

Voice and Aspect: Some Notes from Malaysian Malay

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The Malay verbal prefix *meN-* is widely assumed to be an active voice marker, but in recent years Soh and Nomoto have demonstrated that it exhibits aspectual effects. As a result, questions have been raised about the extent to which *meN-* should be analysed as an active voice marker. In this paper, I argue against treating *meN-* as a voice marker and show how the properties of *meN-* that have been attributed to its active voice status can be given alternative accounts. While the aspectual effects of *meN-* do not support its treatment as a voice marker, they are compatible with current syntactic analyses treating *meN-* as heading vP (more specifically v*P) or VoiceP, to the extent that these projections are associated with the existence of an external argument. The analysis thus implies that the syntactic projections of v*P or VoiceP are not necessarily tied to grammatical voice, and they may have aspectual properties.¹

1. Introduction:

It is widely assumed that the verbal prefix *meN-* in Malay is an active voice marker (e.g., Chung 1976; Son and Cole 2004; Nomoto and Shoho 2007).² This analysis is attractive as it accounts for (i) the canonical argument realization pattern in *meN-* sentences; (ii) the absence of *meN-* in *di-* passives and object-preposed sentences; and (iii) (to a certain extent) the well-known observation that *meN-* blocks DP movement across it (Saddy 1991; Soh 1998; Cole and Hermon 1998). In recent work, it has been demonstrated that *meN-* has aspectual effects. In particular, *meN-* may not appear in stative sentences (Soh and Nomoto 2009; Tham 2010), and its appearance affects the telicity of degree achievement sentences (Soh and Nomoto 2012). These aspectual effects, in turn, influence how arguments are realized (Soh and Nomoto 2011). In Soh and Nomoto (2012), we account for these effects by proposing that *meN-* requires the verbal projection it merges with to describe eventualities with stages, in the sense of Landman (1992, 2008).

The new findings on the aspectual effects of *meN-* raise questions about its status, and the extent to which its analysis as an active voice marker can be maintained, given its aspectual properties. In this paper, I examine the connection between voice and aspect in relation to *meN-*. While voice has been shown to interact with aspect, the particular patterns found with *meN-* are unlike those observed in other languages, making it difficult to maintain that *meN-* is an active voice marker or a marker of both active voice and aspect. I thus argue against treating *meN-* as a voice marker (cf. Gil 2002; see

¹ I am grateful to Asako Shiohara for organizing the Workshop on Indonesian-type Voice System, where an earlier version of this paper was presented. I would like to thank the participants of the workshop, the two anonymous reviewers, and Sander Adelaar for helpful comments. All errors are mine.

² Voice is used here to refer to grammatical voice (e.g., active, passive, middle).

also Nomoto, this volume), and present alternative accounts for properties associated with it that have been attributed to its active voice status, including its blocking effect. While many recent analyses of the blocking effect of *meN-* assume that it is an active voice marker (Aldridge 2008; Nomoto 2008, 2011; Sato 2012; Cole et. al 2008), their particular accounts do not depend on that assumption. The blocking effect of *meN-* is also likely to be a more general phenomenon involving at least one other prefix, namely the prefix *ber-* (Soh 1998). In fact, its aspectual effects are compatible with current syntactic analyses that treat *meN-* as heading vP (more specifically v*P) (Aldridge 2008; Nomoto 2008, 2011; Sato 2012) or VoiceP (Cole, Hermon and Yanti 2008), to the extent that these projections are associated with the existence of an external argument.³ The analysis thus implies that the syntactic projections of v*P or VoiceP are not necessarily tied to grammatical voice, and they may have aspectual properties.

2. Background

2.1 The prefix *meN-* and active voice

The prefix *meN-* is commonly assumed to be an active voice marker. This analysis straightforwardly accounts for the canonical argument realization pattern in *meN-* sentences. As shown in (1a), the sentence with *meN-* has the agent realized in a subject position and the theme realized in an object position. This is in contrast with the sentence with the passive prefix *di-* in (1b), where the theme appears in a subject position and the agent is introduced by an *oleh*-phrase.

