

**Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries
Applied Linguistics Program**

**SOUTHERN SUBANEN
GRAMMAR SKETCH**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. INTRODUCTION.....	4
I. MORPHOLOGY.....	4
A. WORD STRUCTURE.....	4
B. NON-LINEAR MORPHOLOGY.....	5
B.1. INFIXATION.....	5
B.2. CIRCUMFIXATION.....	5
B.3. REDUPLICATION (Full).....	6
C. ALLOMORPHY.....	6
C.1. MORPHOPHONEMIC CHANGES.....	6
D. MORPHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY.....	7
E. VALENCY CHANGE.....	7
E.1. ADDITION.....	7
a. Causative.....	7
b. Applicative.....	8
E.2. REDUCTION.....	8
a. Passive (Passivisation).....	8
b. Antipassive.....	8
II. BASIC CLAUSE STRUCTURE.....	9
A. CONSTITUENCY AND SYNTACTIC CATEGORIES.....	9
A.1. WORD LEVEL CATEGORY.....	9
A.2. PHRASE LEVEL CATEGORY.....	10
A.2.1. PHRASE STRUCTURE.....	10
a. Phrase Structure Trees/Diagrams.....	11
b. Phrase Structure Rules.....	11
c. Lexical Insertion Rule.....	12

A.2.2. SEMANTIC ROLES AND GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS.....	12
A.2.3. ARGUMENT STRUCTURE.....	13
a. Annotating Tree Structures.....	14
b. Annotating Phrase Structure Rules.....	15
A.2.4. NOUN PHRASE.....	15
a. Noun Phrase Trees.....	15
b. Noun Phrase Rules.....	16
A.2.5. ORGANISATION OF CORE ARGUMENTS.....	16
A.2.6. PERSONAL PRONOUNS SYSTEM.....	17
A.2.7. TENSE, ASPECT, AND MODALITY (TAM).....	19
III. SENTENCE PATTERNS.....	19
A. SPECIAL SENTENCE TYPES.....	19
A.1. IMPERATIVES.....	19
A.2. INTERROGATIVES.....	19
a. Yes-No question/closed question.....	19
b. Wh-question/open question.....	19

0. INTRODUCTION

This paper shows the grammar sketch of the Southern Subanen language. It discusses the general information, morphology, basic clause structure and sentence patterns of the language.

Southern Subanen is an Austronesian language found in the Southern Zamboanga Peninsula of the Mindanao region of the Philippines. It is spoken by 72.47% of 914, 278 people in the Southern Zamboanga Peninsula. These people are known as Subanen which means living/settling along the riverbanks.

I. MORPHOLOGY

A. WORD STRUCTURE

Verbs in Southern Subanen are bound morphemes. They always take tense marking affixes, e.g. *pe-* 'PRS', *-en* 'FUT'. The position class chart below illustrates the structure of the verbs.

TENSE MARKER	VERB ROOT	TENSE MARKER
<i>pe-</i> 'PRS'		<i>-an</i> 'PST'
<i>mi-</i> 'PST'		<i>-en</i> 'FUT'
<i>me-</i> 'FUT'		

Table 1. Southern Subanen Verb Structure

Six verb roots are known, to date. These are *sipeg* 'embarrass', *gbul* 'slice', *suntut* 'hit', *bigay* 'give', *dluto* 'cook', *timbang* 'shoot'.

Example Sentences:

Me>sipeg<an a.
FUT>embarrassment<FUT 2SG
'You will be embarrassed.'

Mi-gbul u karne manok.
PST-slice 1SG meat chicken
'I sliced chicken meat.'

Mi>suntut<an ilan.
PST>hit<PST 3PL
'They were hit.'

Bigay-an en yaa gan.
Give-PST 3SG 2SG food
'He gave you food.'

Pe-dluto u banggala.
PRS-cook 1SG cassava
'I am cooking cassava.'

'will be shone (by a light)'
me>sipeg<an
 FUT>embarass<FUT
 'will be embarrassed'

'will be overloaded'
me>sebu<an
 FUT>amaze<FUT
 'will be amazed'

As shown by the data, noun roots in Southern Subanen are added with discontinuous affixes *me-><-an* 'FUT' before and after the base form to convert them into verbs in a future tense form. This is illustrated by the following notation.

