

Documentation and Grammar of Bahasa Sug

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ABSTRACT: Before there was the Philippines, the Sulu Sultanate existed as a unified state governed under the principles of Islam, hence the title *Sulu Darussalam*. *Bahasa Sug*, the language of the Sultanate of Sulu, is still used by the people of the Sulu archipelago, Zamboanga, Palawan, Davao, and in the Malaysian state of Sabah. This paper has a dual purpose: 1) To present a survey of the documentation done on Bahasa Sug, and 2) to study the grammar of Bahasa Sug for pedagogical purposes. Native language speakers of Bahasa Sug and experts in linguistics were consulted in this qualitative research. Findings revealed that only a few studies are done on Bahasa Sug, and are focused on lexicography, linguistics, and literature. As studied, Bahasa Sug is a predicate-initial language. The Bahasa Sug sentence is basically composed of a verb phrase and a determiner phrase. Like the nations with royalty in Southeast Asia, it is of great importance that the Philippines preserve its indigenous languages, in this case, Bahasa Sug.

KEYWORDS: Bahasa Sug, morphosyntax, argument structure, Tausug, linguistics

Introduction

One of the most fundamental claims of modern linguistic analysis is that all languages, whether spoken by rich or poor, powerful or weak, educated or illiterate, have a grammar. Since all languages are spoken, they must have phonetic and phonological systems; since they all have words, and that sentences have semantic meanings, they must have semantic principles as well. As these are the very things that make up a grammar, it follows that all languages have this type of system (O'Grady 1992).

The Philippines, home to many indigenous languages, has 175 languages (Gordon 2005). These languages, except perhaps the Spanish-based *creole* called *Chabacano*, are closely related genetically and typologically. They all belong to the Philippine subgroup of the Austronesian language family.

Among these languages, only *Tagalog*, *Cebuano*, *Ilokano*, and *Bikolano* are mostly studied. Languages in the south, such as Bahasa Sug, are seldom the subject of research.

Bahasa Sug or *Tausug*, the language of the then Sultanate of Sulu, known as *Sulu Darussalam* 'abode of peace,' was adopted as the language of the royal court, and was written in Arabic script called *Jawi*. Today, the language is still used by the people of the Sulu archipelago, Zamboanga, Palawan, Davao, and in the Malaysian state of Sabah.

This paper aims to present a survey of the documentation done on Bahasa Sug, and to study its grammar for pedagogical purposes, using the principles of universal grammar (UG) put forward by Noam Chomsky (1995). The UG states that certain rules are shared by all human languages and form part of universal grammar.

Methodology

This qualitative research utilized anthropological tools such as interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) from key informants. Questions were unstructured so that informants could freely share the details about their language. Aside from interviews and FGD, the informants also shared some legends as *corpora* for the study of Bahasa Sug grammar. Constant consultation with the experts was done for data accuracy and grammar analysis.

The informants of this study were ten pure-blooded Tausug, ages 30-74, who live in Sitio Tacub, Barangay Zone I, Santa Cruz, Davao del Sur. All of them are knowledgeable about their language. Originally, the informants hail from Jolo, Luuk, and other municipalities in Sulu. The researcher, a native Tausug, took the role of a participant and went into direct contact with the native speakers of Bahasa Sug during the FGD.

Studies on Bahasa Sug were retrieved from the libraries and online sources such as electronic journals and researches in paper presentations.

Anchored in the framework of syntax by Chomsky (1995) and of semantic structures by Charles Kreidler (1998), the researcher had a prolonged engagement with the analysis of Bahasa Sug grammar. Audit trail was scrutinized by two university professors handling Linguistic courses.

Documentation on Bahasa Sug

Studies on Bahasa Sug are limited to lexicography, literature, and linguistics.

On Lexicography

The dictionary, *Tausug-English dictionary: Kabtangan iban maana* compiled by Irene U. Hassan, Nurhadan Halud, Seymour A. Ashley, Mary L. Ashley (1975) and Irene U. Hassan, Seymour A. Ashley, and Mary L. Ashley (1994) is the result of a joint project of the Bureau of Public Schools, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and the Coordinated Investigation of Tausug Culture. It is the first major vocabulary compilation published in the Tausug language. The Tausug-English dictionary is not only a light disclosing a rich Tausug heritage and culture, but also a bridge for Sulu's future, encouraging communication, understanding, accord, renewal, and achievement. In a shrinking world, it is increasingly important to learn to communicate with and to understand each other. As what Santanina Rasul, a former Senator of the Republic of the Philippines, puts it: "I see this publication as an intercultural bridge of understanding between the Tausug culture and other cultures of the world even as it will serve to strengthen the cultural heritage of the Tausug."