- (1) a. *Ali mem-beli kereta itu.*
 Ali MEN-buy car the
 ‘Ali bought the car.’
- b. *Kereta itu di-beli oleh Ali.*
 car the di-buy by Ali
 ‘The car was bought by Ali.’

In addition, the analysis provides a natural explanation for the absence of *meN-* in *di-* passives and object preposed sentences, exemplified in (2) and (3) respectively. The absence of *meN-* in these sentences can be argued to be due to the inability of a sentence to bear both an active and a passive voice marker, assuming that object preposed sentences are passives (Chung 1976; Travis 2008, but see Arka and Manning 2008).

- (2) a. *Kereta itu di-beli oleh Ali.*
 car the di-buy by Ali
- b. **Kereta itu men-di-beli/di-mem-beli oleh Ali.*
 car the MEN-di-buy/di-MEN-buy by Ali

³ Two flavors of v have been distinguished: v* which is associated with full argument structure, transitive and experiencer constructions, and v which is not (Marantz 1997, Chomsky 2001, 2004). Thus v*P has an external argument, while vP does not. VoiceP hosts an external argument (Kratzer 1996), and is sometimes considered to be the same as v*P.

- (3) a. *Kereta itu telah Ali beli.*
 car the PFV Ali buy
 'Ali has bought the car.'
 b. **Kereta itu telah Ali mem-beli*
 car the PFV Ali MEN-buy

The analysis of *meN-* as a voice marker also has been suggested to explain the contrast in acceptability of *meN-* in wh-questions with a subject versus an object wh-phrase. Questions with a subject wh-phrase may occur with or without the prefix *meN-* as shown in (4), while questions with an object wh-phrase may not occur with the prefix *meN-* as shown in (5) (Saddy 1991; Soh 1998; Cole and Hermon 1998).

- (4) a. *Siapa-kah yang beli kereta itu?*
 who-Q that buy car the
 'Who bought the car?'
 b. *Siapa-kah yang membeli kereta itu?*
 who-Q that MEN-buy car the
 'Who bought the car?'
- (5) a. *Apa-kah yang Ali beli?*
 what-Q that Ali buy
 'What did Ali buy?'
 b. **Apa-kah yang Ali mem-beli?*
 what-Q that Ali MEN-buy

Within the syntactic framework of Government Binding Theory/Minimalist Program, wh-questions are standardly analyzed as involving movement of the wh-phrase to a sentence initial position, namely SPEC-C. Thus, as shown in (6), the derivation of (4b) involves movement of the wh-phrase subject *siapa* to SPEC-C, while the derivation of (5b) involves movement of the wh-phrase object *apa* to SPEC-C.

- (6) a. [_{CP} *Siapa-kah yang* [_{TP} <*siapa*> *mem-beli kereta itu*]]⁴
 b. * [_{CP} *Apa-kah yang* [_{TP} *Ali mem-beli <apa>*]]

The contrast in acceptability between (4b) and (5b) can be described as *meN-* blocking DP movement across it (Saddy 1991; Soh 1998). The movement path crosses *meN-* when the wh-phrase originates in an object position, but does not do so when it originates in a subject position. This descriptive generalization is supported by more complex data involving wh-questions with an embedded clause. When the wh-phrase originates in an embedded clause, no subject-object asymmetry is found. Neither a subject nor an object wh-phrase in an embedded clause can be questioned (extracted) when the matrix verb bears the prefix *meN-* (Saddy 1991; Soh 1998).

⁴ The pre-movement position is indicated with <>, and the material inside <> is a lower copy of the moved element and is not pronounced.

