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A Morphosyntactic Analysis of Isamal Ergatives: Movement in Ergative Structures

Rodney C. Jubilado

Abstract

Isamal is an Austronesian language spoken by around 8,000 indigenous people of Samal Island, Mindanao, Philippines. Fieldwork has shown that every speaker of Isamal is bilingual in Cebuano, the most dominant language in the island with a population of 104,123 according to Philippine Census (2015). This paper deals with the morphosyntax of Isamal ergatives, and analysis is made using the Minimalist Program with focus on the movement of elements in the structure. Verb morphology is given a description to lend a hand in the analytical scrutiny of the projections of the lexical information encoded in the argument and thematic structures of the verbs. Like all ergatives, Isamal ergatives have only one argument, that is, the theme-DP. There are three primary syntactic structures that are analyzed in this paper, namely, VP, TP, and CP. With the employment of the Minimalist Program for analysis, movement in the ergative structures shows that verbs, arguments and adjuncts can move.

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Linguists, who are working on language documentation, focus on, among many things, the collection and analysis of linguistic data in this particular subfield (Good, 2011; Austin, 2010; Himmelman, 2006; Harrison, 2005). Languages like English, French, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian, to name a few, are well-documented as their volumes of literature indicate. In fact, these are the official languages of the United Nations due to the number of speakers, wide geographical spread, economic strength, and sociopolitical significance. In the Philippines, the current number of indigenous languages is 175 (Simons & Fennig, 2019). Philippine languages spoken by more than a million speakers are mostly well-documented languages. Among them are Tagalog (and its nationalized dialect, Filipino), Cebuano, Ilocano, Kapampangan, Bicolano, Hiligaynon, and Bahasa Sug to name a few. On the other side of the spectrum are the least documented languages that include Isamal language.

Isamal is an Austronesian language spoken by around 8,000 indigenous people of Samal Island, Mindanao, Philippines (Jubilado, 2021; 2017; 2004). Samal Island is located in the middle of Davao Gulf in Southeastern Mindanao. On January 30, 1998, the island was created a city by virtue of the Republic Act No. 5999. The newly made city has the official name Island Garden City of Samal, which is composed of the three original municipalities -Babak, Samal, Kaputian. It is part of the greater Metropolitan Davao that comprises Davao City, Digos, Tagum, Panabo, Carmen and Sta. Cruz. Fieldwork shows that every speaker of Isamal is bilingual in Cebuano, the most dominant language in the island with a population of 104,123 according to Philippine Census (2015). In the language family tree, Isamal is classified as a member of the Greater Central Philippine languages under the heading of Mansakan. Isamal is categorized as a dialect of Kalagan language whose speakers are labelled Muslims (Simons & Fennig, 2019) that is contrary to the real situation. Per extended fieldworks, mutual intelligibility between Isamal and Kalagan languages is around 70-80%. In terms of population, the Kalagan people (Kagan, endonymically) in Samal Island are less than a thousand people. They profess Islam as compared to the Isamal or Samal who are greater in number and profess Christianity. While the Kalagan people are located mostly in the coastal areas of the first district of Babak, the Isamal people are residing in different areas including the town centers of the three districts of the city, namely, Babak, Samal, and Kaputian.

Any language documentation includes the objective of collecting and analyzing data for the production of these three scholarly products: lexicon, grammar, and literature. As such, language analysis and description form part of the language documentation. Along this idea, this paper deals with the morphosyntactic analysis and description of the ergatives in Isamal language

and the explication of movement in the ergative structures. Since 1970s, some linguists have been working on ergativity (Dixon, 1979; Comrie, 1978), and such major works have contributed to the subfield of linguistic typology in categorizing languages into ergative-absolutive and nominative-accusative. Theoretically, there are two types of ergativity, namely, morphological ergativity and syntactic ergativity. Morphological ergativity is associated with case marking, in particular, the cases of ergative and absolutive. Syntactic ergativity is best understood that the object of the transitive verb behaves and functions like the subject of an intransitive verb. Since Isamal is one of the least documented languages, there is a stark scarcity of published linguistic articles on this language. This article is the first attempt to analyze the morphosyntax of ergatives of Isamal language.

