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## **Ternate Malay : grammar and texts**

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### 3 Categorization of lexical items

Words in Ternate Malay generally do not show any formal features to indicate gender, number, time or grammatical role. Each word may serve any grammatical function. In such a situation, the linguistic context and the non-linguistic situation determine which function a word fulfils and how it is best interpreted. Frequent appearance in certain combinations and constructions determines which functional interpretation of a particular lexical item comes to mind first. Particular lexical items with only grammatical functions and certain constraints may serve as useful devices to delimit the interpretation of the function of lexical items in their immediate environment. Speakers use these strategies to come to an appropriate interpretation and achieve a successful communication.

The flexibility of words in function and meaning found in this language makes it difficult to apply the linguistic tools traditionally used to distinguish between word categories. Words fulfil certain functions: some are frequently used to express a lexical meaning, while others are used to serve a grammatical function. Yet another group of words may play both roles: in some contexts, the lexical aspect is more prominent, while in other contexts the grammatical function is more salient.

Depending on the context and the situation in which it occurs, an utterance consisting of two words, for example *Udin tinggi* may be interpreted in different ways. In one reading, *Udin* (personal name) and *tinggi* 'high' are interpreted as two distinct elements, serving different syntactic functions, expressing the meaning 'Udin is tall'. In another reading *Udin tinggi* is considered to be one constituent, reflecting the meaning 'the tall Udin'. There are no formal characteristics that indicate whether the utterance consists of one or two syntactic elements. Prosodic features may be helpful to determine whether the structure and the border between constituents may be indicated, for instance by a slight pause or a particular intonation pattern. A prosodic analysis of Ternate Malay would be an important next research project comparable to Stoel's (2005) study on focus in Manado Malay. I have not been able to include a prosodic analysis here.

Certain items may help to determine the structure and to achieve the most appropriate interpretation. The possessive marker *pe* appears in constructions in which it is preceded and followed by a word. The first element in the construction refers to the possessor, while the second element refers to the possessum. In such a linguistic context, any word or construction preceding or following *pe* expresses *de facto* a nominal meaning. The head in this type of constructions always follows *pe*. Thus the Y *pe* X sequence is automatically parsed as a constituent.

My theoretical approach here is inspired by David Gil's analysis of Riau Malay (Gil 1994, 2000). Ternate Malay is similar to Riau Malay in that the word classes are extremely flexible. Gil (1994) shows that a classic analysis making use of word classes would entail pervasive use of zero-conversion, and the same would apply to

Ternate Malay. His proposal is not to distinguish underlying syntactic categories but to distinguish for each word, interpretations as event, state, time, place, thing and possible others, and the interpretation of combinations of words is determined by the combination of interpretations of the individual words. This book can be seen as an attempt to show how such an analysis works for a more or less complete treatment of the grammar of Ternate Malay.

Words are considered here to belong not to a pre-determined word class, but to have an inherent prototypical meaning. In the combination with other words and when serving a particular syntactic function, the type and the meaning becomes clearer. A constituent is a word or a group of words that serves a syntactic function. When it serves as predicate, it has a verbal function, when it refers to a thing, it serves a nominal function, and when it expresses a property, the word has an adjectival function. Certain words may facilitate the interpretation of the parsing of constituents and help the determination of semantic roles of constituents. Semantic roles express the relationship between constituents and the predicate. The structure of predicates and relations with other constituents is discussed in chapter 7.

In § 3.1 various aspects of flexibility of words are described. In § 3.2 I discuss how combinations of words result in an interpretation depending on the interpretation of the function of the constituting elements and specifically when one of them has a purely grammatical function.

### 3.1 Flexibility

Words in Ternate Malay may serve different syntactic functions and express various meanings without showing any change in their formal shape. When words do change their shape, for instance through a morphological process, the resultant word may have a slightly different meaning, but similar to their bases, these complex words are also able to serve various syntactic functions. Three aspects of the flexibility of words in Ternate Malay are discussed here: semantic flexibility, syntactic flexibility, as well as morphological flexibility, and it is shown that neither syntactic nor morphological features of words can be used as tools to determine word categories. In the glosses it is indicated whether a word is interpreted in its nominal function [N] or in its verbal function [V].

#### 3.1.1 Semantic flexibility

In this paragraph, I show how words may express different meanings depending on the context in which they occur. In some cases, the linguistic context leads to an appropriate interpretation, while in other cases the combination of words remains open for various interpretations, and non-linguistic circumstances may be needed in order to determine which of the interpretations is most appropriate.

Examples (1) and (2) show that a word can refer to a thing as well as to an action or activity without showing any formal distinctions. The difference arises because of the different syntactic function.

The word *gigi* may have two referents: it may refer to an object or thing (tooth, teeth) or it denotes an action or activity (bite), depending on its syntactic function. In combination with the third person singular pronoun *de*, it forms the construction *de gigi*. This construction may have different meanings, depending on the interpretation of the structure. When the construction is interpreted as a possessive construction of which *de* is the possessor and *gigi* is the possessum, expressing the meaning ‘his/her/its tooth/teeth’, *gigi* is interpreted as a thing with the meaning ‘tooth, teeth’ (See § 4.3.4 for more examples of this type of possessive constructions).

When the construction is interpreted as consisting of two constituents with two different syntactic functions and *de gigi* represents the meaning ‘he/she/it bites/bite’, *gigi* can be interpreted as an activity with the meaning ‘bite’. Note that there is no overt marking for person, gender, time, etc. on the activity word to help the interpretation.