- (7) a. **Siapa-kah yang Ali meng-anggap meny-[s]uka-i Karim?*⁵
 who-Q that Ali MEN-believe MEN-like-I Karim
 ‘Who does Ali believe likes Karim?’
- b. *[_{CP} *Siapa-kah yang* [_{TP} *Ali meng-anggap* [_{CP} <*siapa*> *meny-[s]uka-i Karim*]]]
- (8) a. **Siapa-kah yang Ali meng-anggap Minah suka?*
 who-Q that Ali MEN-believe Minah like
 ‘Who does Ali believe Minah likes?’
- b. *[_{CP} *Siapa-kah yang* [_{TP} *Ali meng-anggap* [_{CP} *Minah suka* <*siapa*>]]]

This is expected since the movement path of the wh-phrase from either the subject or the object position of the embedded clause to the matrix SPEC-C crosses the prefix *meN-* in the matrix clause.

2.2. The prefix *meN-* and aspect

While there are reasons to assume that *meN-* is an active voice marker, it has been demonstrated recently that *meN-* has aspectual effects. I present the aspectual effects of *meN-* in this section.

One aspectual effect associated with *meN-* is a restriction in the type of sentences that *meN-* may appear in. Specifically, *meN-* may not appear in stative sentences as in (9) (Soh and Nomoto 2009; Tham 2010).

- (9) a. *Saya tahu nama-nya.*
 1SG know name-3SG
 ‘I know his/her name.’
- b. **Saya men-[t]ahu/menge-tahu nama-nya.*
 1SG MEN-know name-3SG

The appearance of *meN-* also affects the telicity of the sentence when the sentence describes a degree achievement (Soh and Nomoto 2012). As (10) shows, degree achievement sentences may appear with a *selama* phrase or a *dalam* phrase, indicating that they may describe a telic or an atelic situation.

- (10) a. *Harga elektrik turun selama tiga hari.*
 price electricity fall during three day
 ‘The price of electricity fell for three days.’
- b. *Harga elektrik turun dalam tiga hari.*
 price electricity fall inside/within three day
 ‘The price of electricity fell in three days.’

However, with *meN-*, these sentences can only describe atelic situations, but not telic ones.

⁵ The segment inside [] represents the initial segment of the base/stem that is deleted with the prefixation of *meN-*.

- (11) a. *Harga elektrik men-[t]urun selama tiga hari.*
 price electricity MEN-fall during three day
 'The price of electricity was falling for three days.'
- b. **Harga elektrik men-[t]urun dalam tiga hari.* (cf. (10b))
 price electric MEN-fall inside/within three day

Unlike degree achievement sentences, the presence of *meN-* in non-degree achievement sentences does not restrict their descriptions to atelic situations. Such sentences may also describe telic situations, as evidenced by their compatibility with a *dalam* phrase.

- (12) a. *Kerajaan bina 3545 rumah awam kos rendah*
 government build 3545 house public cost low

dalam tempoh tiga tahun.
 inside/within period three year
 'The government built 3545 units of low-cost public housing in three years.'
- b. *Kerajaan mem-bina 3545 rumah awam kos rendah*
 government MEN-build 3545 house public cost low

dalam tempoh tiga tahun.
 inside/within period three year
 'The government built 3545 units of low-cost public housing in three years.'

In Soh and Nomoto (2012), assuming that *meN-* is *v*, we propose that it requires the verbal projection it merges with (VP) to denote a set of eventualities with stages, in the sense of Landman (1992, 2008). We show that with degree achievements, *meN-*'s aspectual requirement translates into a difference in telicity between sentences with *meN-* and sentences without.⁶ This aspectual requirement in turn explains why *meN-* may not occur in stative sentences (Soh and Nomoto 2009).

In Soh and Nomoto (2011), we argue that the aspectual requirement of *meN-* is partly responsible for the particular argument realization patterns found in intransitive sentences. In particular, we show that *meN-* sentences with 'unaccusative' roots are in fact unergatives. They pattern like sentences with 'unergative' roots with and without *meN-* with respect to the 'unaccusativity' diagnostics (e.g., the positioning of the argument and causativization possibility with the suffix *-kan*), and in contrast to sentences with 'unaccusative' roots without *meN-*. For example, with respect to argument position, the argument of an unergative root may appear only in a pre-verbal position, but not in a post-verbal position as shown in (13).

