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Author(s): Anthony Jukes

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Focus and argument indexing in Makasar

Anthony JUKES

Centre for Research on Language Diversity
La Trobe University

Makasar and other languages of South Sulawesi share a grammatical pattern in which (in basic examples) an NP can be ‘fronted’, and the fronted NP is then not indexed with a pronominal clitic, unlike most core arguments. This pre-predicate position is analysed as focus, and its interaction with the indexing system serves several of the functions typically fulfilled by a voice system in other West Austronesian languages. However this ‘basic’ characterisation, especially with regard to focus, misses subtleties and irregularities in complex sentences which also need to be accounted for.

1. Introduction

Makasar (also referred to as Makassar, Makassarese or Macassarese — the endonym is *basa Mangkásara*) is one of the larger regional languages of eastern Indonesia, spoken by the Makasar people in and around the city of Makassar in the province of South Sulawesi. The number of speakers is estimated at about two million (Jukes 2006), making Makasar the second largest ethnic group in Sulawesi — the largest being Bugis with an estimated 3,600,000 (Pelras 1996:1). The language is still widely spoken, though there has been a significant shift away from it in Makassar city itself.

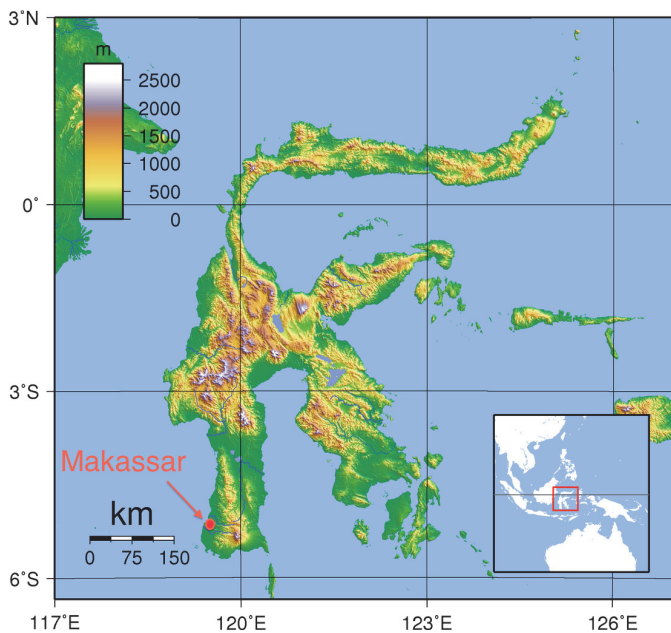


Figure 1: Sulawesi and Makassar

Makasar is a member of the South Sulawesi language subgroup, within the (Western) Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family (Blust 2009). Its closest relatives are the nearby languages Konjo and Selayarese, sometimes thought of as dialects of Makassar. More distantly related are the other languages of South Sulawesi such as Bugis, Mandar, and Sa’dan Toraja. Adelaar (1994, 2005) has also shown the subgrouping relationship between South Sulawesi languages and the Tamanic languages in Borneo.

2. Basic clause structure

Makasar is head-marking and morphologically ergative, with grammatical relations being primarily signified by pronominal clitics on the predicate ('argument indexes' to use Haspelmath's (2013) terminology). The pronominal clitic system is shown in Table 1, along with the associated free pronouns and possessive suffixes.¹

	Free Pronoun	Proclitic (ERG)	Enclitic (ABS)	Possessive suffix (POSS)
1s	<i>inakke</i>	<i>ku=</i>	<i>=a'</i>	<i>-ku</i>
2 fam	<i>ikau</i>	<i>nu=</i>	<i>=ko</i>	<i>-nu</i>
2 pol/1pl inc.	<i>ikatte</i>	<i>ki=</i>	<i>=ki'</i>	<i>-ta</i>
1 pl exc. ²	<i>ikambe</i>		<i>=kang</i>	<i>-mang</i>
3	<i>ia</i>	<i>na=</i>	<i>=i</i>	<i>-na</i>

Table 1: Pronominal elements

2.1 Intransitive clauses

In intransitive clauses there will be an absolutive enclitic (=ABS) indexing the sole argument S, if S is definite or otherwise salient in the discourse, and not in focus (§5.2). The ABS enclitic tends to attach to the first constituent and is thus a second-position or 'Wackernagel' clitic.

