, in order to address the growing

need to ensure the preservation of the Ibanag culture, its language, folk literature and culture, it is then but fitting to discuss these syntactic categories to young learners and not to teach the literature as spring board to grammar.

Along with the systematic literature review conducted poses several possibilities for future studies. It was mentioned that Ibanag language share the same characteristics with other Cordilleran languages, it is therefore recommended that a systematic review of literature following intertextual studies on other languages like Yagad, Agta, Itawes and Ilocano may be pursued. Likewise, since the focus of this paper is only on morphology and syntax, literature reviews may be conducted along phonology, semantics and pragmatics. Finally, a literature review may also be conducted focusing on poems and songs of Ibanags.

5. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ma. Theresa L. Eustaquio is a faculty member in the Isabela State University Echague Campus, Philippines teaching English and Literature subjects. At present, she is pursuing her PhD in Language Education degree. She authored and published researches along the field of language education.

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