A Simple Analysis and Critical Reflection of the Morphology and Syntax of Acehnese Language

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Abstract

There are specific morphology and syntax rules that accompany every language and contribute to the uniqueness of each language. When people learn a new language, for example, they must apply the grammar rules associated with it if they want to be effective communicators. In Indonesia, within the province of Aceh, a good number of local languages are spoken. One such language, which the people living in the northern part of Sumatra, Indonesia, speak, is known as Acehnese. The major objective of this study is to conduct an evaluation and a critical reflection of Acehnese that will describe the language's morphology and syntax in full detail. One native speaker studying for a Doctor of Philosophy at Adelaide University, by the name of Zulfadli Aziz, provided the data used for this research work. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols were utilised in identifying and transcribing all instances involved in the data. Regarding Acehnese morphology, several aspects have been explained in detail, namely, pronouns, tenses, plurality, reduplication, affixes, classifiers, and articles. This study also covers some aspects in term of syntax such as, word order, flexibility, and intonation. Many identifiable differences exist between Acehnese and Arabic, for instance, the word order in Arabic is verb-subject-object (VSO) whereas Acehnese has an SVO order. Furthermore, the paper makes recommendations that could easily be applied to make the experience of learning Acehnese easy.

Keywords: Acehnese, Arabic, Morphology, Syntax, Affixes, Classifiers, Intonation, reduplication

1. Introduction

Every language has its own morphology and syntax rules that makes it unique. Learning a new language means incorporating grammar rules, as well as other skills, in order to become an effective communicator. In the Aceh province of Indonesia, a significant number of languages abound. One spoken by the people living in the northern part of Sumatra, Indonesia, is Acehnese. This particular language is spoken by a population of approximately three-and-a-half million individuals (Lewis 2009). In terms of the official context, such as media and work as well as administration, Acehnese is not broadly utilised since the official language used in Indonesia is Bahasa Indonesia. Nonetheless, the use of Acehnese can be seen in informal contexts, more specifically in urban places, such as Banda Aceh (Alamsyah et al. 2011). Unfortunately, few studies of this language have been conducted. The data of Acehnese presented here have been elicited from one Acehnese speaker, Zulfadli Aziz, a Ph.D. student at Adelaide University.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and produce a critical reflection on the Acehnese morphology and syntax, based on the researcher's own experience, with a strong contrastive linguistics focus. It will also address the following issues: (1) An analysis of the morphology and syntax of Acehnese, (2) the differences between Acehnese and Arabic language.

2. An Analysis of the Morphology and Syntax of Acehnese

2.1 Morphology

According to Haspelmath (2002), morphology is the study of word structure. The researcher asserted that morphological analysis typically consists of the identifications of parts of words or more precisely constituents of words (McCarthy 2002). However, Acehnese possesses its unique morphology; it has been explained in detail below.

- Pronouns: Like any language, Acehnese has its own pronouns. As an illustration, it has /lon / = I; /ɟih/ = he, she, and it; /ɟih/ = we; /awəʔ/ = they; /drɔɯh/ = you (singular); and /awadrɔ mandʊm/ = you (plural) (see Table 1 and 2). However, Acehnese pronouns do not differentiate for gender; that is, the same pronoun may be used for she/he. The example in Table 3 shows that the pronoun for "she" and "he" (in red color) is the same: /ɟih/. In addition, Acehnese pronouns do not distinguish between singular and plural, except the first person pronouns. This does not mean that the same pronouns can be used for plural pronouns without the help of other words. Second and third person pronouns are usually made plural by adding a word meaning *all* = /mandʊm/. For example, Table 4 shows a special word for a single person, or *you* = /drɔɯh/, but by adding the word *all* = /mandʊm/, it becomes "you all" = /awadrɔ mandʊm/.