Example (1) is taken from a story about a crocodile that has killed a dog and describes this event. In this situation, an interpretation of *gigi* as an activity and *de gigi* expressing the meaning ‘it bit’ seems to be appropriate. The construction *ilang spanggal* ‘(lit.) disappear part’ is interpreted as consisting of two constituents: *ilang* serves as the predicate, expressing a verbal meaning ‘disappears’, *spanggal* is interpreted as subject and the entity that has disappeared. The construction *ilang spanggal* then expresses the meaning ‘a part was gone’.

In another situation, for instance when describing a person’s appearance or condition, the expression *de gigi* could represent a possessive meaning. In such a case, *gigi* is interpreted as a thing and *ilang spanggal* would describe the condition of *de gigi* ‘his tooth’, i.e. that a part of it is missing. The utterance *de gigi ilang spanggal* then means ‘part of his tooth is missing’.

In the first part of example (2) the word *karung* ‘sack’ functions as a predicate. It expresses a verbal meaning and refers to an activity; *dia karung* then expresses the meaning ‘he puts (it) in a sack’. The same word *karung* with the same shape appears in the construction *karung strep* ‘striped sack’. The structure of this construction is interpreted as consisting of a head *karung*, which is modified by *strep*. It refers to the thing used to perform the activity expressed in the predicate, and receives a nominal meaning. The word *karung* may represent two (or more) different meanings without changing its shape.

- (1)            *de      gigi      ilang      spanggal.*  
                  3SG   1. bite   disappear   part  
                             2. tooth

1. *he bit and a part was gone.*

2. *a part of his tooth was missing.*

- (2)            *baru   dia   karung   pake   karung   strep,...*  
                  CONJ 3SG sack.[V]   use   sack.[N]   stripe

...and he put him in a striped sack,...

The following small fragment shows how a newly introduced word is used in daily speech. The speaker utters a sentence and realizes that he uses a new word and explains where the word comes from and how the word is used. The examples show how this newly introduced word immediately represents various lexical meanings without any overt marking on the word.

A few months before the conversation, a murder had taken place. The suspect was a man from the island of Flores who was accused of killing a woman with a sword. After this event, both the words *sabel* ‘sword’ as well as the word *flores* came into use. Example (3) follows a conversation about what could happen if a man is married to a boxer. It is said that if the boxer loves her husband she will not hit him. However, there may be a moment when he makes a mistake. Then it is better for him to run away to avoid being hit. In example (3) the word *flores* is firstly introduced and occurs in combination with *biking*. The combination of *biking flores* can be interpreted in two ways: *flores* can be interpreted as an activity referring to an action or it can be interpreted as a thing, namely the act or the performance of the action or activity. When *flores* in *biking flores* is interpreted as a thing, the construction *biking flores* means something like ‘make, commit a murder’. If *flores* is interpreted as an activity, *biking flores* can be interpreted as a causative expression meaning ‘make someone murder someone’. The second interpretation with *flores* interpreted as an activity seems to be appropriate in this context. In example (3b) *flores* is part of *istila “flores”* and serves an adjectival function.

In example (3c) *flores* serves as a predicate and refers to an activity. The performer of the action is *kita* ‘first person singular’ while *ngana* expresses the patient who undergoes the action. It is preceded by *pa* ‘to’, a grammatical element to indicate the undergoer of an action or serving some other function. In examples (3d) and (3f) the speaker explains the origin of the term. In example (3f) *Flores* serves as the modifier of *orang* ‘person’, resulting in the construction *orang Flores* ‘a Flores person’ or ‘a person from Flores’, in which the adjectival function is more prominent. Example (3g) is similar to (3c), in which *flores* serves as a predicate and has to be interpreted as an activity.

- (3) A: jang dong **biking flores**.  
 don’t 3PL make Flores.[V]  
*don’t let them kill you.*
- (3b) A: skarang ana-ana su pake istila **“flores”**.  
 now PL-child COMP use term Flores.[A]  
*now the guys use the term “flores”.*
- (3c) A: “kita **flores** pa ngana satu kali kong...”  
 1SG Flores.[V] to 2SG one time CONJ  
*“one time I’ll “flores” you.”*

- (3d) A: kan peristiwa bunu di atas tu tara...  
 QT incident kill in above that NEG  
*the murder case up there, right...*
- (3e) B: oh.  
 EXCL  
*right.*
- (3f) A: orang **Flores** yang bunu to?  
 person Flores.[A] REL kill QT  
*the murderer was a person from Flores, right?*
- (3g) A: kita **flores** pa ngana kong ngana...  
 1SG Flores.[V] to 2SG CONJ 2SG  
*I'm going to "flores" you and you're going to...*

### 3.1.2 Syntactic flexibility

The meaning of a word is determined by the context in which it occurs. Changing the context of a word may cause a change in the syntactic function of the word and a change in the meaning, without any change in formal shape. This flexibility has been exemplified in example (2) where *karung* in combination with *dia* serves as a predicate and results in the construction *dia karung* 'he puts (it) in a sack', expressing a verbal meaning, and *karung* refers to an activity. When *karung* is combined with *strep* it results in the construction *karung strep* 'striped sack' of which *karung* is the head and has a nominal meaning, referring to a thing. In this construction, *strep* is used as a modifier with an adjectival meaning. When this construction follows *pake* 'use' it may refer to the undergoer or the theme of the action *pake*. The syntactic flexibility of words and word constructions precludes the use of syntactic properties to define word categories for each individual word.

