

## Verb nominalization and thematization with the suffix *-nya* in Indonesian

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In this paper, we will examine a nominalization pattern that occurs in written modern Indonesian, mainly in the press corpus. It consists in the thematization (thematic fronting) of a clause, whose verb is be nominalized by the suffix *-nya*.

- (1) *Men-(t)urun-nya ekspor akan mem-per-buruk neraca per-dagang-an.*  
AV-descend-NOM export will AV-CAUS-bad balance NOM-commerce-NOM  
The decrease in the exports will worsen the commercial balance.

We argue that thematizations of this kind result from the fronting of a causal subordinate clause that could be paraphrased, for the example above, *karena ekspor menurun* “because the exports are decreasing”. Our corpus shows that this structure always exhibits a causal relation, the consequence being expressed by the verb phrase. The nominalized verb, promoted to the subject argument, is fronted to the left of the sentence (or clause), and always completed by a noun, whose referent is non-animate; thus personal pronouns are excluded from this position.

Not all the verbs can be nominalized by the suffix *-nya*. The intransitive dynamic verbs are mainly verbs of motion, like *bangunnya* “the rise”, and only a few verbs prefixed by *ber-* (imperfective) can be nominalized, e.g. *berakhirnya* “the end, the closing stage”. Nominalization of intransitive verbs prefixed by *meN-* (actor voice) is restricted to verbs expressing a change, a progress, e.g. *menurunnya* (see ex. 1).

The transitive verbs must be passivized (more accurately, put at the undergoer voice) before being nominalized and fronted.

- (2) *Di-tolak-nya cabai Indonesia oleh pasar Taiwan mem-(p)ukul usaha ekspor cabai.*  
UV-refuse-NOM chilli Indonesia by market Taiwan AV.hit business export chilli  
The rejection of Indonesian chilli by Taiwan’s market hits the business of exporting chilli.

A transitive verb can be nominalized by *-nya* under some restrictions: it cannot embed negation, coordination, irrealis and tense-aspect-mood markers that may appear in a causal subordinate clause. Such a nominalization is also bounded to some syntactical positions: always fronted (left to the verb), not coordinated neither completed by a subordinate clause. These restrictions are predictable, as it seems that only one fronting movement is possible in a sentence, hence we can’t have the fronting of a subordinate clause along with another fronting movement, e.g. an indication of time fronted as an interrogative morpheme: *\*Kapan ditolaknya cabai [...] memukul usaha [...]?* “When has the rejection of the chilli [...] hit the business [...]?”

Semantic features of the thematization-nominalization by *-nya* should not be left aside. Other means of verb nominalization are available, e.g. on the base *turun* “to descend” are formed *turunnya* and *penurunan*, which like *menurunnya* (see ex. 1) may be translated “fall, drop, descent, decrease”; their difference in meaning reflects the aspectual features of the process they refer to. There is a clear-cut aspectual opposition between nominalizations of dynamic verbs by *-nya* and *peN-* *-an*, e.g. *bunuh* “kill” can be nominalized *dibunuhnya Munir* “the fact that Munir has been killed” versus *pembunuhan Munir* “the murder of Munir”, the last being regardless of whether the event is completed or not. Moreover, the perfective aspect specified by *-nya* will also lead to the localization of the event in the past, if no other indication of time is available in the context.

Finally, we will recall the classical narrative pattern *di-V-nya*, possibly the prototype of the *-nya* thematization-nominalization which seems recent and innovative in Indonesian.