Variation and change in Abui : the impact of Alor Malay on an indigenous language of Indonesia
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Chapter 8

Concluding remarks

This chapter has four main parts. Section 8.1 revisits the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. Section 8.2 summarizes all seven chapters and provides the main findings of each. Section 8.3 synthesizes the findings from all the chapters and provides a general discussion. Section 8.4 provides some avenues for further research.

Given these considerations, this thesis sets out to answer the following question: How has Alor Malay influenced the grammar of Abui?

The primary aim is to investigate variation in the speech of younger and older speakers. Doing so will provide a window into incipient contact-induced change. The secondary aim is to understand how historical and social factors led to the current contact scenario. Combining the collection of linguistic data with sociolinguistic data on speaker's histories, language backgrounds, and practices will enable us to observe the effect of social factors on language change.

8.1 Revisiting the research questions

This thesis set out to answer the following question: How has Alor Malay influenced the grammar of Abui? Specifically, two sub-questions were posed: (i) How much variation exists in *reflexive possessive marking*, *verb usage*, and *reduplication*? (ii) How is age correlated with the variation? Moreover, two additional questions were posed for two of these areas, namely: iii) How is

gender correlated with the variation in *reflexive possessive marking* and *verb usage*? (ii) What do differences in production and comprehension tell us about speakers' knowledge of the *reflexivity distinction* and the *verb usage* pertaining to certain event domains? The answers to these questions are presented in §8.2.

8.2   Summary of results

The answer to the first question is that contact with Alor Malay has led to the simplification of Abui; this is argued to be both due to transfer from Alor Malay as well as incomplete acquisition of Abui. Age was used as a proxy for language dominance and thus contact with Alor Malay as well; older people were more dominant in Abui and were less likely to exhibit transfer effects from Alor Malay, while younger speakers were less dominant in Abui and more dominant in Alor Malay, thus more likely to exhibit transfer effects from Alor Malay as well as show effects of incomplete acquisition. In the three linguistic areas investigated, the reflexivity distinction in possession is becoming neutralized, certain verbs are taking over others and becoming more generic, while reduplication is becoming more productive and more Malay-like in function and form. The sub-questions are answered in the summaries of their respective chapters, namely Chapters 5, 6, 7.

Chapter 1 introduced the main themes of this thesis. It situated Abui in its geographic and linguistic context. It introduced the speech community of Takalelang and discussed some observations about the Abui people. It then provided some theoretical background, before posing the main research questions.

Chapter 2 was devoted to deconstructing the contact scenario. This first involved a discussion of some key historical events in the last few centuries, providing the reader with background on Alor's colonial history told through the lens of Dutch colonial documents as well as oral histories. One of the goals of this chapter was to show how Malay was introduced to the island for economic, political, and religious motives. The introduction of schools and the erection of Protestant churches in the early 1900s was the start of a process of school enrollment and conversion which was used to teach Malay to *rajas* 'local leaders' and thus strengthen ties with the Dutch. The next few decades saw a rise in enrolment for both boys and girls; how-

ever, it was not until the mid-1960s that school attendance began rising steadily. This was a result of many families relocating from montane villages down to the coast to be closer to schools, churches, markets, and medical facilities (as part of government schemes). With school attendance rising in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, teachers began imposing strict rules banning the use of Abui at schools. Schoolchildren were expected to address teachers as well as each other using only Malay Indonesian. Parents were also encouraged, during church gatherings and community meetings, to prepare their children for school by raising them in Malay as opposed to Abui. After an in-depth discussion of schooling in the Takalelang region, the second part of Chapter 2 shed light on the sociolinguistic profile of the speech community in Takalelang. In particular, it described the three main varieties, Abui, Alor Malay, and Indonesian in the community and their domains of use. It also elaborated on the processes of language acquisition and socialization as well as on two key sociolinguistic variables: age and gender. Then a brief discussion was provided on language attitudes and an assessment was made on Abui's vitality and revitalization attempts. This chapter also established that the community of Takalelang has been in intense contact with Malay for roughly 50-60 years.

