

Rethinking Indonesian-type passives: A view from Javanese

East Javanese, an Austronesian language with an Indonesian-type three-way voice system, displays an understudied asymmetry in quantifier floating. When a clause is marked in Actor Voice (AV), the universal quantifier *kabèh* ‘all’ can intervene between its sentence-initial host and the perfective auxiliary *wis*, (1). In Object Voice (OV), however, quantifier floating in the pre-auxiliary field is unacceptable (2) unless uttered with a special intonation (which yields a distinct reading).

- (1) [Konco-ku] **kabèh** wis *m.angan tahu*. (2) *[Tahune] **kabeh** wis *ta'=Ø-pangan*.
 friend-1SG **all** PERF AV.eat tofu [tofu- DEF] **all** PERF 1SG=OV-eat
 ‘All my friends have eaten the tofu. [AV] (intended: ‘I have eaten all the tofu.’) [OV]

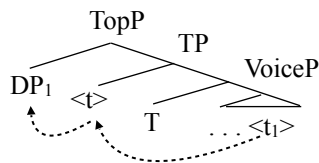
In the so-called Passive Voice (3), quantifier floating in the pre-auxiliary field is also unacceptable, as in OV (2).

- (3) *[Tahune] **kabeh** wis *di-pangan (ambè' konco-ku)*.
 tofu-DEF **all** PERF PASS-eat (by friend-1SG)
 (intended: ‘All the tofu were eaten by s/he/my friend.’) [Passive Voice]

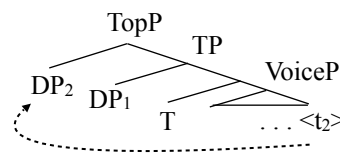
This asymmetry between AV on one hand and OV/passive on the other is unexpected under the traditional split-ergative approach to Indonesian-type voice systems (e.g. Aldridge 2008; Cole et al. 2008; Legate 2014), where the subject in all three voices (1)-(3) is claimed to land in [Spec, TP] through a one-step A-movement from the *vP* phase edge. The additional pause shown only in AV clauses’s pre-auxiliary field (1) is unexplained.

We argue for an \bar{A} -approach to Javanese voice: the asymmetry above reflects a step of **subject-to-topic movement** (4a) present only in **subject topic constructions**, the AV (1). In **object topic constructions** — the OV and the (so-called) passive (2)-(3) — quantifier floating in the pre-auxiliary field is banned because the topic \bar{A} -moves directly from its postverbal θ -position to [Spec, TopP], (4b). Therefore, stranding in the subject position ([Spec TP]) is impossible, (2)-(3). We provide further evidence that the so-called passive (3) is best analyzed as an OV construction (2) with a 3rd-person initiator.

- (4) a. AV (subject topic construction)



- b. OV and ‘passive’ (object topic construction)



The basics. In Javanese AV clauses (featured by a nasal prefix), the external argument (or unaccusative theme) obligatorily surfaces in the preverbal field (5a). In OV (characterized by an unmarked bare verb), the initiator is realized as a proclitic, with the internal argument (or a PP, see below) optionally surfacing in the preverbally field. Importantly, unlike that in AV, the initiator in OV can only be in 1st or 2nd person, (5b).

- (5) a. **Siti** wis *ng-rangkul arè' iku*. b. **Arè' iku** wis *ta'/mbo=Ø-rangkul (arè' iku)*.
Siti PERF AV-hug child DEM **child** DEM PERF 1SG/2SG=OV-hug (**child** DEM)
 ‘Siti hugged that child.’ [AV] ‘I/you hugged that child.’ [OV]

The so-called passive construction (6) features the same word order flexibility with OV. However, in contrast to that in OV, the initiator proclitic in a passive must be a 3rd-person pronoun (i.e. *di-*, traditionally glossed as a passive affix). This pronoun can be spelled out as a full DP and introduced by an optional preposition *ambè'*, (6).