(13) **Unergative root**

- a. *Kalau anak nyanyi dalam kereta api,*
 if child sing in train

⁶ See Gil (2002: 273) for early observations that *meN-* is preferred for ongoing as opposed to completed activities and for durative rather than punctual activities in Kuala Lumpur Malay.

ibu.bapa-nya harus menegur-nya.
 parents-3SG should reprimand-3SG
 'If children sing in the train, their parents should reprimand them.'

- b. **Kalau nyanyi anak dalam kereta.api,*
 if sing child in train

ibu.bapa-nya harus menegur-nya.
 parents-3SG should reprimand-3SG

This pattern is found regardless of the presence of *meN-*.

(14) **Unergative root with *meN-***

- a. *Kalau anak me-nyanyi dalam kereta.api,*
 if child MEN-sing in train

ibu.bapa-nya harus menegur-nya.
 parents-3SG should reprimand-3SG
 'If children sing in the train, their parents should reprimand them.'

- b. **Kalau me-nyanyi anak dalam kereta.api,*
 if MEN-sing child in train

ibu.bapa-nya harus menegur-nya.
 parents-3SG should reprimand-3SG

The argument of an unaccusative root, on the other hand, differs in its possible positions depending on the presence of *meN-*. Without the prefix *meN-*, the argument may appear in a pre-verbal or a post-verbal position as shown below.

(15) **Unaccusative root**

- a. *Kalau harga elektrik tidak turun,*
 if price electricity not fall

kita akan bankrap.
 1PL will bankrupt
 'If the price of electricity doesn't fall, we'll go bankrupt.'

- b. *Kalau tidak turun harga elektrik,*
 if not fall price electricity

kita akan bankrap.
 1PL will bankrupt
 'If the price of electricity doesn't fall, we'll go bankrupt.'

However, with the prefix *meN-*, the same argument may only appear in a pre-verbal position, patterning like an unergative root (with or without *meN-*).

(16) **Unaccusative root with *meN-***

- a. *Kalau harga elektrik tidak men-(t)urun,*
if price electricity not MEN-fall

kita akan bankrap.
1PL will bankrupt

‘If the price of electricity doesn’t fall, we’ll go bankrupt.’

- b. **Kalau tidak men-(t)urun harga elektrik,*
if not MEN-fall price electricity

kita akan bankrap.
1PL will bankrupt

The patterning indicates that the sole argument in a *meN-* intransitive sentence is always an external argument regardless of whether the verb root is typically considered unergative or unaccusative. Thus all intransitive sentences with *meN-* are unergative.

In summary, while analyzing *meN-* as an active voice marker appears to account for a number of phenomena, new findings about the aspectual effects of *meN-* raise questions about such an analysis. In the next section, I examine the extent to which *meN-* can be considered an active voice marker despite the aspectual effects, by considering the connection between voice and aspect and the extent to which an analysis of *meN-* as an active voice marker can explain its aspectual properties.

3. Voice, aspect and the prefix *meN-*

Voicing contrasts (active, passive and middle) have sometimes been linked to aspectual distinctions, involving both viewpoint aspect and situation aspect.⁷ These distinctions include notions such as perfectivity (Hopper and Thompson 1980), telicity (Klaiman 1991), eventive versus stative (Klaiman 1991) and punctual versus non-punctual (Arce et al. 1994, Cooreman 1994).⁸ Although such associations have been made, they remain

⁷ Viewpoint aspect (grammatical/syntactic aspect) focuses on the temporal perspective of the situation, and involves distinctions such as imperfective and perfective. Situation aspect (aktionsart/lexical aspect) is concerned with the internal structure of the situation, and involves aspectual situation classes such as states, activities, achievements and accomplishments, which are distinguished from each other in terms of whether or not the situation described is temporally bounded (telic), extended in time (durative) or dynamic (Smith 1991).