Theoretical Background

This paper makes use of the Minimalist Program (MP) in analyzing ergatives by highlighting the lexical information of the predicates and the derivation of the structural descriptions projected by the predicates. The Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 2013, 2008, 2007, 2005, 2004, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1995) is a theoretical framework within the generative school of thought in linguistics that aims at the explanation of the knowledge of language and the acquisition thereof in line with the Universal Grammar (UG). Chomsky sees UG “as the theory of the initial cognitive state” (Chomsky 2002:8). By virtue of the child’s experience of being exposed to the first language, the child is deemed as being exposed to the primary linguistic data (PLD). His experience includes his observation on how people around him use language. Such experience serves as the input to the UG. Whatever the PLD is, this helps in determining the particular grammar (read: particular language) that the child will eventually acquire. The particular grammar is derived from the UG by fixing the given parameters in either of the two options similar to the fashion of “on” or “off” like a switch. The child’s task is to come up with his first language with specific rules which he will eventually induce as the result of his exposure to the PLD in accordance to and within the confines of the invariant rules of the Universal Grammar. Clearly speaking, his major linguistic task in the course of language acquisition is to fix the parametric options in the initial state which UG provides. Where language acquisition is deemed as a creative process, it makes the child capable of understanding and uttering novel sentences which are not even heard beforehand. Language in this sense can be defined as the product or output of the interaction of the PLD and the UG.

The Minimalist Program assumes the architecture of the Principles and Parameters Theory. The caveat is that some basic ideas, concepts, and conditions in GB are either totally eliminated or revised such as DS, SS, X-Bar Theory, Case Theory, and others. It is one of the principal reasons why knowledge of GB is required and or presupposed before embarking on the theoretical shores of MP. Although Chomsky (1995) is the standard text of the Minimalist Program, reading it directly is downright mind-boggling to the uninitiated.

Moreover, grammar in MP is composed of the lexicon and the computation. From the lexicon, the lexical items enter the computation with the formal features of which some are interpretable and the others uninterpretable. In terms of computation, derivation starts with the lexical array or numeration. In deriving the structures, it is assumed in this study the employment of the Minimalist Program in particular the *Derivation by Phase* (DBP) as outlined in Chomsky (2001, pp.1-52)¹ and *On Phases* (OP) as outlined in Chomsky (2005, pp.1-29)². Chomsky pointed out that, in DBP, syntax is computed by phase, which means primarily the complementary phrase (CP) and the transitive small VP (shorthand: v*P). CP is deemed a complete clause and therefore propositional in nature. Also, v*P is considered a phase when it is transitive, which means that it has the full argument/thematic structure wherein the external argument is specifically present. Once a phase is built, the same is sent to the phonological form (PF) and the logical form (LF) via *transfer*, making the phase impenetrable by other syntactic operations. After sending the phase, computation continues further with the upper parts of the clause. In this paper, the TP template is used for analyzing the syntactic structures.

The very central part of this aspect of grammar is the narrow syntax, which is an LF computation (Chomsky, 2001, p. 3). Narrow syntax is the particular cycle where the syntactic structure is built via *Merge*³ in coordination with other operations such as feature checking and valuation via *Agree*⁴. Agree holds

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- 1 Derivation by Phase, henceforth DBP, stipulates the idea that the derivation of a sentence is done phase by phase. DBP introduces the valuation mechanism of features and of agreement. Through Agree, the unvalued features in the derivation are valued and undergo deletion at the terminus of the phase.
 - 2 Chomsky's manuscript *On Phases* (OP) complements DBP in the explication of computing phases (Chomsky, 2008). In the probe-goal syntactic relation, agreement takes place in the domain wherein the goal has uninterpretable/unvalued features. The features of the goal value the probe features including the structural features such as Case.
 - 3 Merge is the basic syntactic operation which combines lexical items via feature checking to build a syntactic object such an X Phrase where X corresponds to the heads, namely, noun (N), verb (V), adjective (A), preposition (P), determiner (D), tense (I), small v (v), and complement (C) among others. Therefore, the X Phrases can be nominal phrase (NP), verb phrase (VP), adjective phrase (AP), preposition phrase (PP), determiner phrase (DP), tense phrase (TP), small verb phrase (vP), and complement phrase (CP).
 - 4 In view of the checking relations, Agree is the syntactic operation, which is distinct from Merge, that holds the relation between the probe and the goal in checking and valuing the formal features of the concerned lexical items (Boeckx, 2008, p. 77-78).

the constituents α and β if both constituents are local and that α c-commands β where α is the *probe* and β is the *goal*. By probe, it means the head with the uninterpretable feature, and goal is the matching syntactic object with the interpretable feature. For the probe's uninterpretable features to delete, it searches a goal via c-command. The goal must be local to the probe meaning that it is within the domain of the probe. The goal's uninterpretable features must be unchecked making it active in the computation. After the valuation and the checking of uninterpretable features of the goal, it ceases its participatory powers in relation to *Agree* (Adger, 2010, pp. 210-214; Hornstein, Nunes, & Grohmann, 2005, pp. 317-318).

