



# Grammatical Relations in Sou Amana Teru

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# Overview

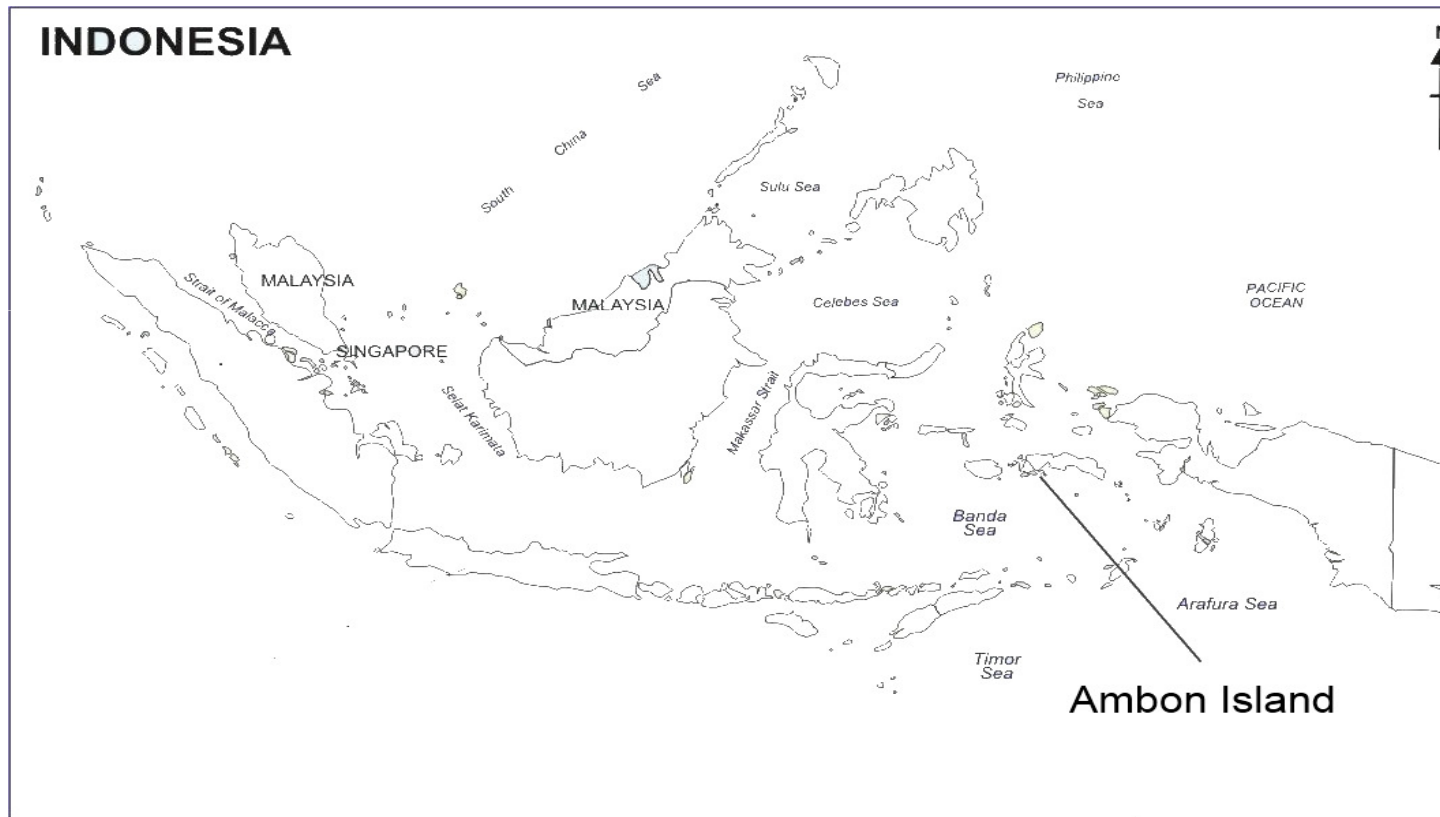
- Background on the language
- Pronouns and arguments
- Structure and subject?
- Possible pivot constructions
- Verbal morphology
- Semantic motivations
- A remaining asymmetry



