Passive Agreement in Acehnese

Julie Anne Legate, University of Pennsylvania
jlegate@ling.upenn.edu
www.ling.upenn.edu/~jlegate/

1 Introduction

Lawler (1977): the passive in Acehnese shows verbal agreement with the agent.

a. Lón geu-tingkue lé ureueng inong nyan
   1sg 3Pol-carry by person female that
   “I was carried by the woman” (I:152)

b. * Lón lón-tingkue lé ureueng inong nyan
   1sg 1sg-carry by person female that
   “I was carried by the woman” (I:152)

c. Ureueng inong nyan neu-ba lé droeneuh
   person female that 2-take by you
   “The woman was brought by you”

Durie (1985, 1988): this construction is not a passive; the theme is a topic, while lé is not by but rather an ergative case marker that appears only when the agent is post-verbal.

Today: Lawler was right.

Specifically, Acehnese is a Malay/Indonesian-style Austronesian language, showing three clause-types (see Cole & Hermon 2005 and Cole et al 2008 for related Malay/Indonesian data.)

a. Active
   Dokto ka geu-peu-ubat Ibrahim
   doctor Perf 3Pol-Cause-medicine Ibrahim
   “The doctor has treated Ibrahim”

b. Passive
   Ibrahim ka geu-peu-ubat lé dokto
   Ibrahim Perf 3Pol-Cause-medicine by doctor
   “Ibrahim was treated by the doctor”

c. Object Voice
   Ibrahim ka dokto peu-ubat
   Ibrahim Perf doctor Cause-medicine
   “Ibrahim was treated by the doctor” (II:15)

---

1 Thank you to the audiences at the East and Southeast Asian Linguistics Discussion Group at Cornell University, and the Linguistics Colloquium Series at UCLA for comments and discussion on earlier versions of this work. This work is supported by a grant from the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, Cornell, held jointly by myself and Abby Cohn. Thank you to our consultant Saiful Mahdi, as well as to his wife Dian Rubianty, for teaching us about their language. Saiful speaks a mixture of the Pidie and Banda Aceh dialects; Dian speaks the Banda Aceh dialect. Unless otherwise noted, data are from my notes (cited by book (I or II) and page number).
Outline:

• Evidence that the raised theme occupies an A-position
• Evidence that \( \text{lé} + \text{agent} \) behaves as a PP, not a DP
• Explanation of the agreement patterns in terms of interpretable features on \( v \)

2 The Raised Theme

Durie-style analysis: the raised theme is a topic, hence occupies an A-bar position
Lawler-style analysis: the raised theme is a grammatical subject, hence occupies an A-position

Test One: Weak Crossover

Background: Quantifier phrases must bind covarying pronouns from an A-position.

Two quantifiers \( \text{tieptiep} \) “every” and \( \text{karap mandeum} \) “almost all”

In the active, the agent can bind the theme, but not vice versa:

(3) Active
a. tieptiep maq geu-lindong aneuk geuh
every mother 3Pol-protect child 3Pol
‘Every mother, protects her child’ (II:52)
b. aneuk geuh geu-lindong tieptiep maq
child 3Pol 3Pol-protect every mother
‘His/her child protects every mother’ (II:52)

(4) Active
a. Karap mandeum gurée geu-peu-runoe mured geuh
almost all teacher 3Pol-Cause-learn student 3Pol
‘Almost all the teachers, taught their students.” (II:55)
b. Gurée jih geu-peu-runoe karap mandeum mured
teacher 3Fam 3Pol-Cause-learn almost all student
‘His/her teacher taught almost all the students” (II:55)

In the passive, the raised theme binds the agent:

(5) Passive
a. Tieptiep aneuk geu-lindong lé maq droe-jih
every child 3Pol-protect by mother self-3Fam
‘Every child, is protected by his/her mother” (II:53)
b. Karap mandeum mured geu-peu-runoe lé gurée droe-jih
almost all student 3Pol-Cause-learn by teacher self-3Fam
‘Almost all the students, were being taught by their own teacher” (II:56)

Test Two: Condition C
Background: Condition C reconstruction effects found with A-bar movement, but not with A-movement (e.g. Lebeaux 1995, Fox 1999)

In the active, an R-expression embedded in the agent can corefer with a pronominal object; the reverse is impossible. (\textit{awak nyan} is literally “person that”, however it functions as the pronoun “they”):

