The status of the agentive clitic in Malay: evidence from reflexive binding
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1. “Symmetrical” voice in Malay
Recent work in Malay/Indonesian syntax, notably Arka & Manning (1998), Musgrave (2001), and Cole et al. (2008), argues for the voice system shown in (1a–c). The three voice patterns are illustrated in (2). The agent phrase in the di-passive may optionally be omitted, whether it is understood from context or simply unspecified. When the agent is expressed it appears as a PP, introduced by the preposition oleh as seen in (2c); but oleh may optionally be dropped if the agent immediately follows the verb. In Objective Voice, however, the agent phrase is obligatory and must appear immediately before the verb stem; it must follow all auxiliaries (as illustrated in (2b), negation markers, etc.

(1)  

a. *meN-V < agent, patient >  
    |  |  
    SUBJ OBJ  
  Active Voice

b. Ø-V < agent, patient >  
    |  |  
    Core/OBJ SUBJ  
  Objective Voice
  (=Ergative/Inverse)

c. di-V < agent, patient >  
    |  |  
    (OBL) SUBJ  
  Passive

d. *** < agent, patient >  
    |  |  
    SUBJ (OBL)  
  (Antipassive – not attested in Malay)

(2)  

    2sg must AV-read book this  
  ‘You must read this book.’

b. Buku ini harus kau=Ø-baca.  
    book this must 2sg=OV-read  
  ‘You must read this book.’ [Sneddon 1996:249]

c. Buku ini harus di-baca oleh setiap orang Melayu.  
    book this must PASS-read by every person Malay  
  ‘This book must/should be read by every Malay person.’

Other Western Malayo-Polynesian languages which have similar voice systems include: Balinese (Arka 2003); Acehnese (Legate 2012); West Coast Bajau (Miller 2007) and various other Sama-Bajau languages (Walton 1986, Gault 1999, Miller 2013); Toba Batak (Schachter 1984); Mualang (Tjia 2007); Bugis (Hanson 2001, Laskowske 2015); Ida’an-Begak (Goudswaard 2005); Maanyan (Gudai 1985); Melanau (Clayre 1972).
2. Subjecthood and transitivity

(3) Subjecthood tests (Chung 1976a; Vamarasi 1999):
   a. only subjects can be relativized, clefted or questioned using yang + gap;
   b. only subjects can be controlled in complement or purpose clauses;
   c. only subjects can undergo raising and “tough” movement;
   d. the pronoun form ia ‘3sg’ can only function as a grammatical subject.

(4) Transitivity tests: distinguishing core from oblique arguments (Arka 2005/2009; Musgrave 2001):
   a. core arguments are always expressed as NPs/DPs, never PPs;
   b. only core arguments can launch floating quantifiers;
   c. (?!)only core arguments (and certain possessors) can be Left-Dislocated;
   d. only core arguments are obligatory;
   e. adverbials and oblique arguments can be “scrambled” into clause-initial position, but this is not possible for core arguments (Verhaar 1984: 36ff).

There is no question that the patient is the grammatical subject of the Passive and OV clauses. The agent of the OV construction is identified as a core argument because it never takes a preposition, is obligatorily expressed, and occupies a fixed position adjacent to the verb. (It cannot be Left-Dislocated. For most speakers it cannot launch floating quantifiers, but cf. Riesberg (2014:56).)

(5) a. Mobil itu dapat kita Ø-perbaiki.
   car that get 1pl.INCL OV-repair.
   ‘We can repair the car.’ [Chung 1976a: 60]

   b. Surat ini harus adik Ø-tandatangani.
   letter this must younger.sibling OV-sign
   ‘You (younger sibling) must sign this letter.’ [Dalrymple and Mofu 2009]

   c. Buku itu sudah Tini Ø-kembalikan.
   book that already (speaker’s name) OV-return
   ‘I (Tini) have already returned the book.’ [Sneddon 1996:250]

There is no question that the agent of the Passive is an oblique argument when it is marked by the preposition, or when it appears as a free NP/DP when the preposition is omitted (6a). Arka & Manning argue that the agent of the di-V construction is a core argument when it is expressed by the 3rd person pronoun =nya cliticized to the verb (6b). Passive agents by definition cannot be core arguments, so under their analysis examples like (6b) are not passives, but some kind of ergative or inverse clause. Their primary evidence for this claim is the contrast in binding properties illustrated in (7).

