

TABOO OBJECT RELATIVE CLAUSES IN INDONESIAN¹

Tim Hassall

Faculty of Asian Studies,
Australian National University
timothy.hassall@anu.edu.au

0. Abstract

This paper concerns one type of relative clause in Indonesian, the variety of Malay which is the national language of Indonesia. This clause type has a verb marked by the *meN-* nasal prefix, and uses a gap strategy to relativise on an Object position – illustrated in (8) and (9) below. (In this paper the term ‘Object’ is used to refer collectively to both direct objects and objects of complements, as both are equally the focus of the paper. When it is necessary to distinguish the two, the terms ‘direct object’ or ‘object of a complement’ are used.)

This type of relative clause is rejected by grammarians and is apparently regarded as non-existent. This paper will demonstrate that it has a small but definite role in the formal variety of Indonesian. The paper will also identify factors that motivate its use, and explain why it is likely to become more common.

1. Background

1.1. Basic clause types

An active clause in Indonesian is as follows:

- (1) Anak itu akan membantu Ali.
 child that FUT MEN-help Ali.
 That child will help Ali.

The word order is SVO. The verb is marked as active by the nasal prefix *meN-*.²

Two passive constructions exist in Indonesian, often called Passive Type 1 and Passive Type 2 (cf. Sneddon 1996). The choice between Type 1 and Type 2 is determined by who the Actor is.

Passive Type 1 is used when the Actor is third person.

- (2) Ali akan dibantu (oleh) anak itu.
 Ali FUT DI-help by child that
 Ali will be helped by that child.

In (2), the verb *bantu* is marked as passive by the verb prefix *di-*. The Agent *anak itu* is placed after the verb, as an oblique constituent.

Passive Type 2 is used when the Agent is a pronoun or a pronoun substitute.

- (3) Ali akan saya bantu.
 Ali FUT 1sg \emptyset -help
 Ali will be helped by me.

In (3) the verb *bantu* is marked with a zero prefix. No element can intervene between Agent and Verb. So any modifiers of the verb, as with the future marker *akan* here, must precede the Agent.

1.2. Preverbal elements in passive clauses

A constraint on forming passive clauses is that certain lexical elements cannot always precede a passive verb. By way of illustration, let us first look at a word that *can* freely do so: the future marker *akan*. In (1) it precedes the active verb *membantu* ‘help’, while in (2) and (3) it precedes the passive verbs *dibantu* and *bantu* respectively, to form a passive clause that is semantically equivalent to the active clause.

A word that cannot precede a passive verb in that way, according to Wolff (1986) and some informants, is the word *berani* ‘dare.’ Here it is first in an active clause:

- (4) Ali berani melawan polisi itu.
 Ali dare MEN-resist police that
 Ali dared to resist those police.

In (4), it is the Agent, Ali, who is doing the ‘daring’. In other words, *berani* ‘dare’ is semantically linked to the Agent. But if we try to use *berani* that way in a passive clause, it is not accepted by all speakers:

- (5) ? Polisi itu berani dilawan oleh Ali
 Police that dare DI-resist by Ali
 For: *Ali dared to resist those police.*

Sentence (5) is intended to mean the same as (4), i.e. *berani* ‘dare’ is once again linked semantically to Ali. But when *berani* ‘dare’ precedes a passive verb while thus semantically linked to the Agent, some speakers regard the resulting clause as unacceptable.

It is hard to specify which words can and cannot precede a passive verb when semantically linked to the Agent.³ Both informants and writers disagree among each other in the case of certain words, with Alieva et al (1991: 390) contradicting Wolff (1986) by accepting *berani* ‘dare,’ and Alwi et al (2000:347-348) contradicting nearly everyone by ruling out *ingin* ‘wish, desire’ in some sentences. But the crucial thing for present purposes is simply that many words are problematic in this position. Ones that struck one or more of my informants as awkward to some degree include: *berani* ‘dare’, *ikut* ‘join in’, *mampu* ‘(be) capable’, *berhasil* ‘succeed’, *gagal* ‘fail’, *suka* ‘like’, *lupa* ‘forget’, *coba* ‘try’, *mulai* ‘start’, *takut* ‘(be) afraid’, *enggan* ‘(be) reluctant’, *senang* ‘(be) happy’, *malu* ‘(be) ashamed’ and *berusaha* ‘try’.

1.3. Relative clauses

A subject relative clause (RC) in Indonesian is illustrated below. (In all RC examples both the relativiser *yang* and the position of the gapped noun phrase are highlighted in bold.)

- (6) Anak **yang** Ø membantu Ali itu baik hati sekali.
 child REL MEN-help Ali that kind very
 The child who helped Ali is very kind.

In (6), the relativised noun phrase (NP) is *anak* ‘child’. The position of the relativised NP is marked with a gap, indicated here by the null symbol \emptyset . This NP is the subject of the verb *membantu* ‘correct,’ which is marked as active by the nasal prefix *meN-*. The relative clause is preceded by the relativising particle *yang*. This type of RC is often referred to as a gap strategy and is the most common type of RC in Indonesian (cf. Sneddon 1996, Cole & Hermon 1998).

According to most grammarians of Indonesian, one cannot relativise with the gap strategy on any position other than Subject. And when the RC verb is marked with a *meN-* prefix, then virtually all grammarians agree in ruling out any non-Subject position (e.g. Cole & Hermon (1998); Vamarasi (1999: 12-13); Kaswanti Purwo (1989: 350, 1996: 195); Musgrave (2001: 59); Sneddon (1996: 286); Voskuil (1996: 188-189)).⁴ Native-speaking informants also tend to regard such RCs as awkward to some degree, discussed later.

In line with this constraint, Indonesians routinely use passive RCs to ensure that a gapped NP occupies the Subject position. So a notion such as “the child whom Ali helped” will typically be rendered as:

- (7) Anak **yang** \emptyset dibantu oleh Ali itu kecil sekali.
 child REL DI-help by Ali that small very
The child whom Ali helped is very small. (literally: ‘who was helped by Ali’)

The type of RC which is the focus of this paper disregards that constraint, and uses an active RC to gap an Object position instead. Here is an example, from a public address by the fiction writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer:⁵

- (8) Bisa saja dibuat daftar kekurangan atau kekeliruan
 can just DI-make list deficiency or error
 angkatan-angkatan terdahulu **yang** kalian
 generation-generation earliest REL 2pl
 perlu mengkoreksi \emptyset .
 need MEN-correct
One could certainly make a list of the deficiencies or errors of the earliest generations (of freedom fighters) which you need to correct.