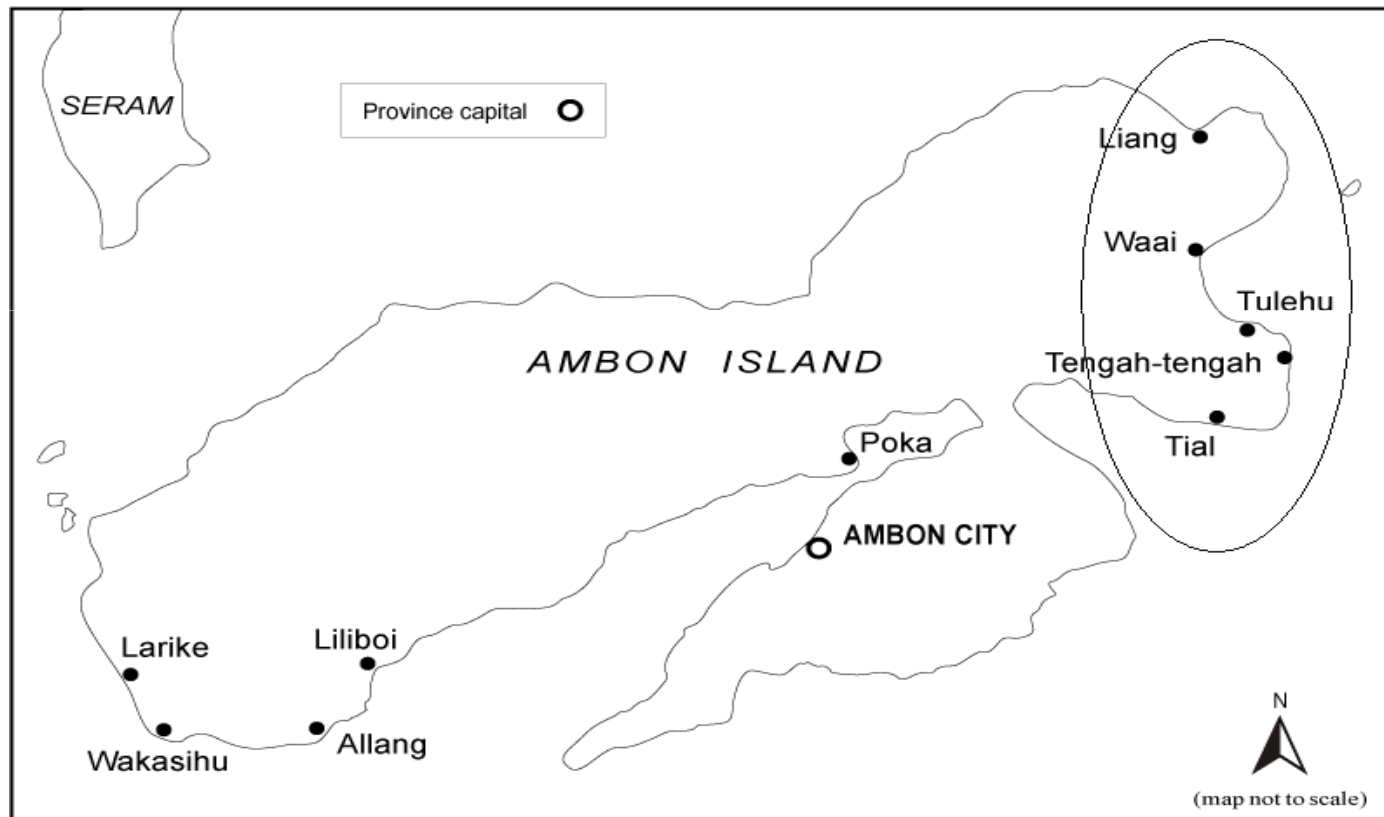
# Sou Amana Teru

- Austronesian, Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian
- Spoken in three villages at the eastern end of Ambon Island: Tulehu, Tengah-Tengah, Tial
- Variant dialect in another village: Liang
- Name means 'language of three villages'
  - Alternatives: Bahasa Tulehu, Bahasa Uli Solemata

