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Research Article

Comparative Syntactic Analysis of Basic Sentence Structures in *Tausug* and English: Implications for Language Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the basic sentence patterns of Tausug (Bahasa Sug) and English, exploring their structural similarities and differences through a descriptive research design. The research involved 80 native Tausug speakers with advanced English proficiency from Jolo, Sulu, Philippines, and used Paul Roberts's (1956) seven basic sentence patterns as an analytical framework. The study addressed three primary research questions: (1) the contemporary significance of Tausug language studies, (2) the integration of Tausug jargon and idiomatic expressions in language standardization efforts, and (3) the syntactic variations between English and Tausug grammatical structures.

Data were collected using an 82-item survey instrument examining Tausug jargon, idiomatic expressions, basic sentence patterns, and sociolinguistic factors such as Tausug's role as a regional lingua franca, its influence on neighboring ethnolinguistic groups, and its significance in governance and education. Statistical analysis employed descriptive methods and weighted means. The results revealed a significant language shift among younger Tausug speakers, leading to a decline in formal Tausug proficiency, despite its status as the lingua franca of the Sulu Archipelago. Although there are structural parallels between Tausug and English basic sentence patterns, notable syntactic variations were identified, particularly in word order and sentence structure.

These findings suggest that while Tausug retains some structural similarities to English, the syntactic differences could impact second language acquisition, particularly for those learning English as a second language. Moreover, the decline in Tausug proficiency underscores the need for efforts to preserve and standardize the language, integrating its unique jargon and idiomatic expressions into educational and governance contexts to promote its continued use and development.

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Introduction

English as a second language presents unique challenges for Tausug speakers due to the influence of their first language (L1) speech patterns, sentence structures, and word order configurations. This linguistic phenomenon aligns with Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which suggests that interference from the first language significantly impacts second-language learning. Tausug, a Malayo-Polynesian language, shares common features with Central Philippine languages, particularly the Visayan group (Chretien, 1963; Hassan et al., 2014), and serves as the dominant language in the Sulu Archipelago, where it functions as a lingua franca among various ethnic groups, including the Sama and Badjaw communities (Warren, 1981).

Recent sociolinguistic trends indicate a concerning decline in standard Tausug usage among younger generations, marked by an increase in code-mixing and grammatical simplification. For instance, the shift from the standard "Wai sin ku" to the incorrect "Wai aku sin" exemplifies this change. This language shift presents significant challenges to the preservation and standardization of Tausug (Duran, 2019), especially as the increasing demand for English proficiency—driven by economic and global factors—compounds these issues.

This study aims to analyze the contemporary significance of Tausug language studies, explore the integration of Tausug jargon and idiomatic expressions in language standardization, and examine the syntactic variations between English and Tausug grammatical structures. Through this, the research seeks to uncover the implications for second language teaching and learning, particularly in how first-language interference may affect English language acquisition and pedagogical approaches.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive-comparative approach to examine the basic sentence structures of Tausug and English. The approach is justified by the need to

capture the syntactic variations and similarities between these two languages. The descriptive-comparative framework focuses on analyzing and contrasting the basic sentence patterns of Tausug and English, guided by Paul Roberts's (1956) seven basic sentence patterns.

Data were collected from multiple sources. Primary data for Tausug sentence structures were gathered from 80 native Tausug speakers through structured interviews, recorded natural conversations, and written texts, including literature and educational materials. English sentence structures were analyzed using Roberts's (1956) framework. Data collection procedures included conducting semi-structured interviews, recording 10 hours of natural conversations, and transcribing oral data using standard linguistic transcription conventions.

The choice of respondents was based on their advanced proficiency in English, which allowed for meaningful comparisons between the two languages. These respondents were prioritized because their advanced English skills are essential for accurate translation and understanding of the syntactic structures of both languages. The focus on advanced English-proficient Tausug speakers also ensures that the study captures the linguistic behaviors of individuals who are likely to encounter and navigate syntactic interference between the two languages, making them ideal participants for this comparative analysis.