Words such as *nama* 'name', *kunci* 'key', and *kuli* 'skin' may refer to a thing as well as to an activity, depending on the linguistic context in which they occur. In example (4) *nama* participates in a Y *pe* X construction *dia pe nama* 'her name'. In this construction, *nama* appears in the X position and refers to the possessum which expresses *de facto* a thing. Note that in this equational sentence, the name Sri acts as a predicate and has to be interpreted in its verbal meaning, expressing the meaning 'be Sri'. In example (5) *kunci* 'key' is the theme of the activity *ambe* 'take' and is interpreted to refer to a thing. In example (6) *kuli* 'skin' is the head of the construction which is modified by *ular* 'snake', resulting in the construction *kuli ular* 'snake skin', referring to a thing and serving as the stimulus of the activity expressed in *lia* 'see'. Note that the interpretation of the construction *kuli ular* is a possessive interpretation 'the skin of a snake' or 'snake skin'.

- (4)            dia    pe        **nama**    Sri    to?  
               3SG   POSS   name.[N]   Sri   QT  
               *her name is Sri, right?*

- (5)            ambe   **kunci**   lagi    to?  
               take   key.[N]   again   QT  
               *he took the key again, right?*

- (6)            kita    lia    **kuli**        ular...  
               1SG   see   skin.[N]   snake...  
               *I saw a snake skin...*

In the following examples, the same words of examples (4) through (6) appear, but here they act as predicate expressing a verbal meaning. Despite the change in syntactic function, the items maintain their formal shape, and are identical to those in the examples above. In example (7) *nama* serves as the predicate and the verbal meaning ‘have/bear the name’ is more prominent, while *kapala skola* ‘headmaster’ serves as the subject. In example (8) *kunci* serves as a predicate expressing the verbal meaning ‘lock’. There are no formal characteristics that differentiate between this interpretation of *kunci* ‘lock’ and that of *kunci* ‘key’ in example (5). It is the context and situation of example (8) in which *kunci* occurs which determines that interpreting *kunci* as an activity is the most appropriate interpretation. The structure of example (9) can be analyzed in various ways. When *tabal* is interpreted as the predicate ‘be thick’, and *buaya kuli* as being one constituent with a possessive construction where *kuli* acts as the possessum<sup>8</sup> and *buaya* as the possessor, then example (9) reflects the meaning ‘the crocodile’s skin is thick’. In another reading, *kuli tabal* could be interpreted as one constituent consisting of the head *kuli* modified by *tabal*, resulting in *kuli tabal* ‘thick skinned’, and acting as the modifier of the head *buaya*. In such a reading, *buaya kuli tabal* reflects the meaning ‘thick-skinned crocodile’ in which *kuli tabal* expresses an adjectival interpretation. Note that the construction *kuli tabal* could be interpreted as a (relative) clause in which *kuli* is the subject and *tabal* is the predicate, resulting in a meaning of *buaya kuli tabal* as ‘(it was) a crocodile of which the skin is thick’. These are only a few interpretations. It is clear that depending on how the structure is determined, both a verbal interpretation and an adjectival interpretation of *kuli tabal* are possible.

- (7)            kapala   skola   **nama**    Pak    Salim   [...]  
               head    school   name.[V]   EPIT   Salim   [...]  
               *the headmaster is called Mr. Salim.*

<sup>8</sup> It is not clear whether this interpretation is possible or whether there are restrictions with regard to the possessor in this type of possessive constructions. In § 4.3.4 only examples of possessor + possessum constructions with a human possessor are given.



- (8)           untung   dong   **kunci**   pintu,   **kunci**   jendela.  
           luck     3PL   key.[V]   door   key.[V]   window  
           *luckily they locked the door and locked the windows.*

- (9)           buaya     **kuli**     **tabal.**  
           crocodile   skin.[V]   thick  
           *the crocodile had a thick skin.*

In the discussion of example (9) there are two possible interpretations of *kuli tabal*. In one interpretation, *tabal* is interpreted as the modifier of the head *kuli* reflecting the meaning ‘thick skin’, while when *tabal* is interpreted as a predicate *kuli tabal* reflects ‘the skin is thick’. There are no overt markers that determine a clear-cut distinction between the two structures. The larger linguistic context and the situation may indicate which structure is more appropriate, while in some cases it may remain vague.

In example (10) *basar* ‘big’ occurs as a constituent in its own respect and acts as the predicate while *ikang ini* ‘this fish’ acts as the subject. Note that *ini* serves as the boundary of the constituent. In example (11) the subject about which information is provided is *ngana pe rambu* ‘your hair’, while *mera* ‘red’ as well as *panjang* ‘long’ serve as predicates and describe the subject. Note that *mera* in the construction *ngana pe rambu mera* could be analyzed differently as being the modifier of *rambu*, so that *rambu mera* is the X element in the construction. In example (12) *muda* ‘young’ acts as a predicate and describes a person called *Aba*. The predicate is preceded by *masi*, an item that indicates continuity and precedes predicates. Note that words such as *ini* in example (10) and *masi* in example (12) facilitate an interpretation of *basar* and *muda* respectively as constituents in their own right, acting as predicates. *Ini* is posited at the end of a constituent and indicates the border with the following constituent, while *masi* always serves as a predicate operator and precedes the predicate.

