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Author(s): Lubna Alsagoff

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The Notions of Subject and *Topic* in Malay¹

Lubna Alsagoff
Stanford University

0. Introduction

It is an uncontroversially accepted fact that the notion of **subject** is central to syntactic theory. This contrasts with the status of *topic* in syntactic theory: a notion whose importance to syntactic theory has not been acknowledged to the same extent in the literature, and has often been marginalized as a discourse function with little integration into the overall syntactic organization of language. The primary aim of this paper is to demonstrate the inadequacy of this approach by arguing for the importance of *topic* to Malay syntax.² In particular, certain syntactic characteristics or behavior, previously exclusively associated with subjects, are shown, in Malay, to be shared with *topics*.

Strong evidence of this comes from a consideration of obligatory control facts in Malay, which evinces the necessity of including the notion of *topic* in the definition of the control site of equi constructions. Whereas most syntactic frameworks differ in the ways in which the controller of control constructions such as equi have been characterized, they have commonly assumed it as a fact of Universal Grammar that the controllee of such constructions is the grammatical subject. The data on Malay, however, conclusively argues that such an assumption needs to be reconsidered to include *topic* as a necessary condition on the identity of the control site. In addition, evidence from relativization further corroborates this thesis that properties thought to be uniquely characteristic of grammatical subjects are in fact shared by *topics*.

1. An Outline of the Problem

The basic facts on the three constructions that this paper will be focussing on, *meng-*, *di-* and \emptyset -, are outlined in this section. In particular, the central problem that is raised by the data on the \emptyset - construction is discussed. A consideration of the facts from the perspective of obligatory control constructions provides evidence that while a straightforward analysis of the *di-* construction as passive suffices to provide an account of the facts, neither the traditional analysis in which the \emptyset - construction is treated as an object-fronted construction, nor the analysis proposed by Chung (1976a, b) in which it is analyzed as passive, is adequate in providing an explanation of the full range of data: in particular, the dialectal split in the way the \emptyset - construction behaves in control structures.

1.1. The *Di-* Construction

Malay is a configurational language with a basic subject-verb-object constituent order, i.e. the basic pattern of an active sentence in Malay will have the subject in the initial position, and the object in the post-verbal position, as in the *meng-* construction in sentence (1), in contrast to the *di-* construction in (2a) which is passive:

1. Mariam **memukul** doktor itu.
Mariam MENG-beat doctor the
Mariam beat/is beating the doctor.

- 2a. Doktor itu **dipukul** (oleh Mariam).
 doctor the DI-beat (by Mariam)
 The doctor is/was beaten (by Mariam).
- b. *Doktor itu **dimemukul/mendipukul** oleh Mariam.
 doctor the DI-MENG-beat/MENG-DI-beat by Mariam

In the *meng-* construction in (1), the agent, *Mariam*, is the subject, while the postverbal patient *doktor itu* is the object. In contrast, in the *di-* sentence (2a), the patient *doktor itu*, instead of the agent, is now the grammatical subject, while the agent is a chomeur. And as with passives in English, the logical subject is optional, as indicated by the parentheses in (2a) above.³ Since a sentence can, of course, only be marked for voice once, it is not surprising therefore that *di-*, the passive voice marker, is restricted from co-occurring with *meng-*, as demonstrated in (2b).

Passivization can, in very broad terms, be characterized as an operation that alters a default association between the grammatical functions and the thematic roles. Hence for languages typologically termed *accusative* languages, such as English, French, and Malay, in unmarked active sentences, the subject is normally linked to the *logical subject*, with the object thus linking to the next highest thematic role, i.e., what we will refer to in this paper as the *logical object*. In passive sentences, this linking pattern is altered in that the logical subject is no longer eligible for linking with the subject -- as a result of a change in the verbal morphology -- allowing the logical object, the theme in the case of sentence (2a), to link with the grammatical subject.⁴ Therefore, instead of the agent *Mariam* in (1), the theme, *doktor itu*, is now the subject in both these sentences.

