

THE AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE-TYPE FEATURES AS REVEALED IN MALAY

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1. General linguistics still has but a poor knowledge of the grammatical structures of the Austronesian (AN) languages. 'Malay'¹ (in the broad sense) has undoubtedly been the most widely used and fully described among the AN languages. It is useful to see to what degree Malay can be treated as a typical representative of the AN family.

2.1 Linguists of the past have made a great number of really positive and astute discoveries of theoretical value. Their work is still useful for us in spite of its shortcomings from the modern point of view. It is true that in exotic languages they were often seeking structures, forms and categories familiar to Europeans (finite and non-finite, person, mood and tense forms of verbs, number and case of nouns etc.). In our times we can to some degree give new judgements about which of their conclusions are correct and correspond to the facts in AN languages, and which are not.

On the other hand, these former writers have pointed out to us which phenomena of those known to European linguistics are absent in exotic languages. This information, negative as it is, has now attained its positive value.

Possessing all this previously collected knowledge plus modern linguistic approaches and methods, it has become possible to begin, step by step, to penetrate into and formulate the specific features of the AN languages.

2.2 There is another happy circumstance promoting comparative linguistic work in the AN linguistic sphere nowadays – the possibility of wide mutual contact and exchange between scholars of different countries and different spheres of interest. The ICAL conferences give brilliant evidence of this fact.

Now, as the countries of AN stock mostly have their own national states, possibilities exist for uniting different branches of AN linguistics. This was one of the essential purposes of the 1981 TICAL conference, as clearly outlined in the conference documents.

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3. To penetrate from the general linguistic point of view into the specific character of such an exotic language family as Austronesian is by itself an extremely complicated task. If we try to reveal this character limiting ourselves to the material of only one language—even a well-described one and even with the help of the modern scientific approach to language as a system—still in most cases we are destined to failure. Such could be the case since the conceptions and notions of Western linguistics would exercise too strong an influence on many a researcher. The danger lies in the fact that these conceptions and notions on the one hand are very elaborate and on the other hand are most ordinary and seemingly plain and natural.

Therefore the systematic approach to a single language should be optionally combined with the analysis of corresponding phenomena in different cognate languages.

I would like to produce one example to illustrate the point. In Indonesian the verbal suffixes *-kan* and *-i* among their other functions play the role of a morphological means of differentiated expressing of verb-noun object relations. The fact could hardly ever be revealed and explained from the data of the Indonesian language itself. I found myself able to formulate this peculiarity of Indonesian only after I had studied the specific verbal system of Tagalog, with its multiple passive forms and the peculiar rules of their selection (see below, 4.3).

4.1 After these preliminary remarks we can return to the subject of the paper. It is not my intention to discuss once more the already well-known features of AN languages relevant to structural typology in general. My intention is only to put forward those features relevant to grammatical structure which I have investigated myself, these being for a long time the object of my interest.²

It is necessary to define what is meant here by the structural features of the AN type. I don't see any way of determining them better than saying that these are the features which are common to AN languages but cannot be considered universal properties of any language.

4.2 One of the most general peculiarities of the AN type, explaining many others, is the specific character of interconnection between lexical and grammatical levels in general. I would dare to say that the absence of a clear-cut borderline between the lexical and grammatical spheres in an AN language is a quality of principle and not accidental separate phenomena which are encountered in many languages.

In the Malay language the said character of interconnection of levels can be seen in the following:

(a) The Malay root-morphemes act not only as stems of derived words but, quite usually, as plain words by themselves; therefore one and the same material unit belongs to the morphological and lexical levels.³

(b) The main means of word-derivation—affixation and reduplication—are used on both levels. One and the same affix in one case fulfills a derivative function, in another case a grammatical function, in the third case the two functions altogether, syncretically: the difference depends upon the class of the root-morpheme. Three corresponding examples: *batu + meN > membatu*; *taruh + meN > menaruh*; *potret + meN > memotret*. To a greater or lesser degree

this syncretism is to be seen in all verbal affixes (only verbs have formal grammatical categories, i.e. of voice and transitivity), in Malay as well as in other Western Austronesian languages. A grammatical verbal form here is generated in one act of affixation, and not in a many-graded process such as in agglutinative languages of Altaic stock (Turkish, Mongolian). In the latter a verbal (or noun, or adjective) word-base is generated first by adding certain derivative suffixes to a root and then different suffixes conveying grammatical meanings are added to produce a complete word-form. This makes the essential difference between the Indonesian and Altaic types of agglutination.⁴

We must admit that, in describing AN languages, a tradition spontaneously has emerged and has been maintained, which correctly reflects the said objectivational peculiarity of word-derivation: in the manuals and grammars of different AN languages all means of word-derivation are described in a separate part of a book beyond connection with grammar proper, each model of many-morphemed words (or each affix or each way of reduplication) being described with its various 'meanings'.