$[X]_{\text{NOUN}} \rightarrow [meXan]_{\text{VERB}}$
 [FUT]

B.3. REDUPLICATION (Full)

Noun Roots		Positive		Augmentative	
dalem	'depth'	medalem	'deep'	medalem-dalem	'a bit deep'
dipel	'thickness'	medipel	'thick'	medipel-dipel	'slightly thick'
yaba?	'length'	meyaba?	'long'	meyaba?-yaba?	'slightly long'
gasa?	'thinness'	megasa?	'thin'	megasa?-gasa?	'slightly thin'

Noun roots in Southern Subanen are first added with prefix *me-* to make them into adjectives (positive) and then fully reduplicated to make them into augmentative adjective forms. This is shown by the following notations.

$[X]_{\text{NOUN}} \rightarrow [meX]_{\text{ADJECTIVE}}$
 [POSITIVE]

$[X]_{\text{NOUN}} \rightarrow [meXX]_{\text{ADJECTIVE}}$
 [AUGMENTATIVE]

C. ALLOMORPHY

C.1. MORPHOPHONEMIC CHANGES

su gbalay	'the house'
su gbulan	'the moon'
su dlangit	'the heaven'
su dlupa	'the ground'
su ηmanok	'the chicken'

/su gbalay/ → /su dlangit / #_ l /
 /su ηmanok / #_ m /

/su gbalay/ #_b /

As illustrated by the examples above, /g/ has 3 allomorphs: /d/, /ŋ/, and /g/. When a root begins with a voiced bilabial stop /b/, it becomes /g/. It assimilates to the alveolar point of articulation and becomes /d/ when it appears before /l/. It becomes the velar nasal /ŋ/ when it appears before the nasal /m/ resulting from an assimilation on the manner of articulation.

D. MORPHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY

In Southern Subanen, words have almost no affixes or most of the words consist of a single morpheme. The language is predominantly analytic. However, the verbs show that Southern Subanen is also partly agglutinating. They have affixes to indicate their tenses. This is shown by the chart below.

VERBS	GLOSS
mi-gbebat	'sang'
pe-gbebat	'is singing'
me-gbebat	'will sing'
gbibat-an	'was sung'
pe-gbebat-an	'is sung'
gbebat-an	'will be sung'

Table 2. Southern Subanen Verbs and Affixes

Example Sentences:

Mi-gbebat su nga gembata.
 PST-sing DET PL child
 'The children sang.'

Pe-gbebat su nga gembata.
 PRS-sing DET PL child
 'The children are singing.'

E. VALENCY CHANGE

The two kinds of valency changing operations, namely, the Addition/valence-increasing process and Reduction/valence-decreasing process, are shown in the following examples.

E.1. ADDITION

a. Causative

When the basic intransitive clause is derived into a transitive clause, there is an increase in valency in the verb and a new agent is added to the clause. S becomes O and A is the agent or causer

of the action.

T<um>ulog na su gembata.
<FUT>sleep now ABS child
'The child will now go to sleep.'

Pe>tulug<en na nu gina su gembata.
CAUS.TR.FUT>sleep<CAUS.TR.FUT now ERG mother ABS child

b. Applicative

The S in the basic intransitive clause becomes the A in the derived transitive clause and P (Peripheral), which is not required in the intransitive clause, becomes the O in the transitive clause. See examples below.

H<um>arang su gembata tu gbegu katre.
<PST>lie down ABS child OBL new bed
'The child laid down (on the new bed.)'

H<in>arang-an nu gembata su gbegu katre.
<APP.TR.PST>lie down-APP.TR.PST ERG child ABS new bed
'The child laid down on the new bed.'

E.2. REDUCTION

a. Passive (Passivisation)

A valence-decreasing process happens in which A is demoted when the transitive clause is derived into an intransitive clause. Below are examples of passivisation.

T<in>imbak nu dlai su dlibun.
<PST> shoot ERG man ABS woman
'The man shot the woman.'

Mi>timbang<an su dlibun.
PASS.INTR.PAT.PST>shoot< PASS.INTR.PAT.PST ABS woman
'The woman was shot.'

b. Antipassive

In Antipassive, there is no increase or decrease in the valency of the verb. The arguments are just rearranged. A and O in a transitive clause become S and E in an intransitive clause. Examples are:

Gb<in>ul nu dlibun su karne.
<PST>slice ERG woman ABS meat
'The woman sliced the meat.'

