

My goal in this paper is threefold: 1) To provide a comprehensive description of the distribution and function of the ‘transitivity marker’ *meng-* in Indonesian; 2) To demonstrate that *meng-* is in fact not a verbal prefix or transitivity marker, as is usually assumed, but a clitic pronoun; and 3) To provide a Minimalist account of the properties and distribution of *meng-*, particularly with respect to the incompatibility of *meng-* with certain types of NP movement, which has been observed but not previously accounted for.

My analysis of *meng-* reflects two key properties of *meng-* that have been marginalized in previous analyses, although these properties render *meng-* unique among the inventory of Indonesian verbal affixes. First, *meng-* is purely optional in the environment in which it is licensed, namely transitive, active clauses (1); in these clauses, omitting *meng-* results in no change in meaning.

- (1) Bill **(meng)**ira Tom **(meng)**harap Fred **(men)**cintai Ali.
 Bill *meng*-think Tom *meng*-expect Fred *meng*-love Ali
 ‘Bill thinks that Tom expects that Fred loves Ali.’

Second, *meng-* reflects a semantic, not syntactic, transitivity: *meng-* becomes mandatory when the object of the active, transitive verb is not overtly expressed (2).

- (2) Ali sedang ***(mem)** baca.
 PROG ***(meng)**-read
 ‘Ali is reading.’

meng- observes several restrictions on its distribution that are unexplained under the assumption that *meng-* merely marks transitivity. *meng-* is unable to appear in its customary environment in the case of NP-movement to a position higher than the verb, as in passives (3) or *wh*-movement (4), (5).

- (3) Buku itu sudah saya ***(mem)** baca. (4) Apa_i yang Ali ***(mem)** baca t_i?
 book that already 1SG *(meng)*-read what that Ali *(meng)*-read
 ‘That book was read by me.’ ‘What is Ali reading?’
 (5) **Siapa**_j yang kamu ***(meng)**harapkan t_j akan **(mem)** beli mobilmu?
 who that 2SG **(meng)*-hope-APP will *(meng)*-buy car-2SG
 ‘Who do you hope will buy your car?’

Such NP movement must be overt: if the *wh*-element remains in situ, or moves only to a position that is c-commanded by the verb in question, the appearance of *meng-* is not affected. Movement of *wh*-adverbials also has no effect on the appearance of *meng-*.

To account for these facts, I propose that *meng-* is an indefinite clitic object pronoun. Following e.g. Baker 1996, I show that in a clause containing *meng-*, *meng-* originates in the theta position of the object and raises to adjoin to the verb; if the clause also contains an object NP, this NP is an adjunct, co-referent with *meng-*. In a *meng*-less clause, the object NP is theta-marked in the customary position. That *meng-* is mandatory when there is no object NP follows: *meng-* is necessary to meet the Theta Criterion, so that the verb’s internal theta role may be assigned.

The incompatibility of *meng-* with NP movement to a position higher than the verb follows. *meng-* is disallowed in passives (3) because if *meng-* appears, the overt object NP is an adjunct, which by the Chain Condition is prohibited from raising to an A-position. The prohibition on overt *wh*-NP movement, but not on overt *wh*-adverbial movement or *wh*-in-situ, over a verb bearing *meng-* is similarly accounted for: for example, in a multiclausal sentence (5), matrix *meng-* is co-referent with the embedded CP. *Wh*-movement from within the adjunct CP can be shown to be subject to island effects, and is hence prohibited.