Valency Classes in Jakarta Indonesian
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This paper explores the notion of 'verb classes' in Jakarta Indonesian. It has been argued for, and demonstrated in various languages that it is possible to semantically categorize classes of verbs based on their syntactic properties (Levin 1993 on English; Apresjan 1967 on Russian; Malchkov 2010 on Even; inter alia.) Here, I argue that – unlike English, Russian, and Even – there are no 'valency classes' in JI. That is, there are no regular alternations under which distinct semantic categories of verbs undergo which increase or decrease the number of arguments in the argument structure of a given type. While there are classes strictly speaking , some general tendencies do emerge.

The current work is part of a larger typological project comparing the behavior of 80 word types, mostly 'verbal' in nature, across a diverse range of the world's languages. Here we expand on this core list of word types to include what are typically thought of as nouns, adjectives and pronouns, in JI. We then look at the possible range of alternations into which these word types can enter. This paper looks specifically at the three most productive affixes in the language that under some analyses have the potential to be valency altering, specifically (pre-)nasalization, the *di-* prefix and the *–in* suffix.

The very idea of unique syntactic word categories in Jakarta Indonesian is problematic. The three potentially valency altering affixes under examination here, appear with almost equal regularity on words of putatively different categories, a verb in (1), noun in (2), adjective in (3) and demonstrative pronoun in (4)[1]:

1. bawa 'carry'
   a. m-bawa
   b. di-bawa
   c. bawa-in
   d. di-bawa-in

2. kopi 'coffee'
   a. ng-(k)opi
   b. ?di-kopi
   c. kopi-in
   d. di-kopi-in

3. tua 'old'
   a. *n-(t)ua
   b. ?di-tua
   c. tua-in
   d. di-tua-in

4. ini 'this'
   a. *ng-ini
   b. di-ini
   c. ini-in
   d. di-ini-in

The general lack of clear syntactic categories in JI and the almost universal availability of the valency affixes would suggest that there are no natural semantic classes in JI. This view is further strengthened by the following:

5. a. Gue kirim   dia surat.
   b. Gue kirim   surat (ke) dia.
   c. Gue ngirim   dia surat.
   d. Gue ngirim   surat (ke) dia.
   e. Gue ngirimin   dia surat.
   f. Gue ngirimin   surat (ke) dia.
   1sg N-send-IN 3sg letter   (to) 3sg
   'I sent him a letter.'

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[1] This project makes use of both naturalist and elicited data. The naturalistic data come from the JFS Database of Jakarta Indonesian, a corpus of some 100,000 coded utterances. The elicited data was gathered over many hours of work with 5 native speakers in Jakarta during the course of 2010.

While strictly speaking then, there are no coherent valency classes in JI, there are nevertheless some strong tendencies which emerge.

Ultimately we argue that these affixes do not affect the argument structure of the words to which they attach. They are rather semantic markers involved in various ways to mark salience, focus, aspect, iterativity, plurality of object, etc.

6. a. Gue cuci baju.
        1sg wash clothing
        'I washed my shirt.'
    b. Gue nyuci baju.
        1sg N-wash clothing
        'I wash clothes.'

The preferred reading for (6a) is punctual, the event occurred at a single time. When the nasal prefix is added, the preferred reading is repetitive (punctual iterative). These are preferred readings, but not obligatory, as each reading is available for each construction. To the extent that various clusters of word types enter into particular alternations is here further explicated.

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