

Modals and aspect markers in Kelantan Malay

This paper presents various modals and aspect markers, and identifies their grammatical categories in Kelantan Malay, a Malayic dialect spoken in the state of Kelantan. Since the centrality of the standard dialect in our research has brought about an unbalanced picture of the Malay language group, more studies in Kelantan Malay are desirable. In particular, Kelantan Malay is relatively underdescribed variety of Malaysia; it makes a structural distinction between auxiliaries and main verbs and auxiliaries undergo optional head movement.

Starting from a general description of modals and aspect markers, I claim that modals and aspect markers constitute distinct grammatical categories such as verbs, adverbs, and nouns. The distribution of auxiliaries is straightforwardly explained by the head movement constraint (Travis 1984). The following observations support my view: (a) possibility of fronting in which lexical verbs are not fronted in forming yes-no questions and (b) use of negation in which negations make a distinction in word class. The syntactic diagnostics reveal that in *bule* ‘can’, *mesti* ‘must’, *patut* ‘should have’, and *pernah* ‘ever’ are auxiliary *verbs* that optionally allow fronting; the progressive *tengoh* is a *nominal* element because *buke* is a negation for nominal predicates. The following examples are samplers of the data.

- (1) a. *dio tok bule kecek bahaso ingrih* b. *bule ko awak kijo kak rumoh?*
 3Sg Neg can speak language English can Q 2Sg work at home
 ‘S/he cannot speak English.’ ‘Can you work at home?’
- (2) a. *sayo buke tengoh beli buku*
 1Sg Neg Prog buy book
 ‘I am not buying a book.’

The stronger support for my claim comes from the existence of a fixed order among auxiliaries and fronting possibilities in *double* auxiliary constructions. This confirms that *sudoh* ‘already’ and *keno* ‘should’ are auxiliary *verbs* which disallow fronting (3); *ake* ‘will’ is an *adverb* (4).

- (3) a. *awok sudoh bule baco buku ko?* b. **bule ko awak sudoh baco buku?*
 2Sg already can read book Q can Q 2Sg already read book
 c. **sudoh ko awak bule baco buku?*
 already Q 2Sg can read book ‘Were you already able to read a book?’
- (4) a. *awok ake bule kijo kak rumoh ko?* b. *bule ko awak ake kijo kak rumoh?*
 2Sg will can work at home Q can Q 2Sg will work at home
 c. **ake ko awak bule kijo kak rumoh?*
 will Q 2Sg can work at home ‘Will you be able to work at home?’

Following the head movement constraint (Travis 1984), the fronting of one head over another is not possible because head movement is blocked by the presence of an intervening head. This suggests that as illustrated in (3), *sudoh* is a verb that projects a head position; if *sudoh* were an adverb, *bule* would be able to be fronted across *sudoh*, contrary to the fact in (3b). Similarly, as in (4) *ake* is an *adverb* of time; if *ake* were a verb, it would disallow *bule* to be fronted across it.

Thus, such patterns show that auxiliary verbs differ from lexical verbs with respect to a structural position: an auxiliary verb occupies a head position by forming its own functional phrase (Cinque 1999). Furthermore, the overall distribution supports Grimshaw’s idea (1991, 2005) that functional projections of modal/ aspect words contain the feature [+verb, -noun]. However, one exception is found in occurrence of the progressive marker *tengoh* as shown in (2), which has the feature [+verb, +noun] while it still serves as the aspect marker, and this forms a counterexample to Grimshaw’s (1991, 2005) typology on extended projections. In my presentation, I shall investigate the empirical and theoretical implications of modals and aspect markers in Kelantan Malay, and compare those with examples from Javanese (Cole et al. 2008). I examine to what extent Kelantan Malay and Javanese share the same properties with those in standard Malay/Indonesian.

References

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