1 Introduction

Through the examination of middle voice constructions in Balinese, we address two related issues raised in the recent literature dealing with this topic; namely, 1) the nature of the middle voice category (Kemmer 1993) and 2) the distribution of middle constructions (Haiman 1983). But first, a brief introduction to the Balinese structure and morphological middle forms is in order.

Balinese, like many other Indonesian and Philippine languages, has a fluid (or symmetrical) voice system, where there is no basic voice, and whereby either an agentive or patient nominal can be rather freely chosen as a primary grammatical relation (e.g., Subject, Topic, or Pivot). The following examples (1) and (2) illustrate the two relevant transitive constructions, actor-voice (AV) and undergoer-voice (UV) constructions (Arka 1998), which correspond to the Actor-Topic/Focus and Goal-Topic/Focus constructions in Philippine languages.

Transitive clauses

(1) Actor-voice construction

I tyang nyepak cicing-e. [N-sepak] (N-verb form)
I AV.kick dog-DEF
‘I kicked the dog.’

(2) Undergoer-voice constructions

Cicing-e sepak tiang. [Ø-sepak] (Ø-verb form)
dog-DEF UV.kick I
‘I kicked the dog.’

As for intransitive clauses, there are three formal classes: a) ones that have a N-verb form, b) ones that have a ma-verb form, and c) those that have a Ø-verb form.

Intransitive clauses

(3) Cerik-cerik-e ngeling. [N-geling]
child-child-DEF cry
‘The children cried.’
Cerik-cerik-e majuuk. [ma-jujuk]  
child-child-DEF stand up  
‘The children stood up.’

Cerik-cerik-e ulung. [Ø-ulung]  
child-child-DEF fall  
‘The children fell.’

Among these intransitive constructions, the ma-construction illustrated in (4) provides a point of departure to our inquiry of the middle voice forms in Balinese.

2 Ma- As a Middle Marker
In the Balinese grammatical treatments such as Artawa (1994), Clynès (1995), and Arka (1998), the ma-construction has generally been considered simply as an alternate or variant construction of the N-prefixed form such as (3). But there are a fair number of ma-forms that express those situation types that are coded by what are identified as middle voice constructions in other languages. Accordingly, it is reasonable to consider these forms as middle constructions.1 The ma-prefix, in addition, has several other uses whose semantics are not straightforwardly characterizable in terms of the middle semantics. The following represent the middle and some other uses of the ma-prefix.

Morphological middles
(6) ma-suah ‘comb (hair)’, ma-suluh ‘look at oneself in the mirror’
ma-sugi ‘wash (face)’, ma-ambuh ‘wash one’s hair’
ma-baseh ‘wash one’s hands/feet’
ma-cukur ‘shave’ (Artawa’s dialect) ‘cut one’s hair’ (Arka’s dialect)
ma-kuris ‘shave one’s beard/moustache’ (Arka’s dialect)
ma-pupur ‘powder oneself’
ma-sikat ‘brush oneself (e.g., own teeth)’
ma-dengdeng ‘dry oneself, sun-bake’, ma-payas ‘dress oneself’
ma-topong ‘have a hat on’, ma-song ‘have a hole’
ma-umah ‘have a place to stay’
ma-bapa ‘has a father-relation with someone’ ‘call someone bapa/father’
ma-adi ‘has a sibling relation with someone’ ‘call adil/younger sibling’
ma-lingeb ‘lie face down’, ma-sila ‘sit down cross-legged’
ma-jujuk ‘stand up’ (straight, not bending), ma-tangi ‘stand up’
m(a)-engkeb ‘hide’, ma-jalan ‘walk’, ma-laib ‘run’
ma-kecog ‘jump’, ma-lincer ‘spin’, ma-suryak ‘shout’
ma-takon ‘ask’, ma-bangkes ‘sneeze’, ma-kecu ‘spit’
ma-kenyr ‘smile very briefly’, ma-keplug ‘explode (once)’
ma-krep ‘produce cracking sounds’
ma-kebyah ‘flash (of light) once’, ma-kudus ‘produce smoke’

Singaraja dialect (Clynès 1995: 264)
me-kecu ‘spit’, me-solah ‘dance.HI’, me-tangi ‘wake up’
me-suryak ‘cheer’, me-suat ‘answer’, me-gending ‘sing’
me-gendi ‘leave’, me-keber ‘fly’, me-sedédég ‘lean against’
me-bading ‘turn around’, me-cuab ‘sprout out (e.g., blood)’ etc.

Reciprocal ma----(-an)^2
(7) Manuk-e ma-palu.
    roosters-DEF fight.each other
    ‘The roosters are fighting (each other).’

    Wayan and Made fight.each other
    ‘Wayan and Made are fighting.’

Resultative ma-
(9) Jajan-e suba ma-gugut.
    cake-DEF already ma-bite
    ‘The cake is already bitten.’

Antipassive ma-
(10) a. Nasi-ne daa tiang.
    rice-DEF eat 1SG
    ‘I ate the rice.’

    b. Tiang ma-daar. (Antipassive)
        ISG ma-eat
        ‘I ate.’

(11) a. Ia ngeneh-ang tiang.
    3SG think-APPL 1SG
    ‘He is thinking about me.’

    b. Ia ma-keneh teken tiang. (Antipassive)
        3SG ma-think to 1SG
        ‘S/he has some feeling (love) for me.’

Inchoative ma-
    ma-medih ‘become angry’ < depid ‘angry’
    ma-meseh ‘become swollen’ < beseh ‘swollen’
    ma-manes ‘become troublesome/ become angry/ start to cause problems’ < panes
        ‘hot/angry’

“Pretend” ma-
    ma-mongol ‘pretend to be deaf’ < bongol ‘deaf’
    ma-mules ‘pretend to sleep’ < pules ‘sleep’
3 On the Nature of the Middle Category
3.1 Reflexives and Middles
The first issue we wish to deal with has to do with the nature of the middle voice category; namely, a topic extensively studied by Kemmer (1993). On the basis of the observation that there are both those languages that do not formally distinguish between reflexive and middle constructions and those that do, Kemmer recognizes two types of languages, which she identifies as “one-form languages” and “two-form languages,” respectively.

Spanish (one-form language)
(12) a. María se vio. (Reflexive)
MID see
‘Maria saw herself.’
b. María se peinó. (Middle)
MID comb
‘Maria combed (herself).’

Swedish (two-form language)
(13) a. Hon såg sig själv. (Reflexive)
she saw herself
‘She saw herself.’
b. Hon kammade sig. (Middle)
she comb MID
‘She combed (her hair).’

Kemmer (1993:28) then goes on to say that “[t]he marking patterns described above...tell us two things. One is that since reflexive and middle markers often show synchronic and/or diachronic formal relations, we can conclude that there is a semantic relation between the categories that these markers express. On the other hand, the fact that languages often do make a formal distinction between reflexive and middle marking also suggests that there is a semantic distinction between the functional correlates of these formal markers which is susceptible to linguistic coding. It is the two-form languages in which this difference is most clearly manifested.”

On the basis of the considerations expressed above, Kemmer distinguishes reflexive situation types and middle situation types in the following manner. Those constructions that express reflexive situation types are then identified as reflexive constructions, and those that express middle situation types are treated as middle constructions.

Reflexive situation types
Direct reflexive (John hit/kicked/killed himself.)
Indirect reflexive (John built a house for himself.)
Logophoric reflexive (She feels herself (to be) abused.)

Middle situation types
Body action middles
Grooming actions (wash, shave, bathe, dress, adorn...)
Change in body posture actions (sit down, kneel down, lie down...