The analysis framework consists of three main components: syntactic analysis, comparative analysis, and linguistic validation. **Syntactic Analysis:** This component involved parsing the collected sentences to identify constituent structures, word order patterns, and morpho-syntactic features. The analysis focused on how Tausug and English sentence patterns align or differ, particularly in their syntactic ordering, phrase structures, and agreement systems. **Comparative Analysis:** This step compared sentence structures in both languages, highlighting similarities and differences in constituent ordering rules, agreement systems, and

modification patterns. The analysis also considered the impact of language transfer, particularly how Tausug speakers might apply their L1 sentence structures to English. **Linguistic Validation:** To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study incorporated several validation measures. Expert validation of linguistic analyses was conducted by native Tausug scholars, while peer review was employed to assess the comparative findings. Member checking was used by consulting native speaker experts to confirm the accuracy of translations and interpretations. Additionally, triangulation of data sources was implemented to ensure the robustness of the analysis.

Potential Biases and Mitigation

Given the reliance on respondent self-reports, one potential bias is the subjective nature of language recall during interviews or the influence of participants' linguistic attitudes and preferences. To mitigate these biases, the study included a range of data sources—such as recorded conversations, structured interviews, and written texts—to triangulate findings and reduce the reliance on individual recollection. Furthermore, member checking with native speaker consultants was conducted to

verify the authenticity of the data and to ensure that the analyses reflected native linguistic intuitions accurately.

Tausug Jargon and Idiomatic Expressions

As part of the linguistic analysis, the study also explored the use of Tausug jargon (or *alinyan*) in the context of sentence structures. Jargon is a form of social or cultural language used by specific groups, often carrying particular meanings that are not immediately understood by the wider population. For instance, some words used by respondents, such as "ampun" (respectful address to a sultan), "sapanjang" (throughout one's life), and "dahik" (to drag a boat), are examples of this unique Tausug linguistic phenomenon. These expressions provide additional insights into the syntactic variations and the role of language in social interaction.

By examining both standard and non-standard forms of Tausug language, including jargon and idiomatic expressions, this study highlights the richness and complexity of Tausug syntax and offers important considerations for language standardization and education.

Among the *malikata* that have been identified by the respondents were the following:

<i>Ampun</i>	– respectful address of a subject to his sultan or datu; means your Highness.
<i>Ampupu</i>	– to carry something with both hands.
<i>Andarun</i>	– a small charm or amulet for a child.
<i>Apu-giba</i>	– the second descending generation from ego; grandchild.
<i>Bagalawang</i>	– a big kite; a children's game similar to a prisoner's base.
<i>Bahana</i>	– a report, information, or rumor.
<i>Banghad</i>	– the customary or traditional bride price set by a family.
<i>Dasig</i>	– to speak vociferously and shrilly; to shout at someone.
<i>Dahik</i>	– to drag (a boat) up onto or off the beach.
<i>Diyat</i>	– money used to recompense for physical injuries done to someone.
<i>Dugang</i>	– something added to another; the rest of something.
<i>Ganarul</i>	– famous, celebrated, and renowned person.
<i>Gandawari</i>	– a figurehead of a boat or ship.
<i>Ganggang</i>	– adj. meaning dry, arid, desiccated, brittle, crisp (as of clothes, trees or land)
<i>Gasad</i>	– intention or purpose.
<i>Habun</i>	– to waylay or ambush someone.
<i>Habug</i>	– broadness, breadth of cloth.
<i>Halulay</i>	– to reunite or reconcile (as husband and wife).
<i>Haymbugatun</i>	– dignified (of a woman whose worthy of self – esteem, respect and honor).
<i>Himmat</i>	– care, concern, solicitude.
<i>Ikang-ikang</i>	– chains, fetters, shackles of a prisoner.

Inumpung – to meet and discuss something; gather together.

Irup – to mind; be mindful of something.

Jahat – trouble.

Jaid – to surrender.

Jantik – elegant in dress and appearance.

