Naturalness of verbs in Kupang Malay language

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Abstract---This paper investigates the naturalness of verbs in Kupang Malay Language (KML). It is introductory research that aims at knowing which verb is more natural: active verbs or passive verbs. The researcher conducted the current study using Morphological Naturalness (MN) Theory proposed by Mayerthaler (1981). Data of KML were taken randomly from *Alkitab Bahasa Kupang, Tapaleuk* column in *Pos Kupang* Newspaper, and directly from KML speakers. After gaining data, it was discussed using the descriptive qualitative method. The finding of the current research is as follows. Most active verbs in KML have got morphological markedness while passive verbs have not got markedness at all. Therefore, it is stated that passive verbs in KML are more natural than active verbs. The finding of the current research is proposed to be a pilot project in investigating the origin of KML, as an Austronesia language.
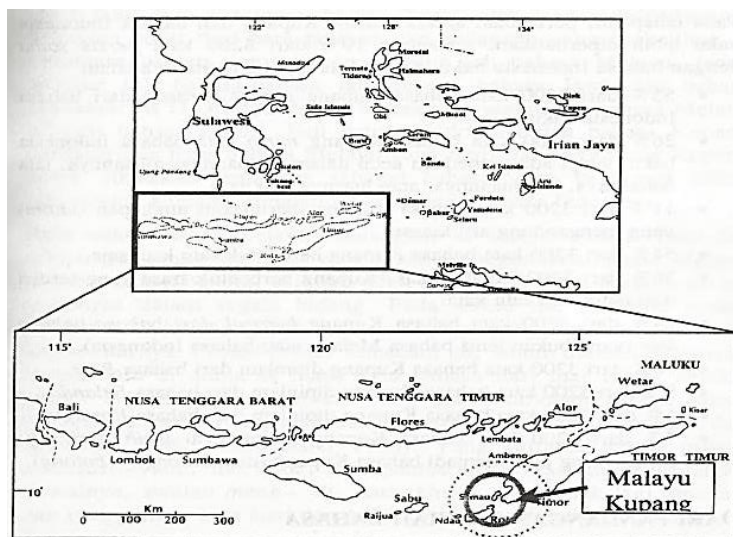**Keywords---**morphology, naturalness, verbs, Kupang, Malay language.

Introduction

Figure 1. Source: Jacob J, Charles E. Grimes, (2003). *Kamus Pengantar Bahasa Kupang: Edisi Kedua.* Kupang: Artha Wacana Press.

Kupang Malay Language (KML) is used as the first language or the second language in East Nusa Tenggara Province (Latupeirissa, 2017; Alias *et al.*, 2015; Aman *et al.*, 2014; Arroyo *et al.*, 2007). Scientifically, KML is a creole language[*] (Jacob & Grimes, 2003) used by most people around the capital city of East Nusa Tenggara Province (Latupeirissa, 2016). It is counted as the Austronesian language (Blust, 1978, 1993; Grimes, 2000; Grimes *et al.*, 1997; Grimes, 2000). Following is a language map that shows the use of KML in East Nusa Tenggara Province. There is only view written data can be found. Therefore, the linguistic investigation of this language is extremely needed.

Based on that opinion, the researcher conducted a study of KML language. The study is focused on the morphological aspect, which is to know which verb is more natural; active verb or passive verb.

Theoretical review

The current research applied the theory of *Morphological Naturalness (MN)* Theory. MN Theory proposes that what is cognitively easy for the potential language user is also easily accessible, especially to children and consequently universally preferred (Dressler & Karpf, 1995; Mahamod *et al.*, 2009; Nothofer, 2006; Ramli *et al.*, 2015). This theory is based on the fact that some things are easier to handle (for the human brain) than others. For example, regular forms of English verbs are easier than irregular forms. Next, the notion of naturalness is explained by naturalists in relation to the extralinguistic foundations of language, such as psychological limitations of perception and receptive processing, limitations of memory and restrictions on storage and retrieval of information (Wurzel, 1994; John, 2015; Kimura *et al.*, 2008; Mahamod *et al.*, 2010). It represents a central concept in the understanding of natural languages.