Mi-gbul karne su dlibun.
PST-slice OBL.meat ABS woman
'The woman sliced meat.'

II. BASIC CLAUSE STRUCTURE

A. CONSTITUENCY AND SYNTACTIC CATEGORIES

A.1. WORD LEVEL CATEGORY

1. **Nouns** in Southern Subanen follow verbs but may also follow modifiers of the head in the clause. They function as subject and object of the sentence. They also encode actor and patient roles in the clause. This is shown by the following example sentences.

Pe-kan	gembagel	tubong	su	kuting.
PRS-eat	big	rat	DET	cat

'The cat is eating a big rat.'

Mi-panaw	gina	u	halabung.
PST-walk	mother	1SG	yesterday.

'My mother walked yesterday.'

2. **Verbs** inflect for tense marking, i.e. the prefix *pe-*^{PRS} and infix *<umin>*^{PST}. They always take the initial position of the sentence. They function as the head of the clause and encode actions as shown by the examples below.

T<umin>ulog	hyanin	hagebi.
<PAST> sleep	3SG	last night

'He slept last night.'

Pe-tulog	hyanin	nandaw.
PRS-sleep	3SG	now.

'He is sleeping now.'

3. **Adjectives** may follow verbs and function as modifiers of the head in a phrase. This is illustrated by the following examples.

Pe-panaw	su	megasa	dlibun	nandaw.
PRS-walk	DET	thin	woman	now.

'The thin woman is walking now.'

The chart below shows the morphology, distribution, function, and semantic roles of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives of the language.

	Morphology	Distribution	Function	Semantics
Nouns	-----	Follow verbs but may also follow modifiers of the head in a phrase	Subject and object of the sentence	Actor Patient
Verbs	Inflect for tense marking, i.e. the prefix <i>pe-</i> 'PRS' and infix <i><umin></i> 'PST'.	Initial position of the sentence	Head of the clause	Action
Adjectives	-----	May follow verbs	Modifiers of the head in a phrase	Attribute of the Noun

Table 3. Word Class

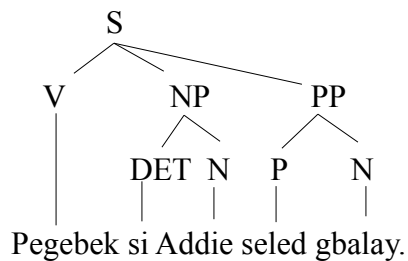
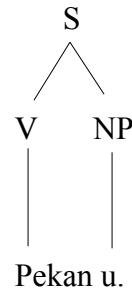
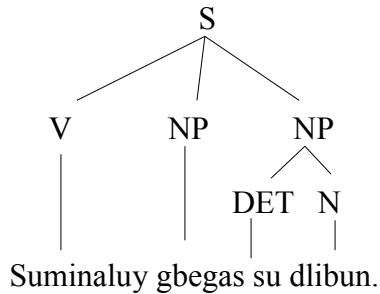
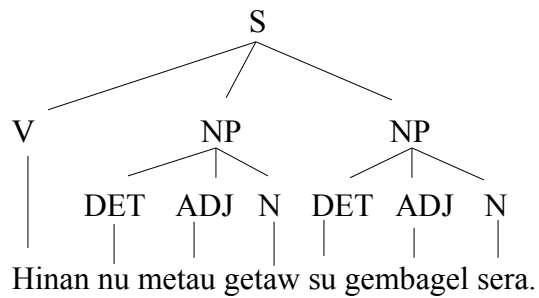
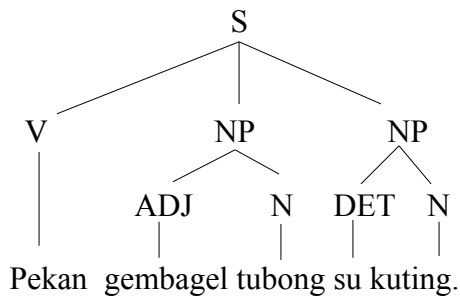
A.2. PHRASE LEVEL CATEGORY

A.2.1. PHRASE STRUCTURE

Constituents are identified in the example sentences below. After they are identified, phrase structure trees or diagrams will be drawn to represent the constituent structure of a clause or a sentence in Southern Subanen.

