Bare passive agent hierarchy

Introduction. The bare passive construction is a construction in which the verb occurs with no overt voice morphology and the internal argument behaves as a subject. It is often noted that in Standard Indonesian, bare passive agents are restricted to pronouns and pronoun substitutes (= non-pronominals with 1st/2nd person reference) (Sneddon et al. 2010:257). Thus, *bapak* 'father' in (1) is only acceptable when used as a pronoun substitute. However, no such restriction exists in the closely related language, Standard Malay. The question arises which is the norm among the languages that have bare passives. Based on a cross-linguistic survey, I show that the Standard Malay-type is the norm and proposes an implicational hierarchy of possible bare passive agents. I also present an analysis of bare passives and their cross-linguistic variations.

(1)   Standard Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010:259)
       Suart ini harus **bapak** tandatangani.
       letter this must father sign.on
       '{You/*Father} must sign this letter.'

Implicational hierarchy. I propose the implicational hierarchy in (2). If a language allows the items in a slot as bare passive agents, it will also allow the items to the left of that slot.

(2)   *Clitic pronouns*   *Free pronouns*   *Noun phrases*

1st 2nd	>	3rd	>	pronouns	>	pronoun substitutes	>	kin terms	>	proper names	>	indefinites	>	definites	>	covert
A		**B**		**C**		**D**		**E**		**F**		**G**		**H**		**I**

(3) summarizes languages that belong to the groups shown in (2). Language that belong to groups B and C have not been found yet.

(3)   **A**   Sama Bangingi' (Gault 2002), Standard Javanese (Conners 2008)
       D   Standard Indonesian (Sneddon et al. 2010)
       E   Madurese (Jeoung 2017)
       F   Indonesian (Guilfoyle et al.'s (1992) variety)
       G   Balinese (monotransitive; Artawa 1998)
       H   Balinese (ditransitive; Udayana 2012), Sasak (Asikin-Garmager 2017), Kendal Javanese (Sato 2010), Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, Standard Malay, Jambi Malay (Yanti 2010), Minangkabau (Crouch 2009), Acehnese (Legate 2014), Sama Pangutaran (Walton 1986)
       I   Mualang (Tjia 2007)

It is clear that the norm is the system of group H, where the requirement on bare passive agents is simply that they must be overt. While items toward the left side on the hierarchy may be preferred, DPs consisting of multiple words are also possible, as in the Balinese example in (4).

(4)   Balinese (Udayana 2012:108–109)
       Anak ento beli-nin   **sabilang anak**   baju ento.
       person that buy-APPL every   person shirt that
       'Everybody bought that shirt from the man.'

In Mualang, an Ibanic language of Western Kalimantan, bare passive agents need not be overt, as in (5). The agent position is indicated by *pro*.

(5)　　Mualang (Tjia 2007:177)

Manuk ***pro*** pakay p-amis　　da　pian.
chicken　　eat　CAUS-finished LOC bathing.place
'The chickens were eaten up at the bathing place.'

Analysis. I argue that by default, bare passive agents are licensed by an inherent ergative case assigned by a passive v (= Aldridge's (2008) v_{Erg}), as depicted in (6) (groups H–I), but this mechanism is not available in some languages or constructions (groups A–G). In (6), v specifies the voice and introduces Agent whereas Voice signals the type of v projecting its complement. Patient moves to the subject position for structural case. V moves to v (Patient-Agent-V order) or further to Voice (Patient-V-Agent order).

(6)　　Aux [$_{\text{VoiceP}}$ Ø [$_{\text{vP}}$ **Agent** [$_{\text{v}'}$ v_{pass} [$_{\text{VP}}$ V Patient]]]]
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[Erg]

Languages in group H either do not have a null unspecified pronoun *pro* or *pro* is restricted to structural case positions. Balinese exhibits a construction-based split. A monotransitive clause cannot have definite agents (7), unlike a ditransitive one (4). In the former case, the default ergative case licensing is unavailable, though it is not clear why.

(7)　　Balinese (Artawa 2013:10)

Nasi-n　oke-ne　　amah bangkung(-e).
 rice-LINK 1SG-POSS eat　　pig-DEF
 '{A/*The} pig ate my rice.'

The reason why the default licensing is unavailable in gourps A-F has to do with Silverstein's (1976) hierarchy of split ergativity, which resembles the hierarchy in (2): nominals higher in the hierarchy are less likely to be realized as ergative as opposed to nominative.

When the default case-licensing is unavailable, an alternative mechanism is called for. One promising such mechanism is proposed by Levin (2015), originally for Balinese and Malagasy bare passive agents. He argues that head-head adjacency is employed in place of case-licensing. While licencing by adjacency is the primary licensing mechanism for Levin, it plays a secondary role in my analysis.

Implications. The presence of bare passives with a covert agent as in Mualang (5) suggests that the overtness of the agent, which is found in almost all definitions of bare passives, should not be included in the definition. It is rather a characteristic specific to individual languages. The cross-linguitic variability and the analysis of it presented above support an ergative analysis of bare passives à la Aldridge (2008). Furthermore, to the extent that bare passives are related to English-type passives (e.g Nomoto 2018), such an analysis may be valid for passives in general.

Selected references. Aldridge, E. 2008. Phase-based account of extraction in Indonesian. *Lingua* 118:1440–1469. ● Artawa, I.K. 2013. The basic verb construction in Balinese. *NUSA* 54:5–27. ● Levin, T. F. 2015. *Licensing without Case*. MIT dissertation. ● Nomoto, H. 2018. The development of the English-type passive in Balinese. *Wacana* 19:122–148. ● Silverstein, M. 1976. Hierarchy of features and ergativity. In *Grammatical Categories in Australian Languages*, ed. R. R. M. Dixon, 112–171. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. ● Sneddon, J. N., A. K. Adelaar, D. N. Djenar and M. Ewing. 2010. *Indonesian: A Comprehensive Grammar*. London: Routledge, 2nd edn. ● Tjia, J. 2007. *A Grammar of Mualang: An Ibanic Language of Western Kalimantan*. Leiden: LOT. ● Udayana, I.N. 2012. Indefiniteness constraints of (monotransitive) OV-agents in Balinese. *Jurnal Kajian Bali* 2:87–112.