On Literature

Rita Tuban (1977), a descendant of the Sulu Sultanate, documented the Tausug Folk Literature. She explored the *kissa* (legends), *lugu* (songs), *salsila* (genealogy of the Sulu Sultanate), and *poems* in Bahasa Sug.

Meanwhile, Ingilan (2013) also conducted a research entitled “Literary Patterns in Kagan and Tausug Legends.” Findings of the study revealed that Tausug legends, similar to a short story, have elements namely characters, setting, plot, and theme. The characters in the legends include Allah, Jibrael (angel Gabriel), human beings, animals such as pigs and birds, and supernatural beings. The legends also spoke about supernatural beings like the white lady, the existence of pig, and tukling and crow; and particular phenomena like the rainbow appearing in the Tausug communities. The study also found that the tribes acted in accordance with their belief that *katan ini piyapanjari sin Tuhan* (these are all planned by God). Most of these legends are based on the Tausug’s beliefs, knowledge, and experiences.

On Linguistics

In her study entitled “The Phonology of Tausug: A Descriptive Analysis,” Tan (1967) found out that the Tausug does not have a highly complicated sound system compared to some languages of the world. It has only three vowel phonemes, /a/, /i/, /u/ (a fact which undoubtedly facilitated its adoption by the early people of Sulu of the Arabic language). Tausug has nineteen consonants namely /p/, /b/, /t/, /k/, /g/, /ʔ/, /r/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /q/, /y/, /l/, /z/, /s/, /j/, /w/, /tʃ/, and /dz/.

Ingilan (2013) analyzed the verb phrase constituents in the Muslim legends of Tausug, Kagan, and Maguindanao. The verb phrases in Bahasa Sug has verb, noun phrase, adverbial phrase, and prepositional phrase as constituents.

In the study of Jubilado and Ingilan (2012), it was revealed that Islam plays an immense role in the lexicalization of profanity in Bahasa Sug like *Syaytan* (‘devil’), and *Kafir* (‘infidel’). It functions as an identity marker of Tausug as Muslims. Animal references form part of the profanity in Tausug Muslims like *Putingan kaw! Babuy kaw!* (‘You are a liar! You are a pig!’) in Tausug. Cursing in Tausug also includes expressions of destruction, sex, death, sickness and assault to the “face.” Expressions of profanity in Tausug are in sentential forms.

Grammar of Bahasa Sug

In the study of Bahasa Sug grammar, the theory on syntax of Chomsky (1993) and semantic structures of Kreidler (1998) were used to uncover the laws in Bahasa Sug.

Sentence is one of the most fundamental units of linguistic organization. Speakers of any human language can produce and understand an infinite number of sentences. The part of grammar that represents a speaker’s knowledge of sentences and their structures is called syntax.

The task now is to analyze the Bahasa Sug syntax.

First Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Nanga kahuy hi Sala.*

Transliteration: Got firewoods Sala.

Translation: “Sala got woods.”

The first Tausug sentence *Nanga kahuy hi Sala* which is transliterated and translated in English shows that the Tausug sentence has a verb phrase in the initial syntactic position. The verb phrase *Nanga kahuy* (Got firewoods) is located before the determiner phrase *hi Sala*, which acts as the subject of the sentence. It follows the verb-object-subject (VOS) word order having *Nanga* (verb), *kahuy* (object), and *hi Sala* (subject).

Second Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Natipun in manuk,sapi,kambing iban na sin kaibanan.*

Transliteration: Assembled the rooster, cow, goat and others.

Translation: “The rooster, cow, goat, and other animals assembled.”

The second Tausug sentence *Natipun in manuk, sapi, kambing iban na sin kaibanan* again shows that the verb phrase is located in the initial syntactic position. The sentence is headed by the verb phrase *Natipun* (assembled) followed by the determiner phrase *in manuk, sapi, kambing-iban na sin kaibanan*.

Third Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Diyayaw nila in Kaaba.*
 Transliteration: Arranged they the Kaaba.
 Translation: "They arranged the Kaaba."

The third Tausug sentence *Diyayaw nila in Kaaba* is another manifestation that Tausug follows the VSO word order. This sentence is headed by a verb phrase *Diyayaw* (arranged). The subject, *nila* (they) comes after the verb phrase. The verb is located on the left side of the sentence which is followed by the subject. It follows the VSO word order, *Diyayaw* (verb), *nila* (subject) and *in kaaba* (object).