- Pekan [gembagel tubong] [su kuting.]
 PRS-eat big rat DET cat
 'The cat is eating a big rat.'
- H<in>an [nu metau getaw] [su gembagel sera.]
 <PST> eat DET old man DET big fish
 'The old man ate the big fish.'
- S<umin>aluy [gbegas] [su dlibun.]
 <PST>buy rice DET woman.
 'The woman bought rice.'
- Pe-gebek [si Addie] [seled gbalay.]
 PRS-run DET Addie inside house
 'Addie is running inside the house.'
- Pe-kan [u.]
 PRS-eat 1SG
 'I am eating.'

a. Phrase Structure Trees/Diagrams



b. Phrase Structure Rules

After making the phrase structure diagrams, rules below were created to generate the trees.

S → V (NP) NP (PP)

NP → { (DET) (ADJ) N }
 { PN }
 { PRO }

N → { dlibun, tubong, kuting, getaw, sera }

DET → { su, si, nu }

V → { suminaluy, pegebek, pekan, hinan }

ADJ → { gembagel, metau }

PRO → { u }

PN → {Addie}

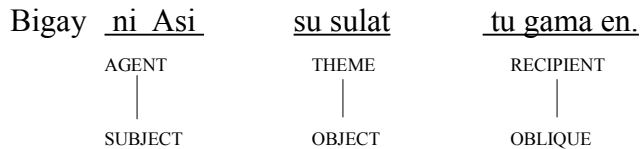
c. Lexical Insertion Rule

Any lexical category (N, DET, V, ADJ, etc.) may have a single daughter node which is a specific lexical item of the same category.

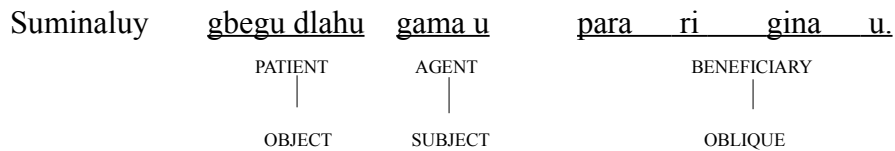
A.2.2. SEMANTIC ROLES AND GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

The following examples below show the different semantic roles and grammatical relations in Southern Subanen sentences.

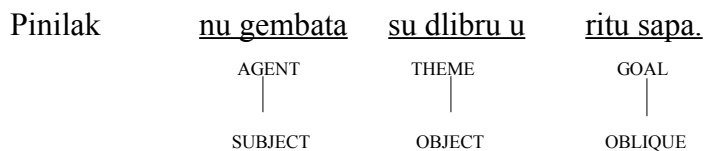
1. Bigay ni Asi su sulat tu gama en.
PST give DET Asi DET letter to father 3SG
'Asi gave the letter to his father.'



2. S<umin>aluy gbegu dlahu gama u para ri gina u.
<PST>buy new dress father 1SG for DET mother 1SG
'My father bought a new dress for my mother.'



3. P<in>ilak nu gembata su dlibru u ritu sapa.
<PST> throw DET child DET book 1SG to river
'The child threw my book into the river.'



4. Dl<umin>angoy ilan pangay ritu dibaluy sapa.
<PST> swim 3PL going to other side river
'They swam to the other side of the river.'

Dluminangoy	<u>ilan</u>	<u>pangay ritu dibaluy sapa.</u>
	THEME	GOAL
	SUBJECT	OBLIQUE

5. M<in>angay u tu Manila gunut sawa u.
 <PST> go 1SG to Manila with wife 1SG
 'I went to Manila with my wife.'

Minangay	<u>u</u>	<u>tu Manila</u>	<u>gunut sawa u.</u>
	THEME	LOCATION	ACCOMPANIMENT
	SUBJECT	OBLIQUE	OBLIQUE

A.2.3. ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

Below are some examples of argument structure of verbs in Southern Subanen.

