

# Historical Development of the “Malay-type” Voice System

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Malay-type voice systems are often characterized by the existence of the two sentence structures with contrasting word orders (“actor voice” and “undergoer voice”) and by applicative constructions which involves two applicative verb endings, such as *-i* and *-kan* in Indonesian (cf. Arka and Ross 2005:7, Adelaar 2005:7). In this paper, I will present two hypotheses which explain the historical development of these characteristics widely found in languages in Indonesia.

The first hypothesis presented here involves a word order change, which explains the existence of the two “symmetrical” sentence structures in the languages under consideration. In languages with such sentence structures, the noun phrase indicating the actor may precede the one indicating the undergoer as in (1)a, or may follow it as in(1)b. Such relative positions between the two noun phrases are fixed in each sentence structure.

(1) Indonesian (Adelaar 2005)

- a. “AV”      **Aku**      *məN-tulis-i*      **amplop itu**.  
                  1SG      AV-write.on      envelope DIST  
                  ‘I scribbled on the envelope.’
- b. “UV/PV”      **Amplop itu**      **ku=tulis-i**.  
                  envelope DIST      1SG=write.on  
                  ‘I scribbled on the envelope.’

A simple word order change, namely, the earlier nominative phrase acquiring a fixed sentence initial position readily yielded this system.<sup>1</sup>

The second hypothesis presented here involves the development of the applicative constructions, which are often characterized by the form of the verbs carrying *-i* and *-kan* like endings, such as those appearing in (1) and (2) respectively. I will claim that those with *-i* are the reflex structure of an earlier locative transitive structure, while those with *-kan* verbs must have developed from an earlier general transitive structure having an oblique NP immediately following the verb after the fronting of the actor NP.<sup>2</sup> The oblique preposition was

<sup>1</sup> Relevant discussion appears in Kikusawa 2008 and others.

<sup>2</sup> Discussion based on and extended from Kikusawa 2006 and 2007.

encliticized to the verb and ultimately incorporated as a suffix.

(2) Indonesian (Adelaar 2005)

- a. “AV”        *Ia mən-tulis-kan saya bon.*  
3SG AV-write.for 1SG receipt  
‘He wrote me a receipt.’
- b. “OV/PV”    *Saya di-tulis-kan bon.*  
1SG UV-write.for receipt  
‘(They) wrote me a receipt.’

Mechanisms and specific scenarios of the proposed changes are expected to contribute to the descriptive work of languages in Indonesia in that they provide some clues as to the kind of morphosyntactic features one should be looking for. They may also provide explanations of the grammaticalization processes involved that brought about variations and some of the “unusual” looking grammatical characteristics found in some languages today.

## References

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