Obligatory control basically provides a test for identifying the subject in a clause. In such structures ((3), (4)), there is a missing argument in the lower clause, i.e. an argument that cannot be lexically realized ((3b)), the obligatory controllee, whose reference is determinable by association with an argument in the higher clause, called the controller. This missing argument or controllee is uniquely and universally characterized as the grammatical subject.⁵ The generalization that emerges from the data in sentences (3) and (4) below is that the verbal prefix *di-* has the effect of changing the identity of the obligatory controllee, and hence the subject, from the agent to the patient:

- 3a. Ali menyuruh Mariam [_ **memukul** doktor itu].
 Ali MENG-ask Mariam [_ MENG-beat doctor the]
 Ali asked Mariam to beat the doctor.
- b. *Ali menyuruh Mariam [Samad **memukul** doktor itu].
 Ali MENG-ask Mariam [Samad MENG-beat doctor the]
- c. *Ali menyuruh Mariam [Samad **memukul** _].
 Ali MENG-ask Mariam [Samad MENG-beat _]
- 4a. Ali menyuruh doktor itu [_ **dipukul** oleh Mariam].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor the [_ DI-beat by Mariam]
 Ali asked the doctor to be beaten by Mariam.
- b.*Ali menyuruh Mariam [doktor itu **dipukul** _].
 Ali MENG-ask Mariam [doctor the DI-beat _]

In (3a), the lower clause of the sentence is the active *meng-* construction. Here, the subject is the agent, and is the controllee. In (4a), where the lower clause is the *di-* construction, there is a change in the identity of the controllee: the theme, *doktor itu*, is now interpreted to be the subject of the lower clause, since this is now the only eligible controllee. This is evidence that the *di-* construction is indeed a passive construction. (3b) corroborates the results of the control test by demonstrating that the gap or control site must be obligatorily present. In addition, examples (3c) and (4b) give evidence that it has to be the subject that functions as the controllee: neither objects nor obliques are eligible as sites for control.

1.2. The \emptyset - Construction

In the set of examples below, sentence (6) is the corresponding \emptyset - construction for the sentence in (5a). Just as there is a prefix in the *di-* construction, similarly, it is possible to analyze the \emptyset - construction as involving a null prefix which may not co-occur with the active *meng-* prefix. In (6), the nominal phrase *doktor itu*, which is the theme, gets promoted to the initial position of the sentence, before the logical subject or agent *saya*. However, since object preposing is an operation that does not alter the linking patterns of the argument structure, the first person pronoun remains as the grammatical subject, and the phrase *doktor itu* is still the object. Only their linear positions have changed:

- 5a. Saya memeriksa doktor itu.
 1SPR MENG-examine doctor the
 I examined the doctor.
- b. *Saya \emptyset -periksa doktor itu.
 1SPR \emptyset -examine doctor the
- c. *Doktor itu saya memeriksa.
 doctor the 1SPR MENG-examine
6. Doktor itu saya \emptyset -periksa.
 doctor the 1SPR \emptyset -examine
 The doctor, I examined.

In \emptyset - constructions, instead of the logical subject, the logical object now occupies the initial position in the sentence. This change in the word order is obligatorily triggered by the \emptyset - prefix: (5b) shows that a subject-verb-object word order is unacceptable when the verb is inflected with the \emptyset - prefix, and conversely ((5c)), when it is inflected with *meng-*, the object cannot be preposed as the initial constituent of the sentence. (5c) also makes the point that the verb in a \emptyset - construction cannot be inflected with *meng-*, and must occur in its stem form.

In the traditional literature, the \emptyset - construction is characterized simply as a non-passive, object-preposed construction, where all that is altered is the word order of the constituents. Chung (1976a, b), on the other hand, analyses the \emptyset - construction as being yet another passive construction (in addition to the *di-* construction), and thus treats the preposed logical object as the newly promoted grammatical subject of the passive. In defense of this analysis, Chung presents data on adverbial complements of purpose equi constructions as a test of the grammatical subjecthood of the logical object. The following data on transitive complement equi constructions corroborate Chung's analysis of the \emptyset - construction as passive:

7. Ali menyuruh saya [_ memeriksa doktor itu].
 Ali MENG-ask 1SPR [_ MENG-examine doctor the]
 Ali asked me to examine the doctor.
- 8a. Ali menyuruh doktor itu [_ saya Ø-periksa].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor the [_ 1SPR Ø-examine]
 Ali asked the doctor to be examined by me. (DIALECT A)
- b. *Ali menyuruh saya [doktor itu _ Ø-periksa]
 Ali MENG-ask 1SPR [doctor the _ Ø-examine]

When the lower clause is a \emptyset - construction as in (8), the only argument that can be controlled is the initial argument, thereby suggesting that this argument is the new grammatical subject. This clearly supports Chung's argument for an analysis of the \emptyset - construction as a true passive construction, in which the logical object in the unmarked active construction has been promoted to the grammatical subject. The data thus refutes the traditional approach in which the \emptyset - construction is considered as non-passive, where the initial argument is simply a preposed object, since this treatment of the facts predicts that this argument should **not** be controllable.

Given the data in (7) and (8), it therefore appears that Chung's analysis is sufficient for an adequate explanation of the facts pertaining to control. However, this is not quite the case, since the data in (7) and (8) do not represent the entire corpus. In an informal survey of approximately 20 speakers of Indonesian and Malay, there is a marked and consistent dialectal split, with about half the speakers giving judgements of data as above, and the other half indicating yet another pattern for the control constructions, as given in (9):

- 9a. *Ali menyuruh doktor itu [_ saya Ø-periksa].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor the [_ 1SPR Ø-examine] (DIALECT B)
- b. *Ali menyuruh saya [doktor itu _ Ø-periksa]
 Ali MENG-ask 1SPR [doctor the _ Ø-examine]

The newly introduced data in (9) definitely illustrate that in this dialect, the \emptyset - construction is not analyzable as passive, since under this analysis, while the ungrammaticality of (9b) can be explained by the fact that the gap is not the subject, the unacceptability of (9a) becomes a problem because the analysis predicts that as the grammatical subject, the initial argument should be controllable. The problem is further complicated because treating the \emptyset - construction as non-passive also does not work. In this case, while the ungrammaticality of (9a) is easily explained by stating that the gap in these cases is not the grammatical subject in the lower clause, (9b) remains unexplained: here, although the gap is the subject, control is still not possible.

In fact, that neither of the arguments in the lower \emptyset - construction clause is eligible for control presents an even larger problem. If we accept the assumption that Universal Grammar designates the controllee of equi constructions must be the subject, then we come to an impasse with the facts in (9), since they alledge that there is no grammatical subject in \emptyset - sentences, something which contemporary syntactic theory strictly prohibits (e.g. Chomsky (1986), Bresnan and Kanerva (1988)). Thus we need still to explain why if there is a grammatical subject in the

embedded clauses, it cannot be controlled.⁶

2. Introducing the Notion of *Topic*

The facts above point to the need for a new analysis of the \emptyset - constructions that can explain the facts on control. In addition, they also raise the issue of whether, in the construction of such an analysis, this dictates changing previous assumptions about the identity of the controllee in equi constructions. This paper demonstrates that the key to the problems raised by the control facts lies in the introduction of the *topic* function. Section 2.1 provides evidence from the *-kah* construction that there is in fact a *topic* position at the clause level, which in Malay is the initial argument position. Section 2.2, which deals with relativization, demonstrates that the *topic* function exhibits a number of properties that are usually assumed in the literature to be the exclusive properties of grammatical subjects.

2.1. *-Kah* Construction

One uncontroversially accepted characteristic of *topics* is that they cannot be questioned. In particular, questioning in place of *topics* is not possible. This follows from the idea, shared in almost all discussions of *topics*, e.g. Chafe (1976), Givon (1979), Ward (1986), that *topic* is that which is the *given*, or common knowledge in the discourse structure, or in some other terminology, the presuppositional stratum on which new information is introduced. It is therefore something that cannot be elicited in a question by virtue of it being by definition, the shared information on which the discourse is framed. In this subsection, one type of construction will be considered: questioning in situ with the suffix *-kah*.