Fourth Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Nagjanji magtuy sila na hibalik in Kaaba.*
 Transliteration: Agreed immediately they to return the Kaaba.
 Translation: "They agreed immediately to return the Kaaba to its place."

The fourth Tausug sentence *Nagjanji magtuy sila na hibalik in Kaaba* shows that it is preceded by a verb phrase *Nagjanji magtuy* (agreed immediately), which is in the initial syntactic position. It is then followed by the subject *sila* (they). It is noted also that the adverb *magtuy* (immediately) appears to be the constituent of the verb phrase, thus follows the structure: VP (verb phrase) = V (verb) + AdvP (adverbial phrase).

Fifth Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Siyuysuyan niya in manga panubuh niya.*
 Transliteration: Told he the family his.
 Translation: "He told his family."

The fifth Tausug sentence *Siyuysuyan niya in manga panubuh niya* also shows that the verb phrase is located in the initial syntactic position. The sentence is headed by the verb phrase *Siyuysuyan* (Told), followed by the noun *niya* (He). It follows the VSO word order *having Siyuysuyan* (verb), *niya* (subject) and *in mga panubuh niya* (object).

The corpora revealed that majority of the Tausug sentences are verb-initial, and has the structure VP (verb phrase) + DP (determiner phrase).

Now, look at the sixth to eighth sentences.

Sixth Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *In manga ista naubus kiyau sin Kulapu.*
 Transliteration: The fishes all eaten by Kulapu.
 Translation: "The fishes were all eaten by Kulapu."

Seventh Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Magtuy siya minuwi pa bay.*
 Transliteration: Immediately he went to home.
 Translation: "He immediately went home."

Eighth Sentence

Tausug Sentence: *Ampa siya limingi pa taykuran niya.*
 Transliteration: Then he turned to back his.
 Translation: "Then he turned to his back."

What happens here is that all the sentences have verb phrases in their final syntactic position. This means that the verb phrase comes after the subject, the determiner phrase. The sentences follow the subject-verb-object (SVO) word order. The sixth sentence has *In manga ista* (The fishes) as a topic which is followed by the comment *naubus kiyau sin Kulapu* (were all eaten by Kulapu). The seventh sentence has *siya* (He) as topic which is followed by the comment *minuwi pa bay* (went home). The eighth sentence has *siya* (He) as topic and comes after the comment *limingi pa taykuran niya* (turned to his back). Thus, they follow the structure DP + VP.

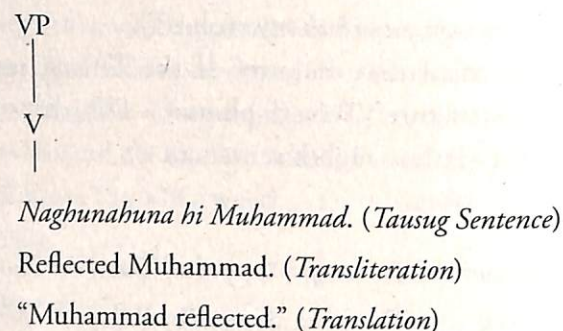


FIGURE 1. Verb as head word of Tausug VP

In Figure 1, VP (verb phrase,) is a constituent of the sentence *Naghunahuna hi Muhammad*, which has a verb *naghunahuna* (reflected) as its member. It is then noted that a single-word verb like *naghunahuna* functions as a verb phrase since it is a constituent of a verb phrase whose main member is a verb.

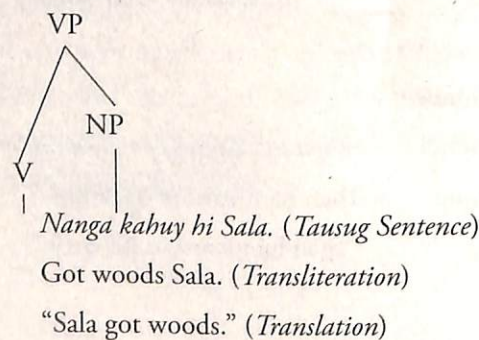


FIGURE 2. The structure of Tausug VP (V+NP)

It is also shown in Figure 2 that the Tausug verb phrase has verb (V) + noun phrase (NP) as constituents. This shows that the verb phrase is composed of the verb *nanga* and noun phrase *kahuy*. It is noted then that the verb is on its head-initial position, which means that it comes on the left side of the verb phrase.