(c) The proximity of lexical and grammatical levels specific to AN-type can be also seen in the character of grammatical categories. Several grammatical meanings (number, tense, aspect, voice, case, degrees of comparison) are expressed by mixed, either morphological or lexical means. One Malay example: to express reciprocity of action morphological (tuduh-menuduh, bertuduh-tuduhan) or lexical (saling menuduh) means can be used.

(d) Word-compounding as a way of producing new lexical units is very productive in certain AN languages with a high degree of analytism (Malay, Javanese, Acehnese, Cham, Polynesian). It cannot be considered as a particular AN feature, since many other analytical languages have it as well. But here, in Malay for instance, the word-compounding is present in the form, which makes it difficult again to distinguish between grammatical and lexical phenomena: such units as *besi berani*, *ilmu bumi*, *ibu kota*, being facts of lexics, are at the same time in their structure usual syntactical (i.e. grammatical) formations (word groups).

I think that this peculiarity of word-compounding allows us to distinguish between two categories of compound (containing two or three root-morphemes) lexical units. The first category includes such compound words (composed words, composites) which are formally identical with free syntactical word groups, but have lost their freedom: they are not produced for a concrete speech sentence, with arbitrary selecting synonyms, but are reproduced as lexical units with given components and meaning, already existing in the language (for example, in the meaning of *geography* we must use *ilmu bumi* and not *ilmu tanah* or *ilmu benua*, in the meaning of *parents* we may not use *manusia tua* or *orang berumur panjang* instead of *orang tua*). Some of these units are idiomatic, but it is not an obligatory criterion: many of them are quite transparent semantically; there are a lot of terms among them.

The second category, compound words proper, includes three groups of bi-componential lexical units: (a) asyntactical (*bumi putera*); (b) with at least one bound morpheme (*swapraja*, *mahasiswa*); (c) affixed (*ketidakadilan*, *menandatangani*).

Presumably there is some other evidence as to the proximity of lexical and grammatical levels in the AN language, but what is outlined above, I hope, will make the idea sufficiently clear.

4.3 In the AN languages (especially in Western AN) the morphology, in so far as it exists, has developed mainly in the verbal sphere. And in this sphere, the meanings which are rendered by affixation are mostly those connected with verb-noun relations: case meanings, after Fillmore, subject (=doer) and object (=goal) relations of the verb, in my terminology. The voice category must be admitted to be the nuclear grammatical category of the verb which reflects subject-object relations. With the voice category the problem of transitivity, of rendering action-object relations, is connected. To express object relations affixes, morphological means of realisation, are also used. And there are at least two types of morphology serving these relations in the AN languages.

In the first type of which the Malay language is representative the verbs are divided into transitive and intransitive (on the base of capacity to produce di-forms). The category of transitivity in Malay includes two opposite meanings; causative-transitive and applicative-transitive, with the possibility of neutralisation. The first meaning is usually expressed by the verbal suffix -kan, the second one by the suffix -i, so the opposition of the contentive object relations corresponds to the opposition of formal suffixed markers. The voice relations are expressed by such verbal prefixes as meN, di-, ber-, ter-. Therefore we see in Malay two sets of markers: prefixes for voice and suffixes for transitivity. Such languages as modern and old Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Madurese, Bugis and Makassar can be classified with Malay in this respect.

This type stands in contrast to the other represented by the Tagalog (and other Philippine) and Malagasy languages. This second type is characterised by use of passive-voice forms (which are usually more than one and sometimes, as in Tagalog, amount to six) for differentiating the object relations of verbs. It means that a passive voice formative is selected according to the object relation which is to be expressed in the given sentence. Transitivity is not expressed by a special affix neither in an active nor in a passive construction, and the whole problem of verbal transitivity is to be decided here in quite a different (i.e. negative) way.⁵

4.4 The last AN type feature which I wish to mention here is the use of possessive-type constructions in the sphere of subject-object relations. This problem is naturally connected with the above-mentioned voice category, more precisely with the particular ways of building voice constructions and their evolution.

This peculiarity can be formulated as the important role of a special syntactical type — possessive — in the AN languages. The term 'syntactical type' is used in the context of 'the syntactical typology' which is based on ways of expressing subject-object relations in a sentence, taking into account the nominal, and verbal, and pronominal morphology, as well as their semantics and functioning.

In speaking of a language of possessive syntactical type the notion 'possessive structure' acquires a new dimension. A nominal word group with possessive meaning (a qualified noun plus a possessive pronoun or a substantive attribute) is also given a new dimension: besides expressing the fact that an object belongs to its owner, such a word group expresses also that an action belongs to its doer (agent). The doer of an action is expressed by a possessive attribute, in the same way as the subject of possession. The nucleus of the relevant word combination is a word with verbal meaning (either a word with

formatives of verbal categories, or a root-word without any formatives). As a result, the interrelation between the verb category and the noun category is entirely peculiar, while possessive pronouns are used on a larger scale so as to include the functions of indirect agential forms of personal pronouns. The formally uniform syntactical structure is divided from a semantic point of view into variants: (1) the object (substance) possessive structure and (2) the process possessive structure. If the process possessive structure forms the predicate group, then this must be regarded as an indication of the possessive syntactical type of the language in its most clear-cut form.

