

N. ALIEVA

THE POSSESSIVE SYNTACTICAL TYPE AND THE MALAY LANGUAGE

In 1977 I prepared a paper for the Second International Conference on Austronesian linguistics. It dealt with the possessive category, its general features, its evolution and its use in grammatical structures of Indonesian languages (Alieva, 1978). Among the problems connected with the possessive category, it is essential to discuss the problem of the possessive structure of a sentence over against the possessive structure of a language, a problem which, with regard to Indonesian and Malay, in that paper has been referred to as peripheral. However, this problem must be studied both as a general linguistic problem of typology and as an aspect of the grammatical system of an Austronesian language. In this case the problem is treated by using examples from Bahasa Indonesia, although Malaysian provides similar materials. In the first place I will discuss what the "possessive structure of a language" and the "possessive structure of a sentence" are.

The problem of possessiveness as the dominant feature of a language was discussed by European linguists of the 19th century with regard to Indo-European and American Indian languages. A detailed and qualified, though not impartial analysis of the linguistic theories of F. N. Finck, H. Schuchardt, C. C. Uhlenbeck and some other authors is found in a monograph by J. Wils (1952), who supported the idea of contrasting active, dynamic features and passive features (in a broader sense) as the determining characteristics of a language system.

NATALIA F. ALIEVA, a graduate of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies, is at present senior research fellow in the Department of Linguistics of the similar Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Her main field of interest is Austronesian linguistics, and two important publications are an Indonesian Grammar (Moscow: Nauka, 1972) and a study on the Indonesian verb, *The Category of Transitivity* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975). Dr. Alieva may be contacted at the Department of Linguistics, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, Ulitsa Zhdanova 12/1, k. 334, Moscow 103777, USSR.

In that discussion the attention of linguists centred on the verb, which was considered from both formal and psychological viewpoints. Syntax and context, however, were often not taken into account. At that time no clear distinction was made between the nominative, ergative and possessive types of language systems. The credit for introducing a clear-cut system of syntactical typology can be given to an outstanding Soviet linguist, the late Academician I. I. Meshchaninov. Using the great variety of languages found in the Soviet Union he formulated, as long ago as 1940, the concept of syntactical typology (Meshchaninov 1940), 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 his book *Obshchee jazykoznanije* [General Linguistics] he described three individual types, i.e. the nominative, the ergative and the possessive. He concentrated on the ergative type, which he described in a great number of papers over many years. The possessive type was characterized by him in its most general features with the aid of materials — rather scanty — from the Paleoasiatic languages. This is what he said about the essence of this particular system: "A possessive structure of the predicate is at the same time a nominal phrase. It shows that the action belongs to a specific person who is not taken as the doer of the action, but as the one to whom the action expressed by the predicate belongs" (Meshchaninov 1940: 136).

While studying the evolution of the ergative structure of a sentence in many languages Meshchaninov also discovered elements of the possessive system, which was revealed through the subject of the action being expressed by the genitive form of a noun or a pronoun. He speaks explicitly of the "possessive structure of an ergative sentence" (Meshchaninov 1967: 108-139), showing that a combination of features of different syntactical types is conceivable for any one language.

Later, both Soviet and European linguists had almost completely forgotten about the possessive syntactical type and the possessive structure of a sentence. This was probably due to the lack of factual material needed for the relevant research in the languages with which 20th century linguists were concerned, which, undoubtedly, did not include the world's most numerous family of languages, the Austronesian family.

Austronesian languages provide a wealth of material for studying many aspects of the possessive category, including its syntactical typology. It should be emphasized that the syntactical system of a language must be studied together with its lexical and morphological systems.

Linguistic works tackling Austronesian languages contain, however, only a small number of references to the possessive structure and its features. S. J. Esser did mention such features when discussing comparative studies of the verb in Indonesian languages (Esser 1929). It is worth noting that, on the other hand, the concept of the possessive structure is found neither in descriptive works nor in linguistic theories based on Tagalog and other languages of the Philippines. The languages of the Philippine branch nevertheless do offer the scholar an abundance of convincing material illustrating the prevalence of the possessive type in expressing subject-object relations in their grammatical systems.

This was evidently a result of the absence of an adequately elaborated linguistic theory of possessiveness. If we exclude a few references to this problem in general Indonesian studies, there are otherwise no studies of it in works on Malay linguistics.¹ And yet, as I have pointed out earlier, certain phenomena in the Malay grammatical system, which will be dealt with later, can be interpreted as representing the possessive structure of a process sentence, while others are the result of the lexicalization of possessive structures.