begay 'give'	<agent, SUBJECT	theme, OBJECT	recipient> OBLIQUE
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betang 'put'	<agent, SUBJECT	theme, OBJECT	location> OBLIQUE
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han 'eat'	<agent, SUBJECT	patient> (OBJECT)
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dupi
'rain' no argument structure

gayad 'cry'	<agent> SUBJECT
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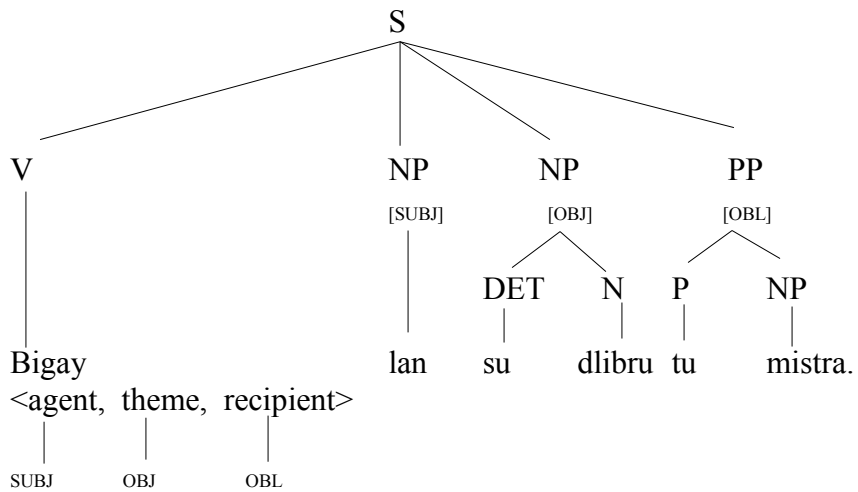
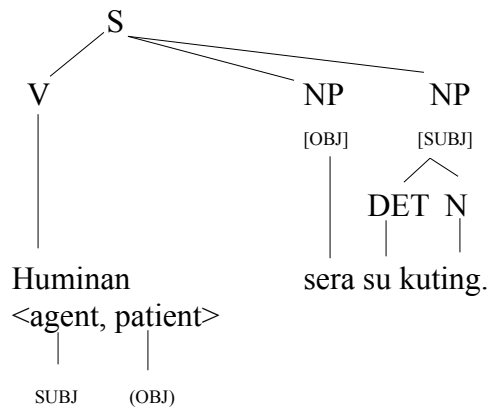
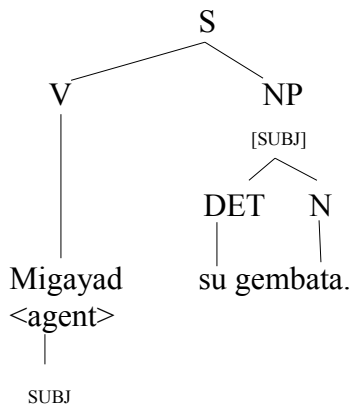
angay 'go'	<theme, SUBJECT	goal> OBLIQUE
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Example sentences:

1. Mangay u tu simbahan.
 FUT go 1SG to church
 'I will go to the church.'

2. Bitang en su gan ri dlamisaan.
 PST put 3SG DET food on table.
 'He put the food on the table.'
3. D<umin>upi hamun.
 <PST> rain earlier
 'It rained earlier.'
4. H<umin>an sera su kuting.
 <PST> eat fish DET cat
 'The cat ate fish.'
5. Bigay lan su dlibru tu mistra.
 PST give 3PL DET book to teacher
 'They gave the book to the teacher.'
6. Mi-gayad su gembata.
 PST-cry DET child
 'The child cried.'

a. Annotating Tree Structures



b. Annotating Phrase Structure Rules

S → V NP (NP) (PP)
 [SUBJ] [OBJ] [OBL]

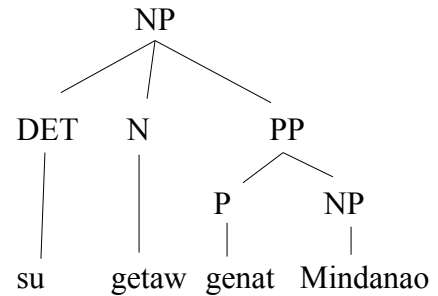
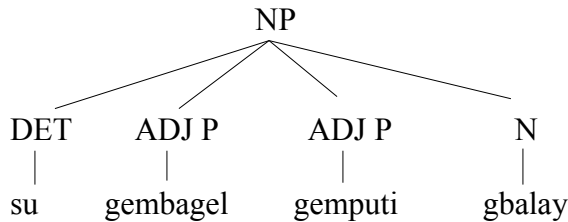
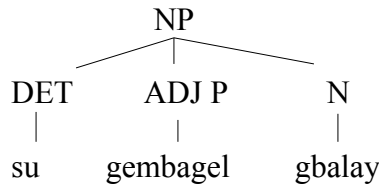
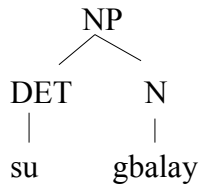
A.2.4. NOUN PHRASE