In (8), the relativised NP is *kekurangan atau kekeliruan angkatan-angkatan terdahulu* ‘deficiencies or errors of the earliest generations’. This NP is the direct object of the *meN-* prefixed verb *mengkoreksi* ‘correct,’ and its position in the RC is marked with a gap.

A second example is this, from a writer’s personal weblog:

- (9) Bukankah kehendak kita menciptakan manusia yang tak
 NEG-INT desire 1pl MEN-create-KAN human REL NEG
 bisa mengambil keputusan sendiri menjadi maksud yang
 can MEN-take decision self MEN-be intention REL
 tidak perlu ...? Jadi misteri **yang** kita tak mampu
 NEG necessary so mystery REL 1pl NEG (be) capable
 menangkap Ø dengan nalar, mengapa manusia diciptakan!
 MEN-catch with reason why human di-CREATE-kan
*Isn't our desire to create humans devoid of free will, a pointless desire...? So
 the mystery that we are not capable of grasping rationally is: why was
 humanity created?*

In (9), the relativised NP is *misteri* ‘mystery’. This NP is the object of the *meN*-prefixed verb *menangkap* ‘catch,’ and its position in the RC is marked with a gap. The lexical element *mampu* ‘(be) capable’ is probably best regarded here as a full verb. As such, it is a matrix verb that takes the verb *menangkap* ‘catch’ as its verbal complement (see Wolff 1986: 142-144; Sneddon 1996: 270-271). By that analysis, the relativised NP *misteri* is not a direct object but rather the object of a complement.⁶

The types of relative clause in (8) and (9) – which I will refer to collectively as “*meN*- gapped Object,” seem to be regarded as non-existent.⁷ The direct object variant receives more explicit attention, with Voskuil (1996: 203) stating flatly that instances of it “do not occur, in no variant of Indonesian”. Similarly, Ewing and Cumming (1998:79) say that the prescriptive ban on that clause type is closely adhered to in both formal discourse and more informal written texts. And while grammarians often fabricate instances of “*meN*- gapped Object” for discussion, I have never seen an authentic instance of it cited by any writer.

The aims of the present study are: to demonstrate that the relative clause type “*meN*- gapped Object” does occur in Indonesian; to describe the salient formal features of authentic tokens of this clause type and to identify factors motivating its use.

2. Method

The first stage of the research was casual observation. I simply recorded in a notebook, over several years, any instance of “*meN*- gapped Object” that I happened to notice in any text (19 instances in total). The second stage was a small-scale search for additional instances of this construction in written texts on the internet, using Google search engine.⁸ This search consisted of six sessions of about two hours each. It was not intended to be exhaustive but rather to test out tentative notions formed on the basis of the initial observational data about what type of formal features tended to characterise tokens of “*meN*- gapped Object,” and to give some idea of how frequently writers might use this clause type and in what type of texts.

3. Findings and Discussion

The study found that “*meN*- gapped Object,” while very infrequent, is used in Indonesian and within the formal variety of Indonesian specifically. Nearly 100 Indonesian texts were found that contained an instance (or more than one) of this clause type.⁹ Of these texts, just under two-thirds were original Indonesian texts. The

remainder were in texts that were translations or suspected translations of an English text or, occasionally, of a text in Arabic or Dutch.¹⁰

3.1. Register

Most instances of “*meN-* gapped Object” in the data occurred in texts that were formal in register, i.e. marked by the consistent presence of overtly formal features and absence of informal ones (see Ewing, to appear, for a description of informal Indonesian and Sneddon (2003) for the relationship between the formal and informal varieties). As the *meN-* nasal verb prefix itself is a marker of formal register to some degree, this is not surprising. However some instances occurred in texts that were only semi-formal, and a few occurred in quite strongly informal texts.¹¹

3.2. Types of texts containing “*meN-* gapped Object”

Tokens were found to occur in a range of text types. The tokens obtained by the initial stage of casual observation included ones from television interviews, novels, short stories, scholarly non-fiction works, and newspaper articles. The ones obtained by web text-searching included ones written by journalists in articles in on-line newspapers and magazines, and by a variety of people quoted or interviewed in such articles; as well as entries in personal weblogs, postings to discussion forums, academic articles, essays on social and religious issues, religious scriptures (both Christian and Muslim), short stories, and transcripts of speeches by public figures such as government ministers.

These texts containing “*meN-* gapped Object” are nearly all very recent. Of those whose date of composition could be ascertained, the vast majority were composed in the 1990s or later. A couple were written in the 1970s (and first published in the 1980s), but none earlier than that.¹²

3.3. Malaysian

The web text-searches revealed that this construction also occurs in Malaysian, the variety of Malay that is the national language of Malaysia. This is significant as the prescriptive taboo on this construction and the rejection of it by native informants is as strong in Malaysian as in Indonesian (see Yeoh 1977).

Thirty Malaysian texts were found with at least one instance of “*meN-* gapped Object.”¹³ Ten of these were original texts in Malaysian while the others were translations or suspected translations of English (or Arabic) texts.

3.4. Influence of English: Translation from an English source text

Linguistic influence from English is a powerful motivation for the use of “*meN-* gapped Object”. This is most obvious when writers produce it in the act of translating from a source text in English. Here is an example:

- (10) Peraturan semacam ini juga memaksakan seorang
regulation one-type this also MEN-force-KAN one-CLASS
bawahan untuk memperbincangkan persoalan
inferior COMP MEM-PER-discuss-KAN matter
pribadinya dengan para atasan dalam birokrasinya,
personal-3sg with PL superior in bureaucracy-the
suatu situasi **yang** orang banyak pasti lebih suka

a situation REL person many certain more like
menghindari Ø.

MEN-avoid-i

This kind of rule (i.e. that civil servants have to ask their boss's permission before they divorce or re-marry) also forces employees to discuss their personal affairs with their superiors in the bureaucracy, a situation which many people would definitely prefer to avoid.