In the Minimalist Program, the language faculty consists two parts: (1) the lexicon and (2) the computational system (CS). The separation of lexicon and CS substantiates the elimination of the redundancy which PSR and lexical properties possess. Such separation resolves the tension between explanatory and descriptive adequacy. The lexicon specifies the lexical item to enter into the CS minus redundancy which can be predicted in the UG. The lexicon is composed of lexical items which are classified as lexical categories and functional categories. Lexical categories are contentives or substantives like N, V, A, ADV, and P owing to the fact that they possess idiosyncratic descriptive content or sense properties. Functional categories are functors like tense, pronouns, determiners, auxiliaries, complementizers, infinitivals, and others. These functors have essential grammatical functions which bear information about the grammatical properties of expressions within the sentence (Radford, 1997:45). In the lexicon, the lexical entry contains information on the meaning of the word, its syntactic category, its pronunciation, its morphological properties, and the argument/thematic structure.

CS is responsible in building structures and getting rid of unnecessary ones. CS selects the lexical item (LI) from the lexicon to form linguistic expressions (Chomsky, 1995, p.6). The computational model has only two levels of representations which are levels of interface, namely, Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF). The model of grammar in MP is enhanced and represented below.

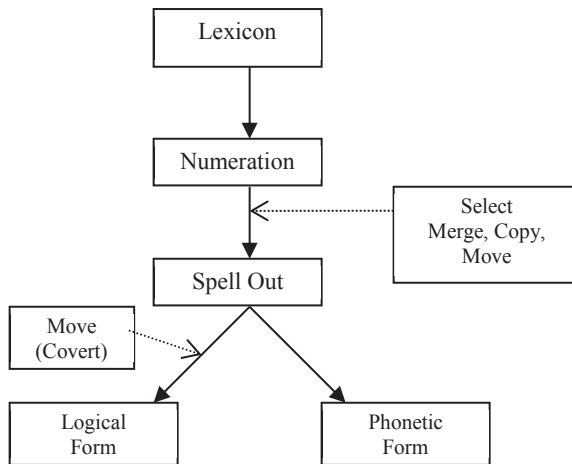


Figure 1. The Grammar in MP.

Assuming the Strong Lexicalist Hypothesis, deriving the structural description is done in bottom-up fashion, which means that the lower structures are computed first before the higher structures. Traditionally, ergative verbs are part of the monadic or monoargumental verbs called intransitive verbs. In the advent of the Unaccusative Hypothesis⁵ and the Burzio's Generalization⁶, the ergative or unaccusative verbs are given the intense scrutiny in various syntactic researches and typological studies in generative linguistics.

Materials and Methods

For this study, fieldwork was done to collect data from the informants who were native speakers of Isamal, born to Isamal parents, 21 to 60 years of age, and residents in the second district of the city of Samal. Five informants were identified and consulted in this research using eliciting materials to start the collection of data. The eliciting materials⁷ were composed of questions for discussion and sample sentences for native speaker's grammaticality judgment.

5 Unaccusative Hypothesis was proposed by David Perlmutter (1978, p.160) categorizing the traditional intransitive verbs in to two types, namely, unaccusative and unergative. In this hypothesis, unaccusative verbs select only one internal argument which is the logical object theme. The unergative verbs select only one external argument which is the grammatical subject, which can be either an agent or an experiencer depending on the lexical semantics of the lexical verb.

6 Burzio's Generalization stipulates that verbs that can theta-mark its external argument can also assign accusative case (Burzio, 1986, pp. 178-179). It conceptualizes the structural facts that the subjects in the unaccusative constructions behave syntactically like the object themes of the transitive constructions.

7 These eliciting materials were designed by the late Professor Ernesto Constantino of the Department of Linguistics, University of the Philippines.

