Sundanese active voice: transitivity, agentivity, and syntactic decomposition
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Recent studies of Indonesian-type voice morphology have argued that the primary function of the AV morpheme (active voice) is to mark a predicate as transitive (Chung 1976, Cole, Hermon and Yanti 2007, a.o.) Other researchers maintain that voice morphology is essentially agreement morphology indicating the thematic role of the grammatical subject. (see Wouk 1989, Postman 2002, a.o.) Examples (1a-b) illustrate transitive AV-constructions in Indonesian/Malay and Balinese, where the agent is the grammatical subject, which is argued to agree with the predicate from its pre-verbal position. The Sundanese counterpart to these examples is given in (2).

Both the transitivity and agentivity generalizations are unable to capture the Sundanese facts, where AV morphology (N-/nga-) is commonly found on intransitives. Not only does N-/nga- surface on prototypical unergative verbs where the grammatical subject is the semantic agent (3a), but it is also found on prototypical unaccusative verbs where the grammatical subject is the semantic patient (3b). A second challenge for the agentivity analysis comes from the pada- construction in Sundanese (4), which combines both an AV-marked transitive predicate and a grammatical subject that is assigned the thematic role of patient. Similarly, meunang- constructions (5) also employ transitive AV-marked verbs with patients for grammatical subjects. Both pada- and meunang-constructions are translated into English passives.

Based in part on Kratzer’s (1996) VoiceP proposal, Son (2006) and Son and Cole (2008) introduce four verbalizing heads: vDO and vCAUSE which select an external argument and vBE and vINCHO (for inchoative), which do not. We will argue in favor of the application of this proposal to Sundanese, arguing that the head of each of each of these four phrases is realized as N-/nga-. A tree representing the structure of example (3a) is given in (6). Son and Cole’s proposal can predict the distribution of N-/nga- even when it falls outside the limits of both the agentivity and transitivity accounts.

In sum, we will show that Sundanese lacks a clear correspondence between the occurrence of AV-morphology and the grammatical subject’s theta role and likewise between AV-morphology and transitivity. We will also discuss the success and shortcomings of applying tactics of syntactic decomposition to these data in the spirit of Son (2006) Son and (Cole 2008). Finally, we will incorporate the pada- and meunang-constructions into our syntactic decomposition account of AV-morphology in Sundanese.

1. a. Mobil itu menabrak kereta. (Indonesian and Malay)
car DET AV.hit cart
‘That car hit the cart.’

b. Tiang ngalih Nyoman (Balinese, Arka 1998)
I AV.search Nyoman
‘I searched for Nyoman.’

2. Ujang neunggeul Aceng.
Ujang AV.hit Aceng
‘Ujang hit Aceng.’
3. a. Barudak keur ngarojay children PROG AV.swim
   ‘The children are swimming.’

   b. Dompét kuring murag.
   wallet I AV.drop
   ‘My wallet dropped.’

4. Imas pada néangan ku urang lembur.
   Imas PART AV.search.ANby people village
   ‘Imas was searched for by the villagers.’

5. Kamar ieu geus meunang mulas.
   room DET PERF PART AV.paint
   ‘This room has been painted by the villagers.’

6. \( \text{DO-VOICEP} \)

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\begin{array}{c}
\text{barudak} \\
N-/nga- \\
\text{kojyay} \\
<\text{barudak}> \\
\end{array}
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\textbf{Selected References}


