

Active/Passive alternation and switch reference in Indonesian narrative discourse

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There is a wealth of studies on Indonesian passive, addressing issues that range from appropriate terminology for the different types of passive, what constitutes core arguments in passive, passive as ergative, to discourse functions of the inverse *di-* constructions. It has been pointed out that the *di-V-nya* inverse passive is common in narrative, and that its function is to encode a series of actions carried out by the same actor. This paper examines a less discussed aspect of inverse passive, namely, its alternation with active voice. Drawing data from 15 contemporary teen novels, I argue that instances of alternation can be accounted for as switch reference. A switch from active to inverse passive marks a change in scene and narratorial perspective. In terms of information structure, the relation between agent and patient in inverse passive constructions can be considered as a relation between primary and secondary topics respectively. A frequency count shows that in contemporary fiction, active constructions – particularly that with *meN-* verbs – are more prevalent than passive, confirming an earlier finding by Cumming (1991). This paper also shows that cases of switch reference are few. These cases may partly represent a desire on the part of the authors to follow the earlier tradition of fiction writing that uses inverse passive to describe successive main events, and partly a pull towards a contemporary style in which active constructions are preferred.