Spoken data was recorded, transcribed and encoded in a disk for further analysis by the researcher who is a native speaker-linguist himself. Absent the written literature of Isamal, it was within the theoretical bounds of the generative school of linguistics to use *intuitive judgment*, a technical term that points to the consultation of native speakers for their judgment on the grammaticality and the acceptability of the utterances of the language involved in the research (Chomsky, 2008; 2002; 1965). To complement the data from the fieldwork, written data were taken from the Facebook of the two Isamal speakers, who were among the five informants.

Basic Verb Morphology and Constituent Order of Isamal

Following Reid (1992), the verb morphology of Isamal exhibits complex properties like other Philippine type of languages. Like the rest of the Philippine languages, Isamal has numerous but finite set of verbalizing affixes, for example, *mag-*, *pag-*, *-um*, *-un*, *i-*, and *-an*, that indicate and license the arguments, semantic relations, case categories or case forms as used in the literature (Tanangkingsing, 2015, 2007; Aldridge, 2012; Dita, 2011, 2010; Nagaya, 2007; 2005; Kitano, 2005; Nolasco & Saclot, 2005; Liao, 2004; Reid & Liao, 2004; Mithun, 1994). Together with the preceding set of affixes, the affixes like *miga-*, *piga-*, *iga-*, *ga-*, *piga-an*, and *-y-* inflect the verbs with aspects, namely, contemplative, imperfective, and perfective. Unlike the larger languages such as Tagalog, Ilocano, and Cebuano, Isamal does not make use extensively of reduplication in its verb morphology. In daily speech among Isamal speakers, the aforementioned affixes are morphologically productive and can be affixed to most nouns including those nouns borrowed from any language such as English. Although Isamal has no standardized orthography, Isamal children at school have the tendency to use standard Filipino orthography as the basis of writing Isamal. Predictably, Isamal children have two spellings for the English phrase 'to use a computer': *magkompyuter* or *mag-computer*; the former is often recommended for use in the classrooms, and the latter by the printed and social media. Similarly, the English phrase 'to computerize something' can be spelled *kompyuteron* but not *computer-on*.

Isamal verb morphology can show (1) the number of arguments in the computation of the sentential structures projecting from the verb and (2) the type of aspectual affixes that the verb root can take. Below is Table 1 that shows the representative verbalizing affixes showing the fully inflected forms of the verbs with aspects.

Table 1. Sample of Isamal Verbalizing Affixes with Full Verb Paradigm.

Root	Affix	Aspect		
		Contemplative	Imperfective	Perfective
1. kan 'to eat'	mag/miga/y	magkan	migakan	myagkan
	pag/piga/y	pagkan	pigakan	pyagkan
	um/ga/y	kuman	gakan	kyuman
	un/piga/y	kanun	pigakan	kyan
2. atag 'to give'	mag/mig/y	mag-atag	migaatag	myag-atag
	pag/piga/y	pag-atag	pigaatag	pyag-atag
	i-/iga/y	iatag	igaatag	yatag
	an/piga/y	atagan	pigaatagan	yatagan
	-i/piga-an/ pyag-an	atagi	pigaatagan	pyag-atagan
3. kadtu 'to go'	um/ga/y	kumadtu	gakadtu	kyumadtu
	pag/piga/y	pagkadtu	pigakadtu	pyagkadtu
	an/piga/y	kadtunan	pigakadtunan	kyadtunan
	-i/piga-an/ pyag-an	kadtuni	pigakadtunan	pyag- kadtunan
4. datung 'to arrive'	um/ga/y	dumatung	gadatung	dyumatung
	pag-an/pi- ga-an/pyag-an	pagdatungan	pigadatungan	pyagdatun- gan
	an/piga/y	datungan	pigadatungan	dyatungan

As seen in Table 1, the first verb *kan* 'to eat' has 12 basic inflected forms. This particular verb is transitive, which basically has two arguments, namely, the agent and the theme. The agent is the subject when the verb is inflected with the affixes *mag* and *um*. However, the theme is the subject if the verb is inflected with the affixes *pag* and *un*. Observe the sample sentences below.

1. Migakan si Rabang na pawda.
Imp-Act-eat Det Rabang Det cassava
'Rabang is eating a cassava.'
2. Pigakan ni Rabang ya pawda.
Imp-Pat-eat P Rabang Det cassava
'The cassava is eaten by Rabang.'

In sentence (1), the verb *migakan* 'eating' has the agent *si Rabang* as the grammatical subject, and the theme *na pawda* 'a cassava' as the grammatical object. In sentence (2), the verb *pigakan* 'eaten' has the theme *ya pawda* 'the cassava' as its grammatical subject and the agent *ni Rabang* 'by Rabang' its oblique prepositional phrase.