In (10), the entire segment of head NP + relative clause (i.e. the segment *suatu situasi yang orang banyak pasti lebih suka menghindari*) is evidently a close translation of an English segment of text with an Object relative clause, such as “a situation which many people would definitely prefer to avoid”.¹⁴

The Malaysian writer Muhammad Salleh is striking for his heavy use of “*meN*-gapped Object” (along with many features of gross translationese) in his Malaysian renderings from English of various texts on socialism. He wrote eight of the translated Malaysian texts in the data and he uses it liberally in all of them (e.g. in Salleh 2002).

3.5 Influence of English: Covert syntactic transfer

Speakers and writers who use “*meN*-gapped Object” in original texts, too, often do so at least partly because of syntactic transfer from English. The very fact that people use this construction when translating texts from English strongly suggests a covert influence at other times. Other factors also point to a powerful covert influence of English, as follows.

(a) English and Dutch have strongly influenced the syntax of Indonesian (see e.g. Moeliono 1992; Badudu 1996; Kaswanti Purwo 1996; Sneddon 2003). During recent decades the influence has increasingly been from English and, as Sneddon (1996: 2) observes, new structures are constantly being introduced under pressure from English. One such influence during recent decades has been a rise in frequency of active clauses as opposed to passive ones (Kaswanti Purwo 1996: 199-208; Verhaar 1989: 258-261). The emergence of this active construction of “*meN*-gapped Object” might be one manifestation of that broader syntactic influence.¹⁵

(b) the users of “*meN*-gapped Object” in the data are well-educated Indonesians (e.g. journalists, fiction writers, university students or politicians). This social stratum is highly familiar with English, which is the first foreign language in Indonesia, a compulsory subject throughout high school and which carries very high prestige (see e.g. Sneddon 2003, Lowenberg 1994). In Malaysia English has greater prominence still, and educated Malaysians are generally more proficient in English than educated Indonesians.

(c) My informants often remarked without prompting that English influence was at work in original instances of “*meN*-gapped Object” in the data. Moreover, English native speaking students of Indonesian – in my own experience and that of other teachers – very often produce “*meN*-gapped Object” in their own speech and writing.

3.6 Formal features of “meN- gapped Object”

The study also revealed certain formal features of “meN- gapped Object” tokens in the data.

3.6.1 *Preverbal lexical elements.* Rather than comprising a minimal structure of obligatory elements only, most tokens of “meN- gapped Object” in the data contain lexical elements before the *meN-* prefixed verb such as negators, temporal/ aspectuals, or modals. Fully 85% of the tokens found in original Indonesian texts contain extra words of this kind and a large majority of tokens in translations of texts also contain them.

An example is (8) earlier, where in front of the RC verb *mengkoreksi* ‘to correct’, we find the modal auxiliary *perlu* ‘need’. Here are a few more examples to illustrate this tendency, with the additional lexical items marked in capitals: *tidak* ‘not’ in (11), *tidak bisa* ‘cannot’ in (12) and *ingin* ‘wish, desire’ in (13).

From a novel by the famous writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer:

- (11) Sahaya hanya mengetahui **yang** orang Jawa TIDAK
 1sg only MEN-know-i REL person Java NEG
 mengetahui Ø, karena pengetahuan itu milik bangsa
 MEN-know-i because knowledge that possession nation
 Eropa dan karena memang saya belajar dari mereka.
 Europe and because indeed 1sg BER-study from them
It's just that I know what the Javanese do not know, because that knowledge belongs to Europeans, and I have surely learned from them.

A well-known writer of fiction, Danarto, being interviewed in a newspaper article:

- (12) Justru di dalam puisi Goenawan Mohamad itu ada
 precisely LOC inside poetry Goenawan Mohamad that there-are
 adegan senggama **yang** orang TIDAK BISA melihat Ø.
 scene intercourse REL person NEG can MEN-see.
Nah, dari sinilah ...
Well from this-EMPH
In Goenawan Mohamad's poetry for that matter, we find sex scenes which are not explicitly depicted. Now this is what...

And one example from Malaysian (a headless relative): in the transcript of a speech by then-President Mahathir Mohamad:

- (13) Orang asing dan media mereka tidak ada niat baik
 person foreign and media 3pl NEG have intention good
 terhadap kita ... **Yang** mereka INGIN melihat Ø ialah negara
 towards 1pl REL 3pl wish MEN-see COP country
 kita ini mengalami nasib buruk ...
 1pl this MEN-experience-i fate bad
Foreigners and their media do not have friendly intentions towards us ...
What they would like to see is our country suffering misfortune ...

It would appear then that the presence of such words makes “*meN-* gapped Object” feel more acceptable to those who use it. Informants agreed that these extra words made the construction much more acceptable (although still tending to find it awkward to some degree).

This resembles the situation with a different type of Object relative clause in Indonesian: one that marks the object not with a gap but with a pronoun copy of the NP. With that construction, the addition of lexical elements such as modals improves it to the point of making it fully acceptable (Kaswanti Purwo 1984:145-147, 1989: 420; Verhaar 1983:60) – as illustrated below.

- (14) Ini merupakan soal **yang** SUDAH LAMA
 this MEN-form-KAN matter REL already long-time
 kita INGIN membicarakannya.
 1pl wish MEN-talk-KAN-3sg
This is a matter that we have wanted to discuss for a long time (from Verhaar 1983: 59)

Compare that with (15) below, stripped of extra words and thus unacceptable:

- (15) *Ini merupakan soal yang kita membicarakannya.
 this MEN-form-KAN matter REL 1pl MEN-talk-KAN-3sg
This is a matter that we discussed.

Why should extra words improve the type of RC in (15)? Kaswanti Purwo (1984) argues that they (a) create distance between the word *yang* and the *meN-* prefixed verb, and (b) make the clause in some sense ‘modal’, i.e. not purely factual and not referring to a definite event that has taken place.¹⁶ In this study, the same thing is probably happening with “*meN-* gapped Object”. So for example the added words in (11), (12) and (13), as well as obviously creating distance, also make the clause non-factual/ non-eventive.