- (10)           “o,     ikang   ini   **basar.**”  
           EXCL   fish    this   big.[V]  
           *“oh, this fish is big.”*
- (11)           “[...]   ngana   pe     rambu   **mera,**   **panjang.**”  
                   2SG    POSS   hair    red.[V]   long.[V]  
           *“[...] you had long, red hair.” ((Lit.) “your hair was red, long.”)*
- (12)           Aba   masi   **muda.**  
           Aba   still   young.[V]  
           *Aba was still young.*

In the following examples, property words are used in such a way that they refer to a thing or object. In example (13) *kuning* ‘yellow’ acts as an independent entity and immediately follows the predicate *lia* ‘see’ referring to the stimulus of the activity expressed in *lia* ‘see’. *Kita* is the experiencer. In example (14) the speaker describes the pain he felt after being hit by the teacher. In this example, *pedis* ‘spicy, stinging’ occurs as the second element in a Y *pe* X possessive construction, in which position it has *de facto* a nominal meaning, expressing the meaning ‘spiciness’ or in the situation of this example it expresses ‘stinging pain’. These examples show that the principle of syntactic functions does not work in determining the word category of a word.

- (13)            de    pe    lapas,    kita    lia    **kuning**.  
                  3SG   POSS   let.loose   1SG   see   yellow.[N]  
                  *the moment he withdraws his hand, everything is yellow.*

- (14)            de    pe    **pedis**    sampe    sini,    sampe    sini.  
                  3SG   POSS   spicy.[N]   arrive   here   arrive   here  
                  *you feel the pain here and here.*

### 3.1.3 Morphological flexibility

Morphological processes in Ternate Malay are not a useful device to distinguish between word categories, because these processes can be applied to various types of words and the resultant words of these morphological processes show the same syntactic as well as semantic flexibility as any other word. The prefixation with *ba-* is an example of this morphological flexibility.

The following examples show how the process of prefixation with *ba-* can be applied to various type of words: words that may prototypically refer to things, activities and actions as well as to properties and characteristics. In these examples, all the resulting *ba*-words serve as predicates and express a verbal meaning. In the second series of examples, it is shown that *ba*-words may also serve other syntactic functions and express other meanings. More on productive morphological processes is found in § 5.3.

In example (15) the prefix *ba-* is attached to *sapu* ‘broom’, a word that may, amongst others, refer to a thing. In this example *basapu* is used predicatively and denotes an activity in which a *sapu* is used as an instrument. The *ba*-word *bajatong* of example (16) consists of the prefix *ba-* and *jatong* ‘fall’. In this example it serves as the predicate and contains a reflexive meaning aspect ‘to fall by oneself’. In example (17) the *ba*-prefix is attached to *itang* ‘black’, resulting in *baitang*. This word serves as the predicate and expresses the verbal meaning ‘be blackish’, describing that the colour of the chest has a somewhat black colour but it is not completely black, namely it is turning black.

- (15)        kita   **ba-sapu,**        cuci   piring.  
               1SG   USE-broom.[V]   wash   plate  
               *I was sweeping, washing the dishes.*
- (16)        de   **ba-jatong**        dari   atas   seng.  
               3SG   REFL-fall.[V]   from   top   zinc  
               *he let himself fall from the zinc roof.*
- (17)        satu   hari   de   minum   sampe   dada   **ba-itang,**        angos.  
               one   day   3SG   drink   arrive   chest   POSS-black.[V]   burnt  
               *one day he drank until his chest became black, burnt.*

In the above mentioned examples, all the *ba*-words serve as predicates and express an activity or a process. Similar to other words, *ba*-words may serve any other syntactic function, for example they may occur as the subject or topic about which a statement is made, and refer to the act of the performance, such as a *Y pe X* possessive construction in which the elements *de facto* denote a thing, as well as express the manner in which an action or activity is performed. In a different context and serving different functions, *ba*-words express other meanings. Morphological processes, such as prefixation with *ba-*, are not useful tools for the categorization of words.

In example (18) *baisap* ‘to smoke’ acts as the subject about which the statement *jalan trus* ‘(lit.) walk continue’ is made. In this context *baisap* denotes the act or performance of smoking, a thing, rather than an activity. Note that in this example *jalan* is used predicatively and expresses an activity ‘to walk’. In this context and situation it expresses the meaning ‘continue’. In example (19) *bajalang* ‘walk’ is part of a *Y pe X* possessive construction. In such a construction, *bajalang* receives a nominal reading and the word refers to a thing, so that *kita pe bajalang* expresses the meaning ‘my walking’. Serving as the subject *kita pe jalang bagini* reflects the meaning ‘my walking is like this’. Note that the second word *bajalang* in this example serves as a predicate with the verbal meaning ‘walk’. In example (20) *basuntik* ‘inject’ follows the head noun *orang* ‘person’ and serves as its modifier, resulting in the construction *orang basuntik* ‘vaccinated people’ or ‘people who are coming to be vaccinated’. It serves as the subject and is followed by the predicate *tar sadiki* ‘not a little’. In example (21) *badiang* ‘be quiet’ follows *dudu* ‘sit’. In this example, *badiang* serves to modify *dudu* and denotes the manner *dudu* ‘sit’ is performed. This wide range of functions and meanings of *ba*-words shows that prefixation with *ba-* cannot be used as a device to determine word categories.