(6) Active
   a. Mie aneuk-aneuk miet nyan ji-kap awak nyan
cat child-child small that 3Fam-bite person that
   “The children\textsubscript{i}’s cat bit them\textsubscript{i/k}” (II:60)
   b. Awaq nyan ji-poh mie aneuk-aneuk miet nyan
person that 3Fam-hit cat child-child small that
   “They\textsubscript{k/si} hit the children\textsubscript{i}’s cat” (II:61)

In the passive, we find no reconstruction effects for Condition C:

(7) Mie aneuk-aneuk miet nyan ji-poh lé awak nyan
cat child-child small that 3Pol-hit by person that
   “The children\textsubscript{i}’s cat was hit by them\textsubscript{i/k}” (II:60)

Test Three: Control

Background: Only grammatical subjects may be controlled PRO (e.g. Manning 1996)

Subject control verb \textit{tém} “want”

(8) a. Dokto geu-tém peu-ubat aneuk miet nyan
doctor 3Pol-want Caus-medicine child small that
   “The doctor wants to treat the child” (I:145)
   b. * Dokto geu-tém geu-peu-ubat aneuk miet nyan
doctor 3Pol-want 3Pol-Caus-medicine child small that
   “The doctor wants to treat the child” (I:145)

An overt subject is also allowed with this verb, in which case lower verb is most naturally marked with \textit{beu}—“should” (and agreement if the lower verb has a thematic subject)

(9) Lôn tém ngon lôn beu-trok singoh
1sg want friend 1sg should-arrive tomorrow
   “I want my friend to arrive tomorrow” (I:147)

In the passive, the raised theme can be controlled PRO

(10) Passive
   a. Aneuk miet nyan di-tém geu-peu-ubat lé dokto
child small that 3Fam-want 3Pol-Caus-medicine by doctor
   “The child wants to be treated by the doctor” (I:145)
   b. Aneuk miet nyan di-tém geu-tingkue lé ureueng inong nyan
child small that 3Fam-want 3Pol-carry by person female that
   “The child wants to be carried by the woman” (I:152)
NOTE: Durie (1987) reports control of theme as ungrammatical, citing the following from speakers who were from Cot Trieng, Bireuen, in North Aceh (and were 40+ years of age in 1987); our consultants find this grammatical:

(11) * Aneuk agam nyan ji-tém geu-peuréksa lé dokto child male that 3Fam-want 3Pol-examine by doctor

“That boy wants to be examined by the doctor” (Durie 1987:373)

Conclusion: The raised theme behaves as an A-position

3 The lé-Phrase

Durie-style analysis: lé is an ergative case marker that appears only when the agent is post-verbal; the lé-phrase is a DP.
Lawler-style analysis: lé is a preposition, like English by (and Indonesian oleh); the lé-phrase is a PP.

Test One: Uniqueness of the Grammatical Subject Position

Background: Only one DP may appear preceding modals, negation, and aspectual particles (i.e. the grammatical subject position). PPs may precede this DP position.

(12) a. * Ibrahim dokto ka geu-peu-ubat
   Ibrahim doctor Perf 3Pol-Caus-medicine
   “The doctor treated Ibrahim” (II:15)
b. * Lón asée ka di-kap baroe
   1sg dog Perf 3Fam-bite yesterday
   “The dog bit me yesterday” (I:61)
c. Keu ureueng inong nyan boh mamplam ka lôn-jok
   to person female that fruit mango Perf 1sg-give
   “To that woman the mango I gave” (I:82)
d. Di sinoe aneuk miet meukên-meukên.
   at here child small play-play
   “Children play here.” (I:136)

The lé-phrase may precede this DP position:

(13) a. Lé uleue nyan aneuk miet nyan di-kap
   by snake that child small that 3Fam-bite
   “By the snake, that child was bitten” (I:97)
b. Lé dokto Ibrahim ka geu-peu-ubat
   by doctor Ibrahim Perf 3Pol-Cause-medicine
   “By the doctor, Ibrahim was treated” (II:63)

Test Two: yang2 Questions

Background: DPs may be questioned with yang; PPs may not.