3.6.2 *Preverbal words that are awkward in passives.* Many tokens of “*meN-* gapped Object” contain a lexical element that would be awkward in a passive clause. One type is a preverbal word of the kind discussed in section 1.2. Here are examples, with that preverbal element marked by capitals in each case: *lebih suka* ‘prefer’ in (16), *gagal* ‘fail’ in (17), *ikut* ‘join in’ in (18) and *berani* ‘dare’ in (19).

A radio interviewer’s question to a contestant in the Science Olympics:

- (16) Kalau Ina bagaimana? Apa ada bagian dari
 If Ina how INT there-is part from
 ilmu-ilmu sains **yang** Ina LEBIH SUKA
 knowledge-knowledge science REL Ina more like
 menekuni Ø?
 MEN-persevere-i
And what about you, Ina? Is there an area of science that you particularly like to study in depth?

From a short story by the writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer:

- (17) "...sangat indah, usia muda, semua bisa menanganinya,"
 extremely beautiful age young all can MEN-handle-i
 ia mengangguk-angguk ria, "bagus, teruskan apa **yang**
 he MEN-nod-nod happy fine continue-KAN what REL
 telah kami GAGAL melakukan Ø.¹⁷ Dulu.
 already 1pl fail MEN-do-KAN formerly
*it's such a beautiful thing to be young, you can do anything", he said
 nodding happily. "That's good: carry on with the task that we failed to
 accomplish. In the old days."*

From a newspaper report about the arrest of several thieves (a headless relative clause):

- (18) ... ketiga tersangka terakhir ini adalah residivis ... Selain
 the-three suspect last this COP recidivist apart-from
 ketiga kasus tadi, kasus apalagi **yang** anda IKUT
 the-three case just-now case what-else REL 2sg join-in
 merancang Ø? tanya Lettu Irwan Anwar.
 MEN-plan ask first-lieutenant Irwan Anwar
*... these three suspects are repeat offenders. ... "Apart from the three
 offences we've just mentioned, what other ones have you helped to plan?"
 asked First Lieutenant Irwan Anwar.*

From a pop novel by a well-known author (a headless relative clause). [A young man, Fadila, likes to tease his younger sister's female friends.]

- (19) Cuma Saskia **yang** Fadila tidak BERANI mengusik Ø.
 only Saskia REL Fadila NEG dare MEN-tease
Saskia was the only one who Fadila didn't dare to tease.

In each of 16-19 above, an equivalent passive RC would be awkward because the highlighted words could not link semantically to the Agent without creating a clumsy effect (see 1.2).¹⁸

Instances of "meN- gapped Object" containing such lexical items were common in the data. Of the tokens obtained initially by field observation, seven of the 19 had such an element (*lebih suka* 'prefer' (x 2), *gagal* 'fail', *berani* 'dare', *lupa* 'forget', *coba* 'try', and *ikut* 'join in'). And the Google text-searches produced multiple instances with each of *mampu* '(be) capable', '*lebih suka* 'prefer', *coba* 'try', *ikut* 'join in', *gagal* 'fail' and *senang* '(be) happy', plus single tokens with *malu* '(be) ashamed', *mulai* 'start', *takut* '(be) afraid', *enggan* '(be) reluctant' and *berusaha* 'try'.

The presence of these preverbal words makes the clause sound more acceptable to informants (although seldom entirely so). These words have the same facilitating effect as the preverbal words in 3.6.1, i.e. they create distance between *yang* and the *meN-* prefixed verb and often make the clause non-factual and/or non-eventive as well. But these particular ones also create a constraint on using a passive clause – another motivation for using "meN- gapped Object" instead in their presence.¹⁹

3.6.3. *Pronoun modifiers which are awkward in passives.* Instances of “*meN-* gapped Object” often contain an *in situ* modifier of a pronoun Agent phrase. A prime example is the modifying word *sendiri* (‘self’). Here is such an example, from a short story by a respected writer:

- (20) Tahun yang lalu rekan-rekan wartawan Roma
 year REL past colleague-colleague journalist Roma
 telah memilihnya sebagai anggota yang paling
 already MEN-choose-3sg as member REL most
 perlente busananya – suatu pujian **yang** dia SENDIRI
 stylish fashion-3sg a praise REL 3sg self
 tidak pernah memimpikan Ø .
 NEG ever MEN-dream-KAN

The previous year Roma’s journalist colleagues had voted him the most stylishly dressed among them – praise that he personally had never dreamed of.

In (20), the pronoun Agent is modified by *sendiri* ‘self’, to make an Agent phrase meaning ‘he personally; he himself’. Other *in situ* modifiers of Agent pronouns in the data were the quantifiers *semua* ‘all’ and *sama-sama* ‘both, all’ (e.g. in the headless relative *yang kita SEMUA menyaksikan* Ø ‘what we ALL witness,’ and in *organisasi yang kita SAMA-SAMA anggotai* Ø ‘the organisation which we ALL belong to’).²⁰

This feature probably tends to occur in the active, “*meN-* gapped Object” construction because it is awkward to use in a passive clause. With Passive Type 2 specifically, the inclusion of a pronoun Agent phrase modified *in situ* by any other element is doubtful or unacceptable (cf. Musgrave 2001: 84). So for example, a passive RC such as (21) would be ruled out by many speakers:

- (21) ? suatu pujian **yang** tidak pernah dia SENDIRI mimpikan Ø .
 a praise REL NEG ever 3sg self Ø-dream-KAN
praise that he personally had never dreamed of (literally: ‘praise that had never been dreamed of by him himself’)

To make (21) fully acceptable, the element *sendiri* ‘self’ intervening between the Agent pronoun *dia* and the verb *mimpikan* must be removed.²¹

Altogether, 23 tokens of “*meN-* gapped Object” contained an *in-situ* modifier of the Agent phrase. Nearly 20% of the tokens in original Indonesian texts contained one, usually *sendiri* ‘self’. This should not be taken as a valid measure of proportions as some of my web text-searching specifically targeted these modifiers, but does indicate that this is a likely formal environment for “*meN-* gapped Object” to occur in.

These Agent modifiers made the data examples more acceptable to informants, and made some examples wholly acceptable to one informant. As well as simply creating distance between *yang* and the *meN-* prefixed verb (see above), they probably make this active construction sound better by ruling out a ready passive alternative.