- (6) **Arè' iku** wis **di=rangkul (arè' iku) ((ambè') Joko)**.
child DEM PERF 3RD=hug (**child** DEM) ((P) **Joko**)
 ‘He/she/Joko hugged that child.’ [Passive Voice] *the linear order between the two postverbal phrases is free

The syntactic status of the preverbal constituent (henceforth the pivot) remains an ongoing debate. On the traditional split-ergative account (**Hypothesis A**), the pivot occupies an A-position and functions as the subject. AV and passives are accusative-aligned, with the highest DP promoted to [Spec, TP]. In OV, the internal argument A-moves across an immobile ergative initiator to the subject position (e.g. Aldridge 2008; Cole et al. 2008; Legate 2014). On another account (**Hypothesis B**) (e.g. Durie 1985 for Acehnese; Davies 1995 for Javanese; Asikin-Garmager 2017 for Sasak), the pivot moves to an \bar{A} -position as an internal topic; whereby AV and OV clauses constitute subject topic and undergoer topic constructions, respectively, as in (4). The asymmetry in quantifier floating in (1)-(3) is unexpected under Hypothesis A, while follows from Hypothesis B. We present three other pieces of evidence from Javanese for Hypothesis B (4a-b).

Claim 1: Pivots as subject topics and object topics in AV and OV/passive, respectively. In Javanese, all pivot phrases show topic behaviors in three regards, while only in AV do they also show subject properties. This lends support to the analysis in (4a-b) (Hypothesis B) and argues against a subject analysis for pivots (Hypothesis A).

(i) **Definiteness/specificity constraints.** Regardless of voice type, a pivot must receive definite/specific interpretation. This constraint is absent for all non-pivot phrases regardless of their grammatical relation, as in (7).

- (7) a. **Wong-*(é)** ng-guwa' tas-(é). b. **Tas-*(é)** ta'/mbo/di=guwa' (tas-*(é)).
person-DEF AV-throw.away bag-(DEF) **bag-*(DEF)** 1SG/2SG/3RD=throw (bag-*(DEF))
 ‘{The/*a} man threw {a/the} bag away.’ [AV]. ‘I/you/s/he have thrown away {the/*a} bag.’ [OV/passive]

(ii) **AV/NAV asymmetry in binding.** In both OV and passive, a pivot can surface as a reflexive, (8a-b). Given that (i) absolutive objects across languages *cannot* surface in reflexive form (Tollan 2020) and (ii) promotion-to-subject should create a new binder, the asymmetry between (8a-b) and (8c) is consistent only with Hypothesis B, which predicts the pivot can be a binder **only in AV** (8c), where it bears both subject and topic properties.

(8) a. [Awa'-ku. dɛwɛ́]; ta'í=lara-ni. b. Di-lara-ni [awa'-é- dɛwɛ́] c. *[Awa'-ku dɛwɛ́]; aku; ng-lara-ni.
 [body-1SG self] 1SG=hurt-APPL 3RD=hurt-APPL [body-3 self] [body-1SG self] 1SG AV-hurt-APPL
 'I hurt myself.' [OV] 'He hurt himself.' [Passive] (intended: 'I hurt myself.') [AV]

(iii) **AV/NAV asymmetry in allowing PP pivots.** In both OV and passive, a PP (instrument, locative, temporal, benefactor, reason, or comitative phrase) can optionally surface in the preverbal field and carry the same definiteness/specificity constraints as borne by DP pivots. With a fronted PP, the theme must remain postverbally and need not be definite/specific, (9). This indicates that it no longer bears pivot status.

(9) {Ambè' paku/nang kamar/kanggo Joko/ambè' ema'} ta'/mbo/di=pasang gambar-{{(é)/opo aé}.
 {with nail /in room /for Joko/with mother} 1SG/2ND/3RD=hang picture-{{DEF/what AE}
 'I hung {the/any} picture with {the/*a} nail/in {the/*a} room/for Joko/with mother.' [OV/passive]