Intransitive verbs are typically marked with a verb prefix, usually *aC-* as in (1), but a small set of basic verbs such as *tinro* 'sleep' (2) does not require these.

- (1) *A'jappai Balandayya*
aC- jappa =i balanda -a
 INTR- walk =3ABS Dutch -DEF
 The Dutchman is walking

- (2) *Tinroi iAli*
tinro =i i Ali
 sleep =3ABS PERS Ali
 Ali is sleeping

Many other types of phrase may head intransitive clauses, for example adjectives (3), nominals (4) including pronouns (5), and prepositional phrases (6):

- (3) *Bambangalloa*
bambang =i allo -a
 hot =3ABS day -DEF
 The day is hot

¹ The distinction between affixes and clitics can be drawn partly on phonological grounds — affixes are counted as part of the word when stress is assigned, while clitics are not. However this phonological diagnostic is only useful for enclitics, because stress is counted back from the right edge of the word.

² The 1st person plural exclusive category lacks a proclitic form and is considered archaic.

(4) *Jaranga'*

jarang =a'
horse =1ABS

I am a horse

(5) *Inakkeji*

inakke =ja =i
1PRO =LIM =3ABS

It's only me

(6) *Ri balla'nai*

ri balla' -na =i
PREP house -3.POSS =3ABS

He's at home

2.2 Transitive clauses

In transitive clauses both proclitic (A) and enclitic (P) are canonically indexed on the verb, and there is no verb prefix.

(7) *Nakokkoka' miongku*

Na= kokko' =a' miong -ku
3ERG= bite =1ABS cat -1.POSS

My cat bit me

(8) *Lakuarengko Daeng Nakku'*

La= ku= areng =ko Daeng nakku'
FUT= 1ERG= name =2 (title) yearning

I'll call you 'Daeng Nakku'

When both arguments are third person it can sometimes be unclear which clitic pronoun indexes which argument, and the order of free NPs does not help to clarify this, as can be seen in (9). In these situations context or pragmatics must resolve the ambiguity.

(9) *Naciniki tedongku i Ali*

Na= cini' =i tedong -ku i Ali
3ERG= see =3ABS buffalo -1.POSS PERS Ali

Ali sees my buffalo / my buffalo sees Ali

Exceptions to the normal transitive pattern occur for three main reasons:

- (1) either A or P may be in focus position (§5.2);
- (2) the clitics may appear on separate words if there is some preverbal element (due to second-position or 'Wackernagel' constraints); or
- (3) the clause may have an indefinite Undergoer argument. Examination of this type of clause — labeled 'semi-transitive' — is the topic of the remainder of this paper.

2.3 Semi-transitive clauses

The term *semi-transitive* refers to clauses which, although clearly describing events involving two participants, only include a clitic pronoun indexing one of those participants — the Actor, as seen in (10) and (11). The clitic is from the absolutive set (S/P).

(10) *ammallia' ballo'*

aN(N)– balli =a' ballo'
 TR– buy =1ABS palm.wine
 I buy palm wine

(11) *angnganrea' unti*

aN(N)– kanre =a' unti
 TR– eat =1ABS banana
 I eat bananas

Thus, semi-transitive clauses contain verbs which are generally bivalent lexically, but the Undergoer appears as a full NP and is not cross-indexed. The verb is marked with a verb prefix, usually the nasal-substituting *aN(N)–* (see §3). The general rule is that Undergoers must be definite to be cross-indexed — in other words referred to by name or title, otherwise pragmatically salient such as first and second person, or marked with the determiner *–a* or a possessive suffix. Compare the fully transitive parallel to (11):

