

Possession and reference in Manado Malay

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Manado Malay is spoken in North Sulawesi around the city of Manado, the hinterland of Minahasa, and the Sangir-Talaud archipelagoes to the north. Paauw (2008:78) estimated the speaker population of 3,000,000, of whom 1,000,000 are first language speakers. Like many other contact varieties of Malay, it has a possessive construction in which the possessor precedes the possessed, linked by the possessive marker *punya* (in formal speech) or much more commonly *pe*: e.g. *Albert punya/pe oto* ‘Albert’s car’, *ngana punya/pe opa* ‘your grandfather’. This paper examines the 3rd person possessive construction *de pe* (*dia punya*) which occurs very frequently in texts. The examples below come from a procedural text about the preparation of grilled fish.

- (1) *Mo bekeng ikang mujair, kase bersi dulu de pe madumi*
FUT make fish tilapia give clean first 3POSS scale
(Let’s) make tilapia. First clean its scales.

In (1) the referent of *de* is *ikang mujair* ‘tilapia’ and is explicitly mentioned in the clause immediately preceding the possessive construction. However in many cases the relationship is not as clear, as can be seen in (2).

- (2) *Skarang mo bekeng de pe api*
now FUT make 3POSS fire
Now (let’s) make the fire

In (2), the possessor of the fire is not mentioned, however the topic of the discourse is still *ikang mujair*, and although the fish does not own the fire, it is associated with it, and is active in the discourse. Sometimes though the referent is never made explicit, as in (3):

- (3) *so nyanda lama de pe ikang mo masa*
PFV not long 3POSS fish FUT cooked
It won’t be long until the fish is cooked

The owner of the fish is not mentioned anywhere in the discourse – it could plausibly be understood to be the person cooking the fish, but this use is more reminiscent of definite marking similar to *-nya* in Standard Indonesian. A closer look reveals though that some ‘definite’ constructions are acceptable and some are not. Consider (4) and (5):

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| (4) <i>de pe cuaca bae</i>
3POSS weather good
The weather’s good | (5) <i>*de pe gedung tinggi</i>
3POSS building tall
*The building’s tall |
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The paper will examine the factors that allow (4) but disallow (5) to establish the boundaries between possession and reference.

Paauw, Scott. 2008. The contact Malay varieties of Eastern Indonesia: A typological comparison. University at Buffalo. Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo. (PhD Dissertation, University at Buffalo).