Chapter 3 discussed the methodology used in the research for this thesis. It described how the fieldwork was carried out. It also discussed the two main types of data collected: a) sociolinguistic and ethnographic interview data and b) linguistic data. The ethnographic interviews were also used to put together four age-groups which were used to study variation and change in Abui: (pre)adolescents (9-16 years old), young adults (17-25 years old), adults (26-34 years old), and elders (40-75 years old). These age-groups were elaborated on in detail. The linguistic data included conversational data and experimental data. The experimental data consisted of both production data (the Surrey Stimuli) and comprehension data (a forced-choice) task. Finally, details on the corpora collected (and used) were also provided.

Chapter 4 provided a sketch grammar of Abui. This provided an in-depth introduction to the language and served as a brief handbook from which the topics in Chapter 5-7 could be better understood. The key topics included: phonology, basic clausal syntax, the noun phrase, pronouns, pronominal prefixes, the verb phrase, serial verb constructions, and basic clausal operations.

Chapter 5, the first case study of variation and change, was dedicated to the study of the reflexive possessive prefix. The reflexive possessive prefix marks reflexivity in third person possession, contrasting it with a non-reflexive possessive. This category is only found in Abui but not in Alor Malay. The reflexive possessive prefix was shown to be prone to variation across the four groups of speakers tested in both production and comprehension. In particular, (pre)adolescents and to a lesser extent young adults neutralized the distinction between the reflexive and non-reflexive, by generalizing the non-reflexive prefix to contexts otherwise warranting a reflexive possessive. Adults patterned like elders in that they retain the distinction. Interestingly, it was found that gender played a role in explaining the variation in the group of (pre)adolescents: Boys were more likely to neutralize the distinction than girls. This was explained by the fact that boys had less exposure to Abui than girls because they were more free to roam around and spend time speaking Alor Malay with peers, while girls were more tied to the home environment assisting their older female relatives (who often speak Abui) with domestic chores and thus being more exposed to Abui. When testing their comprehension, only (pre)adolescents showed significant differences with respect to elders, while young adults and adults did not. In addition, as with the production data, gender also played a role in comprehension, with boys showing a higher likelihood to simplify the reflexive system than girls. These differences in comprehension suggested that (pre)adolescents have knowledge of the distinction of the grammatical distinction of reflexivity but fail to instantiate it in production. This also provided evidence for the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (Prévost & White, 2000a, 2000b).

Chapter 6 was devoted to the study of lexical semantics and verb usage. Three domains were selected for investigation: visual perception, falling, and change of state. In all of these domains, Alor Malay and Abui do not have translation equivalents: Alor Malay uses one verb, while Abui uses at least two, marking subtle distinctions which are not lexically distinguished in Alor Malay. It was shown that age-related variation was found in how speakers used these verbs in both production and comprehension. In the production of all three domains, (pre)adolescents and young adults were significantly more likely to generalize one verb at the expense of another. In one domain, namely falling, even adults were likely to generalize one verb at the expense of another. The results from the comprehension data revealed

that speakers had more knowledge of these distinctions than the production data would suggest. In comprehension, only (pre)adolescents showed significant differences to the rest of the groups in terms of their likelihood to generalize. This was the case in the domains of falling and change of state, but not in visual perception. There were two surprising results from this study. First, unlike the results in Chapter 5, there were no significant gender effects for verb usage. Secondly, young adults performed very similarly to (pre)adolescents in production, showing significant differences compared to elders; however, in comprehension, they did not show any differences to elders, indicating that they have substantial knowledge of these verbs but seemingly fail to produce them in alignment with what they know.

Chapter 7 explored variation and change in reduplication. Both Abui and Alor Malay were shown to have reduplication; however, reduplication in Alor Malay is more productive, spread across more word classes, and marks more functions. Variation was found across the reduplication patterns of the four age-groups. Specifically, four types of transfer from Alor Malay to Abui reduplication were found. First, there was matter transfer, in particular the insertions: *sama~sama*, *tiba~tiba*, as well as a few nonce matter insertions. Three types of pattern transfer were discussed. The first involved reduplicating verbs to mark intensity which would have otherwise been used in a parallel serialization construction. The second involved using reduplication to mark casualness/aimlessness. The third involved a number of nonce reduplications which were ungrammatical to older speakers, either because the words used typically do not get reduplicated or because speakers reduplicated the right words, but applied the wrong formal features (i.e. whole-word reduplication instead of stem reduplication). All of these trends were shown to be evidence for transfer from Alor Malay because Alor Malay uses reduplication in the same way. It was mostly (pre)adolescents and, to a lesser extent, young adults who exhibited these tendencies. Adults, produced a few of these tokens, also showing that some of these innovations are present in them as well but less saliently so.

