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Nonsubject Wh-Movement in Banjar

It is widely claimed that only subjects can undergo wh-movement in Austronesian languages; this includes relativization, clefting and wh-questions (for example Sneddon 1996). Banjar is a typical Malayo-Polynesian Austronesian Language spoken in Borneo that is similar to Bahasa Indonesia (NVTC 2008). By presenting data where the subject position is held by the agent when the object is clefted, I show that nonsubject relativization must be possible in Banjar.

An active, declarative sentence has the *maN*- prefix on the verb like in example (1). When the subject is clefted, there is still verbal morphology as seen in (2). However when the object is clefted, there is no verbal morphology (3).

1. kau kada handak **mambunuh** binatang
you neg will maN-kill animal
you will not kill the animal
2. kau nang kada handak **mambunuh** binatang
you that neg will maN-kill animal
it is you that will not kill the animal
3. binatang nang kada handak kau bunuh
animal that neg will you kill
it is the animal that you will not kill.

The lack of verbal morphology has led some to propose an intermediate step of passivization; the object is promoted to subject position and can then be extracted (Cole 1998). This is a tempting explanation for two reasons: the word order of clefted object phrases is clearly derived and the lack of verbal morphology is explained by the bare-root passive (which is called the bare root passive because there is no verbal morphology). For example, when the object of the bare-root passive in (4) is clefted, the sentence becomes the one in (3).

4. binatang kada handak kau bunuh
animal neg will you kill
you will not kill the animal

However, the bare-root passive cannot possibly be in intermediate step. In the bare-root passive there is strict adjacency of the agent to the left of the verb. I propose that this is where the agent starts and that the agent DP does not move out of the VP in the bare-root passive. In the active sentences like (1), the agent DP moves up to subject position. This is the same position filled by the object DP in the bare root passive like

binatang in (4). If the bare-root passive is an intermediate step it would predict that the higher subject position will have a trace of the clefted element and therefore the clefted position and the subject position cannot be simultaneously filled. However, we see in (5) that that is possible.

5. binatang nang kau kada handak bunuh
animal that you neg will kill
it is the animal that you will not kill

That the subject position can be filled when an object is clefted proves that passivization is not an intermediate step and that it is possible for nonsubject elements to extract in Banjar. The next step is to explain the lack of verbal morphology in constructions where the object has undergone wh-movement.

References

- Cole, Peter, and Gabriella Hermon. Subject and Nonsubject Relativization in Indonesian. Second Symposium on Malay / Indonesian Linguistics, 18 June 1998.
- Sneddon, James Neil. *Indonesian Reference Grammar*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1996.
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