During the last decades, "natural" has often been used by linguists in an inductive or even anecdotal way as a synonym of "intuitively plausible" or of "cross-linguistically frequent," in reference to both synchrony and diachronic change (Dressler, 2003; Bowden, 2005; Iacob & Grimes, 2011; Jacob & Grimes, 2011). Furthermore, the primary aims of naturalness are: *First*, to investigate the intuitive feeling of greater or lesser linguistic ease in a principled fashion. *Second*, to elaborate and incorporate in theoretical framework (of cognitive psychology). *Third*, to apply the result to all aspects of a dynamic theory of grammar. Therefore, the main principles of naturalness is 'more or less easy for the human brain'.

There are some abbreviations and notations in MN as follows.
u = unmarked
m = marked
M = overmarked

$\overset{>}{m}$ = more marked/ more marked than

$\overset{<}{m}$ = less marked

$\overset{>}{m} \longrightarrow \overset{<}{m}$ = marked becomes less marked/ marked

$\overset{<}{m} \overset{>}{\rightarrow} \overset{}{m}$ = markedness increase

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[*] Most of creole languages are endangered language (Frank, 2007). Therefore, as a creole language, KML has to be investigated as well as documented.

The keyword of this theory is "the less markedness of a language, the more natural that language is". In the context of this research, the less markedness of verb (active or passive verb), the more natural that verb is.

Problem

The problem of the current research, as has been stated, is related to the investigation of the naturalness of KML. It is questioned which verb is more natural; active verbs of the passive verb.

Aim

The current research aims at investigating the naturalness of KML. As an introductory study, the researcher, as has been stated in the background, only focuses on the investigation of KML verbs. The finding is hoped to be supporting materials that enrich the descriptive information/references for KML. Furthermore, The finding of the current research is proposed to be a pilot project in investigating the origin of KML, as an Austronesia language.

Method

Data were gained from several sources. First, they were gained from *Alkitab Bahasa Kupang* that translated by Grimes & Jacob (2003) and Wilts *et al.*, 2014; Yehoshua *et al.*, 2011. Second, they were taken from *Tapaleuk* column in *Pos Kupang* Newspaper, and the third was from KML native speakers (interview).

The researcher randomly took some clauses that contain both active verbs and passive verbs from (1) KML Bible or (2) *Tapaleuk* Column, and (3) conversation of KML native speakers. Next, the method applied in describing data was the descriptive qualitative method. Denzin & Lincoln (2011), claim that qualitative research involves an *interpretive and naturalistic* approach. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. That is why this method is appropriate in describing the investigation of the naturalness of KML verbs.

Discussion

In this part, the researcher presents data and then discusses it. Data that was taken from *Alkitab Bahasa Kupang* (2007) and *Tapaleuk* column are divided into two groups. They are: first, the group of ten clauses with active verbs, second, the group of 10 clauses with passive verbs. The verbs in each clause were underlined and then analyzed.

Active verbs

Following is a group of ten clauses that contain active verbs (underlined).

(1) *Yesus bajalan pi*
Name walk part
Jesus walked

(2) *Dong badiri di tana rata*
3Pl stand prep ground flat
They stood in a flat ground

(3) *Yesus maso pi dalam rumah*
Name enter go prep house
Jesus entered the house

(4) *Dong ada bakumpul ko samba Tuhan*
3Pl   part gather   prep worship God
They gathered to worship God

(5) *Abis bapamit deng tua- tua Kristen dong…..*
Prep farewell prep elders name part
After farewell to the Christian elders….

(6) *badame deng basong*
Make   peace prep 2pl
Make peace to you

(7) *Basong bakatumu na…*
2pl   meet   prep
You meet so….

