Islands-saving strategies and the suffix –*ge* in Tapus Minangkabau

Tapus is a variety of Minangkabau (Malayic, Sumatra) spoken in the far north of West Sumarta Province. Tapus has morphological properties which set it apart from other varieties of Minangkabau (e.g. the variety described by Moussay, 1998). Whereas, in the variety which Moussay describes, verbs exhibit two applicative-type suffixes –*an* and –*i* (cognates of Malay/Indonesian –*kan* and –*i*), Tapus exhibits only one such suffix, -*ge,* which shows many of the same functions as –*kan/-i* e.g. causative, iterative, object marker etc.

Although –*ge* shows some of the same functions as –*kan/–i* in basic clauses, in certain syntactic constructions involving extraction, -*ge* appears in environments where –*kan/–i* are not possible. Tapus has an object voice construction similar to the Indonesian object voice (or P2 passive, following the terminology of Chung, 1976) in which the verb appears in its 'bare' form (i.e. without a voice prefix) and the undergoer argument functions as surface subject. In this construction, -*ge* can appear on certain phrasal predicates on which –*kan/-i* cannot appear. This construction is not grammatical in Standard Indonesian (and Padang Minangkabau).

(1)   Tapus   Indonesian

Siapo yaŋ pərnah diyã [sakiʔ hati]-ge ___ ?   *Siapa yaŋ pərnah kamu [sakit hati]-kan
who REL ever   2.SG sick liver-GE   who REL ever 2.SG sick liver-KAN
'Who is it that you once broke their heart?'

Siapo yaŋ pərnah diyã [korejo toruyh]-ge ___ ? *Siapa yaŋ pərnah kamu [kərja terus]-kan
who REL ever   2.SG work continue-GE   who REL ever   2.SG work continue-KAN
'Who is it that you once made work continuously?'

Siapo yaŋ pərnah diyã [putuyh aso]-ge ___ ? ?*Siapa yaŋ pərnah kamu [putus asa]-kan
who REL ever 2.SG broken hope-GE   who REL ever 2.SG broken hope-KAN
'Who is it that you once made hopeless?'

In island constructions (Ross, 1967), –*ge* behaves differently from –*kan/-i.* Tapus does not permit extraction out of islands, as illustrated by the following ungrammatical sentence which contains a subject gap within an adjunct island.

(2)   Subject gap in an adjunct island

*siapo yaŋ diyã putuyh aso deʔ ____ monokoʔ adiᵃʔ   diyã?
  who REL 2.SG broken hope because ACT-hit younger.sibling 2.SG
  (Who is it that you became desperate [because __ hit your younger sibling]?)

Two strategies exist for saving this kind of island. The first involves inserting a resumptive pronoun in the subject gap position.

(3)   Saved subject gap adjunct island w/resumptive pronoun

siapo$_i$ yaŋ diyã putuyh aso [deʔ   **iɲo$_i$** monokoʔ adiᵃʔ   diyã?]
who REL 2.SG broken hope because 3   ACT-hit younger.sibling 2.SG
'Who$_i$ is it that you became desperate [because he/she$_i$ hit your younger sibling]?'

The grammaticality of this example supports the hypothesis that when the resumptive pronoun is present, the pronoun is coindexed with the fronted *wh*-word *siapo,* and no illicit movement occurs out of the island structure.

The second strategy for saving this kind of island involves attaching the applicative suffix –*ge* to the matrix predicate.

(4)   Saved subject gap adjunct island w/suffix -*ge*

siapo$_i$ yaŋ diyã putuyh aso-**ge**   [deʔ ___ monokoʔ adiᵃʔ   diyã] ?

who REL 2.SG broken hope-GE because ACT-hit   younger.sibling 2.SG

'Who$_i$ is it that you became desperate [because ___$_i$ hit your younger sibling]?'

An additional fact about this construction is that the matrix predicate shows properties typical of a P2 passive. Based on this evidence, it might be hypothesized that *siapo* forms the head of a chain of local movement which somehow circumvents the island constraint.

To complicate the issue, both the insertion of a resumptive pronoun and the insertion of –*ge* and can be employed simultaneously to save the island. This type of sentence seems to show that both coindexation and movement strategies are simultaneously employed to save the island.

(5)   Saved subject gap adjunct island w/suffix -*ge*

siapo$_i$ yaŋ diyã putuyh aso-**ge**   [deʔ   **iɲo$_i$** monokoʔ adiᵃʔ   diyã]?

who REL 2.SG broken hope-GE because 3   ACT-hit   younger.sibling 2.SG

'Who$_i$ is it that you became desperate [because ___$_i$ hit your younger sibling]?'

We propose the suffix –*ge* functions to promote certain adjuncts to objects. This analysis accounts for the grammaticality of (4): –*ge* promotes the adjunct clause headed by *deʔ* to a core argument, out of which the subject *siapo* can be extracted. It also accounts for the distribution of –*ge* in other types of structures (e.g. those shown in (1)). We also claim that Tapus allows a second strategy whereby islands can be saved via resumptive pronoun insertion (3). Since promotion to object (with –*ge*) and pronoun insertion are independent processes, sentences like (5) are allowed, in which a resumptive pronoun has incidentally been inserted in a structure where an adjunct is promoted to object.

References

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