

Is There a VP in Pendau?

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In this paper I will address whether or not Pendau (a Tomini-Tolitoli language in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia) has in fact a VP constituent. Himmelmann (2005:142-143) suggests that in another Tomini-Tolitoli language, the Totoli language, there is a VP constituent similar to a number of other western Austronesian languages.

Pendau has a symmetrical voice system that contrasts active voice and inverse voice (see Quick 1997, 2002, 2003). Transitive word order constructions have a 'rigid' position following the verb. The simplest and most elegant solution is to consider that this constituent is the grammatical object. Pendau also has variable word order in which the 'flex' word order position appears before the verb or after the 'rigid' argument, and can be called the grammatical subject. Subjects and second objects may never be placed between the verb and the grammatical object. In summary then both voices can be described as having a variable word order with these two possibilities in which I will assume tentatively that there is a VP constituent: 1) S[VO]_{VP} and 2) [VO]_{VP}S. The main part of the paper will present data and discuss the evidence for analyzing the Pendau data as having a VP.

Although core arguments can never be placed between the verb and the object, oblique arguments can be placed in between the verb and object when an oblique is fronted for prominence purposes. The only other known exception is an optional 'floating' adverb *moje* 'also, too'. A brief description will be given of this, but as this parallels other exceptions found in languages with VPs, this will not be a problem to the VP analysis (see Kroeger 2004 for example). The remaining discussion will center on presenting and discussing whether the fronted obliques negate the viability of a VP constituent in Pendau.

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