

Dialect variation in the voice system of Sasak: when is a nasal-verb not a nasal-verb?

Peter K. Austin

Endangered Languages Academic Programme
Department of Linguistics, SOAS

1. Introduction

The Sasak language is spoken on the island of Lombok (immediately east of Bali) by around 2.5 million speakers (roughly 85% of the population of Lombok, which was recorded as 2,950,105 in 2005). It shows great internal variation, both geographical and social, with a complex linguistic ecology (Austin 2003) that includes five ethnolinguistically named ‘dialects’ recognized by native speakers and named for the shibboleth terms for ‘like this-like that’ (eg. Ngeno-ngene, Meno-mene, etc.). The geographical varieties show variation in phonology, lexicon and morpho-syntax, especially in the areas of clitic pronouns (Austin 1996, 2006) and valence-changing processes (Austin 1996, 2000, 2001), but also in verbal morphology. All varieties have nasal-prefix verbs (also called ‘nasal verbs’, Arka 1998) and non-nasal prefix verbs (also called ‘oral verbs’ or ‘zero verbs’), however in some varieties the contrast has syntactic relevance in terms of relating to cross-clausal ‘pivot’ choice, while in others the contrast is related to different semantic-pragmatic interpretations of the Agent NP and non-agentlike NP in a two-argument clause (where such an argument must be interpreted as non-referential or non-specific in the nasal-prefix verb construction).

This paper explores the distribution of nasal-prefix verbs in varieties of Sasak. It uses data from geographically-based surveys, including comparative materials from ‘frog story’ and ‘pear story’ texts, together with other kinds of narratives. The goal of the paper is to determine how different varieties employ nasal-prefix verbs and which functions such constructions carry out.

2. Ngeno-ngene

Our data on Ngeno-ngene varieties, especially those of eastern Lombok, shows that there is a clear contrast between nasal-prefixed verbs and zero verbs, and the contrast resembles that found in Balinese. Firstly, there are two types of one-place predicates: (1) those with a nasal prefix that have unergative-type meanings where the single argument is understood as agent-like and the predicate indicates volitional action, emission or manner of motion, and (2) those with no prefix that have unaccusative-type meanings where the single argument is understood as patient-like and the predicate involves non-volitional action or orientation of motion, as in (see Austin 2001):

Unaccusative	<i>teriq</i>	‘fall down’	Unergative	<i>nangis</i>	‘cry’
	<i>dateng</i>	‘come’		<i>ngòndòng</i>	‘swim’
	<i>pelai</i>	‘run’		<i>ngemòs</i>	‘smile’
	<i>gulung</i>	‘roll’		<i>ngleget</i>	‘shiver’
	<i>uléq</i>	‘return’		<i>ngutaq</i>	‘vomit’
	<i>laló</i>	‘go’		<i>mandiq</i>	‘bathe’

For two-place predicates, the following was reported in Austin 2001: in Ngenó-Ngené all transitive verbs can occur in both construction types, as in:

- (1) *Aku* *balé* *beli*
 1sg house buy
 ‘I buy a house’ (Ng)
- (2) *Aku* *mbeli* *balé*
 1sg N.buy house
 ‘I buy a house’ (Ng)

In addition to the nasal prefix, these constructions differ in word order: the Patient-like argument must precede the zero verb (normally with the Agent-like argument before it), and the Agent must precede the nasal verb (with the Patient after the verb). There is also a difference in focus in these clauses with emphasis falling on the preverbal argument. Consultants sometimes translate (1) as “It is a house that I buy” and (2) as “As for me, I buy a house”. In addition, the zero verb can be used as an imperative in Sasak, but the nasal verb cannot (unlike Balinese where there is a contrast in the imperative: the nasal verb is used when the Patient is non-specific, see Artawa, Artini and Blake 1997). The Agent of a zero verb may follow the verb in Ngenó-Ngené Sasak, but this is highly marked, and impossible for a third person pronominal agent (compare Balinese where the usual order with zero verbs is for the Agent to follow the verb). Alternatively, the Agent can be expressed as the object of the preposition *isiq* (also used to mark the Agent in a passive construction – see below), and follow the verb in a prepositional phrase, as in:

- (3) *Balé* *beli* *isiq* *lóq* *Ali*
 house buy by art Ali
 ‘Ali bought a house’ (Ng)

The nasal prefixed verb is syntactically required when anaphoric linkage with omission of Agent of the two-place or three-place verb is required, as in Balinese ... Thus, in relativisation in Ngenó-Ngené Sasak, the relative clause must contain a gap that is coreferential with the head noun; this can be an S or a P with a zero verb (see also Austin 1996 for further details and exemplification). Examples are:

- (4) *Kanak* [*siq* *berari*] *inó*
 child rel run that
 ‘That child who is running’ (Ng)
- (5) *Buku* [*siq* *mèq=beli*] *inó*
 book rel 2=buy that
 ‘That book which you buy’ (Ng)

If the relativised NP is in A function within the relative clause then the nasal construction must be used, as in:

- (6) *Dengan* [siq mbeli buku] inó
 man rel N.buy book that
 ‘That man who bought a book’ (Ng)
- (7) **Dengan* [siq beli buku] inó
 man rel 3sg=N.buy book that
 ‘That man who bought a book’ (Ng)”

The same facts hold for question formation in Ngeno-Ngene: extraction of P is possible with zero verbs and extraction of A with nasal verbs only.