# Location 1



# Location 2





# Typology, sociolinguistics

- Basic typology:
  - SVO (although S may not be very useful...)
  - Prepositions, head-initial NP
  - Alienable/inalienable distinction
  - Numeral classifiers
- Sociolinguistics
  - About 14000 speakers currently
  - But most (80%?) over 30
  - Ambonese Malay is language of most everyday interactions
  - More standard Malay also used: education, media, administration

# Some speakers





# Pronouns and arguments

- Where an S/A argument is human, a pronoun immediately precedes the verb
  - Often a reduced form (a clitic?)
  - Can be doubled by a free pronoun or a free NP
  - But Pro + V + (anything else) is a complete clause
  - Applies to almost all clauses – main, dependent





# Pronoun examples

- Full pronoun alone:  
*Isi pahai wa'ene*  
3pl play LOC-DIST  
'They played there'
- Full pronoun doubled:  
*Yau taha=u pahai'e*  
1sg NEG=1sg play-V  
'I didn't play'



# Human NP examples

- NP + pronoun:

*Isi ana koin-e i=na'e*

3pl child little-V 3sg-sleep

'Their baby was sleeping'

- Pronoun alone:

*Uma isi paha-nalar-ma aman Tuirehui*

then 3pl CAUS-name-EMPH village Tulehu

'Then they called the village Tulehu'



# Structure and subject

- Classical view: Subj as a defined structural position
  - NP immediately dominated by S
  - Spec position of some functional head
- Such an analysis seems initially plausible



# Structural analysis

- Pronoun appears to left of verb
- Right position for a specifier?
  - Maybe – more later
- Free NP or full pronoun is some kind of adjunct anaphorically linked to pronominal argument – Jelinek analysis



# Problems 1

- Pronoun appears to left of verb, but to right of preverbal functional elements:  
*Yau taha=u pahai'e*  
1sg NEG=1sg play-V  
'I didn't play'
- Doesn't look like the right specifier position....



# Problems 2

- Jelinek analysis predicts that free NP / full pronoun can be ordered freely
- This just doesn't happen



## Problems 3 – non-human S/A

- Only the 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive pronouns and 3<sup>rd</sup> person O pronouns can have non-human reference
- No pronoun available to fill preverbal slot:  
*Manu ane kula-e*  
bird eat banana-V  
'The bird is eating banana'



# Non-human S/A

- Consistent analysis of preverbal pronoun as subject would require zero pronoun for non-human
- Preverbal pronoun alone can make full clause
- Therefore prediction that V + (other stuff) would be good as “It Vs etc...”





# Evidence?

- One example instantiates this pattern:

*Lapia-re-na*      *eng*      *isinar-ma-ne*  
sago-this-EMPH 3sg.POSS content-that-EMPH

*masehu*    *aiy-i*    *lo'o-ne*    *rehit*

drop.down 3sg-3sg DIR-EMPH sago.trough

*lare-i.*                      *Masehu usie*                      *ike*

inside-3sg.INAL drop.down already 1pl.INCL

*pareta*                      *waer-e*

squeeze.out water-V

‘The contents of the sago drop down into the trough.

After (it) drops down, we squeeze the water out.’