(12) *kukanrei untia*

ku= kanre =i unti -a
 IERG= eat =3ABS banana -DEF
 I eat the bananas

In most instances semi-transitive clauses such as (10) and (11) require an overt Undergoer NP and there is no possible intransitive interpretation, (cf **ammallia'* 'I buy'). With a few verbs, for example *kanre* 'eat' and *inung* 'drink', omission of the Undergoer is allowed and results in an intransitive clause which is quite well-formed, though obviously it differs in meaning. This is because these verbs are ambitransitive, equally allowing intransitive and transitive readings.³

(13) *angnganrea' taipa*

aN(N)– kanre =a' taipa
 TR– eat =1ABS mango
 I eat a mango/mangoes

(14) *angnganrea'*

aN(N)– kanre =a'
 TR– eat =1ABS
 I eat, I'm eating

The term *semi-transitive* for clauses with indefinite Undergoers was chosen because it captures the fact that these clauses exhibit properties that fall in between those of normal intransitive and transitive clauses. They differ from intransitive clauses because of the obvious fact that they contain Undergoers, both in their logical structure and in their syntax. They differ from fully transitive clauses in that the Undergoer is not marked with a clitic — signalling that it is not like an ordinary P, if it is a P at all.

Other labels which have been or could be used are **actor focus**, **actor voice**, **antipassive**, **extended intransitive**, or simply **intransitive**.

In the following sections I discuss overt marking of focus and topic, which are each associated with particular syntactic positions. The basic facts are not unlike those

³ An alternative analysis gives these verbs an inherent Undergoer, e.g. 'eat (rice)'.

described for *Tukang Besi* (South-East Sulawesi) by Donohue (2002), and are also similar to those described for Mayan languages by Aissen (1992), which is that there is a clause-initial focus slot, and a clause-external (ie. left-dislocated) topic slot.⁴ However the ‘basic’ characterisation, especially with regard to focus, misses subtleties and irregularities in complex sentences which also need to be accounted for.

3. Focus

In its most basic manifestation, focus involves an NP referring to a core argument being placed in pre-predicate position. There is a prefix *aN-* which explicitly marks Actor focus (appearing in the place of the *ERG=* proclitic), whereas Undergoer focus is marked by the absence of an *=ABS* enclitic. (I use the macrorole labels here because both *P* and *P*^{INDEF} may be focused).

Thus, arguments which occur as full NPs directly preceding the predicate are not cross-indexed — for example, compare 15 and 16:

(15) *Tinroi i Ali*
 tinro =i i Ali
 sleep =3 PERS Ali
 Ali is asleep

(16) *I Ali tinro*
 i Ali tinro
 PERS Ali sleep
Ali is asleep

This pre-predicate slot is a focus position,⁵ which performs a variety of pragmatic functions such as disambiguating, emphasizing, adding certainty or uncertainty. So while 15 is just a statement of fact, 16 with *S* in focus can express such meanings as: ‘Are you sure it’s Ali who is asleep?’, ‘I tell you that Ali is asleep’, ‘I’ve heard that Ali is asleep’. It is also the answer to the question *inai tinro?* ‘who is asleep?’ (interrogative pronouns are typically focused). Another example of how focus conveys extended meanings is the following:

(17) *Ballakku kicini'*
 balla' ≡ku ki= cini'
 house ≡1.POSS 2p= see
 You see **my house**

This could be given as an answer to the question: what can you give as a guarantee for a loan? (The unmarked way of saying ‘you see my house’ is *kiciniki ballakku* <ki=cini'=i balla'≡ku | 2f=see=3 house≡1.POSS>).

In transitive clauses either *A* or *P* can be in focus. The following two sentences show *A* focus and *P* focus respectively where both arguments are definite:

⁴ See also Finer’s work on *A'* positions in Selayarese (Finer 1994).

⁵ Specifically, it is a slot for marked argument focus (Van Valin 1999). As for the configuration, Finer (1994) has analysed the focus position (for Selayarese) as Spec of *IP*.

