

Passive Construction of Transitive Verbs in Pulau Rengas Language

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Abstract

This study focuses on examining the passive construction in Pulau Rengas language. The data of this study is the passive construction in sentences uttered by Pulau Rengas natives. The data were collected by doing deep interview and recording techniques. The data were then analyzed by applying the syntax theories focusing on Maggie and Tallerman's. The result of this research shows that passive construction in this language is related to the phonological characteristic of the language itself. Pulau Rengas language is a diphthongal language. This characteristic affects the process of passive construction in this language. While most of language marks the passive verbs morphologically, Pulau Rengas language marks the passive verbs by omitting the prefix of the active verbs. In certain verbs, the passive forms are also marked phonologically depending on the first sound of the verb.

Keywords : *Passive construction, Pulau Rengas, Syntax, Morphosyntax, linguistics*

A. Background of Study

Languages have some universal and specific features. The universal features are the features which are had by all languages in the world such as verb, subject and object. It is undoubted that all languages have verb, subject and object since it had not been found, in

the development of research on syntax, a language which does not have one of those syntactic function. While the verb, subject and object are universally had by world's language, how they are constructed and related in a sentence is obviously different in every language. How the grammatical units of languages differently construct sentences is what the writer means by specific feature.

That languages have different formation of the grammatical units in sentence construction has led the linguists to group them into some types of languages language. The grouping of languages based on the similarities of the basic clause construction such as the positive clause, active clause and declarative clause is also called typology of language. Languages can be grouped based on their similarities of morphological and syntactical construction and based on the words order of the language.

It had been stated that only the basic clause construction becomes the consideration of language typology. It, however, does not mean that other clauses such as passive, negative and interrogative clause are considered less important to be observed. Other construction such as negative clause, interrogative clause and passive clause are regarded as derivational clauses. These derivational clauses are, however, following the typology of their basic clauses construction system.

One of the derivational clauses which is differently constructed in every language is passive clause. Many linguists have stated that passive is found in Accusative-Nominative languages such as Indonesian, English, Minangkabau. On the other side, the anti-passive

is constructed in Ergative-Absolutive languages such as Dyrball, Greenlandic Eskimo and Chamorro. Passive construction or often called as passive voice can be recognized by some signs and characteristics. It can be said that every language has unique passive markers or signs and they are important to be analyzed by linguists. This conception was proposed by Siewirska (in Laanemets) by stating that although most of the world's languages have at least one construction called passive, the difference between the various constructions are quite large.

As languages are used by various speakers around the world, they are also various and unique. One language that the writer finds unique is Pulau Rengas language. Pulau Rengas is a village in Merangin Regency in Jambi Province. As other language must have, Pulau Rengas language also has its uniqueness. The main uniqueness that this language has is diphthong sounds in the final syllable. Besides its phonological uniqueness, it also has a unique passive marker which will be discussed deeply in another part in this writing. Morphosyntactically, the active and passive clause in this language marked differently. Unlike most of Malayan languages which mark the verbs in active clause with prefix *me-* or other nasal affixes variation and prefix *di-* as passive verb marker, Pulau Rengas language marks the verb in active clause intensively instead of the verbs in passive clause.

Having considered that Pulau Rengas language has different and unique passive markers and construction, the writer is interested in describing the construction and marker of passive in Pulau Rengas

language and how it is different from other languages that their passive constructions had already been revealed.

B. Review of Related Literature

This part provides the theories used in analyzing passive construction in Pulau Rengas language.

1. Characteristics of Passive Construction

There are some basic criteria to identify passive. The writer tends to use the criteria proposed by Comrie because it has similarities to the characteristics of passive construction proposed by Tallerman. According to Comrie (in Jufrizal: 2012) there are three criteria for the identification of a passive. The first one is markedness. Formal markedness is divided into three; formal markedness which is more morphological material, direction of derivation, frequency in natural discourse. The second criteria is P-Orientation vs A-Orientation. One of the arguments is permitted to trigger a range of syntactic constructions. The third criteria is absence vs presence of lexico-semantic restriction.

Not only that, he also added that there are other potential factors in determining passive. They are multiple passives, functional passives and impersonal passives.

1. Passive Construction

Jufrizal (2012: 236) stated that in accusative language, the basic clause construction has active diathesis while the derivational clause construction has passive diathesis. The passive is derived from active clause and normally found in accusative language.