Two-place zero verbs in Neno-ngene Sasak are passivised by the addition of the prefix *te-* to the verb root. The Patient precedes the passive verb and the Agent (if expressed) follows, preceded by the preposition *isiq* ‘by’ and acts as an oblique syntactically, as in:

- (8) *Aku* *te-pantòk* *isiq* *lóq* *Ali*
 1sg pass-hit by art Ali
 ‘I was hit by Ali’ (Ng)

3. Central and Southern Varieties of Sasak

Central and southern Lombok is occupied by speakers of Meno-mene, Menu-meni and Meriaq-meriku varieties of Sasak. As Austin (2001) noted: the structure of two-place predicates in Menó-mené and Meriaq-meriku Sasak is somewhat different from Ngeno-ngene. Here the usual word order is Agent Verb Patient for both zero-verb and nasal-verb constructions. A pronominal Agent is cross-referenced by an enclitic pronoun attached to the first available host in the clause, and a pronominal Patient is cross-referenced by an enclitic attached to the transitive verb.

Relative animacy is also an important factor. When the Agent NP is inanimate it is generally expressed in an *isiq* phrase after the verb (cross-referenced by an Agent enclitic), as in:

- (9) *Mu=n* *téóp* *kelambi=nó* *isiq* *angin*
 perf=3 blow shirt=that by wind
 ‘The wind blew the shirt away.’ (Mn)

When the Agent is third person animate and the Patient is first or second person, then speakers prefer that a passive construction be used (see also examples (18) and (19) below). When the Agent is third person animate and the Patient is also third person (animate or inanimate) then the unmarked construction is to use an *isiq* phrase to code the Agent (cross-referenced by a clitic on the first available host), as in:

- (10) *Mu=n* *jelóq* *kelambi=nó* *isiq* *inaq*
 perf=3 dry in sun shirt=that by mother
 ‘Mother dried the shirt in the sun.’ (Mn)

- (11) *Iaq=n* *gitaq* *kanak-kanak=nó* *isiq* *Herman*
 fut=3 see reduplicated-child=that by Herman
 ‘Herman will see the children.’ (Mn)

The nasal verb in these dialects is used when the Patient-like argument is non-referential and in this construction the Patient can be omitted (and can never appear as an enclitic on the nasal verb). The Patient of a zero verb cannot be left unexpressed¹. Consider the following examples:

- (12) *Kanak=nó* *jangke=n* *pancing* *mpaq/lépaq/léndóng*
 child=that pres=3 catch fish/frog/eel
 ‘The child is catching the fish/frogs/eels.’ (Mn)

- (13) *Kanak=nó* *jangke=n* *mancing* *mpaq/lépaq/léndóng*
 child=that pres=3 N.catch fish/frog/eel
 ‘The child is catching (some) fish/frogs/eels.’ (Mn)

- (14) *Kanak=nó* *jangke=n* *mancing*
 child=that pres=3 N.catch
 ‘The child is catching (fish), The child is fishing.’ (Mn)

- (15) *Ie* *mace*
 3 N.read
 ‘He is reading (a book).’ (Mn)

An example from a Meno-meno Frog Story text is the following:

¹ Arka (2009:248) erroneously claims that in “the Puyung variety of Sasak ... nasal verbs (*meli*, *mancing*) and the bare verbs (*beli*, *pancing*) are intersubstitutable. This indicates that, unlike Balinese ... Sasak shows no functional opposition of the N- and 0- prefixes in this context.

- (1) Amir **beli/meli** buku jari Tono (Puyung Sasak)
 Amir buy/N.buy book for Tono
 ‘Amir bought a book for Tono’
- (2) **Kanak=nó** *jangke=n* *pancing* / *mancing* *mpaq*
 child=that PRES=3 catch N.catch fish
 ‘The child is catching fish’ (Austin 2001, ex. 33)

In fact close inspection of the data and checking with native speakers reveals that in the nasal verb construction the Patient must be interpreted as non-specific, so there is a difference in translation here: *meli buku* means ‘bought (some) books’ while *beli buku* means ‘bought a book’ (and the same for example (2) ‘catch fish’ versus ‘catch a fish’). There is a functional contrast but it has to do with referentiality, not voice (AV vs. UV in Arka’s terms). For Menu-meni examples see below.

