

## **Structural Composition of the AUX (Auxiliary) in English and Indonesian: A Contrastive Grammatical Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

There are significant linguistic differences between English and Indonesian despite the fact that modern Indonesian adopts the Roman script in its writing system. Unlike English, Indonesian is most probably a language without tenses, or if it has tense(s), no single element of its auxiliary rules will be affected by the tense(s). Language component-wise, the differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar are obvious between the two languages. In grammar, the structural composition of the AUX (Auxiliary) in Indonesian is heavily based on function words (*sedang*, *akan*, and other equivalents of Modals in English). These function words remained unchanged whatever the tense of the sentences is. English, on the other hand, is significantly affected by its structural composition of the AUX. Therefore, it takes quite significant time for Indonesian learning English to get used to the usage of English auxiliary system as it is much more complicated than Indonesian auxiliary system. Conversely, English speakers learning Indonesian most probably will find the structural composition of the AUX in Indonesian fairly simple to master.

*Keywords: auxiliary, English, Indonesian, linguistic differences, structural composition*

### **Introduction**

There are significant linguistic differences between English and Indonesian despite the fact that modern Indonesian adopts the Roman script in its writing system, a shift from Arabic script used in early Malay as the predecessor of current Indonesian (Dardjowidjojo, 1976). Language component-wise, the differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar are obvious between the two languages. This paper is written for the purpose of contrasting one of the main differences in the grammars of both languages, that is, the structural compositions of the AUX<sup>1</sup> in English and Indonesian. It is hoped that the paper can help contribute to solve some learning problems faced by Indonesians learning English, or hopefully vice versa.

Troike (1995) points out that English has the following structural composition of the AUX: **AUX** → **-Tns (Modal) (Perf) (Progr) (Pass)**, which corresponds to no less than eight different rules/formulas for English sentences. In order to refresh our understanding of the English auxiliary system, it is worth presenting sample forms coupled with each of the eight rules as presented in figure 1 (translations of the English forms into Indonesian are also provided to facilitate comparison of both languages' auxiliary systems). Since the presence of V (Verb) is obligatory in English auxiliary system, it will also be included in each of the eight rules.

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<sup>1</sup> Readers of this paper are assumed to have had familiarity with the linguistic terms and symbols used.

**Figure 1:** English auxiliary system and its Indonesian translation

Rules	Sample forms in English and their Indonesian translations
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} V	Write <i>menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} V	Wrote <i>Menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Modal V	will write <i>akan menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Modal V	would write <i>akan menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Modal Perf V	shall have written <i>akan telah menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Modal Perf V	should have written <i>akan telah menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Modal Progr V	can <b>be writing</b> <i>bisa sedang menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Modal Progr V	could <b>be writing</b> <i>bisa sedang menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Perf V	has / have written <i>telah menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Perf V	had / had written <i>telah menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Progr V	<b>is / are writing</b> <i>Sedang menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Progr V	<b>was / were writing</b> <i>sedang menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Perf Progr V	has / have been writing <b>(not a compatible combination in Indonesian)</b>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Perf Progr V	had / had been writing <b>(not a compatible combination in Indonesian)</b>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} Modal Perf Progr V	may have been writing <b>(not a compatible combination in Indonesian)</b>
AUX → -Tns {PAST} Modal Perf Progr V	might have been writing <b>(not a compatible combination in Indonesian)</b>

Figure 1 above indicates one of the most obvious differences between the AUX in English and the AUX in Indonesian, that is, the impact of the presence of the –Tns (Tense) on other elements of the AUX rules. Another difference that deserves further discussion is the issue of compatibility between the aspect (Perf) and the aspect (Progr). More differences will be found later when we discuss the unchanged aspects in Indonesian versus the changed aspects in English when being preceded by Modals, the Passive, and subject-verb agreement in English and in Indonesian.

### The -Tns (Tense) in English and in Indonesian

English is basically a two-tense language, namely ‘past tense’ and ‘nonpast tense’, though ‘future tense’ is widely regarded as another tense in English (Troike 224). Examples in figure 1 show that the tense (either {PAST} or {NONPAST}) obviously affects the forms of other elements in the AUX rules. Observing the rules and examples given in figure 1, we will note that the tense always affects the first element in the examples given.

