



# Must the subject be a topic? Answers from answers in Javanese

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## Background

- Grammatical subjects are often related to topics (Sasse 1987, Jacobs 2001)
- For many Austronesian languages, it is claimed that **subject = topic**, but this is controversial. (Mashudi 1976, Keenan 1976, Schachter 1976, Poedjosoedarmo 1977, Alsagoff 1992, Cole et al. 2002, Pearson 2005, Sato 2015)

## Core claim

Subjects in Javanese are usually —but not always—topics.

## Subject = Topic?

Cole et al. (2002) for Javanese (Austronesian) Strict Parallelism Hypothesis: Spec,TP = Topic

Their argument 1: *In-situ wh-subj Qs are ungrammatical*

- Instead, all subject questions are clefts
- (1) Sapa \*(sing) meh m-(p)angan apel? (Cole et al. 2002)  
who REL FUT AV-eat apple  
'Who will eat the apple?' [AV = Actor Voice]  
Lit. 'It is who that...'

Their argument 2: *Canonical subjects are never indefinite*

- (2)a. \*[<sub>NP</sub> Kucing] [<sub>VP</sub> m-layu]. (Cole et al. 2002)  
cat AV-run  
Intended: 'A cat ran.'
- b. [<sub>NP</sub> pro] [<sub>VP</sub> ono kucing m-layu].  
exist cat AV-run  
'There was a cat running.'
- c. [<sub>NP</sub> Kucing-e deen] [<sub>VP</sub> m-layu].  
cat-POSS 3SG AV-run  
'His cat ran.'

**Selected References** Chung, S. 2008. Indonesian clause structure from an Austronesian perspective. *Lingua*. | Cole, P., Hermon, G., Inoha, K., & Tjung, Y. 2002. A constraint on wh in-situ in Javanese. *AFLA 8 Proceedings*. | Endriss, C. 2009. *Quantificational Topics*. | Holmberg, A. 2015. *The syntax of yes and no*. | Jacobs, J. 2001. The dimensions of topic-comment. *Linguistics*. | Oda, K. 2005. V1 and wh-questions: A typology. In *Verb first*. | Pearson, M. 2005. The Malagasy subject/topic as an A' element. *NLLT* 23. | Potsdam, E. 2009. Austronesian verb-initial languages and wh-question strategies. *NLLT* 27. | Sato, Y. 2015. Argument ellipsis in Javanese and voice agreement. *Linguistic* 69. | Schachter, P. 1976. The subject in Philippine languages: Actor, Topic, Actor-Topic, or none of the above. In *Subject and Topic*. | Vander Klok, J. 2012. TAM in Paciran Javanese. *PhD dissertation*.

## Proposal: Two subject positions in Javanese

**Syntax-Pragmatics interface constraint:** *Subjects are interpreted as topics in Javanese*

- Spec,TP: Pragmatic preference for topic interpretation → can be cancelled
- Spec,TopP: Semantic requirement for topic interpretation → cannot be cancelled

## Diagnostic 1. Answers with TAM inversion

### A. Background on Javanese word order

In **declaratives**, TAM markers have strict relative order (Cole et al. 2008, Vander Klok 2012)

- (3)a. ✓ Wong Indonesia **ketoke kudu** ng-gowo paspor reng bandera.  
person Indonesia DIR.EVID ROOT.NEC AV-bring passport to airport  
'Indonesians seem to have to bring their passport to the airport.'
- b. \*Wong Indonesia **kudu ketoke** ...  
person Indonesia ROOT.NEC DIR.EVID

### B. Establishing a testing ground for subject vs. topic

In **answers** • TAM markers can violate the strict relative order (✓ *kudu < ketoke*)  
• Grammatical subjects can occur sentence-initially or predicate-initially

- (4) Q: Wong Indonesia **kudu** ng-gowo paspor reng bandera toh?  
person Indonesia ROOT.NEC AV-bring passport to airport PRT  
'Do Indonesians have to bring their passport to the airport?'
- A: ✓ [Wong Indonesia] **kudu ketoke** [<sub>VP</sub> ...]  
A: ✓ **Kudu ketoke** [Wong Indonesia] [<sub>VP</sub> ...]  
'Indonesians must, it seems, ...'

In **answers** • Foc<sup>0</sup> is the dedicated landing site for aux head-movement (Holmberg 2015)

- (5) Q: Kudu toh Gayus m-bayar dendo?  
ROOT.NEC PRT Gayus AV-pay fine  
'MUST Gayus pay a fine?'
  - A: **Kudu**.  
ROOT.NEC  
'Yes.' (Lit. '[He] must.')
- Independent support that *kudu* moves to Foc<sup>0</sup>.  
Auxiliaries can serve as an affirmative answer