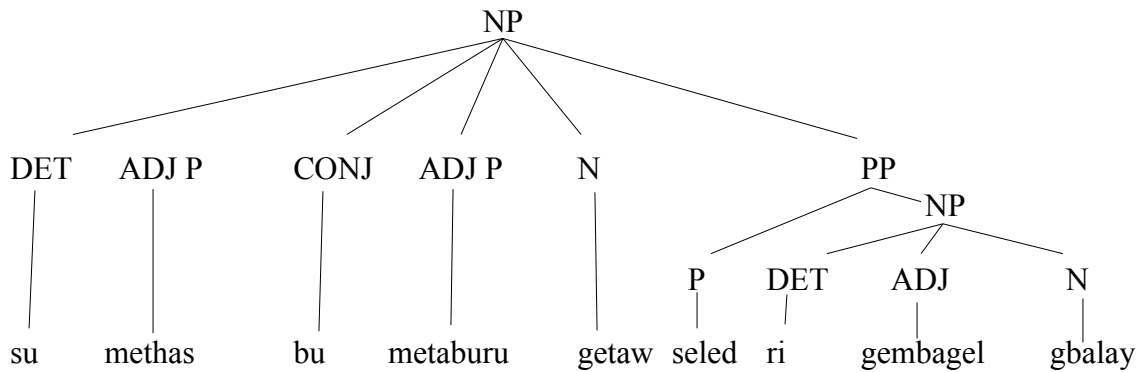
Noun Phrases (NPs) in Southern Subanen take Determiners like *su* 'the' and Proper Nouns. Adjectival Phrases (APs) and Prepositional Phrases (PPs) may also be added to complement the Noun Phrases. These are shown in the following sentences.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. su gbalay
 DET house
 'The house'</p> | <p>4. su gembagel gempti gbalay
 DET big white house
 'The big white house'</p> |
| <p>2. su gembagel gbalay
 DET big house
 'The big house'</p> | <p>5. su getaw genat Mindanao
 DET man from Mindanao
 'The man from Mindanao'</p> |
| <p>3. su methas bu metaburu
 DET tall and fat
 'The tall and fat man inside the big house'</p> | <p>getaw seled ri gembagel gbalay
 man inside DET big house</p> |

a. Noun Phrase Trees

The trees and notations below show the structure of the NPs.





b. Noun Phrase Rules

NP → { DET (ADJ P) (CONJ) (ADJ P) N (PP) }
 { PN }

PP → P NP

A.2.5. ORGANISATION OF CORE ARGUMENTS

Southern Subanen is a morphologically ergative-absolutive language. This is evidenced by personal pronouns that act as case forms where S and O have the same form for 3SG while A has a different form. See examples below.

Puli hyanin.
 FUT return 3SG.S
 'He will return.'

Mita en hyanin.
 FUT see 3SG.A 3SG.O
 'He will see him.'

Another evidence that shows that Southern Subanen is an ergative-absolutive pattern is the case marker *su* 'the' of S and O. This is shown in the following examples.

M<in>ita nu gembata su dlibun.
 <PST> see DET.A child DET.O woman
 'The child saw the woman.'

T<umin>ulog su gembata.
 <PST> sleep DET.S child
 'The child slept.'

A.2.6. PERSONAL PRONOUNS SYSTEM

Southern Subanen personal pronouns are case forms. It follows the Ergative-Absolutive organisation of core arguments. The chart below illustrates this.

PERSON & NUMBER	S/O ABSOLUTIVE	A ERGATIVE	E EXTENSION TO THE CORE
1 Singular	u	u	ryanan
2 Singular	a	mo	ryania
3 Singular	hyanin	en	ryanin
1 Plural (INC) (EXC)	ita ami	ta nami	ryanta ryanami
2 Plural	amo	nyo	ryanyu
3 Plural	ilan	lan	ryanlan

Table 4. Southern Subanen Personal Pronouns

Here are some sample sentences for the personal pronouns:

Tumulog hyanin.
FUT sleep 3SG.S
'He will sleep.'

Mita en su gembata.
FUT sleep 3SG.A the child.O
'He will see the child.'