The second verb *atag* 'to give' has 15 basic inflected forms, and can have three different arguments in its computation, namely, source, theme, and benefactive. The source is the subject if the verb *atag* 'to give' is inflected with *mag* and *i-*. The theme is the subject if the verb *atag* 'to give' is inflected with *pag* and *-i*. The benefactive is the subject if the verb is inflected with the affix *-an*. To make these things clear, observe the sample sentences below:

3. Myag-atag ya ina na sapi sa isu.
PFV-Src-give Det mother Det money Det child
'The mother gave money to the child.'
4. Pyag-atag na ina ya sapi sa isu.
PFV-Pat-give Det mother Det money Det child
'The money was given by the mother to the child.'
5. Yatagan na ina na sapi ya isu.
PFV-Ben-give Det mother Det money Det child
'It was the child whom the mother gave the money.'

In sentence (3), the verb *myag-atag* 'gave' has the source *ya ina* 'the mother' as the grammatical subject marked by *ya* 'the', the theme *na sapi* 'money' as the grammatical object and *sa isu* 'the child' as the benefactive. In sentence (4), the verb *pyag-atag* 'gave' has the theme *ya sapi* 'the money' as its grammatical subject marked by *ya* 'the', the source *na ina* 'the mother' its oblique prepositional phrase, and *sa isu* 'the child' the benefactive argument in the computation. In sentence (5), the verb *yatagan* 'gave' has the benefactive argument *ya isu* 'the child' as the grammatical subject marked by *ya* 'the', the source *na ina* 'the mother' its oblique prepositional phrase, and the theme *na sapi* 'money' as the grammatical object.

The third verb *kadtu* 'to go' has 12 basic inflected forms, and can have two arguments in its computation, namely, agent and goal. When this verb is inflected with the affix *um*, the agent and goal are present in the computation with the agent functioning as the grammatical subject. Conversely, when this verb is inflected with the affix *pag*, the agent and goal are present in the computation with the goal functioning as the grammatical subject. Similarly,

when this verb is inflected with the affix *an*, the goal argument functions as the grammatical subject and the agent becomes oblique prepositional phrase. To make it clearer, observe the sample sentences below.

6. Kyumadtu ya guru sa bay.
PRF-Act-go Det teacher Det house
'The teacher went to the house.'
7. Pyagkadtu ni Rabang ya saka.
PRF-Goal-go Det Rabang Det farm
'It was towards the farm that Rabang went.'
8. Kyadtunan ni Rabang ya saka.
PRF-Goal-go Det Rabang Det farm
'It was the farm that Rabang visited.'

In sentence (6), the verb *kyumadtu* 'went' has two arguments: agent *ya guru* 'the teacher' which functions as the grammatical subject marked by *ya 'the'* and the goal *sa bay* 'the house'. In sentence (7), the verb *pyagkadtu* 'went' has two arguments: goal *ya saka* 'the farm' which functions as the grammatical subject marked by *ya 'the'* and the agent *ni Rabang* 'by Rabang' which is an oblique prepositional phrase. In sentence (8), the verb *kyadtunan* 'went' has two arguments: goal *ya saka* 'the farm' which functions as the grammatical subject marked by *ya 'the'* and the agent *ni Rabang* 'by Rabang' which is an oblique prepositional phrase.

Like the verb *datung* 'arrive', the fourth verb *datung* 'to arrive' has nine basic inflected forms, and can have a minimum of one argument in its computation, the agent. This particular verb is intransitive, which basically has one argument either the agent or the theme. When the verb is inflected with the affix *um* and the agent is the subject, this verb type is called unergative, but it is ergative when the theme is the subject. However, when this verb is inflected with *pag-an*, the agent, the goal, and the locative are present in the computation with the goal functioning as the grammatical subject. Similarly, when this verb is inflected with the affix *an*, the goal argument functions as the grammatical subject and the agent becomes oblique prepositional phrase. To make it clearer, observe the sample sentences below.

9. Dyumatung ya sulat sa bay.
PRF-Act-arrive Det letter Det house
'The letter arrived at the house.'

10. Pyagdatungan na guru si Rabang sa bay.
 PRF-Pat-arrive Det teacher Det Rabang Det house
 'It was Rabang who was in the house when the teacher arrived.'
11. Dyatungan aku na sakit.
 PRF-Goal-arrive 1-Sg Det illness
 'I got sick.'