Kagingkul – the sound of glass, earthenware, etc. jingling, tinkling, or clinking.

Kakak – the sound of a duck; a loud, coarse burst of laughter.

Kamayu – An infection of a wound or sore.

Liganus – a woman having a well-shaped body.

Liyuuran – descent, lineage, ancestry, family or clan.

Lipaga – attention; to concentrate or pay attention to something.

Mustahil – impossible, preposterous or absurd.

Pasuwa - money given away by people who wins in gambling.

Sapanjang – throughout one's life.

Sumariya – investigation, interrogation, systematic inquiry.

Taawil – to interpret a dream; a twitch or itch some part of the body, or speech.

Untayaw – to recover or regain the state of one's health or condition.

Wajil / Wajir – one of a group of aristocratic officials composing the advisory and administrative staff of the sultan of Sulu, royal minister.

Yundul – (variation of undul) result, outcome.

The basic sentence Patterns of *Bahasa Sug* and English

In getting the difference on the statement patterns of the *Bahasa Sug* and the English lan-

guage, this researcher has gathered the translations made by the respondents from English sentences manifesting the different statement patterns by Paul Roberts and have them translate it into English.

The respondents have the following translations:

Pattern 1 (Noun -Verb)

I. The Principal calls.

Prof. Ahmad: "*Panawag-tawag sin principal.*"

Dayang Sahial: "*Timawag in principal.*"

Prof. Salasain: "*Nag-tawag in principal.*"

Other respondents indicated;

"In nakura mastal nagtawag."

"Nag-patawag in prinsipal."

"Nagpatawag in nakura sin iskul."

"Nagtawag in prinsipal".

II. The students answer.

Prof. Ahmad: "*Sambung sin anak mulid.*"

Dayang Sahial: "*Simambung in mga bata iskul.*"

Prof. Salasain: "*Simambung in mga mag-iiskul.*"

Other respondents specified;

"In bata iskul simambung."

"Simambung in bata iskul."

"Simambung in mga murid."

Pattern 2 (noun-verb-noun)

I. The Water flooded the streets.

Prof. Ahmad: *"Nag-dunok in tubig ha dan."*

Dayang Sahial: *"Biyahaan in dan sin tubig."*

Prof. Salasain: *"Nag-dunok in tubig ha ran."*

One respondent had written;

"Biyahaan in dan."

II. The garbage blocked the outlets.

Dayang Sahial: *"In basura himapa ha guguwaan tubig."*

Prof. Salasain: *"Nalapat sin kaput in guguwaan tubig."*

Other respondent wrote;

"In lummi nakalapat sin pag-guguwaan in tubig."

Pattern 3 (noun-verb-noun-noun)

I. The sultan gave the victims food.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In sultan nagdihil pagkaun ha mga diyatungan aramala."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In sultan nagdihil makaun ha mga kiyasisigpitan."*

Other respondents wrote;

"In sultan dimihil pagkaun ha manga kiyasigpitan."

"Nagdihil pagkaun in Sultan ha mga na-biktim."

II. Concern citizens have provided the evacuees clothing.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In manga tao baing-ulungun dimihil tamungun ha mga paguy."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In manga tau matawkasi nagpaawn mga badju ha paguy."*

Another respondent said;

"In Tau baing-ulungun nagdihil tamungun ha mga tau paguy."

Pattern 4 (Noun – linking verb – adjective)

I. Many people were homeless.

Prof. Ahmad: *"Mataud tau in kiyagikan bay."*

Dayang Sahial: *"Mataud tau in wayruun bay."*

Other respondents indicated;

"Mataud tau in way bay."

"Kamatauran sin tau wayruun bay."

II. Roads and bridges became impassable.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In karandanan din a pagkalabayan."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In manga dan iban mga taytayan di kalabayan."*

One respondent indicated;

"In dan iban taytayan di kaantasan."