Malay has such a way of forming passive sentences in which the agent is indicated by the third person pronominal enclitic -nya or by a noun complement, which are in no way different from possessive attributes; examples are:

Buku ini sudah dibaca { nya
anak. Compare: buku { nya
anak

In modern Malay there are different prepositions introduced in transforms of the above sentences:

dibaca oleh { nya
anak, buku daripada { nya
 anak

As a result, there is only a vague propinquity remaining between an agential complement and a possessive attribute, and it would be impossible to reveal its roots on the basis of the Malay material taken by itself. It can only be facilitated by the general theoretical concept of the possessive type and examples from such languages as Tagalog (cf. Section 3). In Tagalog the unity of object and process variants of the possessive structure has a graphic character.

In modern standardised forms of Malay - Indonesian and Malaysian - which have developed to acquire the features of a nominative language, possessive structures have become infrequent and are mostly used in the sphere of nominalisation. Nevertheless, the Austronesian character of Malay is sufficiently evident in these phenomena.

5. Concluding this survey of the AN-type features in Malay, we may indicate that the AN features are to be found in the synthetic-morphological sphere of the language. Therefore the Malay language can be considered to be a typical representative of the AN structure type only to a definite degree – in so far as it has synthetic morphology. But Malay has lost many of the AN synthetic forms and developed instead of them new, analytic constructions. The analytism in general cannot be attributed to the AN structure-type. It is a product of evolution, and that was an evolution in contact with different languages.

Among contemporary AN languages there are some which are highly analytical; but the analytical systems, for example, of a Polynesian language and of the Cham language are of quite different character.

The analytical structures of Malay should be investigated specially. For instance, such a characteristic analytic feature of modern Indonesian and Malaysian as the differentiated use of prepositions to express non-local relations is usually attributed to European influence, but I should call to mind also the strong Arabic influence in this sphere, while the prepositional functioning of verbs (as *melawan*, *melalui*) is evidently an areal feature.

Being now to a degree acquainted with languages of Indo-China such as Cham, Vietnamese, Khmer. I must agree with many linguists who have pointed out precisely this direction for the research of typological and genealogical proximity.

The languages of Indo-China, belonging to different genealogical stocks, were from ancient times involved in contacts and mutual exchange. Especially it is true of such languages as Vietnamese, Khmer, Cham, Jaray, some Thai idioms. Alongside the existing hypothesis of genealogical kinship (as Austric, Austro-Thai) a question may be put about their convergent evolution in a kind of a language-union (*Sprachbund*) such as the Balkan union. It seems to me that there should be and already can be summed up a set of features at all levels which are common to a number of languages and therefore make a linguist think about a specific analytical language type in this area.⁶

The following are some features of analytism in Malay which make it similar to the languages of Indo-China and which, I think, have not previously been listed together.

- (a) the use of lexical units for grammatical purposes;
- (b) the significant weight of word-compounding in generating new lexical units;
- (c) the proximity of adjectives to verbs (not to nouns) in the system of word-classes;
- (d) the syntactical model of O-S-V order as an equivalent for passive construction.

NOTES

1. From the purely linguistic point of view it is convenient to use the term 'Malay' as embracing: the old Malay language ('classic'), different Malay dialects of past and present, modern Indonesian and Malaysian standard languages.
2. This paper summarises my work on Indonesian grammar and typology. The work is present in detailed form, with relevant bibliography, in the following publications: Alieva 1970, 1975, 1978 and 1980.
3. More than that, the Malay root-morphemes on the basis of their distributive and reduplicative abilities are being divided into grammatical classes which are similar but do not coincide with the word-classes. Such root-morpheme classification has been carried out by A. Hassan in his 1974 monograph, also in our collective *Grammar of the Indonesian language* (Alieva et al 1972), and in my 1975 monograph. But such division of morphemes into classes cannot be considered to be an AN-type feature.
4. I would insist on this, especially in view of Wolff's approach distinguishing only two phenomena: derivation and inflection.

5. Semantically the case categories in both types have much similarity which is analysed in Wolff (1981). From this analysis follows that several non-case, aspectual meanings are explicitly expressed in the active verb in a language of Tagalog type, while in the Malay-type morphology the passive markers (as *ter-*, *ke-an*) specially express them.
6. I have merely touched upon the problem of the Indo-Chinese language-union, in the paper presented to TICAL; while this paper was in press, I have tried to realise my intention, and have written a short article on the Cham language in connection with a language-union in this area — with possibly a full bibliography on the problem (Alieva 1982).

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