# Pivot constructions

- Term owing to Dixon
- Refers to structures where
  - NPs referring to the same entity occur in different clauses
  - One of the NPs can be omitted under certain syntactic conditions
  - Normally the relevant condition is that the omitted NP has a particular GR, usually subject



# Possible pivot constructions

- Preverbal pronoun occurs before almost every verb
  - Both main verbs and dependent verbs
  - Main clauses and embedded clauses
- So there is no evidence for subject on the basis of pivot constructions



# Non-pivot examples

- Conjoined clauses:

*Ami maruhu-amu tula ami pamana*

1pl.E hungry-1pl.E with 1pl.E eat

‘We were hungry and we ate’

- Dependent clauses:

*Uma ute wake-ma e=tana=re*

then bamboo segment-that 3sg=take=it

*ena e=pa-’ia=re*

for 3sg=CAUS-good=it

‘Then that piece of bamboo, she took it to fix it’



# Non-pivot examples

- Verb sequences:

*Isi asik isi paho-i-si*

3pl busy 3pl wash-3pl

‘They were busy washing themselves’

*Ire weuta e=pamana*

3sg not.want 3sg=eat

‘(S)he doesn’t want to eat’



# An exception

- A secondary verb following *oi* 'go' does not have a preverbal pronoun:

*Yau oi sahe* roti-e

1sg go buy bread-V

'I went to buy bread'

- Semantic transparency?
- Serial verb construction?



# Relative clauses?

- Very hard to elicit
- Typically, Malay *yang* is retained from prompt:

*Mansia yang isi ane ian-e si upa*

person REL 3pl eat fish-V 3pl live

*wa'a rete Waai*

LOC DIR Waai

‘The people who eat fish live at Waai’



# Relative clauses?

- Structure without *yang* could be juxtaposition

- But definitely no pivot:

*Yau nau mansia-e si upa wa'a rete Waai*

1sg see person-V 3pl live LOC DIR Waai

‘I saw the people who live at Waai’ OR

‘I saw the people. They live at Waai.’





# Verbal morphology

- Sou Amana Teru has
  - No passive
  - No applicative
- Only valence-changing verbal morphology is causative



# Causative examples

- Prefix *pa-*:

*Yau pa-mata manu-e tula lopu-e*  
1sg CAUS-dead bird-V with knife-V  
'I killed the bird with a knife'

- Prefix *paha-*:

*Uma isi paha-nalar-ma aman Tuirehui*  
then 3pl CAUS-name-EMPH village Tulehu  
'Then they called the village Tulehu'



# Semantic motivation

- Causative is semantically transparent
- Whatever thematic role of previous S or A, CAUS adds a more agentive participant
- Available verbal morphology fits a semantic view of argument positions
- Cf. Durie's analysis of Acehnese



# Further semantic motivation

- Such an analysis predicts other areas of grammar should be sensitive to thematic roles
- This is the case – Sou Amana Teru has split intransitive system
- Undergoer-oriented intransitives and intradirectives are double marked:
  - Preverbal pronoun and postverbal clitic



# Split intransitivity

- Undergoer-oriented:

*Yau amuri-u*

1sg tired-1sg

‘I’m tired’

*Yau kere-u      ena asu*

1sg afraid-1sg for dog

‘I’m afraid of dogs’



# Split intransitivity

- Intradirectives:

*lke reu-ka*

1pl.I go.home-1pl.I

‘We are going home!’

*Suri bombonu e=kecewa e=oi-’i*

then turtle 3sg=disappointed 3g=go-3sg

‘Then turtle was sad and he went’



# A remaining asymmetry

- As seen, preverbal pronouns can be doubled by full NPs
- A postverbal reduced pronoun in O function cannot be doubled:



# O examples

- Reduced pronoun alone:

Jadi *rua* *e=supu-'i*

then monkey 3sg=catch-3sg

‘Then monkey caught him’

- Doubling not allowed:

*Au sau-'u*

*e=tana(\*-i)*

*eng ana-e*

1sg in.law-1sg.INAL 3sg=take(\*-3sg) 3sg child-V

‘My sister-in-law took her child’





# Summary

- Very weak evidence in Sou Amana Teru to posit grammatical relations
- Most phenomena of verb-argument relations can be analysed in terms of semantics
- Minimal analytic pay-off from assuming subject and object
- One asymmetry remains – but could be fact of morphology?