(8) *Basayang satu deng satu*
Love   one   prep one
Love each other

(9) *Orang dong manyanyi lagu*
3pl   part sing   song
They sang a song

(10) *Balari pi itu tarang*
Run   prep det light
Run to the light

Passive verbs

Following is a group of ten clauses with passive verbs. It is presented to be an analysis base.

(1) *Dia kana salib*
3sing get crucified
He was crucified

(2) *Su jadi bae*
Mod heal
Have been healed

(3) *Paulus dapa puku*
Name get punch
Paul was punched

(4) *Orang musti dapa sunat*
People must get   circumcised
Men must be circumcised

(5) Ma ada yang kana siksa…
Prep part det get persecute
But some of them were persecuted

(6) Basong kana tipu (p. 61
   2pl   get   lie
   You were lied

(7) Katong dapa salamat
   1pl   get   save
   We were saved

(8) kana gepe dong pung kaki
   get shackle 2pl poss foot
   Their foot was shackled

(9) Dong kana lempar sampe mati
   3pl   get   throw prep death
   They were stoned to death

(10) Dong kana bunu deng kalewang
    3pl   get   kill   prep sword
    They were killed by sword

The naturalness of active verbs and passive verbs in KML

In this section, the researcher describes the group of verbs. As stated, it is described based on MN Theory.

Active verbs

(1) *'Bajalan'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'jalan'.* In MN, this can be notated as follows:

   'jalan' ⟶ *'bajalan'*
     u   ⟶   m
    As 'u ⟶ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

(2) *'Badiri'* is a verb stem. This can be notated as follows:

   'Badiri' ⟶ *'Badiri'*
     u   ⟶   u
    As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this active verb, this verb can be said as natural verb.

(3) *'Maso'* is a verb stem. This can be notated as follows:

   'Maso' ⟶ *'Maso'*
     u ⟶   u
    As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this active verb, this verb can be said as natural verb.

(4) *'Bakumpul'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'kumpul'.* In MN, this can be notated as follows:

   'kumpul' ⟶ *'bakumpul'*
     u   ⟶   m
    As 'u ⟶ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

(5) *'Bapamit'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'pamit'.* In MN, this can be notated as follows:

'pamit' ——→*'bapamit'*

u ——→ m

As 'u ——→ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

(6) *'Badame'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'dame'.* In MN, this can be notated as follows:

'dame' ——→ *'badame'*

u ——→ m

As 'u ——→ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

(7) *'Bakatumu'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'katumu'.* In MN, this can be notated as follows:

'katumu'——→ *'bakatumu'*

u ——→ m

As 'u ——→ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

(8) *'Basayang'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'sayang'.* In MN, this can be notated as follows:

'sayang'——→ *'basayang'*

u ——→ m

As 'u ——→ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

(9) *'Manyanyi'* is a stem. This can be notated as follows:

'Manyanyi' ——→*'Manyanyi'*

u ——→ u

As 'u ——→ u' appears in this active verb, this verb can be said as natural verb.

(10) *'Balari'* is a lexicon that marked by prefix *ba-,* since the stem of this verb is *'lari'*. In MN, this can be notated as follows:

'lari'——→ *'balari'*

u ——→ m

As 'u ——→ m' appears in this active verb, this verb is less natural.

Passive Verbs

(1) *'Kana salib'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'kana'* and *'salib'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'Kana'* is 'u' while *'salib'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:
'Kana salib' ——→ *'Kana salib'*

u ——→ u

As 'u ——→ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(2) *'Jadi bae'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'jadi'* and *'bae'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'jadi'* is 'u' while *'bae'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:
'Jadi bae' ——→ *'Jadi bae'*