Therefore, we will find that:

1. ‘write’ becomes ‘wrote’
2. ‘will’ becomes ‘would’
3. ‘shall’ becomes ‘should’
4. ‘can’ becomes ‘could’
5. ‘may’ becomes ‘might’
6. ‘has’ and ‘have’ becomes ‘had’
7. ‘is’ becomes ‘was’ and ‘are’ becomes ‘were’

(The change may also occur vice versa such as ‘wrote’ becomes ‘write’)

We may now generalize that the forms of verbs, modals (will, shall, might etc), to be (is, was, were, am), and helping verbs ‘have’, ‘has’, and ‘had’ are dependent on whether the tense is PAST or NONPAST.

Unlike English, Indonesian is most probably a language without tenses, or if it has tense(s), no single element of its auxiliary rules will be affected by the tense(s). Based on the eight rules for the AUX in English, we find that the forms of all elements of the AUX in Indonesian are consistently the same for both PAST tense and NONPAST tense. It is not possible to recognize the tense of sentences in Indonesian based on its auxiliary system. Contrary to English, Indonesian relies solely on adverbs of time to indicate the equivalent English PAST and NONPAST tenses. The following comparison of sentences in English and Indonesian may help us better understand the structural compositions of the AUX in Indonesian, especially in relation to tense.

Students	<b>play</b>	football
<i>Siswa-siswa</i>	<b><i>bermain</i></b>	<i>sepak bola</i>

Students	<b>played</b>	football
<i>Siswa-siswa</i>	<b><i>bermain</i></b>	<i>sepak bola</i>

The word ‘**played**’ and ‘**play**’ in the English sentences, as a result of AUX  $\longrightarrow$  -Tns {PAST} V and AUX  $\longrightarrow$  -Tns {NONPAST} V sufficiently indicate the impact of the tenses, while the Indonesian word ‘***bermain***’, as the equivalent of ‘**played**’ and ‘**play**’, remains the same. Thus, the message of the Indonesian sentences in the first and second pairs is exactly the same, unless an adverb of time is added in each of the Indonesian sentences such as the following:

The students play football  
*Siswa-siswa tersebut bermain sepak bola setiap hari Ahad (every Sunday)*

The students played football  
*Siswa-siswa tersebut baru saja (just) bermain sepak bola*

As we may notice from the examples of sentences above, in Indonesian, it is only the adverbs of time that function as the time-markers as opposed to verbs, auxiliaries, or modals in English sentences, which, in addition to being a formal linguistic category, also indicate time.

Using the principles of English auxiliary system, we may now draw tree diagrams for both the English and Indonesian sentences above. To draw the tree diagram for the Indonesian sentence, some modification of the English tree diagram is needed in order to accommodate the natures of Indonesian, which will be discussed later.

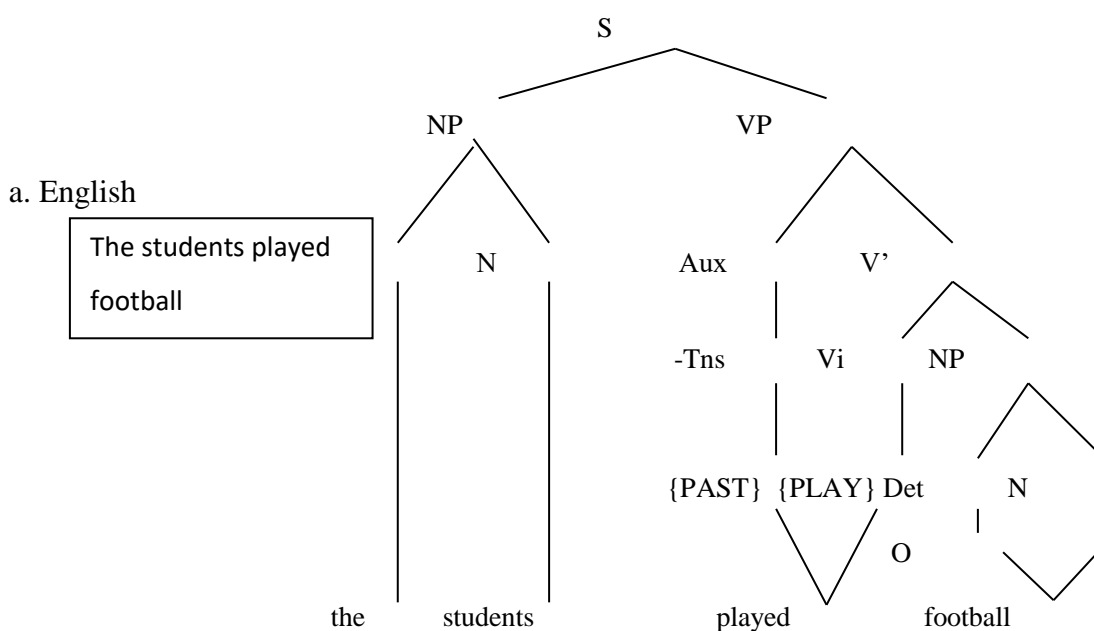
Based on the diagrams and sample sentences presented above we can now formulate the structural composition of the AUX in Indonesian and compare it to its English counterpart.