TABLE 1. V + PP of Tausug VP

Verb Phrase	Literal English Translation
<i>limingi pa taykuran niya</i>	Turned to his back
<i>minuwi pa bay</i>	Went home
<i>Kita sin mga malaikat</i>	Saw by the angels

Table 1 shows that the Tausug verb phrase has verb (V) + prepositional phrase (PP) as constituents. Figures 3 and 4 show that the verbs appear on the left of the verb phrase, followed by the prepositional phrase, which has preposition and noun phrase as immediate constituents. It could be noticed also that in Figure 4, the noun phrase *taykuran niya* has noun + determiner structure, unlike English, which follows the determiner + noun structure.

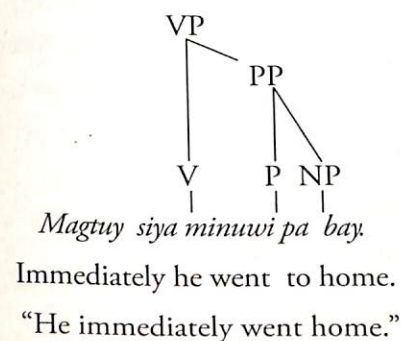


FIGURE 3. The structure of Tausug VP(V+PP)

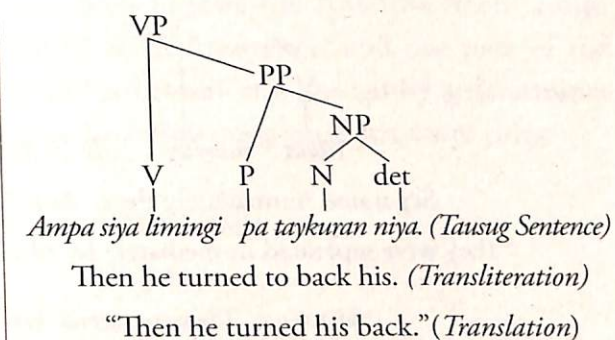


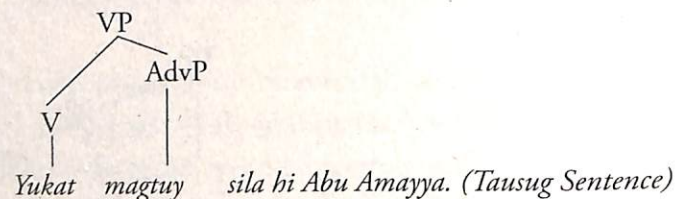
FIGURE 4. The structure of Tausug VP(V+PP)

Table 2 shows that the Tausug verb phrase has verb (V) and adverbial phrase (AdvP) as its constituents. The verb phrase has head-first pattern which means that the verb appears on the left side of the verb phrase.

TABLE 2. V + AdvP of Tausug VP

Verb Phrase	English Translation
<i>Yukat magtuy</i>	Separated immediately
<i>Nagsilawak magtuy</i>	Shouted immediately
<i>Namayta magtuy</i>	Told immediately
<i>Diya na</i>	Brought already
<i>Nagjanji magtuy</i>	Agreed immediately

Figure 5 represents the structure of the verb phrase *Yukat magtuy* (separated immediately). *Yukat* and *magtuy* are shown to be constituents of the verb phrase, consisting of a verb *Yukat* (separated) and adverbial phrase *magtuy* (immediately). It is noted then that the single-word adverb *magtuy* is labeled as an AdvP, since its main member is an adverb.



Separated immediately they Abu Amayya. (Transliteration)

“They were separated immediately by Abu Amayya.” (Translation)

FIGURE 5. The structure of Tausug VP (V+AdvP)

Findings revealed that a Tausug verb phrase has verb, verb + noun phrase, verb + prepositional phrase, and verb + adverbial phrase as constituents:

- Tausug VP V
- V + NP
- V + PP
- V + AdvP

To discuss further the Bahasa Sug syntax, the sentence below is provided which shows that Tausug can stand without verbs.

Malingkat in badju niya.

Beautiful dress her.

“Her dress is beautiful.”

[AP *Malingkat*] [DP *in badju*] [PRN *niya*].

The sentence *Malingkat in badju niya* shows that a Tausug sentence is headed by an adjectival phrase (AP) which has *malingkat* (beautiful), and a derived adjective as constituent. Then, it is followed by the determiner phrase (DP) *in badju* (the dress) which follows the structure det + noun. *Niya* functions as a pronoun (PRN) in this sentence, and not part of the determiner phrase *in badju* since DP is canonically headed by a determiner *in*. Hence, the Tausug sentence has the following phrase structure rules:

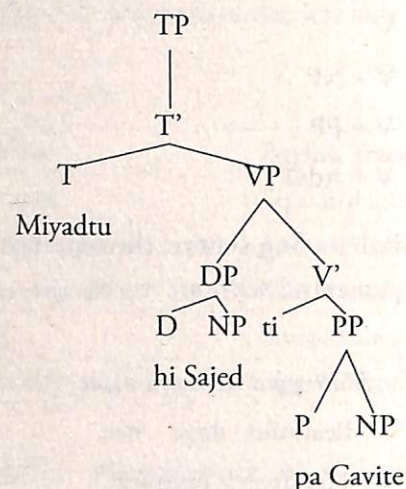
S = AP + DP + PRN

AP = A

DP = det N

PRN = pro

The structure of the sentence below provides a deeper understanding of Bahasa Sug sentence.