⁸ The connection between voice and aspect in Hopper and Thompson (1980) is an indirect one, mediated by the notion of Transitivity and the discourse function of foregrounding and backgrounding. Hopper and Thompson (1980) claim that Transitivity of a clause (which is taken to be a graded property) involves a number of components, one of which is aspect. Although the authors use both the terms ‘telicity’ and ‘perfectivity’ when discussing the component of aspect, ‘telicity’ is used interchangeably with ‘perfectivity’, a case of viewpoint aspect, and is not intended to be relevant for aktionsart/lexical aspect. Thus, Hopper and Thompson (1980) claim that perfectivity is systematically correlated with the degree of Transitivity of the clause. Specifically, a clause in the perfective aspect is more Transitive than a clause in the imperfective aspect. High Transitivity is correlated with foregrounding while low Transitivity with backgrounding. It is noted that passive sentences (of the English type) tend to be used for backgrounding, and are correlated with low Transitivity. Given that low Transitivity is correlated with imperfective aspect, one can infer a link between passive voice and imperfectivity. Note however that in a study of a written corpus *Hikayat Abdullah* characterized as exemplifying ‘early Modern’ Malay, Hopper (1983)

a tendency and the particular associations do not explain the facts found in Malay. For example, Fula, a language of the West Atlantic group of Niger-Congo, makes a distinction between active, middle and passive voice (Arnott 1956: 131 cited in Klaiman 1991: 47). When there are contrasting pairs between active voice and middle voice, middle voice tends to be associated with stative and atelic situations, in contrast to active voice which tends to be associated with eventive and telic situations (Klaiman 1991: 59-61). The particular aspectual effects of *meN-* do not pattern like the reported associations. While *meN-* does not occur in stative sentences, it may occur in telic or atelic sentences in general (see (11a) and (12b)). The telicity effect of *meN-* shows up only in degree achievement sentences, where the sentences receive an atelic interpretation, but not a telic one (see (11)). There is no straightforward way in which the complex aspectual effects of *meN-* can follow from its status as an active voice marker.

Although the situation does not preclude treating *meN-* as a marker of both active voice and aspect, the analysis is undesirable as the aspectual properties observed with *meN-* are not ones typically associated with active voice.

4. Explaining properties of *meN-* without voice

In this section, I show that properties associated with *meN-* that have been attributed to its active voice status may receive alternative explanations that do not rely on *meN-* being an active voice marker. In section 4.1, I address why *meN-* sentences exhibit a canonical argument realization pattern. In section 4.2, I argue that the reason why *meN-* does not appear in *di*-passives and object preposed sentences may be due to the blocking effects of *meN-*. In section 4.3, I argue that while many analyses of *meN-*'s blocking effects assume that *meN-* is an active voice marker, the particular accounts for the blocking effects do not depend on that assumption.

4.1 The canonical argument realization pattern

The canonical argument realization pattern found in *meN-* sentences has been attributed to its status as an active voice marker. However, it should be noted that Malay also has a phonologically null active voice marker (see Nomoto, this volume). This null marker is found in stem sentences given in (17), and it is responsible for the canonical argument realization pattern of such sentences.

- (17) *Ali Ø-beli kereta itu.*
 Ali ACT-buy car the
 'Ali bought the car.'

Given the independent existence of the null active voice marker in Malay, the canonical argument realization pattern found in *meN-* sentences can be attributed to it and does not need to be borne by *meN-*.

- (18) *Ali Ø-mem-beli kereta itu.*
 Ali ACT-MEN-buy car the
 'Ali bought the car.'

shows that both active and (canonical) passive in 'early Modern' Malay share the function of backgrounding. Given that, there is no necessary expectation for active and passive to be different with respect to their correlation with (im)perfectivity.