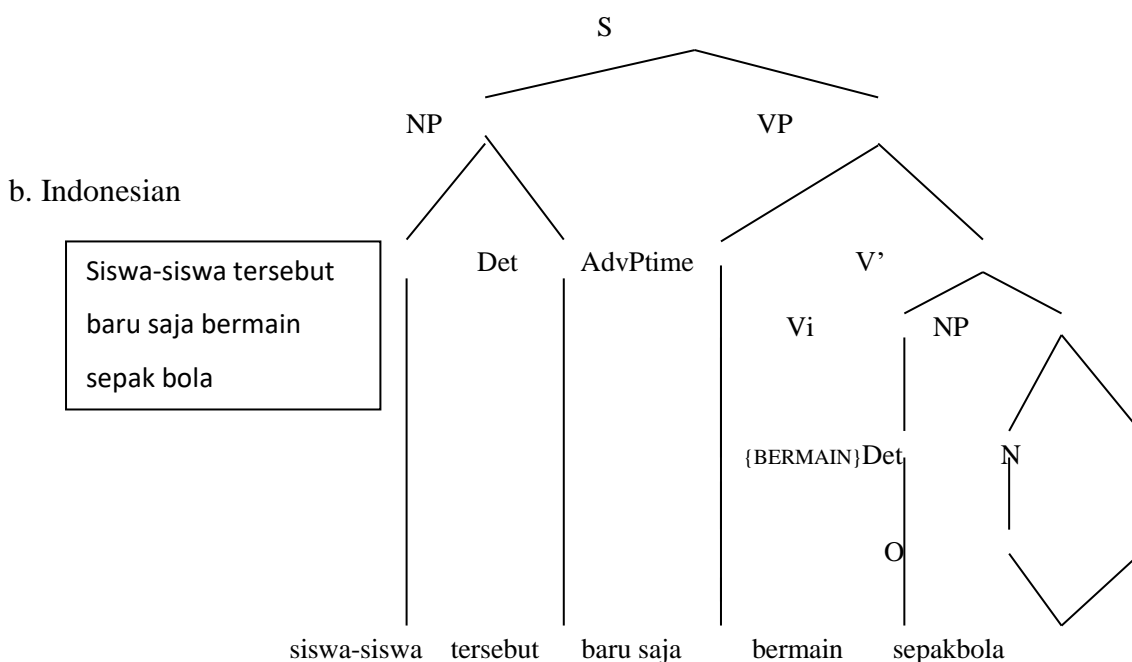
Indonesian:

**AUX** → **(Modal) (Perf) (Progr)**

English:

**AUX** → **-Tns (Modal) (Perf) (Progr)**





Observing the auxiliary systems of both languages, we quickly notice that the only difference between both languages is the absence of tense in Indonesian auxiliary system. This difference constitutes the key element which differentiates how verbs are treated in both languages as we have just discussed.

It is important to note, however, though both languages have similar AUX structures, except for tense, the elements of Indonesian AUX are not normally used in the same way their English counterparts are used. This is particularly true in relation to the use of {Perf} and {Progr} in Indonesian sentences. Although both are present in the Indonesian AUX, they are not to be used in the same sentences. Therefore, while it is possible to have an AUX formation such as **AUX** → **-Tns (Modal) (Perf) (Progr)** for a sentence in English, it is normally not the case in Indonesian. The possible Indonesian AUX formation is either **AUX** → **(Modal) (Perf)** or **AUX** → **(Modal) (Progr)**. Similarly, while English enables its speakers to use the AUX formation **AUX** → **-Tns (Perf) (Progr)**, speakers of Indonesian use either only **AUX** → **(Perf)** or only **AUX** → **(Progr)**.