- (18)        tapi   **ba-isap**        jalan   trus.  
               but   HAB-suck.[N]   walk   continue  
               *but smoking continues.*

- (19)      kita    pe      **ba-jalang**      bagini,    sebe    ba-jalang    ka    dara.  
           1SG   POSS   DUR-walk.[N]   like.this   dad   DUR-walk   to   land  
*I was just walking like this when dad was walking landwards.*
- (20)      orang    **ba-suntik**      tar      sadiki.  
           person   USE-inject.[N]   NEG   a.little  
*There are quite a few people getting vaccinated.*
- (21)      dudu    **ba-diang**.  
           sit      DUR-quiet.[V]  
*I was sitting quietly.*

### 3.2 Interpretation of constructions

Some words in Ternate Malay may consist of bound elements such as *ba-*, *ta-*, or *baku-*, which are attached in front of the word base. These elements merely add a semantic aspect to the word to which they are attached and do not serve any grammatical function. More on these bound elements is found in § 5.3.

The word *banapas* in example (22) consists of the prefix *ba-* and the word *napas* ‘breath’ resulting in *banapas* ‘to breathe’. In this example, *banapas* participates in the predicate and the verbal meaning is prominent. In the same example *bakupikul* ‘carry together’ occurs. This word consists of the prefix *baku-* that is attached to *pikul* ‘carry’ and expresses an aspect of collectivity. *Bakupikul* serves as the predicate and is preceded by the subject *dong* ‘third person plural’, the performers of the action expressed *bakupikul* ‘carry collectively’. In example (23) the *ta-* prefix is attached to *angka* ‘lift’ expressing an involuntary action or state. The word participates in the construction *bahu taangka* in which it serves as the modifier of the head *bahu* ‘shoulder’ and refers to a state or property. In example (24) the prefix *baku-* is attached to *pukul* ‘hit’ to express a reciprocal meaning, resulting in *bakupukul* ‘hit each other’. This word is followed by *deng Anwar* ‘with Anwar’ with which it forms a constituent that serves as the subject of the clause, in which case it has to be interpreted in the nominal reading ‘the hitting each other with Anwar’.

- (22)      de      su      tara    bisa    **ba-napas**,  
           3SG   COMP   NEG   can   POSS-breath.[V]  
*he couldn’t breathe anymore*
- kong    dong    **baku-pikul**      [...]  
           CONJ   3PL   COLL-carry.[V]  
*and they carried him [...]*

- (23)        bahu        **ta-angka**        su        tara        lama        suda.  
               shoulder    INV-lift.[A]    COMP    NEG    long        COMP  
               *hunched shoulders mean that it won't take much longer.*
- (24)        **baku-pukul**    deng    Anwar    su        tarada    suda.  
               REC-hit.[N]    with    Anwar    COMP    NEG        COMP  
               *there is no fighting with Anwar anymore.*

In a situation where words may serve various functions and express different meanings, devices may be needed to achieve the most appropriate interpretation. A number of lexical items merely serve a grammatical function. They are useful elements that facilitate the interpretation of a structure by indicating (optionally) for example which part of the construction serves as the head and which part serves as the modifier of the construction. Two of these elements are discussed here: *yang*, which indicates that the part following *yang* forms the modifier of the construction, and *pe*, which indicates that the element following *pe* is the head of the construction.

### 3.2.1 X *yang* Y constructions

In general, *yang* introduces a word or construction that modifies another word or construction, for instance, *pintu yang basar* 'a big door', in which *yang* introduces *basar* 'big', resulting in *yang basar*, a construction that modifies the head *pintu* 'door'. Constructions with *yang* may easily be parsed as a constituent of which the element that follows *yang* always serves as a modifier. In some cases, a headless *yang*-construction may serve as an independent constituent in its own right.

Example (48) is taken from a conversation about moustaches. The speaker is about to say what he considers to be the most beautiful moustache, when he is interrupted. In this construction *yang* introduces *paling bagus* 'very beautiful' which is the modifier of the head that precedes *yang*, i.e. *kumis* 'moustache'. In example (49) the head of the construction *sagu lombo* 'sago soft' is followed by a *yang*-construction consisting of *tabal* 'thick'. In this construction, *yang* indicates that the head *sagu* is modified by *lombo* 'soft' as well as by *tabal* 'thick' and that these are two parallel modifiers. In example (50) *orang* 'person' is followed by a construction headed by the relativizer *yang* and followed by *bardosa* expressing the meaning 'commit a sin', resulting in the construction *orang yang bardosa* 'person who commit sins'. In this position, the presence of *yang* is optional. When a head is followed by an action word, the most general interpretation is that the first word is the head of the construction. The *yang*-construction in example (51) is a headless construction. In this example, *yang* introduces the construction *masi nona-nona* 'still unmarried woman' and serves as a constituent in its own right. The function of this construction in the larger context, serving as a topic, indicates that a nominal reading of the construction is the most appropriate.

- (25) kumis      **yang paling bagus...**  
 moustache REL very beautiful  
*the most beautiful moustache...*
- (26) sagu lombo **yang tabal dua pulu... lempeng.**  
 sago soft REL thick two tens slab  
*some thick, soft sago, twenty... slabs.*
- (27) orang **yang bardosa** dong umur panjang.  
 person REL commit.sins 3PL age long  
*they who commit sins will have a long life.*
- (28) **yang masi nona-nona** sekitar spulu.  
 REL still RED-unmarried.woman around ten  
*those who are unmarried number around ten.*

### 3.2.2 Y *pe* X constructions

The element *pe* is a helpful device for the interpretation of the structure of a Y *pe* X construction which often expresses a possessive meaning. When *pe* occurs in an Y *pe* X construction, this can be automatically parsed as a constituent. The X element always serves as the head of the construction and refers to the possessor, while the Y element serves as the modifier and denotes the possessum. The *pe* element thus helps to determine which part of the construction is the head. In this function, it also indicates that the elements with which *pe* occur refer *de facto* to things. The following examples show Y *pe* X possessive constructions with various X elements. More on Y *pe* X constructions is found in § 4.3.1.