Miyadtu hi Sajed pa Cavite.

“Sajed went to Cavite.”

The sentence *Miyadtu hi Sajed pa Cavite*, which is termed as tense phrase (TP) by Chomsky (1993), reveals that a Tausug sentence is a predicate-initial language, thus the TP has T' only as constituent. Under T' are the T *Miyadtu* and the verb phrase (VP) *hi Sajed pa Cavite*. The verb *miyadtu*, which is in the completed aspect, is moved to T, which is the sister of VP. *Miyadtu* ('went') serves as the head of the sentence. The VP has DP *hi Sajed* and PP (prepositional phrase) *pa Cavite* as constituents. The DP *hi Sajed*, which is the subject, is part of the VP, and follows the Subject Internal Hypothesis. The subject is located after the verb *Miyadtu* ('went'). The PP *pa Cavite* has the structure preposition + noun phrase. The preposition *pa* signals location in Bahasa Sug.

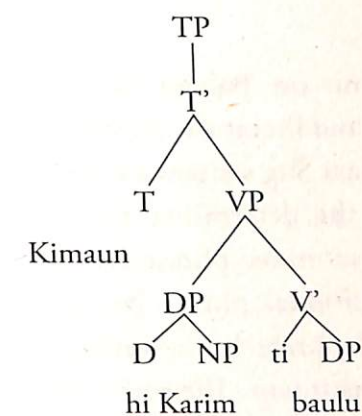
Miyadtu hi Sajed pa Cavite.

[went agent location]

*Miyadtu hi Sajed.

Our discussion about Tausug grammar would not be complete without discussing about semantics, the study of sentence meaning.

The sentence *Miyadtu hi Sajed pa Cavite* ('Sajed went to Cavite') has two arguments based on the feature of the verb *miyadtu* ('went'), making it grammatical. The verb *miyadtu* 'went' is a transitive verb and requires two arguments, in this case, agent and locative arguments. The DP *hi Sajed* serves as the agent argument and the PP *pa Cavite* as locative argument. *Miyadtu hi Sajed* ('Sajed went') is ungrammatical since it does not answer the query: "Where did Sajed go?" Thus, it requires the locative argument.



Kimaun hi Karim baulu.

“Karim ate a baulu.”

Another Bahasa Sug sentence *Kimaun hi Karim baulu* ('Karim ate a baulu') manifests that Bahasa Sug is a predicate-initial language as seen in the structure with T' as the only daughter of TP. The T' has T *Kimaun* and VP *hi karim baulu* as constituents. The sentence is headed by the verb *Kimaun* ('ate') which is in the completed aspect. The subject *hi Karim* which has the structure D + NP is part of the VP, and follows the Subject Internal Hypothesis.

Kimaun hi Karim baulu.

[ate agent theme]

*Kimaun hi Karim.

The Bahasa Sug sentence *Kimaun hi Karim baulu* satisfies the required arguments based on the characteristic of the verb *kimaun* ('ate'). The verb *kimaun* requires two arguments, the agent and thematic arguments. The agent argument, the DP *hi Karim*, answers the query as to who ate the *baulu*, a Tausug delicacy. The thematic argument, the NP *baulu*, answers the question as to what Karim ate.

To judge the grammaticality of a Bahasa Sug sentence, one should know not just the structure, but also the argument.

Conclusion

Few studies are done on Bahasa Sug and these are focused on lexicography, linguistics, and literature. As studied, Bahasa Sug is a predicate-initial language. The Bahasa Sug sentence is basically composed of a VP and a DP. The VP contains the determiner phrase, prepositional phrase, and adverbial phrase. The determiner phrase has determiner and noun phrase as constituents; a prepositional phrase has preposition and noun phrase as constituents, adverbial phrase has adverb as constituent, and adjectival phrase has adjective as constituent. The verb carries specific arguments which must be observed to make the statements grammatical. Like the nations with royalty in Southeast Asia, it is of great importance that the Philippines preserve its indigenous languages. Thus, further studies must be done to preserve Bahasa Sug, a royal language.

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