Pattern 5 (Noun – Linking Verb – Noun)

I. Respiratory diseases are the rampant cause of deaths.

Prof. Salasain: *"In mga sakit ha asang amuin kamwmuhan sabab sin kamatay."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In sakit ha pagnanapasan amuna in kamawmuhan sabab sin kamatay."*

II. The health department has been source of medical aid.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In health department sila in pagkakawaan sin kaubat – ubatan."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In Health department amuin pagkakawaan ubat Tabang daing ha parinta."*

III. The chief problem was high prices.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In malaggu problema amuin mataas panyagaan."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In malaggu problema amuin paghalga sin panyagaan."*

Pattern 6 (Noun – Verb preceding an objective complement – Noun –Noun)

I. Authorities considered the situation an emergency.

Prof. Salasain: *"In mga ha kawasa biylang in kahalan subay hipag uws-uws."*

Dayang Sahial: *"In parinta kiyta in kahalan subay hipag uws."*

II. The mayor chose the councilor his assistant.

Prof. Ahmad: *"Pini sin Mayor in konsiyal pangabay niya."*

Prof. Salasain: *"In Mayol mini konsehal pangabay niya."*

Dayang Sahial: *"Mini in mayol konsiyal niya mahinang abay."*

Pattern 7 (Noun – Verb Preceding an objective complement – Noun – Noun)

I. The officials thought their task difficult.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In pangannal sin manga namamarinta in hinang nila mahunit."*

Mrs. Sahial: *"Natali sin manga nakura in hinang nila mahunit."*

Prof. Salasain: *"Pangannal sin manga nakura in hinang nila mahunit."*

II. The citizens rated their work excellent.

Prof. Ahmad: *"In manga raayat dihilan nila kabantugan in hinang nila."*

Prof. Salasain: *"In manga raayat biysta nila in hinang nila maraw."*

Mrs. Sahial: *"Biyta sin mga tau in hinang nila marayaw."*

With the attempt at creating a sentence pattern for the *Tausug* language by citing the various translations made by the respondents above, the researcher was able to note the following:

It showed that the 1st sentence pattern (N-V) is inverted in Tausug sentence pattern as (V-N) such as in the sentences; *"Nagtawag in principal"* and *"Simambung in mga mulid."* However, the N-V pattern can also be followed by adding the word *"In"* which has the same function as the article 'the' in the English sentences. These are seen from the sentences; *"In nakura mastal nagtawag."* and *"In bata iskul simambung."*

Other Tausug sentence pattern has also an equivalent in the patterns translated from

English. For example, the second pattern (Noun – Verb – Noun) has the pattern in Tausug as either (Verb - noun) as in the sentence *"Biyahaan in dan"* or (Verb – Noun – Noun [object of the preposition]) as in the sentence, *"Nagdunuk in tubig ha ran."*

The third English sentence pattern (N-V-N-N) can be written in using the same pattern in Tausug. Example: *"In sultan dimihil pagkaun ha mga kiyasisigpitan"* and *"In sultan nagdihil pagkaun ha mga diyatungan aramala."*

The fourth pattern (N-LV-Adjective) is also translated in *Tausug* having the same pattern as in, *"In dan iban manga taytayan nahinang di kaantasan."* or without the linking verb, thus, having the pattern of Noun – adjective only. For instance, *"Mataud tau wayruun bay."*

The fifth pattern (N-LV-N) has faced some difficulty in its translation. Most of the respondents confided that it is hard for them to trace the *Tausug* word for respiratory diseases and health department as well as the equivalent of linking words in the *Tausug* language. What the respondents did was to retain the word health department in their translation. They however, used the words 'amuin' and 'amuna' to represent the English word were. The article 'the' that functions as an adjective in the sentence is also translated as 'In' in *Tausug*.