-Kah is a suffix that functions as a marker of the interrogative and *focus*. The constructions involving *-kah* basically are yes-no interrogatives that question a sentence or proposition containing a focussed constituent, i.e. the one to which *-kah* is attached. Therefore since *topic* occupies the initial position of the clause, it stands to reason that this first constituent cannot take the suffix *-kah*, since, as mentioned earlier, *topics* cannot be questioned, and that a constituent cannot be both *topic* and *focus* simultaneously at the same level of clause structure (Bresnan and Mchombo 1987).

- 10a. *Mariam**kah** memukul doktor itu tadi?
 Mariam-KAH MENG-beat doctor the just now
- b. Mariam memukul doktor ituk**ah** tadi?
 Mariam MENG-beat doctor the-KAH just now
 Was it the doctor Mariam beat just now?
- c. Mariam memukul doktor itu tadik**ah**?
 Mariam MENG-beat doctor the just now-KAH
 Was it just now that Mariam beat the doctor?
- 11a. *Doktor ituk**ah** dipukul oleh Mariam tadi?
 doctor the-KAH DĪ-beat by Mariam just now
- b. Doktor itu dipukul oleh Mariam**kah** tadi?
 doctor the DĪ-beat by Mariam-KAH just now
 Was it Mariam that the doctor was beaten by just now?
- c. Doktor itu dipukul oleh Mariam tadik**ah**?
 doctor the DĪ-beat by Mariam just now-KAH
 Was it just now that the doctor was beaten by Mariam?
- 12a. *Doktor ituk**ah** awak periksa tadi?

- doctor the-KAH 2SPR examine just now
Was it the doctor that you examined just now?
- b. Doktor itu awak-**kah** periksa tadi?
doctor the 2SPR-KAH examine just now
Was it you who examined the doctor just now?
- c. Doktor itu awak periksa **tadikah**?
doctor the 2SPR examine just now-KAH
Was it just now that you examined the doctor?

In all three types of construction, the initial argument cannot be questioned. Although it may be possible to explain the data by saying that it is the subject in the sentence that cannot be questioned, if the \emptyset -sentences are analyzed as passives (setting aside the problems faced in the equi constructions), it is an unsatisfactory analysis because whereas *topics* are by definition understood to be constituents that cannot be questioned, such a property is not associated with grammatical subjects. Therefore it is clear that it is necessary to characterize the constituent, the initial argument, that cannot be questioned in all three constructions as the *topic*.

2.2. Relativization

The relative clause constructions in (13) to (14) demonstrate clearly that in both the *meng*- and *di*-constructions, only the subject can be relativized: objects and obliques are not possible gaps. In Keenan and Comrie's (1977) Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy, subjects have the property of being the most accessible position to extract from. In Malay, we see that such a hierarchy is not sufficient to account for the facts on the \emptyset -construction ((15)). Just as there was a dialectal split in the control facts, relative clause constructions also exhibit a difference in speaker judgements. (15b) is ungrammatical for speakers of dialect B, but grammatical for speakers of dialect A.

- 13a. Budak itu **memasak** ikan untuk kucing saya.
Boy the MENG-cook fish for cat 1SPR
The boy cooked the fish for my cat.
- b. Budak itu yang __ **memasak** ikan untuk kucing saya
boy the COMP __ MENG-cook fish for cat 1SPR
The boy who cooked the fish for my cat
- c. *Ikan yang budak itu **memasak** __ untuk kucing saya
fish COMP boy the MENG-cook __ for cat 1SPR
- d. *Kucing saya yang budak itu **memasak** ikan untuk __
cat 1SPR COMP boy the MENG-cook fish for __
- 14a. Ikan **dimasak** oleh budak itu untuk kucing saya.
fish DI-cook by boy the for cat 1SPR
The fish was cooked by the boy for my cat.
- b. Ikan yang __ **dimasak** oleh budak itu untuk kucing saya
fish COMP __ DI-cook by boy the for cat 1SPR
The fish which was cooked by the boy for my cat
- c. *Budak itu yang ikan **dimasak** (oleh) __ untuk kucing saya
boy the COMP fish DI-cook (by) __ for cat 1SPR
- d. *Kucing saya yang ikan **dimasak** oleh budak itu untuk __
cat 1SPR COMP fish DI-cook by boy the for __
- 15a. Ikan awak \emptyset -masak untuk kucing saya.
fish 2SPR \emptyset -cook for cat 1SPR