2Note that yang is the Indonesian complementizer; the Acehnese is nyang. Our consultant varies between the two in pronunciation, but he writes the word as yang, so I have followed that practice.
(14) a. Soe (yang) geu-peu-ubat lé dokto?  
who RelC 3Pol-Caus-medicine by doctor  
“Who was treated by the doctor?” (II:15)
b. Peue (yang) Fatima pajoh?  
what RelC Fatima 3Pol-see Ibrahim  
“What did Fatima eat?” (II:17)
c. Pat (*yang) Fatima geu-kalon Ibrahim?  
where RelC Fatima 3Pol-see Ibrahim  
“Where did Fatima see Ibrahim?” (II:17)
d. Keu soe (*yang) geu-jok lé ureueng agam nyan aneuk miet nyan?  
to who RelC 3Pol-give by person male Dem child small Dem  
“To whom was the child given by the man?” (II:13)

The lé-phrase cannot be questioned with yang:

(15) a. Lé soe (*yang) aneuk miet nyan geu-jok keu ureueng inong nyan  
by who RelC child small Dem 3Pol-give to person female Dem  
“By whom was the baby given to the woman?” (II:13)
b. Lé soe (*yang) Ibrahim geu-peu-ubat?  
by who RelC Ibrahim 3Pol-Cause-medicine  
“By whom was Ibrahim treated?” (II:63)

Test Three: Floating Quantifiers

Background: Quantifiers may float from DPs but not PPs

(16) a. ureueng nyan ka (dum) geu-pajoh (dum) boh drien (dum) uroe nyoe person that Perf much 3Pol-eat much fruit durian much day this  
“That person ate a lot of durian today” (II:37)
b. ureueng agam nyan ka mandum geu-koh pade lam blang nyan person male that Perf all 3Pol-cut rice in field that  
“All the men cut rice in the field”  
*“The men cut rice in all the fields” (II:37b)

Quantifiers may not float from the lé-phrase

(17) a. aneuk miet nyan ka mandum ji-kap lé asee child small that Perf all 3Fam-bite by dog  
“All the children were bitten by the dogs”  
*“The children were bitten by all the dogs” (II:37a)
b. mandum ka geu-pajoh boh drien lé ureueng nyan all Perf 3Pol-eat fruit durian by person that  
“All the durians were eaten by the people”  
*“Durian fruit was eaten by all the people” (II:37a)

Conclusion: The lé-phrase behaves as a prepositional phrase rather than a DP.

CONCLUSION: The construction is a passive.

QUESTION: How do we explain agent agreement in a passive?
4 Agent Agreement

(18) Lôn geu-tingkue lê ureueng inong nyan
1sg 3Pol-carry by person female that
“I was carried by the woman” (I:152)

**PROPOSAL:** This is not “agreement”, but rather interpretable features on v, expressing person, inclusiveness, and relative position in the social hierarchy. These features do NOT saturate the external argument position, but rather restrict the possible external arguments (in the sense of Chung & Ladusaw 2004).

**Explains agent “agreement” in passives**

Passives involve an agentive v without a specifier; instead of the agent being introduced into the specifier of vP, the vP combines directly with a passive head (following e.g. Marantz 2000, Embick 2004)

**Explains lack of “agreement” in unaccusatives**

Acehnese has split-S agreement – unergative verbs show agreement, while unaccusative verbs do not.

(19) Unergative

- a. Lôn lôn-duck ateuh kursi
  1sg 1sg-sit above chair
  “I sat on the chair” (W11-p-S #11)

- b. Ureueng agam nyan geu-plueng
  person male that 3Pol-run
  “The man is running” (I:91)

(20) Unaccusative

- a. Lôn ka (*lôn)-reubah
  1sg Perf 1sg-fall
  “I fell” (I:92)

- b. Dokto ka (*geu)-troh
  doctor Perf 3Pol-arrive
  “The doctor arrived” (II:15)

Aside: As expected, passives show implicit agent effects, while unaccusatives do not (Ko 2008).

e.g. agent-oriented adverbs

(21) a. Pintô nyan geu-buka bacut-bacut meu teugoh teugoh (lê Hasan)
  door that 3Pol-open slowly cautiously by Hasan
  “The door was opened slowly / cautiously (by Hasan).” (Ko, 080513, #13)

b. Pintô nyan teu-buka bacut-bacut *meu teugoh teugoh
  door that Inch-open slowly cautiously
  “The door opened slowly *cautiously.” (Ko, 080513, #13)

**Explains “agreement” without a by-phrase**

This is not agreement with the *by*-phrase, since the *by*-phrase is optional.3

(22) Peuraho nyan singaja geu-peu-ngop (lê Hasan)
  boat that on.purpose 3Pol-Cause-sink by Hasan
  “The boat was sunk on purpose (by Hasan)” (Ko, 080513, #12)

**Correctly locates the “agreement”**

Agreement is located on the lexical verb that assigns the external θ-role, not on any higher modal or aspectual markers.