The prefix *meN-* can be analyzed as marking aspectual information, specifically the presence of stage properties in the situation described (Soh and Nomoto 2012). The proposed analysis implies that the phonologically null active voice marker is the only option available in Malay to indicate active voice.

4.2 The absence of *meN-* in *di*-passives and object preposed sentences

The absence of *meN-* in *di*-passives and object preposed sentences can also be explained in a way that does not necessitate treating it as an active voice marker. Under standard GB/Minimalist analyses of the sentences below, the object DP undergoes movement from an object position to a subject position as shown below.⁹

- (19) a. [TP *Kereta itu* [vP *di-beli* <*kereta itu*> *oleh Ali*]]
 car the DI-buy car the by Ali
- b. [TP *Kereta itu telah* [v*P *Ali beli* <*kereta itu*>]]
 car the PFV Ali buy car the

The reason why *meN-* may not appear in *di*-passives and object preposed sentences is because the formation of *di*-passives and object preposed sentences involves such movement, and this movement of the object DP crosses *meN-*, as shown in (20).

- (20) a. *[TP *Kereta itu* [vP *men-di-beli* <*kereta itu*> *oleh Ali*]]
 car the MEN-DI-buy car the by Ali
- *[TP *Kereta itu* [vP *di-mem-beli* <*kereta itu*> *oleh Ali*]]
 car the DI-MEN-buy car the by Ali
- b. *[TP *Kereta itu telah* [v*P *Ali mem-beli* <*kereta itu*>]]
 car the PFV Ali MEN-buy car the

While the movement operation here does not involve a wh-phrase as in the cases discussed in section 2.1 and section 4.3 below, it has been demonstrated that movement of a non-wh object noun phrase to a subject position exhibits the same restriction as movement of a wh-phrase to SPEC-C (Cole and Hermon 1998; Nomoto 2008, 2011). Neither can cross the prefix *meN-*. It is therefore not necessary to assume that *meN-* is an active voice marker to explain its absence in *di*-passives and object-preposed sentences.

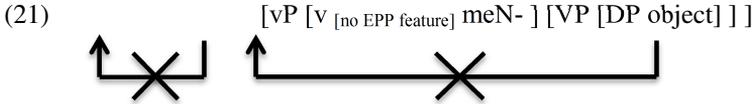
4.3 The blocking effects of *meN-*

Recent analyses have explored the blocking effects of *meN-* within a version of the Minimalist Program that assumes phases/Multiple Spell-out (e.g., Aldridge 2008, Cole, Hermon and Yanti 2008, Sato 2012).¹⁰ These analyses assume that *meN-* is an active

⁹ See footnote 1 on the difference between vP and v*P.

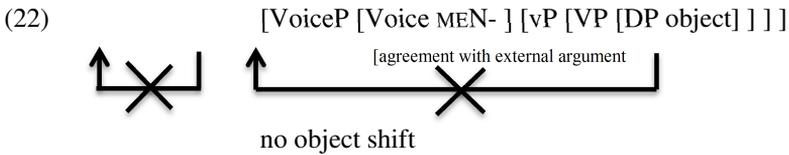
¹⁰ Although Aldridge (2008) and Sato's (2012) analyses are not based on Malay but are on Indonesian and related languages, their analyses should be seen as extendable to Malay given that Malay does not differ in the relevant respects from Indonesian.

voice marker, but they differ in the specifics of their accounts. For example, Aldridge (2008) proposes that *meN-* is an active voice marker occupying *v* that lacks an EPP feature.

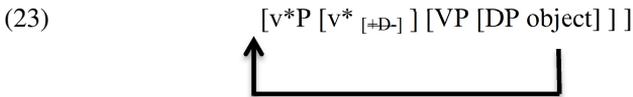


The lack of the EPP feature prevents an object from moving to the edge of the *vP* phase. Such a movement is required for extraction out of *VP* in the phase-based approach.