The fish you cooked for my cat

- b.(A/B*) Ikan yang __ awak Ø-masak untuk kucing saya
 fish COMP __ 2SPR Ø-cook for cat 1SPR
 The fish which you cooked for my cat
- c. *Awak yang ikan __ Ø-masak untuk kucing saya
 2SPR COMP fish __ Ø-cook for cat 1SPR
- d. *Kucing saya yang ikan awak Ø-masak untuk __
 cat 1SPR COMP fish 2SPR Ø-cook for __

It is clear from the data that it is not possible to characterize the eligible gap simply in terms of subjecthood. Neither a passive nor a non-passive treatment of the Ø- construction can explain the facts from dialect B, where despite the constituent being the subject, it cannot be relativized. The only constituent that can in fact be relativized in Malay is the initial *topic* argument. Thus it appears that Keenan and Comrie's Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy needs to be modified to account for these cases where the only noun phrases that can be extracted are from the *topic* position.

3. A Reanalysis of the Facts

Let us first, then, consider how *topic* figures into the syntactic structures of the three constructions that we have been looking at. Under the newly proposed analysis, *meng-* constructions will have the logical subject, grammatical subject, and *topic* converge on the initial argument of the clause -- as a non-passive construction, grammatical subject and logical subject are linked, and as a non-topicalized construction, the logical subject and the *topic* are congruent: e.g. in (1), the initial argument, *Mariam*, is the *topic*, logical subject, and grammatical subject. The *di-* and Ø- constructions ((2a), (6)), in contrast, differ from the *meng-* construction because they share in common the property of being topicalized structures: in both these constructions, it is the logical object, *doktor itu*, that is the *topic*. However, the *di-* and Ø- constructions are different in that while the *di-* construction is a passive structure, the Ø- construction is a non-passive construction. The differences among these three sentences are morphologically marked by the three different verbal prefixes which in effect specify information about the association patterns of the various levels of representation in their lexical entries:

- 16a. *meng-* *topic* = logical subject
 subject = logical subject
- b. *di-* *topic* = logical object
 subject = logical object
- c. Ø- *topic* = logical object
 subject = logical subject

In the entry for *meng-* both the *topic* and the grammatical subject are linked to the logical subject of the clause, making them functionally identical. Similarly, *di-* has both the grammatical subject and *topic* link to the same semantic argument; this time, however, it is the logical object. Finally, in contrast, while the grammatical subject links with the logical object for the Ø- construction, the *topic* aligns with the logical object.

A partial phrase structure grammar is, in addition, necessary for the generation

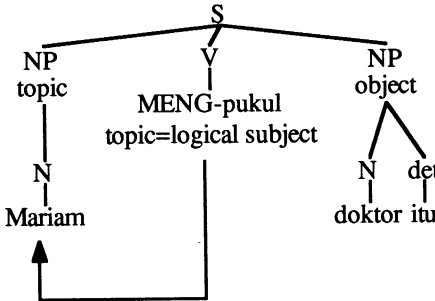
of the three sentence types. The unmarked flat structure is presented, although this in itself is not a crucial feature of the analysis:

17a. S --> NP*, PP, V

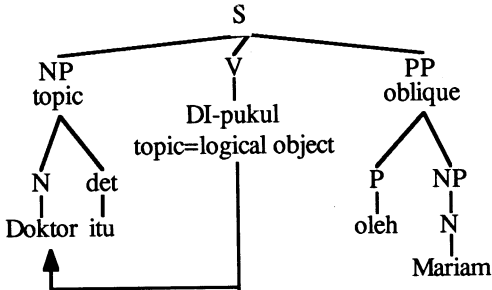
b. *topic* < subject < predicate < object, oblique

This set of phrase structure rules basically state that in any clause, the *topic* precedes all other functions, followed by a subject in the preverbal position, with objects and obliques in the postverbal position. To demonstrate how the grammar outlined above provides structural descriptions of the different sentence types, phrase structure diagrams are given below:

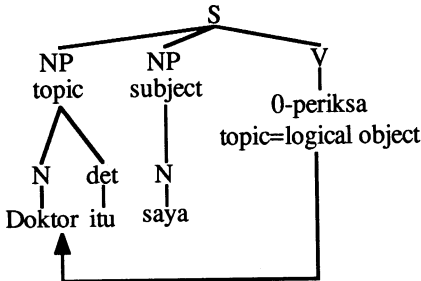
18a.



b.



c.