In sentence (9), the verb *dymatung* 'arrived' has one argument: theme *ya sulat* 'the letter' which functions as the grammatical subject marked by *ya* 'the'. In sentence (10), the verb *pyagdatungan* 'arrived' has three arguments: goal *si Rabang* which functions as the grammatical subject marked by *si*, the agent *na guru* 'by the teacher' which is an oblique prepositional phrase, and the locative *sa bay* 'the house'. In sentence (11), the verb *dyatungan* 'being arrived at' has two arguments: goal *aku* 'I' which functions as the grammatical subject and the theme *na sakit* 'an illness'.

Ergative Verbs in Isamal: Morphology and Argument/ Thematic Structure

There are subtypes of intransitive verbs that assign only one theta role and do not check or assign the accusative case. Aside from being called monadic verbs, these intransitive verbs are also called unaccusative or ergative verbs (Carnie, 2007, p. 304). Some syntactic theories, specifically Relational Grammar, strictly refer ergative to the verb types whose lone arguments such as objects are promoted to subject positions. This phenomenon is common among ergative languages such as Basque, Georgian, Mayan, Warlpiri, and Tagalog. In the Government and Binding Theory parlance (which is adapted eventually in MP), this phenomenon resembles to the ergative verbs for the reasons stated above. It is with Burzio's thesis in 1981 that ergative verbs are also called unaccusative verbs and from then on generative linguistics makes use of these terms interchangeably. Ergative verbs assign theme theta role to its subject argument. It is not the semantic agent of the sentence that makes it behave like the syntactic object of the accusatives or of the passive predicate. Structurally speaking, the initial computation of the sentential structure bears the fact that such has no subject. This type of verb has its VP-internal argument subsequently moved from its canonical object position to the subject position. In fact, this type of verb theta-marks its complement as theme that is moved to have its uninterpretable case feature checked and valued for its nominative case and not the accusative case. This is in accordance with the *Burzio's Generalization* wherein verbs that can theta-mark its external argument can also

assign accusative case (Burzio, 1986, pp. 178-179). Using the definition and the structural characteristics of this type of verbs as bases, Isamal language has the following examples of ergative verbs as shown on Table 2 below.

Table 2. Samples of Ergative Verbs in Isamal with Thematic/Argument Structures.

No.	Root	Ergative Forms	Gloss	Argument/Thematic Structure
1	buak	myabuak	<i>broke</i>	myabuak: [V]:<theme>
2	dakwa	myadakwa	<i>grew</i>	myadakwa: [V]:<theme>
3	datung	dyumatung	<i>arrived</i>	dyumatung: [V]:<theme>
4	gisi	myagisi	<i>torn</i>	myagisi: [V]:<theme>
5	kadto	kyumadto	<i>went</i>	kyumadto: [V]:<theme>
6	kamang	kyamang	<i>got</i>	kyamang: [V]:<theme>
7	kuga	kyumuga	<i>fainted, frightened</i>	kyumuga: [V]:<theme>
8	kuwang	kyumuwang	<i>slept, laid</i>	kyumuwang: [V]:<theme>
9	laga	lyumaga	<i>brightens</i>	lyumaga: [V]:<theme>
10	laya	myaglaya	<i>sailed</i>	myaglaya: [V]:<theme>
11	layug	lyumayug	<i>flew</i>	lyumayug: [V]:<theme>
12	ligid	lyumigid	<i>rolled</i>	lyumigid: [V]:<theme>
13	panaw	myanaw	<i>went</i>	myanaw: [V]:<theme>
14	patay	myatay	<i>died</i>	myatay: [V]:<theme>
15	sugud	myagsugud	<i>began</i>	myagsugud: [V]:<theme>
16	tanak	myatanak	<i>lost</i>	myatanak: [V]:<theme>
17	tapos	myagtapos	<i>ended</i>	myagtapos: [V]:<theme>
18	ubas	myaubas	<i>tired</i>	myaubas: [V]:<theme>
19	ubus	myaubus	<i>finished</i>	myaubus: [V]:<theme>
20	ug	myaug	<i>to fall</i>	myaug: [V]:<theme>

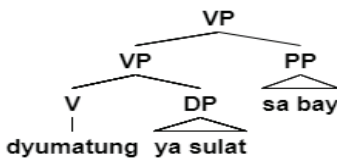
Table 2 above shows the 20 samples of ergative verbs in Isamal. The verbs are either affixed with the agentive *ma-* and *-um-* plus the perfective aspect infix *-y-*. The proliferation of verb forms from a single root shows that Isamal has the morphological property of encoding arguments in the argument/thematic

structure and the marking of which argument occupies the subject position. As shown in the final column, each of these verbs has only argument, that is, the theme.