Cole, Hermon and Yanti (2008) treat the obligatory absence of *meN-* in the presence of movement across it as an agreement phenomenon. The presence of *meN-* marks lack of object shift (and thereby agreement with the external argument), while a zero prefix marks object shift. Since only shifted objects (which are in the phase edge) are allowed to be further extracted, sentences with *meN-* verbs allow only the subject argument to be extracted.



Sato (2012) treats the obligatory absence of *meN-* in the case of movement across it in terms of the blocking of vocabulary insertion in the post-syntactic morphological component within the framework of Distributed Morphology. Within his analysis, a *DP* moves to the edge of *v*P* (assuming a distinction between *vP* and *v*P*) to delete the uninterpretable *D*-feature of the phase head.



This deletion blocks the active voice prefix from being inserted under *v** in the post-syntactic morphological component. Its null counterpart is inserted instead as the 'elsewhere' vocabulary item.

(24) Vocabulary insertion

- i. *meN-* ↔ [v ____ [+D]] (specific case)
- ii. \emptyset_{meN-} ↔ [v ____ [...]] (elsewhere case)

While these analyses assume that *meN-* is an active voice marker, the particular accounts for the blocking effect of *meN-* do not appear to depend on its status as an active voice marker. For example, there is no necessary tie between being an active voice marker and the lack of an EPP feature in Aldridge (2008). Only the feature bundle inserted into *v* and spelled out as *meN-* does not carry an EPP feature. The feature bundle inserted into *v* in active stem sentences can bear an EPP feature (Aldridge 2008:

1456). The fact that these analyses share the assumption that the prefix *meN-* is an active voice marker and yet differ in their actual accounts suggests that the blocking effect does not necessarily follow from the status of *meN-* as an active voice marker. Thus there is no strong evidence that *meN-* would be an active voice marker on the basis of its blocking effects.

In this section, I have shown that properties associated with *meN-* that have been attributed to its active voice status are either unrelated to that status or can be given alternative accounts that do not involve introducing new constraints or elements to the grammar. Thus, there is no strong reason for assuming that *meN-* would be an active voice marker. This analysis is to be preferred, given that an analysis of *meN-* as an active voice marker cannot account for *meN-*'s aspectual effects (section 3), while an analysis of *meN-* as a marker that places an aspectual restriction to its complement can do so directly.

In the next section, I try to demonstrate that the blocking effect of *meN-* is likely to be a more general phenomenon and that the expansion of the domain of investigation to include sentences with *ber-* will help to understand why blocking occurs.

5. The blocking effects: Beyond the prefix *meN-*

Many accounts for the blocking effects of *meN-* have focused exclusively on the behavior of *meN-*. In Soh (1998), it is pointed out that other prefixes have the same blocking effects as *meN-*. In particular, the prefix *ber-* patterns like *meN-* in blocking movement across it. The same subject-object asymmetry is found in *ber-* in simple clauses. A question with a subject wh-phrase may appear with or without the prefix *ber-*, while a question with an object wh-phrase may not appear with *ber-* as shown in (25).¹¹

- (25) a. *Dia (ber-)main permainan computer sampai larut.malam.*
 3SG BER-play game computer till midnight
 'He played computer games till midnight.'
- b. *Siapa-kah yang (ber-)main permainan computer sampai larut.malam?*
 who-Q that BER-play game computer till midnight
 'Who played computer games till midnight?'
- c. **Apa-kah yang dia ber-main sampai larut.malam?*
 what-Q that 3SG BER-play till midnight
- d. *Apa-kah yang dia main sampai larut.malam?*
 what-Q that 3SG play till midnight
 'What did he play till midnight?'

As (26) shows, the prefix *ber-* may not appear on the matrix verb when the wh-phrase originates in an embedded clause.