Prior to analysing specific materials, it is necessary to explain the terminology that will be used and to enlarge upon the notion that a possessive structure is a syntactical type of organization of a given language structure. It should be remembered that in speaking of a language of the possessive syntactical type (with regard to its grammatical system as a whole, which is infrequent, or with regard to its separate structures, which occurs more often), the notion *possessive structure* acquires a new dimension. The expression of the fact that an object belongs to its owner, which is typical of nominative languages in which the possessive structure is taken as a nominal word group (a qualified noun expressing an object plus a possessive pronoun or a substantive attribute), is also given a new dimension, i.e. that of an action belonging to its doer (agent). The doer of the action is expressed by a possessive attribute, in the same way as the subject of possession. The nucleus of a relevant word combination is a word with verbal meaning, a word with formatives of verbal categories, or a root word without any formatives. As a result, the interrelation between nominal and verbal categories is entirely different from that in, for instance, nominative languages. There is almost a complete lack of difference in their formal features, while at the same time possessive pronouns are used on a larger scale so as to include the functions of indirect forms of personal, agential pronouns. In this way the formally uniform

syntactical structure is divided from a semantic point of view into two categories: the object possessive and the process possessive structure.

If the process possessive structure forms the predicate group, then this must be regarded as an indication of the possessive system of the language in its most clear-cut form. This is what I. I. Meshchaninov's definition, cited above, is about.

In Tagalog, the dominant types of sentence with passive verbal forms contain precisely this structure. For instance, in structures with a direct passive voice:

Ang aklat ay binabasa	ng estudyante
	niya
	ni Pedro

(Podberezskij 1976: 421)

The book link read	of a student
	his
	of Pedro

"The book is read by a student (by him, Pedro)."

The agent is expressed with the help of a possessive attribute in three different lexical versions. It is noteworthy that in Tagalog not only the agential, but also some object complements, are formally similar to possessive attributes.

Malay has a similar way of forming passive sentences in which the agent is indicated by the third person pronominal enclitic, *-nya*:

Buku ini | sudah | dibacanya.

Book this | already | read his.

"This book has been read by him."

Compare: Ini buku-bukunya. "These are his (their) books."

The indication of the agent by a noun complement without a preposition is in no way different from that by a possessive attribute:

Buku ini | sudah | dibaca | anak-anak.

Book this | already | read | children.

"This book has already been read by the children."

Compare:

Ini | buku-buku | anak-anak | kami.

This | books | children | we.

"These are the books of our children."

In modern Malay prepositions are used abundantly to reflect syntactical

relations, and it is often pointed out in the literature that the use of prepositions in the modern language has been greatly influenced by Dutch and English. Thus the preposition *oleh* is used to introduce an agential complement, while the preposition *daripada* (or *dari*) introduces a possessive attribute. In this way the above examples can be transformed (without changing their meaning) as follows:

Buku ini sudah dibaca		olehnya	
			oleh anak-anak
Ini buku-buku		daripadanya	
			daripada anak-anak kami.

As a result, there is only a vague propinquity between an agential complement and a possessive attribute, and it would be impossible to reveal this on the basis of the Malay material taken by itself. It can only be facilitated by the general theoretical concept of the possessive structure and examples from such languages as Tagalog.

Owing to the rapid developments of modern times, the Malay language has currently acquired the features of a nominative language. Its dominant structure, namely that of a verbal sentence, is a structure of a nominative type, realized both in active and passive sentences. Possessive structures have become infrequent and are used only in the sphere of nominalization in the most diverse instances of substantivized verbs in speech.

A characteristic feature of Malay, particularly the spoken language, is that sentence structure comprises two parts:

- 1) a grammatical subject realized through a possessive process structure; and
- 2) a grammatical predicate expressed by an adjective, an adverb, or any other adverbial modifier. For instance:

Jalanmu cepat. Datangnya dari pegunungan. Perginya kemana?
Larinya seperti diburu hantu.

Structurally, these patterns are typified by the use of possessive pronoun enclitics, while as a rule they are built with the aid of the *-nya* enclitic.² The indication of the agent, or the possessor of the action, may be extended in such colloquial sentences by the addition of a noun, viz.:

Datangnya suku itu dari pegunungan.
"The tribe has come from the mountains."
(Literally: "Arrival-its tribe this from mountains.")

Perginya Siti kemana?

"Where has Siti gone?"

(Literally: "Departure-her Siti where.")

In literature the extended indication of an agent is quite different. In sentences with a topicalized subject the possessive structure is often used, and the subject of the action is indicated by an enclitic pronoun in the possessive construction and is introduced as the topic at the beginning of the sentence (Prokofjev 1973). Such structures are used to effect greater expressiveness and accuracy of the actual (psychological) segmentation. Examples are:

Dan gaduh itu mudah benarlah *datangnya* (*Salah Asuhan*, 65).

Hasan makin gelisah lagi *duduknya* (*Atheis*, 220).

Anak-anak itu ketika itu *duduknya* dikelas tertinggi (*Mencari sendi baru*, 38).

Didalam keadaan ini accent *jatuhnya* pada suku penutup (*Mencari sendi baru*, 362).

Jatuhnya benar² jauh sekali kebawah (*Anak² kampung Jambu*, 24).

Tempat perkemahan mereka itu *letaknya* kira² setengah kilometer lagi jauhnya (*Anak² Bintang Pari*, 21).

