Universal Grammar
In West Sulawesi

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Background

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Part One:
The notion of Subject
The Notion of Subject

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2. John menulis buku itu

Subject   Verb   Object
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  - First Discovered: Classical Philosophy (Aristotle, Plato)
  - Remains important: Modern linguistics (Chomsky 1965)
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- In this talk, we will build a theory of subjecthood.
What is a theory of Subjects?

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What is a theory of Subjects?

- One subpart of this theory: the Universal Theory of Subjecthood (Chomsky 1965 et seq).
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  - Every sentence is built from two parts: subject + predicate

```
Sentence
  | Subject
  |    John
  |       Verb
  |         wrote
  |           menulis
  |       Predicate
  |       Object
  |         that book
  |           buku itu
```
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- This theory is useful, because it explains a number of things:
  - In many languages, sentences always have a subject.
  - In many languages, the subject always occurs before the predicate.

- This suggests that the universal theory is a good way to understand language.
What is a theory of Subjects?

- But with every universal theory, we have to ask a question:
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in every language, do all sentences have this shape?
What is a theory of Subjects?

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  - Beyond the basic structure of “sentence = subject + predicate,”
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  - Across different languages, do subjects have the same properties?
What is a theory of Subjects?

- We can also ask a number of follow-up questions:
  - Beyond the basic structure of “sentence = subject + predicate,”...
  - Does every language have subjects?
  - Across different languages, do subjects have the same properties?
  - How can we understand variation between languages in this domain?
Today’s Presentation

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1. Reviewing prior research on Bahasa Indonesia
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  can help us to understand the notion of “subjecthood.”

1. Reviewing prior research on Bahasa Indonesia
2. Laying out new research on the languages of Sulawesi
Part Two:
Subjects in an Indonesian Context
The Starting Point

- Subjects have similar properties in languages all over the world.  
  (Li & Thomson 1976)
The Starting Point

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1. **Special Position:** the subject appears at the start of the sentence.
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   (4) John menulis buku itu

   Subject
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(6) John and Mary write books like that

**Subject marking**
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3. **Passive:** the object can become a subject if the agent is moved.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>wrote</th>
<th>that book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>menulis</td>
<td>buku itu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>That book</td>
<td>was written</td>
<td>by John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>Buku itu</td>
<td>ditulis</td>
<td>oleh John</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject | passive verb | Agent
Indonesian: A Theoretical Update

- Research on Bahasa Indonesia has led to a revised theory of subjecthood.
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   (4)  **John** menulis buku itu

   **Subject**
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(6) John and Mary \textit{write} books like that
(8) Buku itu \textit{ditulis\_\_} oleh John
(9) Buku-buku itu \textit{ditulis\_\_} oleh John
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Pasif Semu → **object** to the front, **agent** in place.

(10) **Buku ini**  **saya**  **tulis**

**Subject**  **Agent**  **Pasif Semu**
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3. Special Passive: there is a passive, where the object becomes a subject … but this does not require the agent to move to the end.

Compare the regular passive → object to the front, agent to the end.

(8) Buku itu ditulis oleh John
Subject Passive Agent
The Emerging Theory

- From research on Indonesian, then, we might say:
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- From research on Indonesian, then, we might say:

1. Subjects do not need to trigger agreement,
2. The object can be a subject even if the agent stays in place
The Emerging Theory

- From research on Indonesian, then, we might say:
  1. Subjects do not need to trigger agreement,
  2. The object can be a subject even if the agent stays in place, and
  3. The key factor is that subjects appear at the start of the sentence.
Part Three:
Subjects in Sulawesi
The Sulawesi Situation.

- We will have to refine this theory when we get to the island of Sulawesi.
The Quick Facts

- Things are different there.
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  - A different word order.
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- Unlike Indonesian, these languages have...
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  - A different word order.
- This raises a puzzle.
Case Study: Mandar

- Our focus is on Mandar.
  - A regional language of West Sulawesi Province
  - South Sulawesi Subfamily
  - Northern Subgroup
  - This map → number 16
Case Study: Mandar

- Consider this sentence:
Case Study: Mandar

- Consider this sentence:

(11) U-tarima-i yau sura’
   Ku-terima-ia aku surat
   “Aku menerima suratnya”
Case Study: Mandar

- Consider this sentence:

  (11) U-tarima-i  yau  sura’
  Ku-terima-ia  aku  surat
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- There are two important properties:
Case Study: Mandar

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○ The verb shows agreement with both the agent and the object.
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● What will happen to our theory?
The First Problem

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  - Chomsky 1965: \( \text{sentence} = \text{subject} + \text{predicate} \)
The First Problem

- Verb-initial sentences do not fit with the original theory of subjects.
  - Chomsky 1965: $\text{sentence} = \text{subject} + \text{predicate}$
  - Puzzle: where are the subject and predicate here?

(11) U-tarima-i yau sura’
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The First Problem

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Cf. Chung 1983
The First Problem

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  “verb-initial sentences do not contain a subject.”