Javanese's hanging topic construction provides further evidence that the definite PP in the OV/passive clause (9) is a true pivot. Hanging topics in Javanese must precede a fronted pivot; they can either be a DP or a PP, and need not be definite/specific, as in (10a). The pivot (regardless of surfacing preverbally or postverbally) is therefore the only phrase in a given clause that requires definite/specific interpretations. Therefore, when two phrases cooccur in Javanese's preverbal field (10a-b), only the second phrase (i.e. the pivot) must be definite-marked. Crucially, this position can be filled by a **PP in OV and 'passive'** (10b) but not in **AV** (10c). The AV sentence (10c) is acceptable only if the sentence is interpreted as 'Joko is in the house, reading a book,' with an assumed null copula present between 'Joko' and the PP. Interpreting 'Joko' as a hanging topic with a PP subject yields ungrammaticality. This asymmetry follows from four predictions of the current analysis: (i) pivots are **internal topics** that \bar{A} -moves to its spell-out position, (ii) in sentences that allow ambiguity (e.g. (10c)), a pivot **in AV** must be interpreted as a **DP** because AV is a subject topic construction, (iii) the pivot may be a PP in OV and 'passive' because it constitutes a non-subject topic (Hypothesis B) — rather than an absolutive-marked theme (Hypothesis A), and finally, (iv) since the topic \bar{A} -moves from the postverbal field with no pause in the subject position, pre-auxiliary quantifier stranding is possible only in AV, hence the asymmetry between (1) and (2)-(3).

(10) a. Nang kebun-(é) wong *(iku) n.andur pirang-pirang kembang.
 P garden-(DEF) man DEM AV.plant several-RED flower
 'In {the/any} garden, {the/*a} man planted several flowers. [AV]

b. Pirang-pirang kembang [nang kebun (*ndi aé)] ta'/mbo'/di=tandur.
 several-RED flower [P garden (which AE)] 1SG/2SG/3RD=plant
 'Several flowers, in {the/*any} garden I/you/she/he planted (them).' [OV/passive]

c. Joko nang omah moco buku.
 Joko P house AV.read book
 Acceptable reading: 'Joko is in the house, reading a book.' [AV]
 *'As for Joko, in the house, (he) read a book.' [AV]

Claim 2: The proclitic in NAV as subject agreement and not ergative DP. An immediate prediction of the current analysis is that Javanese may possess a subject position distinct from the pivot (i.e. an \bar{A} topic) position. This prediction is supported by one understudied fact: in Javanese's NAV constructions, the putative "ergative proclitic" may in fact be a theme-like argument selected by an unaccusative verb, (11)-(12).

(11) Mbo'=tibo nang jurang mau. (12) Sopo meneng-meneng sing tak/mbo'/di/=sedih-no?
 2SG=fall P ravine Past who secretly REL 1sg/2SG/3RD=sad-APPL
 'You should have fallen into the ravine' [OV] 'Who<κ> secretly<κ> saddened me/you/s/he?' [OV/passive]

Since inherent ergative Case is assigned only to the external argument position and available only in transitives, it should be incompatible with the environments in (11)-(12). The fact that the proclitic in Javanese OV/passive can be a theme (11)-(12) thus suggests the presence of an **A-position** located external to vP. We assume this position to be Spec TP, located below TopicP and above Aspect (i.e. the locus of the perfective auxiliary *wis* in (1)-(3)). This analysis offers a simple account for the locus of the extra landing site in AV clauses' pre-auxiliary field (1).

Implications and conclusions. The Javanese facts presented here have three important broader implications. First, voice-based split-ergativity does not exist in Javanese, contra recent claims for Indonesian-type languages (Indonesian: Cole et al. 2008; Acehnese: Legate 2014). Second, much variation exists within a cline of constructions traditionally termed the Indonesian-type passives, many of which have been claimed to be structurally equivalent to Indo-European-type passives. The current findings thus call for a careful re-examination of the A/ \bar{A} distinction in Austronesian, and reinforce recent claims in the literature that discourse configurational languages with articulatory morphology for topicalization may exhibit superficial, but illusory, traits of ergativity (e.g. van Urk 2015; Chen 2017).

Selected references. Cole, P et. al. 2008. Voice in Malay/Indonesian. *Lingua* 118, 1500–53. Davies, W. 1993. Javanese subjects and topics and psych verbs. *Language* 31, 239–77. Durie, M. 1985. *A grammar of Acehnese on the basis of a dialect of North Aceh*. Dordrecht: Foris. Legate, J. 2014. *Voice and v: Lessons from Acehnese*. MIT Press. Tollan, R. 2020. The Role of the Absolutive Object in Morphological Accessibility. *LI* 52(3):640–654.