(6) a. Buku ini akan di-baca (oleh) mereka.
   book this will PASS-read by 3pl
   ‘This book will be read by them.’

   b. Buku ini akan di-baca=nya.
   book this will PASS-read=3sg
   ‘This book will be read by him.’
(7) (from Arka & Manning 1998)
   a. ?*Diri=nya di-serahkan ke polisi oleh Amir.
      self=3 PASS-surrender to police by (name)
      (for: ‘Himself; was surrendered to the police by Amir.’)
   b. Diri=nya selalu di-utamakan=nya.
      self=3 always PASS-prioritize=3
      ‘Himself; is always prioritized by him,’ (i.e., ‘He always gives priority to himself.’)

(8) ??Diri=nya di-serahkan=nya ke polisi.
   self=3 PASS-surrender=3 to police
   ‘Himself; was surrendered to the police by him.’

3. Reflexive binding: what corpus evidence shows
   
3.1 *Diri=nya “short reflexive”

Cole & Hermon (2005, for Singapore Malay) and Kartono (2013, for Standard Indonesian) show that the “short reflexive” form (*diri + pronoun) does not behave like a normal reflexive pronoun in certain respects. First, it may take an antecedent that does not c-command it:

(9) [Mertua=nya Rita] sangat meny-ayangi diri=nya.
    mother-in-law=3 Rita really AV-love self=3
    ‘Rita’s mother-in-law really loves herself.’ (from Kartono 2013)

Second, when it is deleted under ellipsis, either the “strict” or “sloppy” readings are possible; with true reflexives, “sloppy” readings are strongly preferred:

(10) a. Beliau menceritakan serba sedikit tentang *diri=nya dan saya juga begitu.
    ‘She told me a little about herself, and I did so too.’ [“sloppy” reading]

   b. Yeni sangat bangga akan *diri=nya, dan saya juga.
      ‘Yeni is very proud of herself, and I am too.’ [“strict” reading]
      [wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r25/lp-in/2010327]

Third, it may either be locally bound, like a true reflexive, or take a discourse antecedent like a plain (non-reflexive) pronoun. Examples of discourse antecedents are presented in (11–15). (cf. Davies 2008 for discussion of a similar “half-reflexive” form in Madurese.)

(11) Adalah amat susah bagi lelaki untuk pulang ke rumah
    very difficult for man COMP return to house
    yang mana *diri=nya tidak di-hormati.
    where self=3 NEG PASS-honor
    ‘It is very difficult for a man to return to a home where he (lit: ‘himself’) is not respected.’ [http://alhafiz.net/search/masa+solat+malaysia/feed/rss2/]
(12) Di-akui oleh=nya, bahwa diri=nya sedang belajar mengendarai mobil.

PASS-admit by=3 COMP self=3 CONT learn drive car

‘It was admitted by him, that self, was just learning to drive a car.’


(13) Menurut Kim, diri=nya dan sang suami juga memiliki pandangan yang sama

follow Kim self=3 and HON husband also possess view REL same

‘According to Kim [Kardashian], herself and her husband also have the same views…’

dalam mengasuh dan mendidik anak mereka.

‘…about rearing and training their children.’

[http://www.wowkeren.com/berita/tampil/00073323.html]

(14) beberapa orang di-akui oleh=nya telah mempengaruhi diri=nya

several person PASS-admit by=3 PERF influence self=3

dalam urusan berakting.

‘Several people are admitted by her [actress Ine Febriyanti] to have influenced herself in the matter of acting,’ (i.e., helped to train her or influenced her method of acting)

[http://portal.cbn.net.id/cbprtl/cyberwoman/detail.aspx?x=Smart+Woman&y=cyberwoman|0|0|4|13]

(15) Irianti pun mengaku dirinya sama sekali tak diberitahu sang suami jika dirinya diajukan

Presiden SBY sebagai calon Kapolri pengganti BHD.

‘Irianti also swore that she (lit: ‘herself’) was not by any means informed by her husband when he (lit: ‘himself’) was nominated by President SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) as candidate for Chief of National Police of Indonesia, replacing BHD (Bambang Hendarso Danuri).’


Examples (12–15) seem to require a LOGOPHORIC interpretation, meaning that the reflexive form is interpreted as referring to the participant whose thoughts, words, or feelings are being reported. Example (16) is especially interesting in this regard; the context makes it clear that the logophoric interpretation wins out over a local c-commanding antecedent.

(16) Kemudian, diakui Nisa, Hambit meminta dirinya menemani Cornelis menyerahkan uang tersebut...

‘Then, it was admitted by Nisa, Hambit asked self (=Nisa) to accompany Cornelis to deliver the aforementioned money…’

[https://koran-indonesia.com/2014/01/terima-rp-75-juta-chairun-nisa-naik-haji/]

I suggest that the contrast illustrated in (7) is due to discourse or pragmatic factors, rather than the syntactic status of the arguments. I suggest that the greater acceptability of (7b) as compared to (7a) is due to the high inherent topicality of clitic pronouns.