- Tenses: Unlike Arabic and English, Acehnese has no verb inflection for tenses (see Table 5). Past or present tense in Acehnese can be understood in context or by the use of certain adverbs of time: /Sinɛh/ = tomorrow for the present time actions; yesterday = /barɔ/; last night = /bɯklam/; last week = /mingɯ yaŋ kalikot for past time actions.

- Plurality and reduplication: The plurality of nouns in Acehnese is not indicated by any ending or inflection, but it is sometimes reduplicated to indicate plurality. As an example, Table 6 shows that Acehnese uses the same word twice for the plural of books (/buku buku/), and the noun remains the same whether it is used for the singular or plural sense. However, in Acehnese, not all types of reduplication indicate plurality; they can indicate another function for emphasis. Table 7 shows a speaker trying to assert the number of red cars by reduplicating with the word *huge* = rəjuʔ rəjuʔ/ and *many* /mirəh mirəh/.

- Acehnese Affixes: Although Acehnese does not have inflectional morphology, it does have derivational morphology. It has both prefixes and infixes to form words from other words, but there are no suffixes. However, there is a notable number of prefixes, which include nominals, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. For example, the prefix /beurangka/, which means "ever" or "any," is used to derive nouns. The combination of /beurangka/ with other words produces adverbs as in Table 8. Another prefix in Acehnese is /pɯ/, which has the function of forming verbs from nouns and adjectives (see Table 8). However, there are some infixes in Acehnese such as /eun/ that have the function of forming nouns from verbs and adjectives. As an example, /paɟɔh/ is a verb meaning "to eat," but by adding the infix /eun/, it becomes the noun /peunaɟɔh/ and means "food" (see Table 8). Another infix is /eum/, which derives verbs such as /kawe/, which is a noun and means "fishing stick" or "fishing rod"; by adding /eum/, it becomes /keumawe/, or "to go fishing" (see Table 8).

- Classifiers: Like most languages, Acehnese has its own classifiers, which are used to describe a relative shape or to accompany nouns in certain grammatical contexts. For instance, the word /bɔh/ is considered a quantity modifier (see Table 18). Another classifier is /droe/, which is a quantity classifier to refer to human beings. For example, Sa droe = one person (see Table 9).

- Articles: An article is a word used with a noun to indicate the kind of reference being made by the noun. Unlike many languages, Acehnese does have articles (see Table 10).

2.2 Syntax

Unlike morphology, syntax is the study of the internal structure of sentences or phrases. According to Haspelmath (2002 p. 1), "Syntax means sentence construction: how words group together to make phrases and sentences." Acehnese possesses a distinctive syntax.

- Word order and flexibility: Acehnese has the same basic word order as English: SVO, or subject-verb-object. This differs from Arabic (see Table 11). Table 12 shows that the word order in Acehnese is flexible, and words can be moved easily while the meaning remains the same, except classifiers like /bɔh/. Acehnese is like most languages that do not separate the classifiers from the word.

- Intonation: the intonation of the order of Acehnese seems to be basic: SVO. In this type of sentence, intonation moves smoothly from one level to another. As an example, Table 13 shows that a statement in Acehnese is characterized by an intonation that falls away at the

end of a sentence whereas Table 14 presents that the intonation is rising gradually at the end of the question.

3. The Differences between Acehnese and Arabic Language

Regarding the discriminations between Arabic and Acehnese, Arabic seems significantly different, especially in morphology and syntax. Some of these differences will be briefly clarified in this section. Arabic has many tenses: past, present, and future. This differs from Acehnese. The Arabic word order is verb-subject-object (VSO) whereas Acehnese has an SVO order. Another discrimination is articles: Arabic has several articles to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. Another difference is that Arabic discriminates between gender in pronouns, verbs, words, and sentence structure. For instance, pronouns like "you" and "they" have specifications for the gender, whether singular and plural. Lastly, Arabic is rich in word derivations. For examples, a lot of words with many different meanings can be derived from a single word. Table 15 presents some derivations that can be produced from one noun, /nawmun/ [نوم], which means "sleeping" (Al-Muhtaseb & Mellish 1998).