8.3   General discussion

As alluded to in §8.2, the main outcome of 50-60 years of intensive Alor Malay contact with Abui is predominantly simplification. Speakers are los-

ing the reflexivity distinction in the third person possessive system and are instead generalizing the generic possessive to all third person possession contexts. In verb usage, speakers are failing to distinguish between semantically similar verbs in a given domain and are instead overgeneralizing the more frequent and polysemous ones. Because Alor Malay is relatively more simple in possession and in these verbal domains, the outcome of simplification observed in Abui is attributed to both transfer and incomplete acquisition. In the area of reduplication, the outcome involved both simplification and complexification, which is not uncommon (Trudgill, 2011). In the verbal domain, the fact that speakers were using reduplication more productively on verbs that older speakers would not have reduplicated is a form of simplification; they are no longer applying the same restrictions that older speakers use on certain verbs. In addition, with respect to form, they are reduplicating the whole word; therefore, they are also no longer applying certain rules, such as 'only the stem gets reduplicated, as well as the patientive prefix.' At the same time, complexification is taking place because they are adding the notion of 'casualness/aimlessness' to verbal reduplication. In addition, some speakers are beginning to extend reduplication to the nominal domain, thus adding the marking of plurality to reduplication. Both of these are argued to be due to transfer, namely pattern transfer. Additionally, they are also transferring some matter reduplications, most notably *sama~sama* 'together', *tiba~tiba* 'suddenly', thereby also filling a lexical gap. In the domain of reduplication, transfer was more obvious than in the previous two domains.

While the types of changes described here are prototypical of changes found in minority communities experiencing shift and attrition (O'Shannessy, 2011; Palosaari & Campbell, 2011), they are also commonly found in many other contact scenarios, cross-linguistically. For example, simplification of the possessive system by generalizing the nonreflexive has been found in German and French L2 learners of Norwegian (Fabricius-Hansen et al., 2017; Helland, 2017). In addition, overgeneralizing a frequent verb at the expense of another has been found among second language learners (e.g. Ameel et al., 2009; Gathercole and Moawad, 2010) as well as heritage language speakers (Weinreich, 1953; Backus et al., 2011). Furthermore, similar effects for reduplication have been found in Macanese and Singaporean English which have both adopted reduplication features from Malay (among other languages) (Ansaldo & Matthews, 2004; Wee & Lim,

2004). What is unique in the Abui case, however, is the high degree of variation and the rate of change, which seems to be accelerated in comparison with a more healthy scenario (Palosaari & Campbell, 2011). Typically, with more stable bilingualism these changes may take several centuries to be completed, as in the case of Macanese and Singaporean English (Ansaldo & Matthews, 2004; Wee & Lim, 2004). However, as is common in shift and attrition scenarios, sometimes these changes may be instantiated in one or two generations (e.g. Silva-Corvalán, 1994; O'Shannessy, 2005).

Of the three areas investigated in this thesis, the area of verb usage stood out as showing the greatest extent of variation. Looking at the proportions of mismatches, it is clear that verb usage and thus lexical verbal semantics is the area that is most advanced in terms of change, with respect to the other two features. This is evidenced by the higher proportion of verb generalization with respect to the other areas. For example, in the domain of falling, (pre)adolescents generalized the verb 'fall from above' to 'fall over' contexts 87% of the time. This was even higher for young adults who generalized it 100% of the time. Even adults generalized at a proportion that was significantly different to elders (48%). In contrast, for the reflexive possessive, (pre)adolescents produced a mismatch proportion of 58%, while young adults produced a proportion of 16%. Adults patterned similarly to elders and had a mismatch rate of only 1%.