(17) Scale of phonological size (Givón 1983:18)

Full NP > stressed/independent pronoun > unstressed/bound pronoun > zero anaphora

[more discontinuous/ inaccessible topics] [more continuous/ accessible topics]

The use of a clitic pronoun for the agent in (7b) implies reference to a highly topical participant, and this topical participant would be available to function as a discourse antecedent for diri=nya,
creating the observed co-referential interpretation. The agentive PP in (7a), in contrast, is a form that would not normally be selected if the agent is highly topical.

### 3.2 Dirinya sendiri “long reflexive”

Cole & Hermon (2005) and Kartono (2013) both state that “long reflexive” forms like diri=nya sendiri are true anaphors: (a) they require a c-commanding antecedent (18); (b) they give rise to “sloppy” readings under ellipsis (19–20); and (c) they require a local antecedent (but this last claim needs clarification; see below).

(18) [Mertua=nya Rita]i sangat meny-(s)ayangi diri=nya sendiri, i/*j.

‘Rita’s mother-in-law really loves herself, i/*her.’ (adapted from Kartono 2013)

(19) Budi meng(k)agumi diri=nya sendiri dan Wati juga.

‘Budi admires himself and Wati does too.’

sloppy interpretation: Budi admires himself and Wati admires herself.

#strict interpretation: Budi admires himself and Wati admires Budi. [Kartono 2013: 39]

(20) “Binatang itu bicara, makan — tapi tak mengerti diri=nya sendiri. Dan aku begitu juga.”


The contrast identified by Arka & Manning holds for long reflexives as well (21), which might be taken as support for their non-passive analysis of di-V=nya. However, it turns out that when no local antecedent is available, the long reflexive can take a discourse antecedent (22–23), contra Cole & Hermon (2005) and Kartono (2013). (The same seems to be true for complex reflexives in Balinese; see Arka 2003:221.) Where there are discourse antecedents, a long reflexive in subject position may be co-referential with (and apparently “bound” by) an agentive PP (23); this is the critical pattern for evaluating the Arka & Manning analysis. In (24), c-commanding local antecedents are rejected in favor of discourse antecedents, on the basis of pragmatic plausibility.

(21) a. ?*Dirinya sendiri di-serahkan ke polisi oleh Amir.

self=3 self PASS-surrender to police by (name)

(for: ‘Himself was surrendered to the police by Amir.’)

b. Dirinya sendiri selalu di-utamakan=nya.

self=3 self always PASS-prioritize=3

‘Himself is always prioritized by him.’ (i.e., ‘He always gives priority to himself.’)

(22) Padahal dirinya.sendiri di-hormati oleh raja-raja.

actually self PASS-honored by kings

‘In fact he himself (Gautama Buddha) was honored by kings.’ [Huston Smith, The religions of Man, translated by Saafroedin Bahar. 2001. Agama-agama Manusia. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, p. 115 (Google books)]
Example (25b) shows that an indefinite, non-c-commanding antecedent (specifically an agentive PP) is not possible with the long reflexive, presumably because an indefinite NP cannot be interpreted as having been previously established in the discourse. However, this is fine with the short reflexive (25a). Note the contrast between (25b), which is unacceptable because there is no eligible discourse antecedent, vs. the syntactically identical (23c) which is fully acceptable because the agentive PP is definite and highly topical.

(25) a. Bukan diri=nya sahaja yang di-rugikan oleh se-orang pencandu.
   ‘It is not only himself that is harmed/cause to suffer loss by an addict.’

b. ?*Bukan diri=nya sendiri sahaja yang di-rugikan oleh se-orang pencandu.

I propose that the apparent binding of a reflexive by the agentive clitic pronoun =nya is in fact due to the presence of a discourse antecedent; this is possible for both long and short reflexives. This explanation predicts that unacceptable examples like (7a) and (21a) should become much better if the agentive PP contained a pronoun (oleh=nya) rather than a proper name (oleh Amir); and in fact, this does seem to be the case, as illustrated in (26).

   self=3 self always pass-prioritize by (name)
   (for: ‘Himself, is always prioritized by Amir,’)

b. Dirinya sendiri tak tampak oleh=nya…
   self NEG pass.seen by=3
   ‘Himself, is not seen by him, (because he only looks at other people).’
   [http://thoriqohalfisbuqi.wordpress.com/2010/01/26/suluk-wragul-sunan-bonang-2/]

b. Yang di-pikirkan oleh=nya hanya=lah kepentingan dirinya.sendiri...
   REL pass-think.about by=3sg for=FOC importance self
   ‘What he, thinks about is only his own (lit: self’s) importance…’
   [http://archiveofourown.org/works/513076]

c. Bukan dirinya.sendiri yang di-amat-amati anak itu…
   neg self REL pass-gaze.at child that
   ‘It was not himself that was gazed at (in the mirror) by the child, (but rather the reflection of the room…)’