The specifically Indonesian way of rendering the speaker's words in direct speech can also be regarded as an instance of the possessive structure:

Ibunya tersenyum kepadanya, *jawabnya*: "berbuatlah apa yang kau pandang baik Lim" (*Anak² kampung Jambu*, 24).

"Hendak kau apakah lagi layanganmu itu, Lim?" *tanya ayahnya* (*Anak² kampung Jambu*, 18).

"Mukanya sama benar dengan muka sigila kampung kita", *ujar ibu Salim* (*Anak² kampung Jambu*, 9).

Such possessive structures can centre around a great many words which, in their semantics, are *verba dicendi*: *kata*, *jawab*, *tukas*, *teriak*, *seru*, and so on. Despite their indubitable verbal semantics and root structure, they cannot be regarded strictly as either nouns or verbs. This points to one feature of a possessive structure in a modern language system.

Among the same phenomena — the phenomena based on process possessive structures which are not currently interpreted as the possessive structure of a sentence — are the ample possibilities of nominalization.

Nominalizations of root verbs with the help of *-nya* can be regarded as the nuclear, simple cases. For instance:

Bencinya kepada gadis yang malang itu tak dapat disembunyi-sembunyikannya lagi (*Salah pilih*, 168).

Marah mereka tak terkirakan (*Bekasi*, 181).

... Sebenarnya disanalah *letaknya* rahasia bahasa yang sedalam-dalamnya (*Jalan Bahasa Indonesia*, 5).

Sudah lima jam ini hujan terus menerus tak ada *hentinya* (*Diper-simpangan*, 57).

Segala sesuatu adalah menunjukkan bahwa *adanya* mereka ditempat itu ialah hendak menangkap Surapati (*Surapati*, 144).

In the modern language, this type of nominalization has been further developed to include derivative verbs with *me-*, *di-*, *ber-*, and *ter-*. Such cases have been analysed by H. Herrfurth (1977) in a special article, while observations made by A. K. Ogloblin (1976) are also of interest.

Finally, the modern language uses widely a number of derivatives with the *-nya* enclitic (and infrequently with *-ku* and *-mu*) in the function of modal and parenthetical words such as: *hendaknya*, *harusnya*, *baiknya*, *kiranya*, *sudinya*, *sayangnya*, *kecewanya*, *tampaknya*, *rupanya*, *sangkanya* (*-ku*, *-mu*), *pikirnya* (*-ku*, *-mu*) and so on. These words and expressions are the result of the lexicalization of process possessive structures.

Obviously, mention must also be made of the forms derived from root morphemes with qualitative meanings (which in Malay have features similar to verbal morphemes and words). They include both productive forms, such as *sedalam-dalamnya*, *sekurang-kurangnya*, *sebesar-besarnya*, *bagusnya*, *panjangnya*, and *dalamnya*, and lexicalized forms, such as *sesungguhnya*, *sebenarnya*, and *sebetulnya*. The latter are classified with the modal and parenthetical words mentioned above.

The above well-known and specific phenomena of modern Malay (Indonesian and Malaysian) have not yet, as far as I know, been compared from the point of view of the features of the possessive syntactical structure of the language. My analysis, however, serves a number of purposes. First of all, in order to provide an adequate scientific and a relevant typological description of a given language system, it was necessary to give a relevant interpretation of the various elements and subsystems of that language.³

It was also desirable to discover whether any features of the possessive syntactical type are found in Malay, in order to facilitate the study of

the Indonesian and, on a larger scale, the Austronesian languages in terms of their typological features, particularly their typology of expressing subject-object relations. Undoubtedly, this huge family of languages as a whole and its individual subfamilies have their own specific sets of structural features at every level of the language and specific interrelations between these levels. Most of the specific features remain *terra incognita* for world linguistics; the possessive category in syntax, as well as in a broader sense, is among the problems that remain to be studied.

Finally, and this is also significant, it was my intention to contribute to the development of the concept of the possessive type — a subject which has not previously been tackled in either modern typology or structural linguistics. It goes without saying that this concept has many weak points, but its due regard along with the gradual accumulation of materials and a better understanding of the already known facts (as the above analysis of Malay features produces), will constitute an approach that will facilitate a correct interpretation of relevant phenomena in different languages and consequently help advance general theoretical studies in linguistics.

NOTES

- ¹ From the purely linguistic point of view it is convenient to use the term "Malay" as embracing Bahasa Indonesia, Malaysian, Old Malay and past and present Malay dialects.
- ² I would like to remind the reader that verbs with *di-* may only take *-nya*; *-mu* and *-ku* are impossible.
- ³ The collectively written *Grammatika indonezijskogo jazyka* [Grammar of Indonesian] (1972) includes, on pp. 102-103, my first attempt to introduce such an interpretation. The present paper is a next step in the same direction.

TEXTS CONSULTED

- Anak² Bintang Pari* - A. H. Nasution, *Anak-anak Bintang Pari*, Djakarta 1951.
Anak² Kampung Jambu - M. Balfas, *Anak-anak kampung Djambu*, Djakarta 1960.
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