In example (52) *pe* is preceded by *Haji Buka* ‘Haji Buka’ and is followed by *ana-ana* ‘children’, forming a possessive construction *Haji Buka pe ana-ana*, in which the first element *Haji Buka* refers to the possessor and *ana-ana* refers to the possessum. In example (53) *dokter* ‘doctor’ precedes *pe* and refers to the possessor, while *pigi* ‘go’ follows *pe* and expresses the possessum. In this position, *pigi* has to be interpreted as a thing, the performance of the activity, expressing the meaning ‘the going’. The whole construction *dokter pe pigi* expresses the meaning ‘(lit) the doctor’s going’ or ‘the doctor’s departure’. In example (54) *pe* is preceded by *paitua* ‘old man’ which refers to the possessor. The possessum is expressed by *cuci balangang* ‘(lit.) wash wok’ and follows *pe*, in which position it has to be read in its nominal meaning ‘the washing of the wok’. The result is a Y *pe* X possessive construction *paitua pe cuci balangang*, expressing the meaning ‘the old man’s washing of the wok’. In the context of this example, the construction serves as a constituent that refers to the stimulus that caused the feeling expressed in *herang* ‘surprised’. In example (55) the expression *di atas* ‘at the top’ is the X element, while the Y element of the construction is *de* ‘third person singular’. In this function as X element,

the construction *di atas* has to be interpreted as a thing, denoting ‘upper part’ and the expression *de pe di atas* ‘(lit.) its on top’ expresses the meaning ‘its upper part’. In all these examples *pe* serves a grammatical function to indicate that the element following *pe* serves as the head of the construction. It also indicates that the elements with which *pe* occur are *de facto* nominal.

- (29)        **Haji    Buka    pe        ana-ana,...**  
               Haji    Buka    POSS    RED-child  
               *Haji Buka’s children,...*
- (30)        **dokter    pe        pigi    loyo    ulang.**  
               doctor    POSS    go    weak    repeat  
               *the moment the doctor goes you’re weak again.*
- (31)        **paitua    pe        cuci    balangang    kita    herang.**  
               old.man    POSS    wash    wok                    1SG    surprised  
               *the way he washed the wok surprised me.*
- (32)        **de        pe        di    atas    ta-pisa        laeng-laeng.**  
               3SG    POSS    in    above    INV-separate    PL-different  
               *the upper part separated differently.*

Several other items may be helpful in determining the structure of complex constructions to achieve the most appropriate interpretation. Some of these items have a fixed position in a construction, for instance they always occur at the end of constituents, such as *ni* ‘this’ and *tu* ‘that’. This position determines where one constituent ends and the next begins. In § 4.1.2 *ni* and *tu* are further discussed. Other items may serve to join elements together, such as *kong* ‘and then’ and *la* ‘and then’, which connect clauses to each other and function as indicators of where one clause ends and another clause begins. More on *kong* can be found in § 6.2.3, while *la* is discussed in § 6.2.4. Words such as *ka* ‘to’, *pa* ‘to’, *dari* ‘from’, and *di* ‘in, at’ are related to movement and location: *ka* ‘to’ and *pa* ‘to’, indicate a movement towards a certain place or goal, *dari* ‘from’ indicates a movement away from a certain place or origin, while *di* ‘in, at’, indicates that there is no movement and refers to a location. These words are always followed by a word or construction expressing a location. Since these words are posited at the beginning of a constituent, they may serve as a border between two constituents. These elements and their use are discussed in § 6.3. Some items serve to indicate the type of an utterance. In addition to an interrogative intonation pattern, question tags such as *to* ‘right?’ and *kan* ‘isn’t it?’ occur at the end of an utterance and indicate that it involves a question. These and other items that may function as question tags are discussed in § 7.1.2.

### 3.2.3 X Y Z constructions

Some constructions, for instance those expressing a nominal meaning, seldom consist of more than three consecutive words. The construction itself as well as its composing elements may consist only of head-initial structures. This constraint is useful for the interpretation of such complex constructions and results in two options. In the first option the first element  $X$  is interpreted as the head, which is followed by a modifier consisting of two elements  $Y + Z$ , resulting in the structure  $[X + [Y + Z]]$ . This modifier itself has to be interpreted as a head-initial structure. The underlined elements are the heads of the constructions. No examples have been found of constructions with a head-final modifier  $[X + [Y + Z]]$ <sup>9</sup>. In the second option the head consists of the first two elements  $X + Y$  and is modified by the third element, resulting in the structure  $[[X + Y] + Z]$ . In this option the head  $X + Y$  itself has a head-initial structure of which  $X$  is the head. The  $X$  element is double underlined. No examples have been found of which the head  $X + Y$  is head-final followed by the modifier  $Z$ ,  $[[X + Y] + Z]$ . There are no examples of constructions in which  $Z$  or  $Y + Z$  serve as head and are modified by  $X + Y$  or  $X$  respectively<sup>10</sup>.

In the following paragraphs, examples are provided of  $X + Y + Z$  constructions. The individual elements may refer to things and activities, but the construction as a whole expresses a nominal meaning.

#### 3.2.3.1 Head initial $[X + [Y + Z]]$ constructions

The head is followed by a modifier consisting of two elements of which the first element is the head. The words that serve as heads of a construction are underlined.

