

***meN*- and DP movement in Malay: an Agreement analysis**

The verbal prefix *meN*- in Malay, which has been argued to indicate both active voice and transitivity (e.g. Chung 1976, Fortin in press) can optionally appear on most transitive verbs. However, as has been well-documented (e.g. Cole & Hermon 1998, Soh 1998), verbs which normally permit the *meN*- prefix cannot take *meN*- if movement of a DP has taken place across it, as demonstrated in the contrast between (1) and (2). In this paper, I present a novel analysis of this well-known problem. I argue that this incompatibility arises because a verb marked with *meN*- must Agree with a DP complement late in the derivation.

Many previous treatments of the restrictions on movement in *meN*-marked clauses in Malay and Indonesian describe the incompatibility of *meN*- with movement of the direct object without proposing the specific syntactic mechanisms that would block this. Cole and Hermon (1998) suggest that *meN*- deletes when a DP that originates below it in the phrase structure moves across it. However, Cole and Hermon do not elaborate on the syntactic mechanics of or motivation for this deletion. Fortin's (in press) more comprehensive analysis, which proposes that *meN*- is a pronoun clitic and antipassive marker, is unsatisfying because it does not capitalize on *meN*-'s *v*-like qualities in theta-role assignment and the already well-established feature-checking relationship between *v* and the object DP.

This paper confirms the previously-noted incompatibility of a *meN*-marked verb and movement of its DP object and offers a novel analysis of this restriction: a *meN*-marked verb must Agree at PF with an *in situ* DP complement. I also propose a hypercorrection analysis for some variation that exists among and within speakers, shown in (3a-b). Since the use of *meN*- is mandatory in formal registers of Malay whenever it is available, some speakers overuse *meN*- in constructions when it is predicted to be blocked. Data for this paper were derived from the judgments of two Malay speakers from Kuala Lumpur and Penang Island.

The coincidence of a *meN*-marked verb and movement of its object DP results in ungrammaticality in a variety of constructions, including *wh*- movement of objects (2), object relative clauses (4), and in the bare passive construction (5).

However, *meN*- is compatible with other types of movement, such as movement of subjects and non-DP arguments or adjuncts. *meN*- is also permitted when a *wh*- DP object remains *in situ*, because none of these constructions prevent *meN*- from Agreeing with an *in situ* DP complement at PF.

An additional puzzle is posed by the behavior of *meN*- in multiclausal constructions. I show that, in multiclausal constructions, a *meN*-marked matrix verb with no DP object, in many cases an ECM verb, is able to Agree with the subject of the embedded clause, unless the embedded subject has been extracted, as in (6).

Another complication arises from the fact that verbs marked with *meN*- must be semantically, though not necessarily syntactically transitive, as shown in (7). Following Fillmore's (1986) argument for implicit arguments, I propose that *meN*- clauses with no overt object have a null object with which *meN*- can agree. These constructions show that the contrast in *meN*-'s grammaticality lies between *in situ* objects and moved traces. *meN*- can occur with both overt and phonologically null objects, so long as they are *in situ*. I also argue that *meN*- actually licenses a null object through the Agree relation, as shown in the contrast between (7) and (8). Transitive verbs not marked with *meN*- are ungrammatical unless they have an overt DP object, suggesting that null objects are not available without *meN*-.

This analysis proposes a syntactic process—Agreement between *meN*- and an *in situ* DP complement—that accurately reflects the incompatibility of *meN*- and movement of the object DP, takes advantage of an already-established syntactic relationship, and could be extended to explain similar movement-blocking effects that arise with *di*-, another verbal prefix in Malay.

Data

- (1) Ali membaca buku itu.
Ali meN-read book that
'Ali read that book.'
- (2) Berapa buku-kah_i Siti (*mem) baca t_i?
how.many book-Q Siti (*meN)-read
'How many books did Siti read?'
- (3a) Apakah_i Siti memecah t_i?
What-Q Siti meN-break
'What did Siti break?'
- (3b) Apakah_i Siti (*mem) pecah t_i?
What-Q Siti (*meN)-break
'What did Siti break?'
- With *meN-*, predicted to be ill-formed. Consultant reports that *meN-* makes the sentence "more formal," than without it, consistent with a hypercorrection analysis.
- Same consultant on a separate occasion judges the utterance with *meN-* to be ungrammatical.
- (4) buku_i Op_i yang Ali (*mem) baca t_i
book REL Ali (*meN)-read
'the book that Ali read'
- (5) Tingkap itu_i Ali (*mem)[p]ecah t_i.
window that Ali (*meN)-break
'That window, Ali broke.'
- (6) Siapa_i yang kamu (*me) lihat t_i menolong Ali?
who REL 2p (*meN)-see meN-help Ali
'Who did you see help Ali?'
- (7) Ali membaca dalam kelas.
Ali meN-read in class
'Ali read in class.'
- (8) Ali baca *(buku) dalam kelas.
Ali read *(book) in class
'Ali read (a book) in class.'

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