¹¹ The semantic contribution of *ber-* in the examples in (25) and (26) is unclear. However, *ber-* has been associated with a reflexive, reciprocal and a result state reading when attached to other verbs (Nik Safiah et.al 1989).

- (26) a. *Mereka (ber-)harap stok yang baru akan di-terima.*
 3PL BER-hope stock that new will DI-accept
 ‘They hope that the new stock will be accepted.’
- b. *Apa-kah yang mereka harap akan di-terima?*
 what-Q that 3PL hope will DI-accept
 ‘What do they hope will be accepted?’
- c. **Apa-kah yang mereka berharap akan di-terima?*
 what-Q that 3PL BER-hope will DI-accept (Soh 1998)

The fact that the blocking effect found with *meN-* is a more general one also shared by *ber-* raises questions about current analyses of *meN-* blocking which treat the obligatory absence of *meN-* in the presence of movement across it as either an agreement phenomenon (Cole, Hermon and Yanti 2008) or in terms of the blocking of vocabulary insertion in the post- syntactic morphological component (Sato 2012). This is because these analyses are too ‘*meN-* specific’ and cannot be easily extended to account for the fact that *ber-* exhibits the same restrictions. It would be fruitful to expand the scope of investigation of blocking to include sentences with *ber-*, and to determine what *meN-* and *ber-* have in common, and how their commonalities contribute to the blocking effects.

6. Implications and conclusion

While the aspectual effects of *meN-* do not support treating *meN-* as a voice marker, they are compatible with current syntactic analyses that treat it as heading v*P (Aldridge 2008; Nomoto 2008, 2011; Sato 2012) or VoiceP (Cole, Hermon and Yanti 2008). This is because the presence of *meN-* is associated with the existence of an external argument in both transitive and intransitive sentences. To the extent that v* and Voice introduces an external argument, an analysis of the prefix *meN-* as v* or Voice allows the argument realization patterns of *meN-* sentences to fall out without additional stipulations. The analysis thus implies that the syntactic projections v*P and VoiceP are in the first place about the existence of an external argument. They are not necessarily tied to grammatical voice, and they may in fact have aspectual properties.

As *meN-* is associated with the existence of an external argument, and places an aspectual restriction on its complement, a question that has remained unaddressed in this paper is how these two properties are connected, and what they tell us about the status of *meN-*. In Soh and Nomoto (2012), we note that the aspectual effects of *meN-* parallel those found in English *do* in pseudo-cleft constructions (*what x did was VP*) and *do so* reduction, which has been noted to be sensitive to situation aspectual distinctions (Dowty 1979; Landman 2008; Baltin 2012; see Soh and Nomoto 2012 for details). *meN-* can be seen as a counterpart of *do* in English, which is typically analyzed as occupying v (Stroik 2001; Hallman 2004; Haddican 2007). To the extent that it can, its association with both the existence of an external argument (in its SPEC) and the requirement that its complement be aspectually restricted is not without precedent. Under this analysis, *meN-* would not be a marker of either viewpoint aspect or situation aspect, but simply a ‘light verb’ which imposes an aspectual requirement on its complement.

To summarize, I have shown in this paper that while voice may interact with aspect, the particular patterns found with *meN-* are unlike that observed in other languages. This makes it difficult to maintain that *meN-* is an active voice marker or a marker of both

active voice and aspect. I then propose alternative accounts for properties associated with *meN-* that have been attributed to its active voice status. I point out that the blocking effect of *meN-* is likely a more general phenomenon involving at least one other prefix, namely the prefix *ber-* (Soh 1998). The expansion of the investigation to include sentences with *ber-* will help to understand why blocking occurs.

Abbreviations

1/2/3	first, second, third person	ACT	active voice marker
DP	Determiner Phrase	CP	Complementizer Phrase
PL	plural	PFV	perfective aspect
SG	singular	Q	question particle
v*	little v*	v	little v/light verb
v*P	little v* Phrase	vP	little v Phrase
voiceP	Voice Phrase	VP	Verb Phrase

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