Mita hyanin nu gembata.
FUT sleep 3SG.O DET child.A
'The child will see him.'

An extension to the core can be added to the clause. The example below shows the form of the E. The list of E personal pronouns are also shown in Table 4.

Example:

Begay ryanan nu gembata su gan.
FUT give 1SG.E DET child DET food
'The child will give the food to me.'

Note: S/O and A have the same form for first person singular which is u '1SG'.

A.2.7. TENSE, ASPECT, AND MODALITY (TAM)

Southern Subanen follows Tense system. It illustrates 3 tenses: past, present, and future. This is evidenced by the affixes which are shown in the following examples.

Verb 'sleep':

T<umin>ulog hyanin hagebi.
<PAST> sleep 3SG last night
'He slept last night.'

Pe-tulog hyanin nandaw.
PRS-sleep 3SG now.
'He is sleeping now.'

T<um>ulog hyanin bus gebi.
<FUT>sleep 3SG tonight
'He will sleep tonight.'

Verb 'walk':

Mi-panaw su gina u halabung.
PST-walk DET mother 1SG yesterday.
'My mother walked yesterday.'

Pe-panaw hyanin nandaw.
PRS-walk 3SG now.
'She is walking now.'

Panaw hyanin bus gebi.
FUT walk 3SG tonight.
'She will walk tonight.'

Verb 'hit':

S<in>untok en inan hagebi.
<PST>hit 3SG 1SG last night
'He hit me last night.'

S<in>untok<en en inan nandaw.
<PRS>hit<PRS 3SG 1SG now.
'He is hitting me now.'

Suntut-en en inan bus.
Hit-FUT 3SG 1SG later
'He will hit me later.'

III. SENTENCE PATTERNS

A. SPECIAL SENTENCE TYPES

A.1. IMPERATIVES

Imperatives in Southern Subanen have different forms from the declarative sentences. Declarative sentences use verbs that have tense marking affixes like *pe-*^{PRS}. Imperatives do not use affixes. This is shown in the following sentences.

Declaratives:

Pe-panaw	si	Bong.	Alap-en	en	su	sigá.
PRS-walk	DET	Bong	get-FUT	3SG	DET	salt
'Bong is walking.'			'He will get the salt.'			

Imperatives:

Panaw a!	Alap mo su sigá!
Walk 2SG	get 2SG DET salt
'(You) walk!'	'(You) get the salt!'

There is another way of making commands in the language. It is by inserting the word *gbata-gbata* 'please' to the command. This is a method for softening a command or making it sound more polite. An example is:

Gbata-gbata	alap	mo	su	dlibru	u.
please	get	2SG	DET	book	1SG
'Please get my book.'					

A.2. INTERROGATIVES

a. Yes-No question/closed question

Interrogatives are distinguished from declaratives by intonation only, i.e, final rising intonation. See examples below.

T<um>ulog a na?	H<umin>an hyanin?
<FUT>sleep 2SG now	<PST>eat 3SG
'Are you going to sleep now?'	'Did he eat?'

b. Wh-question/open question

The following examples show the basic open question words which the Southern Subanen has. They are indicated by a final rising intonation only.

Alan gb<in>al mo?
What <PST>do 2SG
'What did you do?'

Masa mi-gayad su gembata?
Why PST-cry DET child
'Why did the child cry?'

Arindun gina en?
Where mother 3SG
'Where is his mother?'

Taway getaw hitu?
Who man that
'Who is that man?'

Nano a mi-rateng?
When 2SG PST-arrive
'When did you arrive?'

Pegendun a me-ligo?
How 2SG FUT-bathe
'How do you bathe?'

**Morphological Typology
(Cebuano)**

In Cebuano, words have almost no affixes or most of the words consist of a single morpheme. The language is predominantly analytic. However, the verbs show that Cebuano is also partly agglutinating. They have affixes to indicate their tenses. This is shown by the chart below.

VERBS	GLOSS
nag-kanta	'sang'
naga-kanta	'is singing'
mu-kanta	'will sing'
gi-kanta-han	'was sung'
gina-kanta-han	'is sung'
kanta-han	'will be sung'

Example Sentences:

Nag-kanta ang mga bata.
PAST-sing the PL child
'The children sang.'

Mu-kanta ang mga bata.
FUT-sing the PL child.
'The children will sing.'