3.7 *Non-restrictive relatives*. A considerable number of “*meN*-gapped Object” instances were *non-restrictive* relative clauses, i.e. ones which merely add extra information about an entity rather than identifying that entity within a larger set.²² Fifteen of the Indonesian texts with “*meN*-gapped Object” contained a non-restrictive token (or more than one), and several of the Malaysian texts contained one or more such tokens as well. A few non-restrictive examples of “*meN*-gapped Object” from original Indonesian texts:

In a novel by the writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer:

- (22) Ya, Multatuli, di samping Domine Baron von Hoëvell itu, dan
 Yes Multatuli LOC beside Domine Baron von Hoëvell that and
 seorang lagi, **yang** barangkali saja gurumu lupa
 one-person more REL perhaps just teacher-2sg forget
 menyampaikan Ø, yakni Roorda van Eysinga.
 MEN-convey-KAN namely Roorda van Eysinga
*Yes, Multatuli, besides Domine Baron von Hoëvell, and one other, who
 perhaps your teacher forgot to mention, namely Roorda van Eysinga.*

A politician quoted in a magazine article:

- (23) Pokok-pokok Deklarasi Rio sudah dicantumkan. Tidak mungkin
 point-point declaration Rio already DI-specify NEG possible
 kita melanggar perjanjian internasional, **yang** kita ikut
 1pl MEN-violate treaty international REL 1pl join-in
 meratifikasi Ø”, kata Walanrugian.
 MEN-ratify word Walanrugian
*The basic points of the Rio Declaration have already been laid out. It isn’t
 possible that we would violate an international treaty, which we also have
 ratified”, said Walanrugian.*

A double-instance in a posting to a discussion forum on the topic of autism:

- (24) Yang terakhir (**yang** saya sendiri belum bisa melakukan Ø
 REL final REL 1sg self not-yet can MEN-do-KAN
 dengan penuh dan sepanjang waktu, dan akan tetap berusaha
 with full and for-length time and FUT continue BER-try
 untuk bisa melakukan Ø), ikhlaskan kondisi tersebut,
 COMP can MEN-do-KAN willing-KAN condition above-mentioned
 karena semata-mata kehendak Alloh SWT ...
 because entirely will Allah praise-be-upon-Him
*The last thing I would suggest, which I myself am unable to do fully and
 consistently, and will keep trying to be able to do, is to accept that situation
 willingly, because it is entirely the will of Almighty God.*

The non-restrictive nature of such tokens seems to make them more acceptable. For instance, (22) was relatively acceptable to informants, and fully acceptable to one, who remarked that “it’s because of the commas – they make it sound fine”. But we

should note that examples such as (22) – (24) above contain other features as well which make them sound smoother: extra lexical elements before the *meN-* prefixed verb in each instance, plus the adverbial *barangkali saja* ‘possibly’ in (22) and the Agent modifier *sendiri* ‘self’ in the first of the tokens of (24). So it is uncertain how much of a part the non-restrictive nature of the clause actually plays.

3.8 Individual variation. The last thing to mention is the issue of idiolect and personal variation. Seven of the tokens in the data were by the one writer: Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia’s most internationally famous writer of fiction. The instances (8), (11), (17) and (22) are all from works of his, and his seven tokens in the data were from five separate works: two novels, an autobiography, a short story and a public address. So while we can assume that many educated Indonesians never use this construction, the data suggest that others may use it with some regularity as a feature of their idiolect.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that that gapped object relative clauses do occur in Indonesian in the presence of the *meN-* verb prefix. While their textual frequency is extremely low and they are still generally regarded as ungrammatical, they have a marginal role in the formal variety of Indonesian.

A major reason people use this clause type is influence of English. Sometimes the influence of English is overt, in the form of translation from an English source text. Often it is more covert, in the form of second language syntactic transfer.

This clause type has some striking formal features. One is the frequent presence of preverbal lexical elements such as negators, temporal/aspectual markers or modals. Another is the common inclusion of elements that make it harder to use a passive clause instead. These include preverbal lexical elements like *mampu* ‘(be) capable’ and *berani* ‘dare,’ as well as *in situ* modifiers of pronoun Agents, such as *sendiri* ‘self’. A final observation is that this type of RC is sometimes non-restrictive.

The factors above probably interact in many cases. For instance transfer from English probably interacts with the presence of lexical elements conducive to this type of RC, to motivate speakers/ writers to use it.

Individual preference also seems important, as one famous writer employs this construction as a small but definite part of his idiolect.

Finally, the study extends our knowledge of English influence on Indonesian by identifying this structure as one for which English is largely responsible. As English influence on the language keeps growing (at least for the foreseeable future), this type of clause will probably become more widely and heavily used.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to the following Indonesians who helped with this study by supplying judgements on the acceptability of many data examples: Amrih Widodo, Catharina Williams, Djasamen Saragih, Hamdan Juhannis and Urip Sutiyono; as well as to Ben Arps for discussing Dutch relative clauses with me.

² *meN-* is the prefix of a great many active transitive verbs. Voskuil (1996: 61) regards *meN-* as a marker of active voice. Musgrave (2001: 102) says that while it does not mark active voice “in the sense usually understood”, it does signal that the Actor of the clause is linked to the Subject function. Cole and Hermon (1998:2) call it a transitive prefix. The fact that *meN-* also

prefixes a small number of intransitive verbs makes it hard to characterise its function in a simple way.

³ Wolff (1986:143-144) and Vamarasi (1999: 141-146) claim that it is full verbs which cannot precede a passive verb when linked semantically to the Agent. Sneddon (1996: 270-271) offers a slightly different analysis, implying that a few words can precede a passive verb in that way and yet still function as verbs while so doing (namely *berhasil* 'succeed', *gagal* 'fail', *mau* 'want' and *ingin* 'wish, desire').

⁴ Keenan (1972) and Keenan and Comrie (1977) both claim that gapped relativisation of the direct object is possible in the presence of the "*meN-*" prefix, but the fabricated example they offer is explicitly rejected by both Musgrave (2001: 240) and Yeoh (1977: 86), and Comrie himself later says that it is not possible to relativise on the direct object in Indonesian (Comrie 1989: 157). Chung (1976) implicitly accepts "*meN-* gapped Object" with objects of complements – see note 6 below. In the absence of a *meN-* prefix on the verb, certain grammarians (Voskuil 1996; Musgrave 2001; Cole & Hermon 1998) accept gapped relatives on the direct object (or 'non-subject argument' as two of them prefer to call it). They all acknowledge that this RC type, as well, is prescriptively frowned upon.