- (16) *Sangkaq=n jangke laló nyedi lèpang ni liq dalem pelès*
 therefore=3 cont go N.separate frog this loc inside glass.jar
 ‘That’s why the frog ran away from inside the glass jar’ (Mn)

Note that like Ngeno-ngene, nasal verbs are never used as imperatives.

The nasal verb is not required for clause combination in Menó-Mené and Meriaq-Meriku dialects; any core NP (S, A, or P) can be omitted under coreference (though note that since the non-agent of a nasal-verb is non-referential it cannot be coreferential with a nominal elsewhere in the clause or in a previous clause). Thus we find relative clauses such as the following (note that a nasal verb inside the relative clause would be required in the corresponding Ngenó-Ngené construction):

- (17) *Basóng [saq kókóq=k uiq]=nó berelòng putéq*
 dog rel bite=1sg yesterday=dem tail white
 ‘The dog that bit me yesterday has a white tail’ (Mn)

It is important to note that the relativised nominal cannot be represented by a clitic within the relative clause.

Recall that in Menó-Mené and Meriaq-Meriku Sasak the passive is required whenever a third person Agent acts on a first or second person Patient, as in:

- (18) *Mu=k te-gitaq isiq Ali*
 perf=1sg pass-see by Ali
 ‘I was seen by Ali’ (Mn)

- (19) **Mu=n gitaq=k isiq Ali*
 perf=3 see-1sg by Ali
 ‘Ali saw me’ (Mn)

Menu-Meni, spoken in Ganti, Tebao and neighbouring villages in south-central Lombok, shows a number of similarities to Meno-mene and Meriaq-meriku, but some differences from the data discussed so far. As for Meno-mene, two participant verbs in the nasal form can take a Patient argument, however it must not be referential, as the following examples from Sutarman (2010) illustrate (note the use of the non-nasal verbs with referential Patients in the second clause of each example):

- (20) *Aku ng-utang kèpèng léq saiq=kó siq bayah tangkòng*
 1sg N-owe money loc aunt =1sg in.order.to pay shirt
 ‘I owe some money to my aunt to pay for the shirt’
- (21) *Amaq=kó ng-upaq-anq ntan tambah bangket=ng*
 father=1sg N-pay-appl way hoe rice field=3
 ‘My father pays someone to hoe his rice field’

Note that like all other varieties of Sasak, the nasal form can never be used as an imperative.

In Menu-meni, clitic pronouns have two forms in the non-first person, one for Agent cross-reference and the other for Patient cross-reference (see Austin 2006), as in the following table:

	Agent	Patient
1sg	= <i>kò</i>	= <i>kò</i>
1pl	= <i>te</i>	= <i>te</i>
2	= <i>ò</i>	= <i>kem</i>
3	= <i>ng</i>	= <i>è</i>

The Agent enclitic is typically attached to a preverbal host and the Patient enclitic to the Verb. If there is no non-verb host for the Agent enclitic then the Verb will host it (unlike Menó-Mené and Meriaq-Meriku where a special AUX particle appears as the host). If the Patient is non-specific then the Verb just takes Actor forms. If the Patient is specific then a clitic complex of Agent+Patient occurs on the verb — if the 1st and 2nd person are both involved this complex loses the specification of **number** for 1st person (both 1st Agent and 1st Patient neutralise the number distinction in the presence of 2nd person):

ACTOR	UNDERGOER			
	1sg	1pl	2	3
1sg			= <i>kem</i>	= <i>kè</i>
1pl			= <i>kem</i>	= <i>tè</i>
2	= <i>òkò</i>	= <i>òkò</i>		= <i>òkè</i>
3	= <i>ngkò</i>	= <i>ngte</i>	= <i>ngkem</i>	

Recall that inside a relative clause no clitic appears coding the relativised NP (it is treated as if it were non-specific) — this results in ambiguity for first person because =*kò* could be relativised Agent + 1sgPatient **or** 1sgAgent + relativised Patient:

- (22) *nu ie kanak saq gitaq=kò nuqng*
 that 3 child rel see=1sg that
- (a) ‘That is the child who I saw’ (=kò is Patient, head noun is Agent)
 (b) ‘That is the child who saw me’ (=kò is Agent, head noun is Patient)

4. Conclusions

Close study of Sasak, spoken on Lombok island to the east of Bali, reveals wide morphosyntactic differences between varieties spoken throughout the island. In Ngeno-ngene varieties the nasal verb construction has a voice function similar to that described for Balinese by Arka 1998 and others. In Meno-mene, Menu-meni and Meriaq-meriku by contrast, nasal verbs encode non-specific Patient and have no role to play in meeting cross-clausal ‘pivot’ constraints, unlike Ngeno-ngene and Balinese.

There are several other varieties of Sasak, especially Kuto-kute and Nggeto-nggete, which have been little studied to date. Further research on these varieties is need to determine the full picture of Sasak morpho-syntax.

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