(18) *Kongkonga ambunoi mionga*

kongkong \equiv a aN- buno =i miong \equiv a
 dog \equiv def AF- kill =3 cat \equiv DEF

The **dog** killed the cat

(19) *Mionga nabuno kongkonga*

miong \equiv a na= buno kongkong \equiv a
 cat \equiv DEF 3= kill dog \equiv DEF

The dog killed the **cat**

Thus, in 18 there is no proclitic indexing *kongkonga* (A), while in 19 *mionga* (P) lacks a corresponding enclitic.⁶ Also note that in 18 the verb is marked with the Actor Focus prefix *aN-* (found in clauses where A is in focus and P is definite).

If P is indefinite (ie. if the corresponding non-focused clause is semi-transitive) either argument may still be focused, so 20 shows A focus, while 21 shows P^{INDEF} focus:

(20) *Inakke angganre juku'*

inakke aN(N)- kanre juku'
 1PRO BV- eat fish

I'm eating fish

(21) *Juku' kukanre*

juku' ku= kanre
 fish 1= eat

I'm eating **fish**

Note that in 20 the verb is marked as semi-transitive with the prefix *aN(N)-* (the missing clitic pronoun being 1st person =*a'*), but in 21 the verb hosts a proclitic, identical to clauses with focused definite P such as 19 above. This suggests that focus promotes P^{INDEF} to P (ie. promotes it from a non-core to a core argument), with concomitant promotion of S^A to A.⁷

Sentences with indefinite A are marginal as a general rule, and examples 22 and 23 are no exception.

(22) *?Miong ammuno kongkong*

miong aN(N)- buno kongkong
 cat BV- kill dog

A **cat** killed a dog / **cats** kill dogs

(23) *?Kongkong nabuno miong*

kongkong na= buno miong
 dog 3= kill cat

A cat killed a **dog** / cats kill **dogs**

Note however, that to make it even marginally acceptable in 23 *miong* (A) has been cross-indexed with *na=* even though it is indefinite and indefinite arguments are not

⁶ When A is in Focus this has obvious similarities with the phenomenon of 'ergative extraction' as described for Mayan languages (Aissen 1992)— except that there is a parallel 'absolutive extraction' when O is in Focus.

⁷ Basri & Finer (1987) have a different analysis, in which it is the trace (left behind when P^{INDEF} is moved) that is definite and which triggers the ERG= marking of S^A. I prefer an analysis in which focus itself promotes an argument to core status.

usually cross-indexed. This could again suggest that focusing P^{INDEF} promotes it to P, which further promotes A^{INDEF} to A.

Complex sentences show focus phenomena which differ somewhat from simple examples. For example, NPs may be in standard (postverbal) position in one clause, and simultaneously occupy focus position (as can be seen by the use of the Actor focus prefix *aN-*) in a subsequent clause. For example, 24 shows the S NP from one clause serving as focused A in the following clause, and then as A in a third clause though the NP is not present in the clause:

(24) *battu- tommy kongkonga ampasire'bokangi, angkanrei.*

battu tong =mo =i kongkong ≡a aN- pa- si- re'bo' -ang =i
 come also =PFV =3 dog ≡DEF AF- CAUS- MUT- squabble -BEN =3

aN- kanre =i
 AF- eat =3

the dogs came, fought over it, ate it (bembe:100)

Example 25 from the same story shows three clauses with typical focus morphology, but only one in which an NP (*bembea*) actually occupies the focus slot. In the second clause the 1st person (represented by the preposed clitic pronoun on the initial adverbial modifier *dikki'-dikki'*) is marked as focused A by the prefix *aN-* on *ambuangi*, after which the unfocused P of the second clause becomes the focused (but ellipsed) P of the third clause:

(25) *Bembea mange a'je'ne', kudikki'-dikki' mange ambuangi karungkunna naung ri buttaya, napasire'bokang kongkong.*

bembe ≡a mange aC- je'ne' ku= dikki'- dikki' mange aN- buang =i karungkung
 goat ≡DEF go MV- water 1= RDP- creep go AF- fall =3 disguise

≡na naung ri butta ≡a na= pa- si- re'bo' -ang kongkong
 ≡3.POSS go.down PREP land ≡DEF 3= CAUS- MUT- squabble -BEN dog

The goat went to bathe, I crept to throw her disguise down to the ground, it was torn apart by dogs (bembe:111)

In the preceding examples, although focus can be identified according to the structural principles as noted for simple clauses, it is unclear what the pragmatic effects are. This requires further investigation not only of focus but of clause integration phenomena.