Let us first consider the equi obligatory control structures from Section 1. Recall that for these structures, neither Chung's passive, nor the traditional non-passive analysis of the \emptyset -construction, sufficed to explain the facts, in particular, the dialectal split. We contend that in order to understand the facts pertaining to control structures in Malay, the assumption about the identity of the control site; which thus far in syntactic theory, has been unerringly characterized as the grammatical subject has to be changed. However, as we have seen from the data, in Malay the controllee cannot merely be characterized as the grammatical subject since we can neither explain dialect B, nor give a reason for the dialectal split. In what follows, we will demonstrate that if, however, we include *topic* as part of the definition of the identity of the control site, we can elegantly and simply explain all the facts of equi in Malay. An explanation of the dialectal difference falls out naturally from the degree of restriction the speakers place on the identity of the control site. For ease of reference, the data from (3), (4), (7), (8), (9) are duplicated below as (19) - (21):

- 19a. Ali menyuruh Mariam [_ memukul doktor itu]
 Ali MENG-ask Mariam [_ MENG-beat doctor the]
 Ali asked Mariam to beat the doctor.
- b. *Ali menyuruh doktor [Mariam memukul _].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor [Mariam MENG-beat _]
 Ali asked the doctor to be beaten by Mariam.
- 20a. Ali menyuruh doktor itu [_ dipukul oleh Mariam].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor the [_ DĪ-beat erg Mariam]
 Ali asked the doctor to be beaten by Mariam.
- b. *Ali menyuruh Mariam [doktor itu dipukul _].
 Ali MENG-ask Mariam [doktor the DĪ-beat _]
 Ali asked Mariam to beat the doctor.

21 Dialect A

- a. Ali menyuruh doktor itu [_ saya periksa].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor the [_ 1SPR \emptyset -examine]
 Ali asked the doctor to be examined by me.
- b. *Ali menyuruh saya [doktor itu _ periksa].
 Ali MENG-ask 1SPR [doctor the _ \emptyset -examine]
 Ali asked me, the doctor, to examine.

Dialect B

- c. *Ali menyuruh doktor itu [_ saya periksa].
 Ali MENG-ask doctor the [_ 1SPR \emptyset -examine]
 Ali asked the doctor to be examined by me.
- d. *Ali menyuruh saya [doktor itu _ periksa].
 Ali MENG-ask 1SPR [doctor the _ \emptyset -examine]
 Ali asked me, the doctor, to examine.

In dialect B, the claim is that the control site must be a grammatical subject which **in addition occupies the *topic* position**. Therefore, the *meng*-construction in (19a) is grammatical because the gap in the lower clause is the grammatical subject occupying *topic* position, while (19b) is ungrammatical because it is the (*non-topic*) grammatical object that is the control site. In (20a), the topicalized grammatical subject partakes as the eligible control site, whereas (20b) is not acceptable because the *non-topic* post-verbal oblique is ineligible as a control site. By saying that it is the grammatical subject in the *topic* position that functions

as the control site, the data for the \emptyset - constructions, in particular, can be very easily explained. In (21c), although the gap is in the *topic* position, it is not a grammatical subject, and hence control cannot take place. In (21d), the situation is reversed -- while the gap is a grammatical subject, it is not a *topic*, and hence cannot qualify as a control site.

The difference between the two dialects, A and B, lies in the way in which the controllee is identified in each of the dialects. While dialect B necessitates that the controllee still be a grammatical subject as well as *topic*, dialect A, on the other hand, simply requires the controllee to be *topic*. Hence for the *meng*- construction in (19a), control is possible because the gap in the lower clause is in the *topic* position, in contrast with (19b), where the gap is in a non-*topic* position. Similarly, for the *di*- constructions in (20), this means that (20a) is an acceptable construction because the control site is in the *topic* position, whereas (20b) is ungrammatical because its gap is the oblique non-*topic* position. And finally, for the \emptyset -constructions, since the controllee in (21a) occupies the *topic* position, it is eligible as a control site. (21b), in contrast, is not a possible construction in dialect A because although the gap is in the subject position, it is not the *topic*, and hence is ineligible for control.

