The Structure of Complex Existential Sentences in Malay

Hiroki Nomoto

In English we have both *there's someone who wants to see you* and *there's someone wants to see you*. A parallel pair can be found in Malay too.

(1)   a.   Ada orang yang nak jumpa awak.
                be   person COMP want see   you
                'There's a person who wants to see you.'
        b.   Ada orang nak   jumpa awak.
                be   person want see   you
                'There's a person wants to see you.'

In English teaching in Japan, the second English sentence above is taught as a sentence derived from the first one by way of the omission of the relativiser *who*. Much the same is the case in the teaching of Malay/Indonesian in Japan. (1b) is thought of as a result of the omission of the relativiser *yang* from (1a). Shoho's (1993) list of the environments where *yang* is optional includes 'in the noun phrase after *ada*'.

This paper explores the precise syntactic structure of sentences like (1b), which I call 'complex existential sentences' as opposed to 'minimal existential sentences' after Chung (1987). I will examine the following three hypotheses regarding the syntactic structure of complex existential sentences: (I) the relative clause hypothesis, (II) the sentence hypothesis and (III) the quantifier hypothesis. Hypothesis I reflects the view in the previous paragraph and assumes the same structure for both (1a) and (1b) except that the complementiser is overt in (1a) but phonetically null in (1b). Hypothesis II analyses the NP following *ada* 'to be/to have' and the second predicate, i.e. *nak jumpa awak* 'want to see you' as a sentence (IP) rather than an NP. Hypothesis III is motivated by Goddard's (2002) semantic analysis of *ada*. He claims that Malay *ada* is quantifier-like, being an exponent of the semantic prime SOME as well as that of THERE IS. Accordingly *ada* is treated as a part of the subject under this hypothesis. I claim that the first hypothesis is the most plausible but the structures of two types of existential sentences are not completely identical.

References

Chung, Sandra. 1987. The syntax of Chamorro existential sentences. In E. J. Reuland and A. G. B. ter Meulen (eds.) *The Representation of (In)definiteness*, 191-225. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Goddard, Cliff. 2002. Semantic primes and Universal Grammar in Malay (bahasa Melayu). In C. Goddard and A. Wierzbicka (eds.) *Meaning and Universal Grammar: Theory and Empirical Findings, Volume I*, 87-172. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Shoho, Isamu. 1993. Kankeisi YANG nikansuru iti-kousatu [An investigation into the usage of Malay ligature YANG]. *Toukyou Gaikokugo Daigaku Ronshuu* 46: 81-95.