⁵ I have not marked instances of this clause type with a * or ? symbol in this paper, as all cited instances are authentic textual examples.

⁶ Whether a preverbal lexical element in an active clause is a full verb can be hard to determine. A primary test is whether that lexical element can precede the verb in an equivalent passive clause: auxiliary words can do so while full verbs cannot (Wolff 1986: 142-143; Vamarasi 1999: 142). Another test is whether the complementiser *untuk* can intervene between that lexical element and the main verb in the active clause (Vamarasi 1999: 143). However both these tests yield an equivocal answer for many lexical elements. Chung (1976: 51) seems to accept "*meN-* gapped Object" when the relativised NP is the object of a complement rather than a direct object. She does not say so outright, but proffers two (fabricated) examples of gapped non-subject relative clauses that she finds acceptable and contends that they prove how *meN-* prefix *can* appear on the verb under "ill-understood conditions". The gapped NP in one instance appears to be the object of a sentence complement, and in the other instance, the object of a complement verb (see examples 36a and 36b of Chung's text). Unfortunately no other writers pass a direct judgement on Chung's two sentences. Cole, Hermon & Tjung (2003) claim that Musgrave (2001) explicitly rejects both, but my own reading of Musgrave (2001) found no mention of either.

⁷ Cole, Hermon and Tjung (2003) find that in colloquial Jakartan Indonesian, gapped object relatives occasionally occur in speech in the presence of the nasal verb prefix *N-* (not *meN-*). They argue that this happens because the nasal *N-* prefix in Jakartan Indonesian is losing its status as a marker of active transitive verbs (and as support for that latter assertion, cite a 2002 paper by David Gil).

⁸ I chose an internet search-engine rather than concordance software such as WordSmith Tools because it would have taken too long to create a large enough corpus to search using the latter. The Google search engine allowed (somewhat clumsy) searching of an enormous corpus of text. Its main disadvantage was that it does not allow truncation of words, so I could not search a given slot for the presence of a *meN-* prefixed verb by entering only the letters "me". The few web search engines that do allow truncation (e.g. Alta Vista) proved to have other disadvantages that outweighed it. A typical Google search entry started with the relativiser *yang* and looked something like this: "yang saya OR aku OR kamu OR Anda OR dia OR ia OR mereka mampu OR gagal OR suka OR berhasil OR berani." In some searches the 'wild card function' of the asterisk was also useful, i.e. an asterisk entered as a search term yields any word occurring in that slot. As the above example of a search entry shows, my search terms tended to specify pronoun Agents rather than full noun Agents because of the conveniently small number of the former. This naturally biased the data results towards tokens containing that type of Agent.

- ⁹ Shortly after presenting this paper I chanced upon a much faster way to locate instances of “*meN*- gapped Object” in web-based texts, namely by specifying common *meN*- prefixed verbs as terms within the Google search entries, e.g. *membeli* ‘to buy’, *mengalami* ‘to experience’, *menjawab* ‘to answer’ or *melihat* ‘to see’. By brief experimentation with that new search technique I found another forty texts containing ‘*meN*- gapped Object’ – not analysed in this paper.
- ¹⁰ In the case of unattributed and possibly old translations of extracts from the Bible, the source text was quite likely Dutch. In the case of quotations from Islamic scriptures, it was quite likely often Arabic. Dutch Object relative clauses are closely parallel in structure to “*meN*- gapped Object” in much the same way as English ones are, and as far as I can see, Arabic Object relative clauses are also closely parallel to it when their optional resumptive pronoun is absent (cf. Gensler 2004).
- ¹¹ I probably skewed my web-search results towards tokens occurring in formal register by my choice of search terms, to some extent. For example, when specifying lexical items for the pronoun slot I tended to leave out the distinctly colloquial 1st person pronoun form *gue/gua*.
- ¹² In the case of quotations from translated editions of the Bible or the Koran, generally no information was provided about what edition was being quoted from or when the translation was written.
- ¹³ Despite the smaller number of web-text instances in Malaysian, these reveal a degree of penetration by “*meN*- gapped Object” into not only the formal but the official language. I found three tokens in separate speeches by then-President Mahathir Mohamad and one in a speech by a High Court Judge on his auguration, two instances on a government web-site giving information for applicants for a civil service examination, and two in a statute concerning the surrender of library materials to the government.
- ¹⁴ The structural parallels between English Object relative clauses and “*meN*- gapped Object” are very close. Just as the head NP in the English construction is followed by a relative pronoun *who* or *which* or complementiser *that*, the head NP in “*meN*- gapped Object” is followed by the relativiser *yang*. And the order of subsequent elements within the RC is the same in both cases: Agent phrase + optional modifiers/ matrix verb + active verb. (In the case of English the element *who/ which/that* is actually optional, e.g. “the book (that) I bought yesterday”; I don’t know how that fact affects perceptions of structural similarity.)
- ¹⁵ Another active RC type has also appeared in recent decades under influence of English. This is a gapped object RC without *meN*- prefix on the verb, such as *yang saya tak harapkan* \emptyset ‘which I do not expect’ (Kaswanti Purwo 1996: 195; plus see p 208 for attribution to English influence). While Kaswanti Purwo (1996) himself implicitly regards that RC type as a passive clause, Voskuil (1996), Musgrave (2001) and Cole & Hermon (1998) all convincingly analyse it as active. Other forms of English influence on Indonesian syntax include the emergence of RCs employing relative pronouns (Moeliono 1992: 31; Badudu 1996: 36), the appearance of formal equivalents to English participle constructions (Moeliono 1992: 31; Kaswanti Purwo 1996: 196-197), and the rise in the use of copulas (e.g. Kaswanti Purwo 1996:192-193; Badudu 1996: 35).
- ¹⁶ Kaswanti Purwo (1984: 147) actually refers to distance between *yang* and the *subject* of the relative clause (“konstituen subjek dalam klausa yang bersangkutan”), but I cannot fully see how that formulation would apply in all of his own data examples.
- ¹⁷ Interestingly, in the very next line of this story the interlocutor echoes this statement by using *gagal* in a passive clause instead: *Apa yang \emptyset telah gagal Bapak lakukan?* ‘What is it that you failed to carry out?’ (literally, ‘that failed to be carried out by you?’). Some informants judged this reply to be more awkward than the “*meN*- gapped Object” construction in (17) that preceded it.
- ¹⁸ In the case of (19) specifically, the equivalent passive clause would also run a high risk of being misunderstood. Such a passive clause, i.e. *Cuma Saskia yang \emptyset tidak berani diusik (oleh) Fadila*, might be taken to mean “Only Saskia didn’t dare to be teased by Fadila”. That

is, readers would interpret the lexical element *berani* ‘dare’ in the passive clause as linking semantically to the Undergoer ‘Saskia’. So in (19) “*meN*-gapped Object” functions partly to avoid semantic ambiguity.

