

Voice in Malay/Indonesian

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Our purpose in this talk is to compare the voice system in Standard Malay/Indonesian (SMI) with that found in several regional dialects of Malay/Indonesian. In the standard language, there are three voices, an active voice marked on the verb by a variant the prefix *meng-*, a passive voice marked by the prefix *di-* and an object voice in which the verb appears as a bare stem. In the active the agent is subject, but in both the passive and the object voice, the patient is the (derived) subject. Although the passive and object voice are similar with regard to the grammatical role of the patient, the two constructions differ in an important way. In the passive, as in passives in European languages, the agent occurs as an adjunct (if at all), but in the object voice the agent is clearly an argument. The pattern seen in Standard Malay/Indonesian is essentially the same as the voice system found in other "Indonesian-type" Western Austronesian languages like Javanese and Toba Batak. It is also similar in many ways to the voice systems of Philippine-type languages. Thus, analyses of voice proposed for the Philippine-type languages may be extended to SMI with minor adaptation.

Although most published work on Malay and Indonesian has dealt with SMI, SMI is in fact an externally imposed standard language with few or no native speakers. The question naturally arises as to what voice systems are found in the varieties of Malay/Indonesian actually spoken by the population of Malaysia and Indonesia. As we shall show in this paper, a very different picture emerges when colloquial dialects of Malay/Indonesian are examined. Our paper will be organized as follows. We will first describe the voice system of SMI and will show that current analyses of voice based on Philippine-type languages (e.g. Rackowski and Richards 2005), with some modification, provide a reasonable account of the SMI facts. We shall next turn to several colloquial varieties of Malay/Indonesian, specifically Jakarta Indonesian, Jambi Malay and Kuching Malay. While these dialects differ amongst themselves in their voice systems, we shall show that the system found in SMI and other "Indonesian-type" Austronesian languages is not found. Rather, these dialects manifest an active/passive dichotomy and do not have an object voice like that found in Javanese, Balinese etc. The change in voice system is shown to affect other aspects of the grammar like constraints on extraction as well, though not in the same way in each dialect. We argue that a phase edge analysis like that of Rackowski and Richards (2005) does not make the right predictions for the colloquial varieties we survey.