Tallerman (1998: 180) had described that basic passive constructions in all languages are formed from transitive verbs. She also stated that the hallmarks of the passive are first that core arguments of a transitive verb-its subject and object- both change their grammatical relations, second, that the verb signals this by changes in its own form. Here are the passive construction patterns proposed by Tallerman:

- a. Applies to a transitive clause (the active clause) and form the intransitive clause (the passive clause)
- b. The object in the active clause is promoted to subject in passive clause
- c. The former subject (in active clause) is demoted to oblique (in passive clause)
- d. Changes occur in Morphology or form of the verb to signal the passivization.

2. Description of Data and Analysis

1. Data and Source of Data

The data in this paper are the passive clauses of Pulau Rengas language which were taken by doing deep interview with three native speakers of Pulau Rengas language. The three native speakers were asked to construct passive clauses from Indonesian to Pulau Rengas Language. Before that, they were firstly asked to construct the active clauses to support their understanding about the passive clauses. There are ten passive clauses with transitive verbs that will be discussed in the next subsection.

2. Data Analysis

In the part of data analysis, the writer is not directly describing how passive clauses are constructed in Pulau Rengas language because of a crucial factor. Data analysis is divided into three parts; active verbs in Pulau Rengas language, passive verbs in Pulau Rengas language and passive construction in Pulau Rengas language.

2.1 Active Construction in Pulau Rengas Language

Even though this paper is focused on describing the passive construction in Pulau Rengas language, the active construction needs also to be observed. It has been stated earlier that Pulau Rengas language marks the verbs in active and passive clause differently. While most Malayan languages mark both active and passive verbs, Pulau Rengas has the active verbs marks but the passive verbs unmarked. Example 1 and 2 below are the examples of active clause in Pulau Rengas language.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|-------|
| (1) Mak | n-anak | nasai |
| Mother | ACT-cook | rice |
| ‘Mother cooks the rice’ | | |
| (2) Pak | ny-alao | ikat |
| Father | ACT-crawls | fish |
| ‘Father crawls fish’ | | |

Both clauses (1) and (2) are passive clauses in Pulau Rengas language. While most languages in Indonesia mark active clause with prefix *me-* such in Minangkabau language, Pulau Rengas language marks the verbs in active clause by prefix *n-* or *ny-*. The use of *n-* or *ny-* depends on the first phoneme of the root itself. In (1), the marker of

verb in active clause is *n-* appears because the root is *tanak*. Prefix *ny-* marks the activeness of the root *jalao*.

Since the examples in (1) and (2) are transitive clause, both clauses have one core two arguments. The core in example (1) is *nanak* (V) and the arguments are *mak* (S) and *nasai*(O). In example (2), the core is *nyalao* (V) and the arguments are *Pak* (S) and *ikat* (O).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that active verbs in Pulau Rengas language are marked by prefix *n-* with its variation *ng-* or *ny-* depending on the first phoneme of the root. This explanation about the active construction in Pulau Rengas language is considered very helpful in understanding its passive construction.

2.2 Passive Construction in Pulau Rengas Language

It has been clearly seen that verbs in active clause are marked by affix *n-*, *ny-* or *ng-*. Now it is time to see how passive clauses are constructed and how the verbs in passive clause are unmarked. The writer prefers to consider this unmarkedness as a uniqueness of this language.

Passive clauses are the derivational clauses of active clauses as the basic clause construction. That is why in analyzing the passive clause construction it is better to always involve the active construction.

- (3) a. Mak n-tanak nasai
 Mother(S) ACT-cook(V) rice (O)
 ‘Mother cooks rice’
 b. Nasai tenek (wek mak)

- Rice(S) ØPAS-cook (by mother)
'Rice is cooked (by mother)'
- (4) a. Makcik ny-esah kakeh
Aunt(S) ACT-washes(V) clothes(O)
'Aunt washes clothes'
- b. Kakeh seseh (wek makcik)
Clothes ØPAS-wash (by aunt)
'Clothes are washed (by aunt)'

The examples (3) and (4) above contain active and passive construction in Pulau Rengas language. The active clauses (3a) and (4a) have transitive verbs and are marked by prefix *n-* and *ny-*. Prefix *n-* are embedded to root *tanak* and prefix *ny-* occurs in root *seseh*.