- ¹⁹ The fact that these preverbal elements can be analysed as verbs themselves (see 1.2) is significant. It constitutes another parallel with the pronoun-copying type of Object RC – since another way to render that construction acceptable is to insert a matrix verb (Kaswanti Purwo 1989: 420 f3) or a clause (Kaswanti Purwo 1984: 147).
- ²⁰ The word *sama-sama* is most often used as a comitative meaning ‘together’ and in that sense it modifies the verb or entire clause, but it can mean ‘both, all’ (see Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings 2004), and in that latter sense it modifies the Agent specifically. Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings (2004) gloss *sama-sama* in this latter use as colloquial in register, but the texts in which it occurred in these data were not noticeably informal.
- ²¹ There are often ways around this constraint. One can float certain modifiers of the Agent to a position after the verb instead. This can be done with the modifier *sendiri* ‘self’ – although not with the quantifier *semua* ‘all’ (see Musgrave 2001: 184) nor, it seems to me, with the quantifier *sama-sama* ‘both, ‘all’ without changing it into a comitative word meaning ‘together’. And if the pronoun Agent is third person specifically, one could use a Passive Type 1 instead of Type 2. But the data nevertheless suggest that a desire to modify the pronoun Agent *in situ* is a motivation for using the “*meN*-gapped Object” relative clause.
- ²² Keenan (1985) confines his notion of a relative clause to restrictive RCs only, calling non-restrictive ones ‘relative-like’ structures (Keenan 1985: 168-169). Little is written about non-restrictive RCs in Indonesian. Sneddon (1996) does not discuss them except for one special class that has marginal status (Sneddon 1996: 288: section 3.101). While Alwi et al (2000: 391) include one non-restrictive RC among their list of RC examples they do not remark on its difference from the others. In written Indonesian non-restrictive RCs are often set apart from the rest of the sentence by commas, although this convention is not always observed.

List of abbreviations in glosses

1sg, 2sg, 3sg	1st, 2nd, 3rd person singular
1pl, 2pl, 3pl	1st, 2nd, 3rd person plural
CLASS	classifier
COMP	complementiser
COP	copula
EMPH	emphatic marker
FUT	future temporal marker
INT	interrogative particle
LOC	locative marker
NEG	negator
PL	plural marker
PROG	progressive aspect marker
REL	relativising particle

Appendix: Source of numbered data examples from authentic texts

- (8) From a speech titled “*Angkatan Muda Sekarang*” by Pramodya Ananta Toer, at his inauguration as a member of the Democratic People’s Party (PRD), in Jakarta, 21st March 1999. On website of the journal *Media Kerjabudaya*. <http://mkb.kerjabudaya.org/mkb-arsip.htm> (accessed 10/4/04)
- (9) Webpage titled ‘Pertanyaan-pertanyaan dasar manusia’. Personal weblog of an unnamed writer (from country-specific references in text evidently an Indonesian writing around the year 2000). http://brasouw.tripod.com/isi/manusia_diciptakan.htm (accessed 30/1/05)

- (10) *Ruang Batin Masyarakat Indonesia*: by Niels Mulder, Yogyakarta: LKiS, at page 101. [Original title: "Inside Indonesian Society: An Interpretation of Cultural Change in Java", The Pepin Press BV. Translator: Wisnu Hardana]
- (11) Novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Malaka: Wira Karya, 1981, at p 125
- (12) Article "Semua Disulap Atas Nama Ramadan" (An interview with fiction writer Danarto) by Ahda Imran, in the *Berakhir Pekan* section of the newspaper *Pikiran Rakyat*, Sunday 24th October 2004. www.pikiran-rakyat.com/cetak/1004/24/04.htm (accessed 8/4/05)
- (13) On website of political party UMNO. Speech by Mahathir Mohamad, titled "Melayu Mudah Lupa". (Given at the opening of the convention "*Perhimpunan Agung UMNO*", held at the trade centre *Pusat Dagangan Dunia Putra* (PWTC) on 21st June, 2001. www.utusan.com/utusan/SpecialCoverage/UMNO2001/index.asp?pg=ucapan_mahathir.htm (accessed 8/2/05)
- (16) Question by a reporter to a member of Indonesian Science Olympics Team (Tim Olimpiade Sains Indonesia), on live radio: Radio Mercury FM, Surabaya, on program 'Dunia Pendidikan', on 7/12/04, at 7.30pm WIB
- (17) Story "*Tailalat*" by Pramoedya Jakarta, dated 10 July 1996. From a website named "Pramoedya Ananta Toer" <http://www.radix.net/~bardsley/prampage.html> (accessed 30/10/03)
- (18) From an article "*Kula Mung Ping Tiga, Pak*", in newspaper *Bernas*. Author's initials: 'phj'. www.indonesia.com/bernas/9910/04/UTAMA/04dul2.htm (accessed 5/2/05)
- (19) Novel *Saskia*, by Marga T. Jakarta: Gramedia, 1985, at page 13
- (20) Story *Via del Mare*, in the collection of short stories *Tentang Delapan Orang*, by Satyagraha Hoerip. Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1980, at page 56
- (22) Novel *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Malaka: Wira Karya, 1981, at page 185
- (23) Wulanrugian M. Ratulangie Soedjoko, a member of a Special Committee of the People's Representative Council, quoted in the article "*Buruk LSM, Istilah Dibelah*", by Dwitri Waluyo. in magazine *Gatra*, Number 35/III, 19th July, 1977. Text of that *Gatra* article forwarded by John MacDougall to a newsgroup on 21/07/1997. URL of that posting: www.hamline.edu/apakabar/basisdata/1997/07/21/0020.html (accessed 5/2/05)
- (24) Posting to *peduli-autis* website by "Idham" on 12th Jan 2005. Subject: [Putrakembara] *Re: Bijaksanakah aku?* On Website of the organisation 'Putrakembara' <http://puterakembara.org/archives/00000099.shtml> (accessed 30/1/05)