Therefore, the difference in the dialects lies in the difference in the constraints that are operative in each of the dialects:

(22) Dialect A

The only eligible controllee is the *topic* argument.

(23) Dialect B

The only eligible controllee is the grammatical subject which occupies the *topic* position.

Thus, only with the inclusion of *topic* as a necessary condition on the identity of the controllee in equi constructions can the corpus of data be given a unified account; in particular, the facts of dialect B are explained, and a systematic variation can be found for the dialectal difference.

Similarly, with the the *-kah* constructions, all that is needed to explain the fact that the initial argument cannot be questioned in every case is to say that the constituent that is questioned cannot be the *topic*. This follows directly from the definition of *topics*: *topics* are those chunks that are presupposed information that is common knowledge in the context. Therefore, the constituent which occupies the *topic* position cannot be questioned. Put in another way, the constituent that is questioned is the *focus*, i.e. it is the new information that is to be elicited. And since a constituent cannot be both *topic* and *focus* at the same level of clause, it follows that the initial *topic* position cannot be focussed and questioned.

With the introduction of the *topic* function, relativization can be simply explained by stating that the only position that allows extraction is the *topic* position, with the added stipulation that in one dialect, there is an additional constraint put on the *topic*, requiring it to be grammatical subject as well -- this is the case in dialect B. As with the control facts, speakers of this dialect put more restrictive constraints on what can function as the gap in lower clauses. The

grammars of speakers of dialect A simply have *topic* as the only eligible gap.

4. Concluding Remarks

In the preceding section, we see that in order to develop an adequate understanding of Malay syntax and accomplish the analyses of the data presented, *topic* must thus be recognized as a grammaticized function. While many studies have acknowledged the existence of this concept, they have not extended this acknowledgement to show how *topic*, in some languages, can occupy a syntactic role as prominent as that of *subject*. Malay is one such language in which without *topic*, there is clearly a hiatus in our understanding of the syntactic phenomena in that language.

This paper provides convincing evidence that in languages such as Malay, the notion of *topic* is as important to the syntax as the notions of subject and logical subject. The primary theoretical thrust of the paper as a whole is to argue for concept of *topic* as a grammaticized function that must be centrally integrated into the syntax of Malay. Control constructions provide crucial motivation for this, since the identity of the control site must necessarily be defined in terms of *topic*. This conclusion is in turn corroborated by other data on interrogative and relative clause constructions.

Notes

1 Malay is an Austronesian language spoken primarily in the South-East Asian countries of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. It is very closely related to Indonesian, and some of the literature that I refer to is on Indonesian: for the most part, the grammars are very similar.

2 Although essential to sentential syntax, it does not, however, supersede grammatical subject as is suggested by much of the literature on the so-called *topic-oriented* languages (e.g. Schacter 1976). The facts on Malay show that having *topic* alone, without subject, is not sufficient to account for the facts.

3 In addition to this, *oleh* itself is optional, when immediately adjacent to the verb. As mentioned in a previous footnote, there have been alternative analyses of di-. This is, however, beyond the scope of this paper: for a detailed account, see Alsagoff (forthcoming).

4 The exact details as to how the passivization rule is formulated are not relevant to the discussion in this section -- in whatever framework, passivization can be characterized in general terms to involve this change in the pattern of association between the grammatical functions and the thematic roles.

5 Joshi (1989) provides a counter example, and proposes *logical subject* as the controllee in Marathi.

6 It is not possible to say that these sentences are ungrammatical because they contain embedded non-finite clauses which have a fronted constituent, as is the

case with the English sentences:

*Ali asked me [the doctor, _ (to) beat].

These English sentences contain embedded **focussed** constructions, while the \emptyset -construction in Malay is a **topicalized** construction.

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