The head of the construction in example (33) *biji bua yakis* '(lit.) seed fruit monkey' is *biji* 'seed', which is modified by *bua yakis* '(lit.) fruit monkey'. The semantic relationship between the two elements of the construction is that of part – whole, in which the head *biji* 'seed' is a part of the modifier *bua yakis* '(lit.) fruit monkey'. The modifier *bua yakis* consists of two elements *bua* 'fruit', the head, which refers to a class and *yakis* '(lit.) monkey' specifies the type. This is a head-initial construction, but the meaning of the two elements cannot be taken literally to obtain the meaning of the whole expression. *Bua yakis* is an expression to refer to the cashew apple and this prevents an interpretation of this construction as  $[[N_1 + N_2] + N_3]$ . In example (34) the speaker is suggesting some roles he could fulfil in a soccer match. The head of the construction *pemain balakang gawang* is *pemain* 'player', which is followed by the modifier *balakang gawang* '(lit.) back goal'. The expression refers to a 'player behind the goal'. In the same sentence the speaker suggests he could

<sup>9</sup> Exceptions could be those with the structure  $[X + [Y + Z]]$ , a head-initial construction with a head-final modifier, for example those of which the modifier consists of a numeral + numeral classifier or a numeral + mensural classifier, such as *nene dua orang* 'two grandmothers' and *paser anam ember* 'six buckets of sand'. The whole construction is head-initial, but the modifiers *dua orang* and *anam ember* are head-final (See § 4.1.1.2 and § 4.1.1.3).

<sup>10</sup> An exception found in the data is for instance *tong mama papa* 'our mother's father'. In this head-final construction *papa* is the head, preceded by a head-final modifier *tong mama* 'our mother' of which the structure is  $[[X + Y] + Z]$  (see § 4.3.4 on head-final possessive constructions).



also be a *pemain luar garis* ‘(lit.) player outside lines’. In this construction *pemain* ‘player’ is the head, followed by the modifier *luar garis* ‘(lit.) outside lines’. The expression *pemain luar garis* then refers to an “outside-the-lines” player, a player who is located outside the lines. In example (35) *jalan nama Muhama* ‘(lit.) street name Muhama’ *jalan* ‘street’ is the head of the construction, followed by the modifier *nama Muhama* ‘(lit.) name Muhama’. The result expresses the meaning ‘street with the name Muhama’. *Nama Muhama* itself consists of the head *nama* ‘name’ and the modifier *Muhama* ‘Muhama’. The same expression *nama* ‘name’ could have a verbal meaning without any overt marking distinguishing it from its nominal reading, but in the expression *jalan nama Muhama* ‘street named Muhama’ it functions as a nominal.

- (33)      tau      kacang      ka...      [**biji**    **[bua    yakis]]**,      ka?  
             know    peanut    or      seed    fruit    monkey    or  
             *I don’t know if they are peanuts or... cashew nuts?*

- (34)      [**pemain**    **[balakang    gawang]]**      kalo      tara,  
             player      back                      gate              when    NEG  
             *a player behind the goal or else*
- [**pemain**    **[luar      garis]]**.  
             player      outside      match  
             *a player outside the lines.*

- (35)      tara      [**jalang**    **[nama    Muhama]]**.  
             NEG      street      name      Muhama  
             *there’s no street with the name Muhama.*

The resultant constructions act as nominals but the constituting parts need not all function as nominals. The following examples concern constructions with a nominal meaning consisting of a head followed by two words, expressing an activity and a thing respectively. Note that the same elements may form a clause (see § 7.3.2.1). The context and the situation determine how this is best interpreted, for example whether the construction serves as a constituent or not.

In example (36) the head *polisi* ‘police’ is modified by *jaga jalan* ‘guard the streets’, resulting in *polisi jaga jalan* denoting ‘guarding streets police’, an expression to refer to the traffic police. The construction *polisi jaga jalan* could be interpreted as a clause consisting of *police*, referring to the agent, *jaga* referring to the activity, and *jalan*, to the theme or location that is involved in the activity. The construction is closed off by *tu*, indicating the border of the constituent and a nominal interpretation.

The speaker of example (37) talks about a type of coffee. In this example *campur bras* ‘mix rice’ is the modifier of the head *kofi* ‘coffee’. The semantic relation be-

tween the head and the modifier is that the head *kofi* ‘coffee’ denotes an entity that has undergone the action or process expressed in the modifier *campur beras* ‘mix rice’. The resulting construction *kofi campur beras* refers to a kind of coffee, namely ‘coffee which has been mixed with rice’. This same construction could be analyzed as a clause, in which *kofi* acts as the patient that undergoes the activity expressed in *campur*, while *bras* refers to the thing with which the coffee is mixed. The presence of *tu* marks the border of the constituent and indicates the preference for a nominal meaning. In example (38) the head *pertandingan* ‘competition’ is modified by *makang pupeda* ‘eat sago porridge’ to form *pertandingan makang pupeda*, referring to a competition in which the winner is the person who eats the largest number of sago porridge portions, ‘sago porridge eating competition’. In this construction *makang pupeda* modifies the head *pertandingan*. An interpretation of this construction as clause is prevented by fact there is no appropriate semantic role for *pertandingan*, for example as the agent or patient, in relation to *makang*. The construction *pertandingan makang pupeda* in example (38) serves as a predicate, while *tong* serves as the subject.

