

More on The Aspectual Role of the Nasal Prefix in Jakarta Indonesian

This paper builds on and expands upon recent work exploring the nature of the nasal prefix *N-*, in basilectal Jakarta Indonesian (JI). I move past other analyses in arguing that the nasal prefix in JI:

- i. no longer stands in paradigmatic opposition to the voice marker *di-*;
- ii. has been reanalyzed as a pure aspectual marker, specifically a detelicitizer.

Partially due to the general lack of other morphological verbal affixes, voice is a perennial favorite in Austronesian linguistics. In Indonesian and Malay, the discussion often revolves around the nature of the prefixes *di-* and *(me)N-*, and occasionally the bare or passive *semu*. Cole et al. (2006) conclude there is no passive *semu* in JI. Nomoto (2006) arrives at the same conclusion for basilectal Malay. However, they are among the many who either claim or assume that *N-* is a voice marker, specifically active voice, in opposition to the passive marker *di-*. Gil (2002, 2006) departs from the rest in arguing that neither *di-* nor *N-* in JI or Riau Malay are voice markers, or at least not grammatical voice markers in that they play a purely semantic role and have no impact on argument structure or word order. I follow Gil in taking *di-* to be a generalized, i.e. semantic voice marker. That it is no longer in paradigmatic opposition is seen from examples such as (1).¹

Ginsberg and Paauw (2010) and Grange (2011) discuss aspect in JI/I respectively, but restrict themselves to periphrastic constructions. Hidajat (2011) makes a first attempt to explore the aspectual qualities of *N-*, specifically its functions as a progressive marker, though the results are inconclusive.

The range of aspectual functions of the nasal prefix, including progressivity (2) habitualness (3), repetition (4), etc., is here examined. Ultimately, I conclude that the nasal prefix functions on the event semantics of the clause as a whole, and its range of functions can be subsumed under the broad category of a detelicitizer.

DATA

The current study is based on elicitation sessions conducted at the Jakarta Field Station during the period 2009 – 2010 with four native speakers.

1. a. Tessa dorong gerobak.

¹ This type of analysis also helps accounts for the existence of stacked prefixes, such as in (5) below.

- Tessa push cart*
 ‘Tessa pushes the cart.’
- b. *Tessa mendorong gerobak.
Tessa N-push cart
- c. Gerobak didorong Tessa.
cart DI-push Tessa
 ‘The cart was pushed by Tessa.’
2. a. Dalan pake baju.
Dalan wear clothes
 ‘Dalan wears clothes.’
- b. Dalan make baju. [progressive]
Dalan N-wear clothes
 ‘Dalan is wearing clothes.’
- c. Baju(nya) dipake Dalan.
clothes(NYA) DI-wear Dalan
 ‘The clothes are worn/used by Dalan.’
3. a. Erni cuci piring.
Erni wash plate
 ‘Erni washed the dishes’ [telic]
- b. Erni nyuci piring.
Erni N-wash plate
 ‘Erni does the dishes’ [habitual]
4. a. *Jon ajar matematika.
Jon teach math
 ‘John teaches math.’
- b. Jon ngajar matematika.
Jon N-teach math
 ‘John teaches math.’ [repetitive]
5. Diminggirin dulu rambutnya
di-N-edge-APPL before hair-NYA
 ‘Move your hair aside’
- [Experimenter talking to child]
 (Gil 2001:8)

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