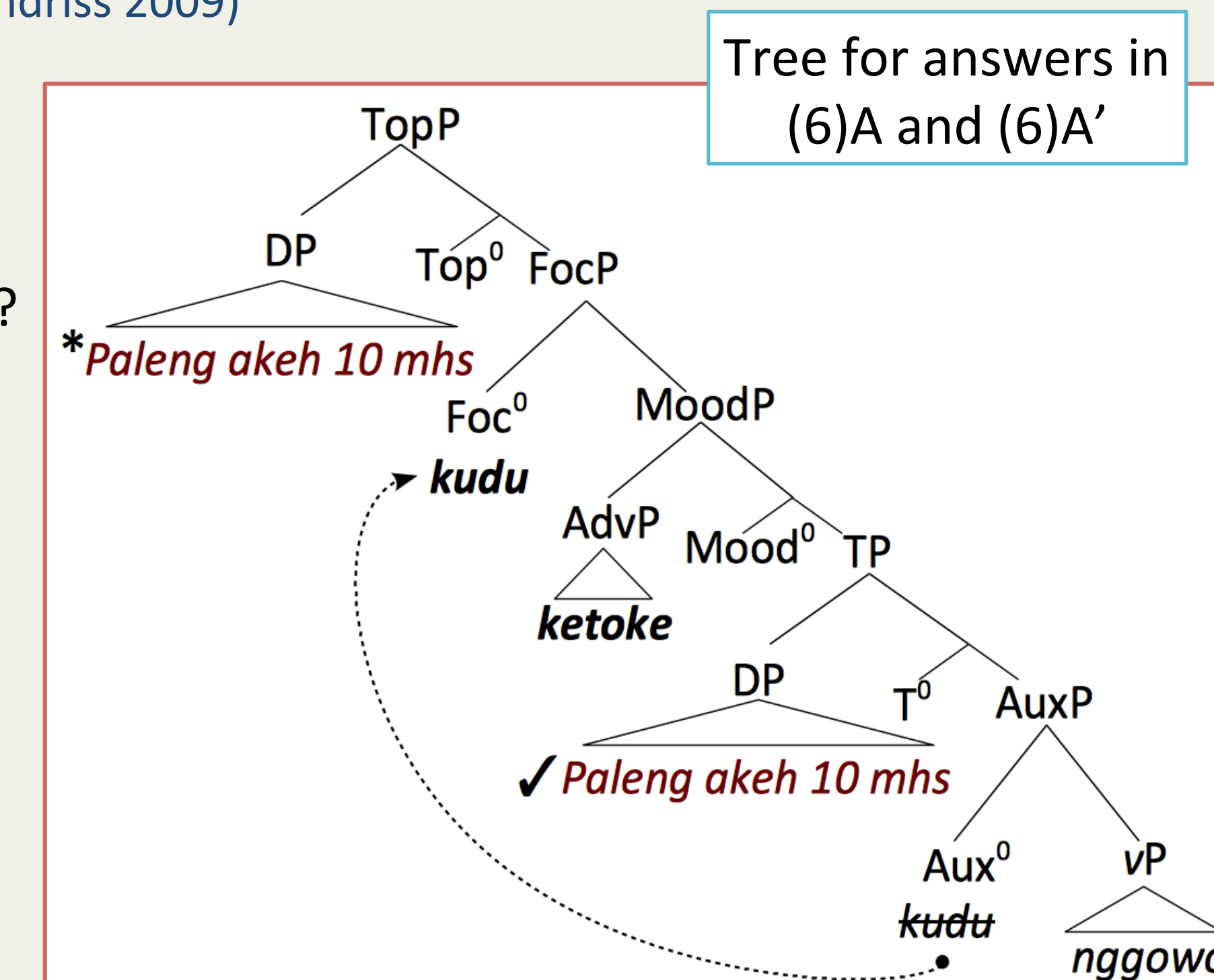
### C. Testing for subject vs. topic using quantifiers

- Some **quantifiers** cannot be topics (*at most, more/less than, few*) (Endriss 2009)  
→ In a **topic** position, these would be **ungrammatical**  
→ In a **non-topic** position, these would be **grammatical**

- (6) Q: Paleng akeh 10 mahasiswa kudu ng-gowo komputer toh?  
EST many 10 student ROOT.NEC AV-bring computer PRT  
'Do at most 10 students have to bring a computer?'

A: \***[Paleng akeh 10 mahasiswa] kudu ketoke** ng-gowo.  
EST many 10 student ROOT.NEC DIR.EVID AV-bring  
'At most 10 students have to, it seems, bring [one].'

A': ✓ **Kudu ketoke [paleng akeh 10 mahasiswa]** ng-gowo.



## Diagnostic 2. Intervention

- The Javanese subject is not always in Spec,TopP.  
→ It does not act as an intervener for  $\bar{A}$ -movement like in Malagasy: objects can extract in Javanese.

(7) Malagasy (Pearson 2005: 413)

\* **ny akoho** [(izay) mamono amin'ny ansty  
DET chicken AT.kill with-DET knife  
**ny mpamboly**  
DET farmer

Intended for: 'the chickens which the farmer is killing with the knife'

(8) Javanese

**Buku**, [sing **murid-e** ape woco t<sub>i</sub>] iku  
book REL student-DEF PROSP read DEM  
'that book that the student is going to read'

## Consequences

*Pragmatic preference for subjects to be topics in Javanese*

- But this constraint can be cancelled (cf. 6A')

*Why are wh-subjects in-situ ungrammatical (cf. (1))?*

- Javanese grammatically focuses wh-subjects (but not necessarily wh-objects) reflecting a cross-linguistic pattern (Zimmermann & Onéa 2011)
- Subject Qs in Modern Javanese have maintained the cleft strategy from Old Javanese, following the pattern of V1 languages (Oda 2002, 2005; Potsdam 2009)

## Summary & Outlook

- Javanese can be considered as 'topic prominent'  
→ But differs from Malagasy, where subjects are always  $\bar{A}$ -elements (Pearson 2005)
- Javanese has at least 2 subject positions  
→ Similar to Indonesian (Chung 2008)  
→ Are there additional subject positions?

(9) Context: *At Mrs. Nunung's food stall...*

- a. ✓ **[paleng akeh 6 murid-e] ketoke** tuku es dawet.  
EST many6 student-DEF DIR.EVID buy ice.drink  
'At most 6 students seemed to buy an ice drink.'
- b. ✓ **ketoke [paleng akeh 6 murid-e]** tuku es dawet.