References

- ALIEVA, N.F., V.D. Arakin, A.K. Ogloblin and Yu. H. Sirk (1991) *Bahasa Indonesia: Deskripsi dan Teori*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius
- ALWI, Hasan, Soenjono Dardjowidjojo, Hans Lapoliwa and Anton M. Moeliono (2000) *Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia (3rd edn)*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka
- BADUDU, Yus (1996) Dari bahasa Melayu ke bahasa Indonesia. In Soenjono Dardjowidjojo (Ed.) *Bahasa Nasional Kita*. Bandung: ITB, pp 28-38
- CHUNG, Sandra (1976) An object-creating rule in bahasa Indonesia. *Linguistic Inquiry* 7(1): 41-87
- COLE, Peter and Gabriella Hermon (1998) *Subject and nonsubject relativization in Indonesian*. Paper presented at the Second Symposium on Malay/Indonesian Linguistics, June 1988. <http://www.ling.udel.edu/pcole/Indonesi.pdf> (accessed 11/09/04)
- COLE, Peter, Gabriella Hermon and Yassir Tjung (2003) *The formation of relative clauses in Jakarta Indonesian: Data from adults and children*. Paper presented at the 7th International Symposium on Malay/Indonesian Linguistics, 27-29 June 2003. www.ling.udel.edu/pcole/RC-ISMIL.pdf (accessed 11/09/04).
- COMRIE, Bernard (1989) *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology (2nd edn)* Oxford: Basil Blackwell

- EWING, Michael C. (to appear) Colloquial Indonesian. In K. Alexander Adelaar and Nikolaus Himmelmann (Eds) *The Austronesian Languages of Asia and Madagascar*. London: Curzon
- EWING, Michael C. and Susanna Cumming (1998) Relative clauses in Indonesian discourse: Face to face and cyberspace interaction. In Shobhana L. Chelliah and Willem J. de Reuse (Eds) *Papers from the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society 1995*. Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University Program for Southeast Asian Studies, pp 79-96
- GENSLER, Orin (2004) *The Arabic mā ... min construction: Rethinking the priority of restrictive relatives*. <http://email.eva.mpg.de/~cschmidt/SWL1/handouts/Gensler.pdf> (accessed 06/04/05)
- KASWANTI PURWO, Bambang (1984) *Deiksis Dalam Bahasa Indonesia*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka
- KASWANTI PURWO, Bambang (1989) Voice in Indonesian: A discourse study. In Bambang Kaswanti Purwo (Ed.), *Serpih-Serpih Telaah Pasif Bahasa Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, pp 344-442
- KASWANTI PURWO, Bambang (1996) Perkembangan sintaksis bahasa Indonesia. In Soenjono Dardjowidjojo (Ed.) *Bahasa Nasional Kita*. Bandung: ITB, pp 192-209
- KEENAN, Edward L. (1972) Relative clause formation in Malagasy. In Paul M. Peranteau, Judith N. Levi and Gloria C. Phares (Eds), *The Chicago Which Hunt: A Paravolume to Papers from the Eighth Regional Meeting*. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago Linguistics Society, pp169-189
- KEENAN, Edward L. (1985) Relative clauses. In Timothy Shopen (Ed.) *Language Typology and Syntactic Description Volume II: Complex Constructions*. Cambridge, CUP, pp 141-170
- KEENAN, Edward L. and Bernard Comrie (1977) Noun phrase accessibility and universal grammar. *Linguistic Inquiry* 8(1): 63-99
- LOWENBERG, Peter H. (1994) The forms and functions of English as an additional language: the case of Indonesia. In Abdullah Hassan (Ed.) *Language Planning in Southeast Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp 230-251
- MOELIONO, Anton M. (1992) Contact-induced language change in present-day Indonesian. *Indonesian Studies* 9 (1-2): 24-33
- MUSGRAVE, Simon (2001) *Non-Subject Arguments in Indonesian*. PhD thesis, University of Melbourne.
- SALLEH, Muhammad (2002) *Pengenalan kepada teori alienasi Marx*. [Translation of a 1998 article by Judy Cox in the journal 'International Socialism', Vol 79]. <http://arts.anu.edu.au/suara.cox2.rtf> (accessed 1/02/05)
- SNEDDON, James (1996) *Indonesian Reference Grammar*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin
- SNEDDON, James (2003) *The Indonesian Language: Its History and Role in Modern Society*. Sydney: UNSW Press
- STEVENS, Alan M. and A. Ed. Schmidgall-Tellings (2004) *A Comprehensive Indonesian-English Dictionary*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press
- VAMARASI, Marit Kana (1999) *Grammatical Relations in Bahasa Indonesia*. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University. Pacific Linguistics series D-93.

- VERHAAR, John W.M. (1983) On the syntax of *yang* in Indonesian. In Amran Halim, Lois Carrington and S.A. Wurm (Eds), *Papers from the Third International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Vol 4: Thematic Variation*. Pacific Linguistics Series C-77, pp 43-70
- VERHAAR, John W.M. (1989) Syntactic ergativity in contemporary Indonesian. In Bambang Kaswanti Purwo (Ed.), *Serpih-Serpih Telaah Pasif Bahasa Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, pp 200-280
- VOSKUIL, Jan Eckhard (1996) *Comparative Morphology: Verb Taxonomy in Indonesian, Tagalog and Dutch*. The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics (HIL Dissertations No 21)
- WOLFF, John U. (1986) *Formal Indonesian (2nd edn)* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program
- YEOH, Chiang Kee (1977) Restrictive relative clauses in bahasa Malaysia. *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences* 7(2): 82-105