Finally, 26 is a proverb with two parallel clauses.

(26) *Tedong lompo mate i rawa ri sirinna na tena naciniki, sama-sama mate ri sirinna taua na nacini'*

tedong lompo mate i rawa ri siring ≡na na tena na= cini' =i
 buffalo big death PREP beneath PREP cellar ≡3.POSS and NEG 3= see =3

sama- sama mate ri siring ≡na tau ≡a na na= cini'
 RDP- louse death PREP cellar ≡3.POSS person ≡DEF and 3= see

A big dead buffalo in his cellar and he doesn't notice it, a dead louse in someone else's cellar and that, he notices

This example is somewhat confusing because *na* has 3 separate functions: ERG, POSS and the conjunction 'and'. But it is clear that in the first part of the proverb the buffalo is indexed with an ABS enclitic, and in the second the louse is not indexed, though the constructions are otherwise exactly parallel. The difference is that the louse is receiving contrastive focus (represented in English with the cleft construction). Which suggests

that focus is marked not only by pre-predicate position, but also by lack of indexing, reminiscent of Nikolaeva's (1999) analysis of Northern Ostyak:

The object that does not trigger agreement bears the focus function, and systematically corresponds to the focus position. (Nikolaeva 1999:331).

The extent to which lack of indexing marks focus requires future investigation.

3. Topicalisation

There is a further possibility for preposing elements in a clause, which is left-dislocation. In this (unlike with focus) a clear prosodic break occurs between the preposed element and the remainder of the clause, and if the preposed element is a core argument, cross-indexing does occur (again, unlike focus). This can be seen in both 27 and 28 — in the former A is topicalised and both arguments are cross-indexed, in the latter A is topicalised, P is focused and thus only A is cross-indexed with a proclitic:

(27) *kongkonga, nabunoi mionga*

kongkong ≡a na= buno =i miong ≡a
 dog ≡DEF 3= kill =3 cat ≡DEF
 the dog, it killed the cat

(28) *kongkonga, mionga nabuno*

kongkong ≡a miong ≡a na= buno
 dog ≡DEF cat ≡DEF 3= kill
 as for the dog, it was the cat that it killed

Example 29 has two clauses illustrating the structural contrast between topic and focus — in the first clause P is topicalised and thus is cross-indexed with an enclitic, while in the second P is in focus and is not cross-indexed:

(29) *Anjo bainea, nalantiki Karaeng ri Massere'; anjo bura'nea nalanti' Karaeng ri Roong*

anjo baine ≡a na= lanti' =i karaeng ri Massere' anjo bura'ne ≡a
 that female ≡DEF 3= inaugurate =3 karaeng PREP Massere' that man ≡DEF

na= lanti' karaeng ri Roong
 3= inaugurate karaeng PREP Roong

That girl, he made her Karaeng of Massere', that boy he made Karaeng of Roong.
 (bembe:003)

Topicalisation differs functionally from focus as one would expect. Whereas marked focus is generally used in a contrastive function, topicalisation is most often used when setting a topic either for a whole text (as was the case in 29 as the story is basically about Karaeng Massere'), or for switching between alternative topics. It also clearly differs syntactically. Whereas a focused argument is an argument within the phrase (as indicated by omission of its corresponding clitic pronoun), a topicalised NP is external to the phrase (as indicated by the presence of the clitic pronoun).

Abbreviations

ABS	absolutive	AF	actor focus
DEF	definite	ERG	ergative
FUT	future	INTR	intransitive
LIM	limitative	NEG	negative
PERS	personal prefix	POSS	possessive
PREP	preposition	PRO	pronoun
PROH	prohibitive	SBJV	subjunctive
STV	stative	TR	transitive

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