In the passive clauses (3b) and (4b), it can be seen that passive verbs are not morphologically marked. The verbs which construct the passive form in Pulau Rengas language in (3b) and (4b) are phonologically marked. It can be examined that in passive construction, the verbs omit the prefixes and reform to root by morphological and phonological. The final vocal sounds in each active verb are changing following the first vocal sound. Thus, the omission of prefix and the change of final vocal sound in constructing passive verb can be considered as the first passive verb marker in Pulau Rengas language.

Similar to other passive constructions, related to syntactic process, Subject (S) in active clause is demoted to be an oblique while the Object (O) in active clause is promoted to be Subject (S) in passive clause. This explains why in (3b) rice which is actually an

object (O) in active clause becomes subject (S) in passive clause construction. Meanwhile, mother is no longer the subject in passive clause, caused by the process of demotion. It is now an oblique and marked by preposition *wek* and its presence is optional. The promotion and demotion processes also explain why in (4b) clothes becomes the subject and the presence of *makcik* becomes optional.

The process of promotion and demotion in constructing passive clause, however, change the grammatical relation among the arguments and the core in active and passive clause. In (3a) and (4a), the cores (*nanak* and *nyesah*) have two arguments; *mak* (S) and *nasai*(O), *makcik*(S) and *kakeh*(O). After being processed by promotion and demotion, the numbers of arguments are reduced. The passive clause construction has only one core (*tenek* and *seseh*) and one argument (*nasai* and *kakeh*).

To prove that in Pulau Rengas language passive verbs are marked morphologically and phonologically, the writer wrote other two examples of active and passive clause.

- (5). a. Abang ng-era^{nt} umbu^{nt}
Brother ACT-cut the grass
'Brother cuts the grass'
b. Umbunt kera^{nt} wek abang
The grass Ø-PAS-cut by brother
'The grass is cut by brother'
- (6). a. Ayuk m-eli weju
Sister ACT-buy dress

‘Sister buys dress’

b. Weju beli wek ayuk

Dress Ø-PAS by sister

‘Dress is bought by sister’

Example (5b) and (6b) are slightly different from the previous examples. While in (3b) and (4b) the passive verbs are marked morphologically and phonologically, passive verbs in (5b) and (6b) are marked morphologically. In (5a) the active verb is marked by prefix *ng-* because the first vocoid sound of the root is *k*. In (6b) the active verb is marked by prefix *m-* following by the deletion of sound *b* as the first sound of the root. In constructing passive clause, both *ngeraⁿt* and *meli* are reformed to their root *keraⁿt* and *beli*. In these two examples, the markers of passive verbs are morphologically zero but its process can be explained morphologically.

To support the description and explanation of the examples above, the writer sees that it is necessary to support those examples by involving other two examples of passive clauses in Pulau Rengas language.

(7) a. Mak ny-aiⁿt hawal
Mother ACT-sew trousers
‘Mother sews the trouser’

b. Hawal jeiⁿt wek mak
trouser Ø-PAS-sew by mother
‘Trouser are sewn by mother’

(8) a. Adek ny-apou umah
Sister ACT-sweep house
‘Sister sweeps the floor’

b. Umah sepu wek adek
House Ø-PAS-sweep by sister
'House is swept by sister'

The example (7a) shows that the marker of active verb is prefix *ny-*. Prefix *ny-* is a variation of prefix *n-* which appears because it is followed by the sound *j*. After the derivational process of the clause, where passive is derived from active clause, the verb is no longer marked by prefix *ny-*. As the morphological process in Pulau Rengas passive construction, the passive verb morphologically turns into the root *jeiⁿt*. The similar verb marking and changing process is also happened to active verb *ny-apou* which is reformed to root *sepu* in passive clause.

3. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

After examining the passive clauses of Pulau Rengas language and its process in constructing passive, the writer is led to the conclusion that passive construction in this language is related to the phonological characteristic of the language itself. Pulau Rengas language is a diphthongal language. This characteristic affects the process of passive construction in this language. While most of language marks the passive verbs morphologically, Pulau Rengas language marks the passive verbs by omitting the prefix of the active verbs. In certain verbs, the passive forms are also marked phonologically depending on the first sound of the verb.

2. Suggestion

Considering the uniqueness of Pulau Rengas language, the writer suggests linguists to do a research about this language from various branches of linguistics.

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