4. Conclusion

Acehnese has its own unique morphology and syntax rules, which vary greatly from other languages. However, knowing the morphology and syntax of the target language can help students to understand the nature of the target language system. Additionally, it will help learners to be more creative in creating new words and sentences. This article provided a simple analysis of Acehnese morphology and syntax, which have been explored in detail. After offering a critical reflection of the morphology and syntax of Acehnese, the researcher discussed some differences between Acehnese and Arabic.

The uniqueness of Acehnese morphology and syntax may cause a great deal of difficulty for learners from many language backgrounds. Here are some recommendations to facilitate learning of Acehnese for other language speakers. Learners should pay an attention to the Acehnese morphology and syntax in order to have an idea about the system of the language. Additionally, they should be aware that Acehnese, like any language, has a unique morphology and syntax rules that vary greatly from other native languages. For example, word order in Arabic is VSO, which is different than the Acehnese word order (SVO). Thus, they should not follow their native language rules while learning Acehnese. This is something students should take into account when they intend to learn Acehnese or any language.

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Appendixes: Tables

Table 1. Acehnese subject pronouns

Subject Pronouns in English	Subject Pronouns in Acehnese	Example + Meaning
I	/lon/	/lon lonpɯgah haba ŋən gata/ I talk with you (sing)
He	/ɟih/	/ ɟih lonpɯgah haba ŋən gata/ He talks with you (sing)
She	/ɟih/	/ ɟih lonpɯgah haba ŋən gata/ She talks with you (sing)
It	/ɟih/	/ ɟih lonpɯgah haba ŋən gata/ it talks with you (sing)
You (singular)	/drɔɯh/	/ drɔɯh gɯcɯgah haba ŋən lon/ You talk with me
They	/ɑwəʔ/	/ɑwəʔ ŋən gɯcɯrit bhəʔ ɲən/ They talk about it
You (plural)	/awadrɔ mandʊm/	/ awadrɔ mandʊm haba ŋən lon/ You talk with me
We	/taɲɔ/	/ taɲɔ ŋən gɯcɯrit bhəʔ ɲən/ We talk about it

Table 2. Acehnese objects pronouns

Object Pronouns in English	Object Pronouns in Acehnese	Example + Meaning
me	/lon/	/ awadrɔ mandʊm ħaba ŋən lon/ You talk with me
him	/ɟih/	/lon lonpɯgah ħaba ŋən ɟih / I talk with him
her	/ɟih/	/lon lonpɯgah ħaba ŋən ɟih / I talk with her
It	/ɲən/	/ɑwəʔ ŋən gɯcɯrit bhəʔ ɲən/ They talk about it
You (as singular)	/gəta/	/lon lonpɯgah ħaba ŋən gətə/ I talk with you (sing)
them	/ɑwəʔ ɲan/	/lon lonpɯgah ħaba ŋən ɑwəʔ ɲan/ I talk with them
You (as plural)	/gəta mandʊm/	/lon lonpɯgah ħaba ŋən gətə mandʊm / I talk with you (pl)

Table 3. Acehnese gender pronouns

Sentence in English	Sentence in Acehnese
She / He is working there last year.	/ɟih tɯŋəh ɟikwrwɟa diSldeh/

Table 4. The pronoun "you," both plural and singular

Sentence in English	Sentence in Acehnese
You (one person) did not sleep last night.	/drɔɯh hana nɯɯʔeh bɯɭklam/
You (plural) did not sleep last night	/awadrɔ mandʊm hana nɯɯʔeh bɯɯklam/

Table 5. Acehnese tenses

Sentence in English	Sentence in Acehnese
Dog will sleep/slept/is sleeping on the bridge.	/əSɛə ɟiʔeh diwatwh titi/