In addition, a related point of discussion is why gender proved to be significant among (pre)adolescents for the variable of the reflexive possessive but not for verb usage.[1] One explanation could be methodological. There was a larger set of total tokens in the reflexive possessive (M: 45, F: 45) than there was with all the verbs combined (M: 27, F: 34). The other, more likely explanation is that these gender differences reveal that verb usage and thus lexical semantics are more affected by contact than the reflexive possessive and thus inflectional morphology. In the reflexive possessive, there is clear evidence to suggest that males are driving the change, as they account for much of the mismatches. Males generalize the non-reflexive 71.1% of the time compared to Females, who generalize significantly less, at 44.4%. In contrast, in verb usage, both males and females show high proportions of generalization (M: 88%, F: 76%). These figures confirm that (pre)adolescent males have difficulty with both areas. However, they also reveal that females

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[1]Gender was not tested for reduplication.

do not struggle as much with the reflexive possessive as they do with verb usage.

The sociolinguistic data confirms that there are gender differences with respect to socialization and acquisition, with (pre)adolescent girls receiving more input and exposure than their male counterparts. The differences in terms of outcome are argued to be indicative that verb generalization is innovating at a faster rate than the other areas. This may indicate that with their increased relative input, girls have mastered the reflexive distinction, whereas in the domain of semantics, increased relative input does not play a strong role in predicting whether they will differentiate between the verbs in production, although it did in comprehension. This claim is supported by the fact that adults, who are meant to have much more input than the younger groups, also generalize in one of the verb usage domains, while they don't for the variable of the reflexive possessive. This simply suggests that groups that do have high relative exposure still struggle with verb usage.

It is well known that, generally speaking, morphosyntax and lexical semantics are affected differently in contact (e.g. Romaine, 1995; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Ross, 2013; Ramscar et al., 2014; Lahmann et al., 2016). In language attrition (on the individual level), Lahmann et al. (2016) found that age of onset was a good predictor of grammatical complexity but not of lexical semantic complexity. Ross (2013) offers a diachronic approach, suggesting that when languages are in contact, the first area of the target language to converge with the recipient language is the lexicon (*lexical calquing*), followed by morphology (*grammatical calquing*), and then by syntax (*syntactic restructuring/metatypy*). Romaine (1995) offers a similar progression. The findings in this thesis support both models. However, as Matras (2009) points out, attempts to create a hierarchy of convergence have not been unproblematic. For example, Silva-Corvalán (1994, p. 220) suggests that, in situations of community attrition, first morphology is affected, then the lexicon, and then syntax. Meanwhile, Stolz and Stolz (1996) suggest that first discourse is affected, then the clause, followed by the phrase, and ending with the word. In any case, as Gathercole and Moawad (2010, pp. 388-389) point out, even within the domain of lexical calquing, there can be large differences across words, with words which are 'conceptually close' much more likely to get calqued than words which are 'conceptually far'. In adition, there are many other constraints which can play a role in which areas of the grammar may be targeted first, such as structural similarities between

the languages. Thus, it seems fair to adopt a nuanced approach, whereby detailed case-studies of various features within a specific language are compared to one another.

8.4 Avenues for further research

The research in this thesis has answered the questions posed in the beginning of this thesis. At the same time, it has also raised a number of other questions. This section mentions a few possible directions for further research emerging from these questions. These include: Which other linguistic variables appear to be sensitive to change? Which linguistic variables appear to be stable? What will the situation be in eight-years-time? How does what is taking place in the Takalelang speech community compare to what is happening in other Abui speech communities?

In addition to the three topics addressed in Chapters 5-7, other areas which appear to show sensitivity to contact and thus may warrant future investigation include aspect marking, pronominal marking, and the ordering of clauses. Both aspect marking and pronominal marking are marked morphologically on the verb. Aspect marking, which is typically expressed through stem alternation and/or suffixation, appears to be reanalyzed to a more analytic system. The perfective stem seems to be merging with the imperfective and there is more reliance on temporal and locative adverbials to mark aspect. Similar processes have been described in many other contact settings, such as for the Ghanaian language, Likpe, in contact with Ewe (Ameka, 2006) and Russian in contact with English (Polinsky, 2008) to name but a few. In addition, Abui's complex semantic alignment system seems to be undergoing leveling. The Abui pronominal system, discussed briefly in §4.6 and in depth in Kratochvíl (2011b, 2014a) appears to be losing the expression of many of the semantic factors which are expressed in the speech of older speakers. At the same time, the pronominal indexing characteristics of these prefixes seem to remain intact. In other words, the consonant of the pronominal prefixes (in all persons except second person singular, which is expressed through the absence of a consonant), still marks person and number; however, the vowel, which typically encodes semantic factors, is being levelled. In addition, some variation with respect to clause ordering was observed. In biclausal constructions, consisting of a transitive

clause followed by an intransitive clause (often with a posture verb), older speakers seemed to prefer the order: 1) transitive verb LINKER 2) intransitive, posture verb as in *bataa hoofahat ba natea* 'hugging a tree and standing'. Younger speakers (below 35) seemed to prefer the reverse word order *natea ba bataa hoofahat* 'standing and hugging a tree'. More Alor Malay data is needed to verify whether this is a word order calque from Alor Malay.

