

## Indonesian as a covert predicate fronting language

When comparing an SVO language like English and a VOS language like Malagasy, one is struck by the number of distinct properties. Beyond the obvious word order difference, it seems that almost every other component of the grammar is also affected. Binding, raising, control, extraction all work quite differently. It is tempting to link the various differences to an account of the word order. This is what is done in Travis (2005) where predicate fronting languages like Malagasy vary maximally from DP fronting languages like English. The claim is that ‘displacement’ universally targets the features D and V. Languages can be parameterized, however, in whether these features target maximal projections or heads. English feature D targets an XP and V targets an X. Malagasy feature D targets an X and V targets an XP.

In this context, Indonesian is an interesting testing ground for the claims made. On one hand, Indonesian shares the SVO word order of English while on the other it shares some of the surprising properties of Malagasy. (1) and (2) show that, Indonesian, like Malagasy, can realize a non-subject agent in an apparent argument position.

- (1) Perempuan itu dia lihat                   INDONESIAN  
woman       that he see                   (from Cole and Hermon 1998)  
'The woman was seen by him.'
- (2) Hitany ny vehivavy                   MALAGASY  
see-his the woman  
'The woman was seen by him.'

I argue that this sort of argument realization is due to the checking of the D feature by a head in the Agent phrase making Indonesian a Malagasy-type language. I further argue that the basic word order difference between Malagasy and Indonesian can be accounted for by assuming that Indonesian generally has covert XP movement to check the V feature. This explains two other apparently conflicting facts about Indonesian. First, Indonesian is what Pearson (1998) labels a DIRECT language in that the VP internal word order is closer to English than Malagasy (which he labels an INVERSE language). On the other hand, Indonesian forms WH-constructions with clefting structures like Malagasy and unlike English. For Oda (2003), WH-clefting is one of the signs of a predicate fronting language. Since INVERSE ordering is derived by predicate fronting for Pearson (1998), the lack of overt movement (though presence of covert movement) in Indonesian would explain why it patterns with DIRECT languages. A WH-feature on the predicate, however, would account for the overt predicate fronting in the case of WH-clefts. Now Indonesian would take on the appearance of Malagasy.

In the final part of the paper, I will compare WH-extraction in Malagasy, English, and Indonesian. Again, Indonesian appears to pattern somewhere between Malagasy and English. English is fairly free in what can undergo WH-movement while Malagasy appears to restrict extraction to subjects. Superficially, Indonesian appears to have the same restrictions as Malagasy, but as Cole and Hermon (1998) show, a more detailed analysis of the data shows that object may extract in Indonesian. I develop their account of extraction and propose that in all three languages, only feature-checked positions can launch WH-movement.

## References:

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