(24) a. Rio di-manfaatkan oleh=nya untuk kepentingan dirinya.sendiri...
   (name) pass-exploit by=3sg for importance self
   ‘Rio was being exploited by her, (= his girlfriend) for her, own (lit: self’s) advantage.’
   [http://www.hutanta.com/ebooks/bypass/EB000005JK]

b. Lagu ini hanya cocok di-nyanyikan oleh=nya.
   song this only suitable pass-sing by=3
   Lagu ini mencerminkan dirinya.sendiri.
   song this reflect self
   ‘This song is only suitable to be sung by him, (= Korean singer Park Jae-Sang). This song reflects himself,’
b. Diri=nya sendiri selalu di-utamakan oleh=nya.
   self=3 self always PASS-prioritize by=3
   ‘Himself; is always prioritized by himi,’ (i.e., ‘He always gives priority to himself.’)

c. ?Diri=nya selalu di-utamakan oleh=nya.
   self=3 always PASS-prioritize by=3
   ‘Himself; is always prioritized by himi.’ [cf. 7b]

(27) Summary of binding properties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SHORT REFLEXIVE (diri=nya)</th>
<th>LONG REFLEXIVE (diri=nya sendiri)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c-commanding antecedent</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>obligatory (if local)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretation under ellipsis</td>
<td>sloppy or strict</td>
<td>sloppy strongly preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discourse antecedent</td>
<td>always possible</td>
<td>possible only when no local (and pragmatically appropriate) c-commanding antecedent is available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas Arka & Manning (1998) identify the agentive =nya as a core argument, Arka (2005/2009) refers to it as “semi-core”. Aside from the binding facts cited above, it has very few of the diagnostic properties that Arka uses to identify core arguments. Arka notes that this “semi-core” classification is awkward: it seems to imply that the di-V=nya construction is neither passive nor ergative, but some intermediate voice category. However, if the binding evidence is not directly relevant to making the core-oblique distinction, then there is no reason not to analyze di-V=nya as a true passive.

4. The functions of the di- passive

(28) Givón (1994) defines voice categories in terms of RELATIVE TOPICALITY; but the Malay voice system clearly does not fit this model:

   active/direct: AGT > PAT passive: AGT << PAT
   inverse: AGT < PAT antipassive: AGT >> PAT

“Passive of Narrative Sequence” (McCune 1979): the di-V construction is used in narrative “to describe a series of chronologically ordered punctiliar actions by a single actor” (Kaswanti Purwo 1988:205).

(29) Tudung botol di-rentap keluar, kemudian… di-jurus=nya minyak tanah itu cover bottle PASS-pull go.out afterward PASS-pour=3 oil earth that ke atas lantai… Botol itu lalu di-himbau=nya ke tengah sungai. to top floor bottle that then PASS-throw=3 to middle river

   Di-keluarkan=nya mancis dari belitan kain di pinggan=nya, lalu di-nyalakan.
   PASS-take.out=3 match from fold cloth at waist=3 then PASS-light

   Di-campak=nya ke lantai perahu.
   PASS-throw=3 to floor boat
   ‘She pulled off the bottle cap, then… she poured the kerosene onto the floor (of the boat)… Then she threw the bottle to the middle of the river. She took out a match from
the fold of the sarong at her waist, then lit it. She threw it onto the floor of the boat.’
[from the short story “Seorang Perempuan, Sungai Dan Senjakala” ‘A woman, a river, and dusk’ by Baharin Ramly, cited in Levinsohn 1991]

In Classical Malay is that the agentive clitic =nya can occur together with a co-referential agentive PP marked with oleh. Two examples from the Hikayat Hang Tuah are shown in (30).

(30) a. Maka oleh Patih Gajah.Mada di-pegang=nya tangan Laksamana
     PRCL by vizier (name) PASS-hold=3 hand admiral
     lalu di-bawa=nya makan…
     then PASS-bring=3 eat
     ‘So Vizier Gajah Mada took the Laksamana’s hand and led him to dinner.’ [Tuah 156:34]

b. Maka di-lihat=nya oleh orang perahu Laksamana yang datang itu…
     PRCL PASS-see=3 by person boat admiral REL arrive that
     ‘And the people saw the Laksamana’s boat, which was approaching…’ [Tuah 414:27]

Selected references