Ergative Structures of Isamal: VP, TP, CP

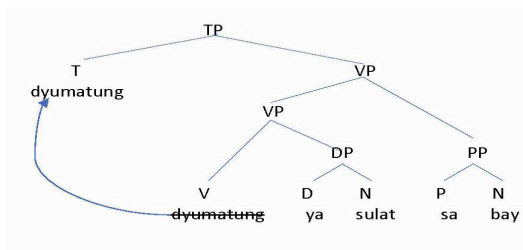
This section deals with the ergative structures of Isamal, namely the verb phrase (VP), the tense phrase (TP), and the complementizer phrase (CP). The analytical nature of this section involves the syntactic processes and relations necessary in the explication of the derived structure. Making use of sentence number 9, which is repeated below as sentence number 12, in the preceding pages for exemplification, computation starts with the lexical array or numeration in (12b) and ends with the expanded CP in (12t) as can be seen below.

12. Dyumatung ya sulat sa bay.
 PFV-Act-arrive Det letter Det house
 ‘The letter arrived at the house.’
- a. dyumatung: V: <theme>
 - b. Numeration: {bay, dyumatung, sulat, sa, ya}
 - c. Select *ya*
 - d. Select *sulat*
 - e. Merge (*ya, sulat*)
 - f. [DP *ya sulat*]
 - g. Select *dyumatung*
 - h. [VP *dyumatung ya sulat*]
 - i. Select *sa*
 - j. Select *bay*
 - k. Merge (*sa, bay*)
 - l. [PP *sa bay*]
 - m. Adjoin [VP, PP]
 - n.



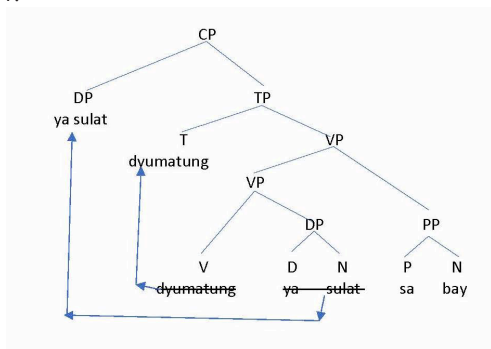
o. Move V *dyumatung*

p.



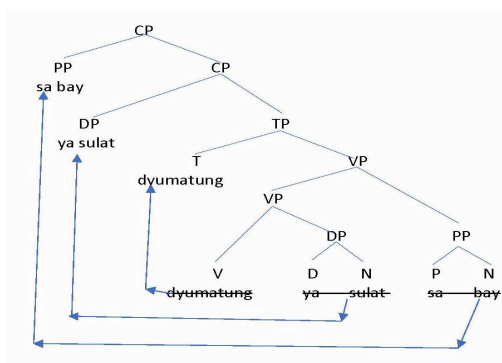
q. Move DP *ya sulat*

r.



s. Move PP *sa bay*

t.



At this juncture, the syntactic object in (12n) is the expanded verb phrase [VP [VP *dyumatung* [DP *ya sulat*]] [PP_{sa bay}]], which is the projection of the properties of the lexical verb *dyumatung* ‘arrived’. Its argument/thematic structure in (12a) shows that there is only one argument, the theme-DP *ya sulat* ‘the letter’. This expanded VP is formed starting with the numeration in (12b) and thereafter by the various syntactic operations as can be seen from (12c) to (12m). Focusing on the VP, the theme-DP *ya sulat* ‘the letter’ is merged with the V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’ to show the sisterhood between the verb and its argument, with the verb preceding the argument. Further analysis makes use of the Feature Checking Theory which operates this way: the V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’ has interpretable verbal feature of [V] and checks the uninterpretable verbal feature [*u*V] of the argument *ya sulat* ‘the letter’. Conversely, the argument *ya sulat* ‘the letter’ has the feature [N] that values the unvalued [-N] feature of the verb the V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’. This state of affairs further ensures the merger to form the VP that dominates the verb and the argument.