- If this is correct, then it means we have to give up the theory of subjecthood.
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- Question: do Mandar sentences contain a subject?
The Second Problem

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(12) Mu-tarima-i   i’o     sura’
    Kau-terima-ia kau     surat
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(13) Na-tarima-o iAli i’o
     Dia-terima-mu si Ali kau
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(5) John write-s books
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- This is different from English, where the verb only agrees with the subject,

- And different from Indonesian, where the verb agrees with nothing.
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(7) *John menulises buku-buku
The Puzzle

- These patterns raise two questions for the universal theory of subjecthood:
The Puzzle

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The Puzzle

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    - Does Mandar have subjects?
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- These patterns raise two questions for the universal theory of subjecthood:
  - There’s no noun at the start of the sentence, so:
    
    Does Mandar have subjects?
  
  - Both the agent and the object trigger agreement, so:
    
    If there is a subject, which one is it?
The Proposal

- Today I want to make two arguments:
The Proposal

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  1. All Mandar sentences have subjects,
The Proposal

• Today I want to make two arguments:

  1. All Mandar sentences have subjects, and
  2. They show the structure “predicate + subject”
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1. **Extraction:** the object can be moved; the agent cannot be moved.
   (Guilfoyle, Hung, & Travis 1992)
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   - (12) Mu-tarima-i i’o sura’
   - Kau-terima-ia kamu suratnya

   - (17) Apa **mu-tarima ?**
   - Apa **kau-terima?**
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   (17)  
   Apa  mu-tarima?  
   Apa  kau-terima?

   (18)  
   *Innai  na-tarima-i  sura’?  
   Siapa  dia-terima-ia  suratnya?
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   Compare: the Pasif Semu in Bahasa Indonesia
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(19) Surat itu sudah saya terima.

(20) Apa yang sudah kau terima?

(21) *Siapa yang surat itu sudah terima?
The Arguments

- There are several syntactic differences between the agent and the object.

1. Extraction: the object can be moved; the agent cannot be moved.
2. Definiteness: the object must be definite; the agent can be indefinite.

(Adams & Manaster-Ramer 1988)
The Arguments

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    Ku-terima-ia aku satu surat
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(15) Na-ita-a’    mesa tau    yau.
     Dia-lihat-ku    seseorang    aku
There are several syntactic differences between the agent and the object.

1. Extraction: the object can be moved; the agent cannot be moved.
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3. Coreference: the distribution of pronouns shows another asymmetry.
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2. Definiteness: the object must be definite; the agent can be indefinite.
3. Coreference: the distribution of pronouns shows another asymmetry.
4. Variable Binding: the distribution of the word “all” shows the same thing.
   (Reinhart 1983; Chomsky 1986)
The Arguments

- There are several syntactic differences between the agent and the object.

1. Extraction: the object can be moved; the agent cannot be moved.
2. Definiteness: the object must be definite; the agent can be indefinite.
3. Coreference: the distribution of pronouns shows another asymmetry.
4. Variable Binding: the distribution of the word “all” shows the same thing.
5. Finiteness: there’s an asymmetry in the system of agreement.

(Bittner & Hale 1996; Legate 2006)
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6. Linear Position: the finer facts of word order show another asymmetry.

(Kayne 1994, Pearson 2005)
The Analysis

- There are several syntactic differences between the agent and the object.
- These patterns suggest that the object sits above the agent in the syntax.
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The Analysis

- There are several syntactic differences between the agent and the object.
- These patterns suggest that the object sits above the agent in the syntax.
- The normal Mandar sentence is very similar to the Pasif Semu:
Some Syntax

- The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.
  (Guilfoyle, Hung, & Travis 1992; Bittner & Hale 1996)
Some Syntax

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- Starting with Indonesian,
Some Syntax

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- Starting with Indonesian,
  - The predicate contains three elements: the agent, verb, and object.
Some Syntax

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- Starting with Indonesian,
  - In active sentences, the agent moves to the subject position.
Some Syntax

- The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.

- Starting with Indonesian,
  - In the pasif semu, the object moves to the subject position.
Some Syntax

- The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.
- Turning now to Mandar,
Some Syntax

● The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.

● Turning now to Mandar,
  ○ The predicate contains the same elements: the agent, verb, and object.
Some Syntax

- The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.

- Turning now to Mandar,
  - Just like the pasif semu: the object moves to a subject position.
Some Syntax

● The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.

● The difference between Indonesian and Mandar: which side the subject is on.
Some Syntax

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- The difference between Indonesian and Mandarin: which side the subject is on.

**Indonesian**
Some Syntax

- The deeper analysis: the object moves to a subject position.
- The difference between Indonesian and Mandar: which side the subject is on.
The Theoretical Result

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  - The old universal analysis: “sentence = subject + predicate”
  - The new analysis: “every sentence contains a subject, but the subject need not precede the predicate.”
Part Four:
Conclusion
Standing Questions

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2. If subjects don’t need to come before the predicate in general,
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3. Why can the object move above the agent in the pasif semu and Mandar,
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2. If subjects don’t need to come before the predicate in general, then why do they come before the predicate in so many languages?

3. Why can the object move above the agent in the pasif semu and Mandar, when it can’t do that in English?
Standing Questions

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- To answer these questions, we would need another talk (or probably more).
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- For now, I’d like to focus on the positive conclusions:
The Improved Theory of Subjecthood

- Today we have seen that subjects behave differently in different languages:
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  There is no universal analysis of “sentence = subject + predicate”
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  b. But when we dig into the structure of the language, We find that it shows robust evidence that there is a subject.

- This suggests that there really is something universal to subjecthood after all.
References