Three other topics which appear to be resisting change through contact include: constituent word order, the alienability distinction, and reflexivity on the verb phrase. These variables have not been investigated systematically in the way that the variables in this thesis have; however, a scan of the data reveals that these topics appear to be stable. Speakers of all ages retain APV word order: almost all clauses end verb-finally. This is suggestive that the length of contact, 50-60 years, as well as the intensity of contact, are not strong enough to exert any influence yet on Abui constituent order; however, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the ordering of clauses does seem to be affected.

In addition, alienability is another area that does appear to be stable so far. While there were not many inalienably possessed nouns in my corpus, a brief count revealed that speakers of all ages had no difficulties differentiating alienably possessed nouns from inalienably possessed nouns. The fact that speakers did have difficulty with marking reflexivity on possessive prefixes but not alienability suggests that the issues may lie more with the interface between inflectional nominal morphology and binding, rather than inflectional nominal morphology more generally. However, much more research is needed to test this claim.

In addition, third person reflexivity on the verb, as marked by the *dV*-pronominal paradigm (see §4.6.7), does not seem to be affected either. Many younger speakers still use the -*dV* paradigm to mark reflexive constructions (e.g. 'He scratched himself.' or 'He washed himself.'). One possible hypothesis to explain this could involve the fact that marking reflexivity on the verb might be a lot more frequent than using a reflexive possessive on a noun. Many intransitive or reflexive constructions use the *dV*- paradigm (see Kratochvíl, 2014a for discussion). In addition, it could be that, for many younger speakers, the *dV*- paradigm might be becoming (semi)-fossilized. A similar process has already taken place in Bunaq (Schapper, 2009). While many of these tendencies seem to be persistent enough, further quantitative research needs to be conducted to confirm these observations and their

hypotheses.

A follow-up panel study in eight years time, for example, from could address the important question of whether age-grading takes place or whether the changes observed in younger speakers are indicative of incipient change (as is often predicted). In other words, since it is claimed that, as speakers grow older, they receive more input from elders (i.e. Abui dominant speakers), does this increased exposure reduce the amount of simplification found, given that the comprehension studies show that some speakers still retain knowledge of the features under investigation? Eight years is the range of three of the younger groups, therefore, in roughly eight years time from the year of the last period of data collection, 2017, speakers would enter the adjacent age-group. For example, it could be that with increased exposure to the L1 speech of elders, (young) adults begin producing more utterances involving the appropriate use of the reflexive possessive. A panel follow-up study could investigate this claim. It is crucial in determining to what extent this process of socialization involving a lack of early Abui acquisition is affecting the language. A study like that would clarify the implications that this sociolinguistic setting has on acquisition and language contact more generally.

Finally, another possible avenue for further research involves the investigation of language maintenance and shift in a different Abui speech community. This could include a montane village, where Abui seems to be more vital, such as Tifol Afeng, for which we already have a body of data in the Kratochvíl corpus. This would not only shed light into the sociolinguistic situation of the wider Abui speech community, but also allow us to investigate even more clearly to what extent some of the findings in this thesis are unique to the level of contact with Alor Malay and to what extent they are part of general processes of acquisition. For example, it was shown in Chapter 6 that (pre)adolescents, young adults, and to some extent even adults generalize one verb at the expense of another. At the same time, it also known that lexical choice is subject to age-grading; that is, speakers are likely to learn new semantic distinctions and adjust their choice of lexical items as they grow older. In this sense, age may not be an absolute proxy for dominance. Having a more conservative, vital Abui community to compare to would allow us to investigate to what extent that which is observable in Takalelang is representative of the acquisition of Abui more generally and to what extent it represents a specific scenario explained by the bilingualism

dynamics of Takalelang.[2]

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[2]I thank Peter Austin for pointing this out.