

LEXICAL LICENSING AT THE INTERFACE OF SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS IN REJANG

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This paper will describe a fragment of conversation from the Rejang language of Sumatra.

A : Abis! Jurusan jano **najea** ne ko, Bi?

B : Coadé **majea** jurusan. Si yo dosen UNSRI. Uku belo'o nak akademi perawat. **Tenunjuk** ne baso Inggris. Uku galak **temunjuk** si baso Ejang o.

A : Enough! What subject does he teach you, Bi?

B : (He) doesn't teach (my) subject. He is a university instructor. I was in the Nursing Academy. He shows (me) English. I am pleased to show him the Rejang language.

(Conversation in Dusun Duku Ilir, recorded in 1974)

I will attempt to account for the above data in a *constrained* and *insightful* way, by paying attention to the interaction of syntactic, semantic, and discourse-theoretic principles. The theoretical framework is adopted from Culicover and Jackendoff's *Simpler Syntax* (Oxford, 2005). Their claim is that syntax alone (without semantic and discourse correspondence rules) is insufficient to account for 'missing' and 'displaced' NPs in natural language. Further, the *Simpler Syntax* approach has certain theoretical and empirical advantages over 'mainstream' generative grammar, which bases grammar on syntactic 'deep structures' and resorts to derivations requiring theoretically costly movement and deletion rules.

Turning to the Rejang data, Speaker A's question Jurusan jano najea ne ko, Bi? contains two and possibly three displaced NPs owing to the passive (prefix **n-**) and WH- question structures. These noncanonical NPs will be accounted for by Direct Licensing (DL) via correspondence rules linking lexical and conceptual-semantic structure. Speaker B's response, consisting of alternating active (prefix **m-**), passive, and verbless sentences, contains several missing pronouns and copulas. Most displaced and missing elements in B's response will be accounted for by Indirect Licensing (IL) via correspondence rules linking lexical, semantic, and discourse structures.

One typological issue concerns whether the fronted WH- phrase in Speaker A's question constitutes a case of DL or IL, i.e. whether the WH- phrase occupies subject position or pre-sentence position. It will be argued that this phrase is actually wh-in-situ, hence a sentential subject licensed by DL. Another typological issue concerns the alternation of active and passive sentences in the data. This alternation, which is highly characteristic of Western Austronesian languages including Rejang, may receive a satisfactory explanation within the *Simpler Syntax* approach.

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