u ——→ u

As 'u ——→ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(3) *'Dapa puku'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'Dapa'* and *'puku'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'Dapa'* is 'u' while *'puku'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Dapa puku' ⟶ *'Dapa puku'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(4) *' Dapa sunat'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'Dapa'* and *'sunat'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'dapa'* is 'u' while *'sunat'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Dapa sunat' ⟶ *'Dapa sunat'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(5) *'Kana siksa'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'kana'* and *'siksa'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'kana'* is 'u' while *'siksa'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Kana siksa' ⟶ *'Kana siksa'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(6) *'Kana tipu'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'kana'* and *'tipu'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'kana'* is 'u' while *'tipu'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Kana tipu' ⟶ *'Kana tipu'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(7) *'Dapa salamat'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'Dapa'* and *'salamat'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'Dapa'* is 'u' while *'salamat'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Dapa salamat' ⟶ *'Dapa salamat'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(8) *'Kana gepe'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'kana'* and *'gepe'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'kana'* is 'u' while *'gepe'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Kana gepe' ⟶ *'Kana gepe'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(9) *'Kana lempar'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'kana'* and *'lempar'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'kana'* is 'u' while *'lempar'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Kana lempar' ⟶ *'Kana lempar'*
      u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

(10) *'Kana bunu'* consists of two lexicons. They are *'kana'* and *'bunu'*. Those two lexicons have no markedness. *'kana'* is 'u' while *'bunu'* is also 'u'. This can be notated as follows:

'Kana bunu' ⟶ *'Kana bunu'*

u ⟶ u

As 'u ⟶ u' appears in this verb, it can be said that this passive verb is natural.

Data of active verbs that contains ten clauses shows that most of the verbs are less natural since most of them are marked by prefix *ba-* as in *(1) bajalan, (4) bakumpul, (5) bapamit, (6) badame, (7) bakatumu, (8) basayang, and (10) balari.* Only (2) *badiri*, (3) *maso* and (9) *manyanyi* stand as a stem that can be used inactive form.

The following figure shows how the passive verb of KML is more natural than the active verb.
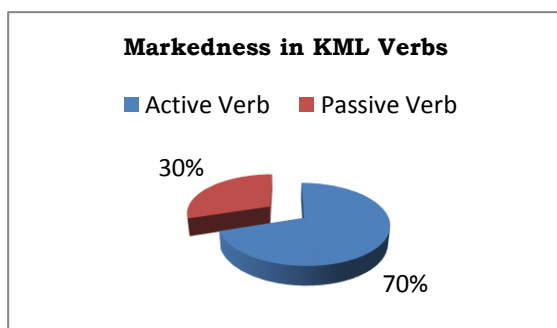

Figure 2. The Markedness in KML Verbs

In Figure 2, it is seen that active verbs in KML are more marked than passive verbs. There is 70 % markedness of the active verbs while the passive verbs have only 30 % markedness. In other words, most of the active verbs in KML is less natural. It can be seen in Figure 3.
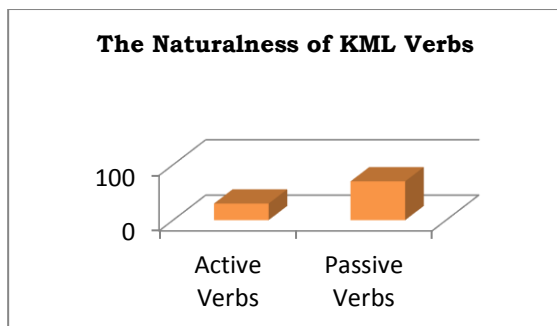

Figure 3. The Naturalness of KML Verbs

Data of passive verbs that also contains ten clauses show that no one of the verbs is marked. Data (1) to data (10) show that in constructing passive form, KML does not need affixation. It needs a lexicon only. For a while, it can be said that in constructing passive, KML uses lexicon *'kana'* or *'dapa'* in front of a verb. Those two lexicons are also verbs. The

researcher assumes that '*kana*' and '*dapa*' can be called as modal. However, further research about the naturalness of passive verbs using more data in KML is recommended.

Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion above, the researcher concludes that passive verbs in KML are more natural than active verbs in KML since data show that from ten active clauses, seven of them are not natural (marked) while all passive clauses are natural (not marked). However, since data taken is only ten, further research using more data is recommended.

Acknowledgments

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