---

3Lawler (1977:224 ftn 11) claims that the *by*-phrase is obligatory, however this is corrected by Durie (1988:108 ftn 8). The initial source of confusion was likely that out of context, a passive without a *by*-phrase is ambiguous, and could be interpreted as an active.
(23)  a. droeneuh (*neu)-pasti ka *(neu)-pajoh sie
    you 2-must Perf 2-eat meat
    “You must have eaten meat” (II:21b)
  b. ureueng inong nyan (*geu)-teungoh *(geu)-taguen bu
    person female that 3Pol-Prog 3Pol-cook rice
    “The woman is cooking rice” (II:21b)

Compatible with the possibility for titles

Titles may appear in place of the “agreement” features (Asyik 1987:273-278; on the North Aceh dialect), e.g. apa “uncle”, ayah “father”, abang “elder brother”, teungku “religious scholar”, guru “teacher”.

(24)  a. Macut h’an jeuet macut-woe meunyo golom bu
    aunt NEG can aunt-go home if not yet rice
    “You aunt cannot go home if you have not eaten rice with us yet” (Asyik 1987:275)
  b. Teungku teungku-piyh u dalam
    religious.scholar religious.scholar-rest to inside
    “You “teungku”, please rest inside here” (Asyik 1987:274)

Allows us to understand patterns of “agreement” omission

In the object voice, the agent appears in the specifier of vP and the agreement is obligatorily absent.\(^4\)

(25)  Object Voice
  a. Aneuk miet nyan uleue nyan (*di)-kap
      child small that snake that 3Fam-bite
      “The snake bit the child” (I:97)
  b. Aneuk miet nyan akan ureueng inong nyan (*geu)-tingkue
      child small that will person female that 3-Pol-carry.in.cloth
      “The woman will carry the child” (II:11)

Hypothesis: when the specifier of vP is filled, the agreement on v must be unpronounced.


In addition, when a DP A-bar trace appears in spec, v, (due to cyclic movement through the phase edge) the agreement must also be omitted. This is found with A-bar movement of the theme\(^5\) and long distance A-bar movement past an active verb, but not past a passive verb.\(^6\)

(26)  Active, A-bar Theme
  a. Ureueng yang dokto ka (*geu)-peu-ubat ka sihat
      person RelC doctor Perf 3Pol-Cause-medicine Perf healthy
      “The person that the doctor treated is healthy” (II:16)

\(^4\)The tests showing that the raised theme occupies an A-position in the passive apply equally to the object voice.
\(^5\)Durie 1985 reports thematic object relativization in the active as ungrammatical, but his example has the verb marked with agreement.
\(^6\)Agreement is also omitted in agent A-bar movement. This falls under the same generalization, if we assume with Chomsky 2007, that movement of the agent to the grammatical subject position and wh-movement of the agent to the specifier of CP proceed independently, forming distinct chains.
b. Aneuk miet yang uleue nyan hana kap pih ji-moe
child small RelC snake that NEG bite even 3Fam-cry
“Even that child that’s not bitten by the snake is crying” (I:144)

(27) Active, Long Distance Movement
a. Uleue yang Ibrahim peugah kap aneuk miet nyan raya
snake RelC Ibrahim said bite child small that big
“The snake that Ibrahim said bit the boy is big” (II:35)
b. Sie yang Ibrahim akan peugah Fatima haroih taguen na di dapu
meat RelC Ibrahim will say Fatima should cook in kitchen
“The meat that Ibrahim will say Fatima should cook is in the kitchen” (II:50)

(28) Passive, A-bar Theme
a. Aneuk miet yang di-kap lé mie nyan ka trok u rumoh
child small RelC 3Fam-bite by cat that Perf arrive to house
“The child who was bit by the cat arrived home” (I:111)
b. Nyoe padé yang di-pajoh lé geubeuh nyan
this rice RelC 3Fam-eat by buffalo that
“This is the rice that the buffalos ate” (I:113)

(29) Passive, Long Distance Movement
a. Asee yang geu-peugah lé Ibrahim hana juah kap aneuk miet nyan
dog RelC 3Pol-say by Ibrahim not wild bit child small that
“The dog that Ibrahim said was not wild bit the child” (II:36)
b. Sie yang geu-peugah lé Ibrahim Fatima taguen mangat that
meat RelC 3Pol-say by Ibrahim Fatima cook delicious very
“The meat that Ibrahim said Fatima cooked is delicious” (II:49)

5 Conclusions

- Acehnese shows three basic clause types: active, passive, and object voice
- Split-S “agreement” are interpretable features of v that restrict the external argument

References
Manning, Christopher. 1996. Ergativity: Argument Structure and Grammatical Relations. LSA.
(eds.), 145-185. CSLI.