In the sixth pattern (Noun – verb preceded with an objective complement – noun – noun), similarly the respondents came across the difficulty of translating the articles and resulted to the used of the *Tausug* word 'In'. There were no rules also as far as the respondents' know which pertains to the form of *Tausug* words when they refer to plural or singular entities so they simply added the *Tausug* word 'manga' before each word to indicate that it is plural. Other than this, the sixth sentence pattern of Paul Roberts can still be used in its original syntax (order) which is reflected in the answers of the respondents. The sixth pattern can also be written in *Tausug* by starting with the main verb as in the sentence, "*Pini sin mayul in kunisyal pangabay niya.*"

The last pattern of Paul Roberts (Noun – verb preceded with an objective complement – noun – Adjective) has been translated by the respondents in two ways; first, it can either be started by a main verb as in the sentence, "*Natali sin manga nakura in hinang nila mahunit.*" Translation of the sentence, the official thought their task difficult. It can also be inferred from this translation the pronoun 'their' which is in the possessive case, is signified by the word 'in' in *Tausug*. Aside from this, the word 'sin' is also used to indicate possession of the word thought as to that of the officials. They also used the words 'manga' and 'nila' to mean that the word 'nakura' in this sentence has a plural meaning.

Another translation, "*In pangannal sin manga namamarinta in hinang nila mahunit*", almost had the same pattern with its English counterpart. The only difference is in order of verb and noun. As it is stated here, the verb 'pangannal' comes before the noun 'manga namamarinta'.

The Variations of Word Order and Grammatical Structures of *Bahasa Sug* and English

Based on the observations made by the respondents and the researcher on the translations of sentences from English to *Tausug*, the following differences in syntax and grammatical structures were identified:

The *Tausug* sentence usually starts with a main verb rather than a noun, which functions as the subject in English sentences.

There are no available rules for spelling *Tausug* words that indicate whether the word is singular or plural. However, in *Tausug* sentences, the words "manga" and "nila" are typically added to indicate that the word beside them is plural.

The basic sentence patterns of Paul Roberts can be written in *Tausug* with little variance. These variances are primarily found in the linking verbs, which the *Tausug* language lacks because it is not yet standardized.

Some *Tausug* words can function as both singular and plural without changing their spelling or adding another word, such as *Tausug*.

Results and Discussion

In response to the comments and suggestions of the panel, the Results and Discussion section of this research study should be enriched by delving deeper into the analysis of *Tausug* sentence patterns, particularly in terms of how structural differences affect second-language learners. *Tausug*, which typically follows a verb-subject-object (VSO) sentence structure, contrasts with the subject-verb-object (SVO) structure of English. This difference can pose challenges for learners, especially those whose first language operates on an SVO structure, making it difficult for them to adapt to *Tausug*'s syntactic rules. By comparing the sentence structures in both languages, the research could explore how these structural disparities impact the comprehension and learning of *Tausug* by second-language learners, potentially hindering fluency and sentence formation.

Additionally, the section on the *Tausug* "Aliyan" language, while fascinating, can be better integrated into the discussion on language standardization efforts. The formal or traditional version of *Tausug*, known as "Aliyan,"

holds significant cultural and historical value. However, its disconnection from modern usage threatens the language's preservation. Therefore, linking "Aliyan" more directly to the need for standardizing Tausug would highlight its relevance in maintaining the language's integrity. Standardization efforts should include the development of consistent grammatical rules, phonetic guidelines, and etymological resources to ensure uniformity in spelling and usage, especially considering the current lack of uniformity in these areas.

Moreover, Tausug's decline in use among younger generations necessitates urgent action to preserve it. Many young Tausug speakers today struggle with understanding or speaking the formal version of the language, leading to a disconnect between generations. This trend underscores the importance of revitalizing and standardizing Tausug to ensure its continuity. The research should emphasize the role of language instructors in integrating Tausug's sentence patterns into the teaching of English, as learners tend to grasp a second language more effectively when their native language is involved in the instructional process. The preservation and standardization of Tausug, particularly its syntactic structures, will ensure that it continues to serve as a critical vehicle for cultural identity and communication across the Sulu Archipelago. The study concludes with a call for further research into Tausug's resilience and its relationship to other languages spoken in the region, suggesting that future studies should explore how non-native speakers utilize Tausug and investigate the factors contributing to its ongoing use despite the pressures of modernization.

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