- (36)        **[polisi    jaga    jalan]]**    tu    polantas.  
               police    guard    street        that    traffic.police  
               *police guarding streets are the traffic police.*
- (37)        **[kofi        campur    bras]]**        tu  
               coffee    mix                uncooked.rice    that
- kofi        cap        apa        lagi        tu?  
               coffee    brand    what    again    that  
               *what is the brand of coffee when the coffee is mixed with rice?*
- (38)        tong    **[pertandingan    makang    pupeda]]**,    mari.  
               1PL    competition        eat                sago.porridge    HORT  
               *let's have a sago porridge eating competition.*

The construction of *sarung bantal polo* in the example (39) consists of the head *sarung* ‘cover’, followed by the modifier *bantal polo* ‘(lit.) pillow hug’, denoting a bolster. The modifier *bantal polo* consists of the head *bantal* ‘pillow’ followed by *polo* ‘hug’, serving as modifier. Note that *bantal polo* could be interpreted as a clause consisting of *bantal* as a theme that undergoes the activity expressed in *polo*.

- (39)        **[sarung    bantal    polo]**    kan    panjang    to?  
               cover        pillow    hug        QT    long        QT  
               *a pillowcase for a bolster is long, right?*

3.2.3.2 Head initial  $[[\underline{X} + Y] + Z]$  constructions

In the following examples,  $X+Y$  are underlined and form the head of the construction, while  $\underline{X}$  is double underlined because it serves the head of the  $XY$  head-initial construction. The  $Z$  element serves as modifier.

The second element of the  $Y$  *pe*  $X$  construction in example (40) is the construction *tamang parampuang SD* ‘primary school girlfriend’ of which the structure is  $[[\textit{tamang parampuang}] \textit{SD}]$ . The head of the construction is *tamang parampuang* ‘girlfriend’, consisting of the head *tamang* ‘friend’ and the modifier *parampuang* ‘female’. *SD*, the abbreviation of *sekolah dasar* ‘primary school’ modifies *tamang parampuang*, resulting in *tamang parampuang SD* ‘primary school girl friend’. In example (41) the construction *hari Minggu muka* ‘next Sunday’ occurs. The head of this construction is *hari Minggu* ‘Sunday’, which consists of *hari* ‘day’ modified by *Minggu* ‘Sunday’, resulting in *hari Minggu*. This construction is modified by *muka* ‘front’.

- (40)            kita    pe        tamang parampuang    [SD]  
                  1SG   POSS   friend       female               elementary.school  
                  *my girlfriend in elementary school*
- nama    Fani.  
                  name    Fani  
                  *called Fani.*

- (41)            tapi    tong    bage    sampe    xx...    hari Minggu    [muka].  
                  but    1PL    hit       arrive    xx       day Sunday       front  
                  *but we went on until xx... the next Sunday.*

In example (42) the construction *lapangan terbang Morotai* is found. When these three elements would be interpreted  $[[\underline{X} + [\underline{Y} + Z]]$  with  $Y$  denoting an activity, *lapangan* would serve as head of the construction, but *terbang Morotai* ‘fly Morotai’ does not have any function. The structure of this construction has to be interpreted as  $[[\underline{X} + Y] + Z]$ , in which *lapangan terbang*, an expression for ‘airport’, serves as the head and *Morotai* serves as the modifier, resulting in the meaning ‘airport of/in Morotai’. The head of *lapangan terbang* is *lapangan*.

- (42)            lapangan terbang    Morotai    paling...    terbesar.  
                  field               fly               Morotai    very               biggest  
                  *Morotai airport is the very... biggest one.*

In some cases it is not immediately clear what the structure of the construction is. An example of such a construction is *pintu balakang ruma*. One way to interpret the structure is as a  $[[\underline{X} + [\underline{Y} + Z]]$  in which *pintu* ‘door’ is the head of the construction which is modified by *balakang ruma* ‘the back of the house’, with the meaning ‘the door (which is) at the back of the house’. Another interpretation of the structure is as

[[X + Y] + Z], in which *pintu balakang* ‘back door’ forms the head of the construction, which is modified by *ruma* ‘house’, with the meaning ‘the back door of the house’. The speaker can use prosody, for instance a slight pause between *pintu* and *balakang ruma*, to explicitly mark the border between the two segments and to express that the referent is ‘the door which is at the back of the house’. The speaker could opt for a Y *pe* X possessive construction *ruma pe pintu balakang* in order to express the meaning ‘the back door of the house’. All these complex constructions are head-initial. The structure of the head or the modifier that consists of two elements has a head-initial structure as well. The fact that complex structures have a head-initial structure facilitates the interpretation of such constructions.

### 3.3 Summary

A Ternate Malay listener has to recognize clauses and constituents in order to interpret an utterance. This is the tacit assumption in the discussion in § 3.1 and § 3.2. I assume that prosody plays an important role in order to recognize a clause and possibly also in order to recognize a constituent. The notion of constituent in the absence of pre-determined word categories is not self evident; still I feel it is necessary. In investigating possible structures of interpretation of a clause I choose one of the words as a candidate to form the predicative function in the clause. Further interpretation depends on whether a possible and likely reading can be constructed by grouping the remaining words into units that serve semantic roles linked to the predicative element, such as agent, theme, location or time, and are nominal in function. Grouping words into units is facilitated by the considerations in § 3.2. Each of the constituents has a head, and the head is mostly initial. Within these constituents further structure can exist. I distinguish the following syntactic functions that words distinguish in the interpretation of a string of elements: thing-like or nominal function, predating or verbal function and property or adjectival function. In the remainder of the thesis, I will use the terms Noun, Verb and Adjective but not in the usual meaning of lexically specified word category but rather as function taken up in the interpretation of a string of words.