Table 6. Acehnese plurality and reduplication

Single	Plural
Person = /urwŋ/	People = /urwŋ urwŋ/
Dog = / əSɛə/	Dogs = /əSɛə əSɛə/
Book = / buku/	Books /buku buku/

Table 7. Acehnese plurality and reduplication for emphasis

Sentence in English	Sentence in Acehnese
There are many red cars.	/mɔtɔ mirəh mirəh/
There are huge cars.	/mɔtɔ rəjuʔ rəjuʔ/

Table 8. Acehnese affixes

Affixes	Example	Sentence in Acehnese	Meaning
prefixes	/Beurangka/	/Beurangkaban/	However
		/BeurangkaSoe/	Whoever
		/Beurangkapeue/	Whatever
		/Beurangkapat/	Wherever
	/pɥ/	/pɥtrəŋ/	want to clarify

			something want to explain something
infixes	/eun/	/peunaɟɔh/	Food
	/eum/	/keumawe/	To go fishing

Table 9. Acehnese classifiers

Classifier	Example	Meaning
/bɔh/	/Sa bɔh gləh/	One glass
	/dua bɔh aʃɛa ɟi Sɯmɯgroh/	The two dogs are barking
/droe/	/Sa droe/	One person

Table 10. Acehnese Articles

Sentence in English	Sentence in Acehnese
The two dogs are barking.	/dua bɔh aʃea ɟi Sɯmɯgroh/
The book is good.	/buku ɲan gət/

Table 11. the basic order of Acehnese

Sentence in Acehnese	/lon lonɟəʔ Sikula/
Meaning	I go to the school.

Table 12. The flexibility of Acehnese word order

Sentence in Acehnese	/kəh kəpəɟoh bɔh driən?/ / kəpəɟoh bɔh driən kəh?/
Meaning	Do you eat durian?
Sentence in Acehnese	/lon lonɟəʔ u kɯɟdɛ/ / u kɯɟdɛ lon ɟəə/ /lon u kɯɟdɛ lonɟə?/
Meaning	I go to the market.

Table 13. The intonation of Acehnese statement
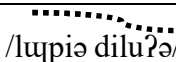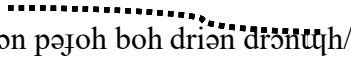
Statement in Acehnese	/lɯpiə diluʔə/ /lɯpiə diluʔə/
Statement in English	It is cold outside
Statement in Acehnese	/lɔn pəɟoh boh driən drɔnɯɟh/ /lon pəɟoh boh driən drɔnɯɟh/
Meaning	I eat your durian.

Table 14. The intonation of Acehnese question

Question in Acehnese	/kəh kəpəɟəh bɔh driən?/ /kəh kəpəɟəh bɔh driən?/
Meaning	Do you eat durian?

Table 15. word derivations in Arabic (Al-Muhtaseb & Mellish 1998, p.8)

Word & Transliteration	Meaning	Word & Transliteration	Meaning
<*naãma*> [نامَ]	He slept	<*naã'imun*> [نائمٌ]	Sleeping
<*yanaãmu*> [يَنامُ]	He sleeps	<*munawwamun*> [منوَّمٌ]	Under hypnotic
<*nam*> [نَمْ]	Sleep	<*na'ūmun*> [نَؤومٌ]	Late riser
<*tanwēmun*> [تنويمٌ]	Lulling to sleep	<*'anwamu*> [أنومَ]	More given to sleep
<*manaãmun*> [مَنامةٌ]	Dream	<*nawwaãmun*> [نَوّامٌ]	The most given to sleep
<*nawmatun*> [نومة]	Of one sleep	<*manaãmun*> [مَنامٌ]	Dormitory
<*nawwaãmatun*> [نوامةٌ]	Sleeper	<*'an yanaãma*> [أن يَنامَ]	That he sleeps
<*nawmiyyatun*> [نوميةٌ]	Pertaining to sleep	<*munawwamun*> [منوَّمٌ]	hypnotic

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