Coding of "active" referents in Malay varieties

This presentation will provide an overview of the referential strategies employed in some Malay varieties, with a special focus on the question how "active" referents (Chafe 1987:22ff, Lambrecht 1994: 93ff) are expressed in transitive clauses. The author conducted experiments in several Malay speaking areas using a short video as stimuli. The video is designed to elicit coordinated transitive clauses expressing successive events, in which both the transitive agent and the patient is considered to be "active", that is, being the concept that "is currently lit up" and "in a person's focus of consciousness" (Chafe 1987:25) at the point of utterance. As a cross-linguistic tendency, active referents are often, but not exclusively, expressed by "pronominal expressions (free or bound pronouns, inflectional markers, null elements)" as Lambrecht (1994:106) summarizes. This tendency applies to all the Malay varieties, the data of which the author collected. However, the varieties show considerable variation in actual strategies for coding of active A and P argument, and the variation of coding exhibits co-relation with the verb form that occurs. The outline of the variation can be summarized in table 1.

	Verb form	A	P
Standard Indonesian	meN- (so-called active form)	the pronoun *dia* or zero	the enclitic pronoun =*nya* or lexical NP
Colloquial Indonesian	di- (so-called passive form)	zero	zero
Barunei Malay	di- (so-called passive form)	the enclitic pronoun =*nya*	zero
Eastern varieties (Kupang Malay, Manado Malay, and Papuan Malay)	unmarked	the pronoun *dia*	lexical NP

Table 1 Most frequent coding of active A and P arguments in Malay varieties

Sentences (1)-(4) below show the typical examples of coding of the active A and P argument in each variety.

(1) Standard Indonesian
[*se-orang anak perempuan*]$_A$ *meng-ambil pisang*$_P$ *dari atas meja.*
Dan φ_A *mem-buka* [***kulit pisang***]$_P$. *Lalu* φ_A *me-makan* [***pisang tersebut***]$_P$.
 'A girl took a banana from the table, and φ peeled the banana skin, and then φ ate the said banana.'

(2) Colloquial Indonesian spoken in Jakarta
Ani$_A$ *cabut* ***pisang***$_P$, *trus* φ_P *di-kupas* φ_A, *trus* φ_P *di-makan* φ_A.
 'Ani took banana, and then φ peeled φ(it), and then φ ate φ(it).'

(3) Barunei Malay
di...walauatuia$_A$ *takidum-kidum taliat pisang*$_P$, *ada pisang di adapan=nya,*
φ_P *di-ambil=***nya**$_A$, φ_P *di-patah* φ_A φ_P *di-patah=***nya**$_A$, φ_P *di-kupas=***nya**$_A$.
inda ia$_A$ *lagi matahi pisang*$_P$, *tarus* φ_A *tahsuap* φ_P *ka mulut.*
 'At that time, she smiled and saw a banana; there were bananas in front of her. She took it, broke, she broke φ_P (it), she peeled φ_P (it). She didn't broke the banana again, then φ_A (She) was putting it to the mouth.'

(4) Kupang Malay
ini anak. ***dia***$_A$ *ambil* [***pisang satu***]$_P$. *abis itu* ***dia***$_A$ *kupas* [***dia pun kulit***]$_P$.
dia$_A$ *kupas* [***dia pun kulit***]$_P$. *baru* ***dia***$_A$ *makan*[***tu pisang pun isi***]$_P$
 'This is a child. She took a banana. After that, she peeled its skin. She peeled its skin. Then she ate the banana's content.'

In relation to expressions indicating successive events as expressed in these examples, Cumming (1991: 199, 203) suggests the following functional change; In classical Malay, di- clauses is an unmarked choice in narrative, while in modern Standard Indonesian, meN- clauses with a pre-predicate subject, came to be a basic transitive construction. We can see that the sentences of Standard Malay, seen in example (1), support the Cumming's claim. If we see the other variations in the light of Cumming's discussion, the sentences of Barunei Malay, one of the indigenous Malay varieties, seen in example (3) can be seen as retaining the feature of classical Malay, and the colloquial Indonesian sentences, seen in example (2), as having undergone an direct development from classical Malay, in a way coding of A dropped. Kupang Malay, as seen in sentence (4), exhibits an independent development, in which the verb is unmarked, and A is regularly coded by the pronoun that immediately precedes the verb; that may either be related to it's Pidgin origin or be seen as an influence of the indigenous languages that the speaker of the variety speak as their mother tongue.

References
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