Adjunction of the non-argument PP *sa bay* ‘at the house’ in (12m) happens after the construction of the VP that dominates the V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’ and the argument *ya sulat* ‘the letter’, thus, expanding the said VP. The expanded VP does not form a phase since the full argument/thematic structure of the V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’ is not realized in contrast to a transitive VP, like *kuman* ‘ate’ in sentence (1) where the presence of an external agentive argument is inherent in the lexical property of the verb. As such, this particular VP is penetrable as stipulated in the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC), which is stated below in (13).

13. Phase Impenetrability Condition

In a phase α with head H, the domain of H is not accessible to operations outside α , only H and its edge are accessible to such operations (Chomsky, 2000, p. 108).

In constructing the TP, the V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’ has to move to T as shown in (12o). Following the Probe-Goal Theory, T acts as the probe for the goal with the aspectual property that is found in V *dyumatung* ‘arrived’, which is grammaticalized by the perfective infix *-y-*. This licensed movement forms the syntactic object TP that dominates T and its sister VP as shown in (12p), and it leaves the phonetically devoid copy that is marked with the strikethrough, ie, ~~*dyumatung*~~. The resulting structure TP *Dyumatung ya sulat sa bay* ‘The letter arrived at the house’ in (12p) is both the LF and PF representations, which are judged grammatical and natural by the native speakers of Isamal.

Furthermore, the syntactic object CP in (12r) shows the licensed movement of the lone theme-DP *ya surat* ‘the letter’ from the canonical syntactic position of [V, DP] to the syntactic position of [Spec, CP]. This movement in (12q) is called topicalization where the single argument DP *ya surat* ‘the letter’ functions as the topic of the clause. Following the Feature Checking Theory and the Probe-Goal Theory, the single argument DP *ya surat* ‘the letter’ has its remaining uninterpretable topic feature [*uTop*], making it the goal, checked by the interpretable topic feature [*Top*] of C, being the probe, in the complementizer phrase in (12r). With the movement of the said the DP, this leaves behind the phonetically devoid copy, *ya surat*. Thus, the following conversation among the native speakers of Isamal can be heard using topicalization as follows:

Speaker A: ‘... myagbaw man kami sa Facebook...lawng nan awn kunu ya dyumatung sa bay...unu kadi...’ ‘...we chatted in Facebook...she said that something arrived at the house...what was it..’

Speaker B: ‘myag-usip ako sa kanak lumun...ya surat dyumatung sa bay ...lawng nan...’ ‘I asked my sister...the letter arrived at the house...she said...’

Finally, the last syntactic object CP in (12t) shows the movement of the adjunct PP *sa bay* ‘at the house’ from the syntactic position of [VP, PP] to the specifier position of the expanded CP. This movement in (12s) is called focalization where the adjunct PP *sa bay* ‘at the house’ functions as the focus in this particular CP, thereby leaving the phonetically devoid copy, *sa bay*. Licensing the movement, the uninterpretable focus feature [*uFoc*] of the goal adjunct PP *sa bay* ‘at the house’ makes it visible to the probe and is checked by the interpretable focus feature [*Foc*] of the probe C of the dominating CP in (12t). Judged as grammatical by the native speakers of Isamal, the full CP forms a phase that obeys the Principle of Full Interpretation stated below in (14).

14. Principle of Full Interpretation (FI)

Only licensed elements can appear in the derivation. In LF, all uninterpretable features must be checked and valued (Chomsky, 1995, pp. 151-157).

Conclusion

Gleaned from the data, Isamal exhibits instances of ergativity just like any Philippine languages (Liao, 2004; De Guzman, 1988). As it is written in the preceding pages, this study attempts to analyze the morphosyntax of ergatives in Isamal language and the movements found in the ergative structures. On morphology, aspects of Isamal includes contemplative, imperfective, and perfective as encoded in the various affixes. The agentive behavior of the ergatives is marked by the affixes *ma-* and *-um-* with the combination of the perfective infix *-y-*. The combination of verbal and aspectual affixes in the verbs licenses the type of arguments of the verb as expressed in the argument/thematic structure and in the structural projection. These ergatives have only one argument, that is, the theme-DP. With the employment of the Minimalist Program for analysis, movement in the ergative structures shows that verbs, arguments and adjuncts can move. Furthermore, there is only phase in the ergative structure, that is, the CP.

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