**Figure 2:** Similarities and differences of auxiliary system in English and Indonesian





The AUX Rules in Indonesian and English	Sample forms in Indonesian and English
AUX → V (1)	<i>menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} {PAST} V (1)	Write / wrote
AUX → Modal V (2)	<i>akan menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} {PAST} Modal V (2)	Will write / would write
AUX → Modal Perf V (3)	<i>Mungkin telah menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} {PAST} Modal Perf V (3)	may/might have written
AUX → Modal Progr V (4)	<i>pasti sedang menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} {PAST} Modal Progr V (4)	May/might <b>be</b> writing

The AUX Rules in Indonesian and English	Sample forms in Indonesian and English
AUX → Perf V (5)	<i>telah menulis</i>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST}{PAST} Perf V (5)	has / had written
AUX → Progr V (6)	<b>Sedang menulis</b>
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST}{PAST} Progr V (6)	<b>is / was writing</b>
<b>Incompatible Perf + Progr combination in Indonesian</b>	–
AUX → Tns {NONPAST} {PAST} Perf Progr V (7)	has / had <b>been writing</b>
<b>Incompatible Perf + Progr combination in Indonesian</b>	–
AUX → -Tns {NONPAST} {PAST} Modal Perf Progr V (8)	May/might have <b>been writing</b> <i>mungkin telah sedang menulis</i>

This comparison further reminds us of the fact that the structural composition of the AUX in English corresponds to no less than *eight* different rules for English sentences as presented in Figure 1 on page 2 (the Indonesian translations in Figure 1 are provided solely for the purpose of comparison, and do not necessarily represent of their grammaticality). On the other hand, considering the incompatibility of {Perf} and {Progr} in Indonesian sentences, the structural composition of the AUX in Indonesian corresponds to only *six* different rules for its sentences. The *six* different rules are presented above in Figure 2 in comparison with the *eight* rules of the English AUX system.

**The Aspect in English and Indonesian**

The forms of aspects in the AUX of English (Perf, Prog) change after being preceded by Modals or other auxiliaries. Referring back to Figures 1 and 2, we will find that changes occur in both aspects. In Perfect (Perf), auxiliaries ‘have’ and ‘has’ consistently change into ‘have’ when preceded by any modal, a change that does not occur in Indonesian, where the word ‘**telah**’ remains unchanged regardless of whether it is preceded by a modal or not. The following examples may help us better understand the changes of forms in the aspects.

 She Dia		<b>has</b>	worked there for 3 years
		<b>telah</b>	<i>bekerja di sana selama 3 tahun</i>
 She Dia	may	<b>have</b>	worked there for 3 years ...
	<i>mungkin</i>	<b>telah</b>	<i>bekerja di sana selama 3 tahun...</i>
 The boys Anak-anak itu		<b>have</b>	lived there since 1999
		<b>telah</b>	<i>tinggal di sana sejak 1999</i>
 The boys Anak-anak itu	must	<b>have</b>	lived there since 1999
	pasti	<b>telah</b>	<i>tinggal disana sejak 1999</i>

The same transformation principle applies for another aspect, the Progressive (Prog), where **be** consistently replaces **is**, or **are**, or **am**, and **was**, **were**, when preceded by a modal as opposed to the unchanged '**sedang**' in Indonesian regardless of whether or not a modal is present before it. Examples of this transformation can be analyzed on the next page.

He		<b>is/was</b>	writing
<i>Dia</i>		<b>sedang</b>	<i>menulis</i>
They		<b>are/were</b>	writing
<i>Mereka</i>		<b>sedang</b>	<i>menulis</i>
He	may	<b>be</b>	writing
<i>Dia</i>	<i>mungkin</i>	<b>sedang</b>	<i>menulis</i>
They	might	<b>be</b>	writing
<i>Mereka</i>	<i>mungkin</i>	<b>sedang</b>	<i>menulis</i>

One interesting feature of this comparison is that the word **sedang** is found to be the equivalent of a combination between to be (**is**, **are**, **was**, **were**, and also **am** and **be**) and the **ing** ending in the verbs. This grammatical combination makes it possible for Indonesian to have an equivalent for the word **sedang**.

### Subject Pronoun-Verb Agreement in English and Indonesian

The examples on aspect (Progressive) above also reveal some of the differences on subject pronoun-verb agreement in English and Indonesian. As we can clearly observe, English requires different to be (and also verb form, which is not discussed in this paper) for some of its subject pronouns though this is not true for some other English subject pronouns. To be **is** {NONPAST} and **was** {PAST} are required for subject pronouns such as **he**, **she**, **Andi**. To be **was** is also required for subject pronoun **I**, which must be followed by a different to be (**am**) for {NONPAST}. On the other hand, to be **are** {NONPAST} and **were** {PAST} are required for subject pronoun you, **you (all)**, **we**, **they**, **Andi and Jane**. In Indonesian, however, there is no subject pronoun-verb agreement (as well as person and number agreement) required in sentences. The same verb or auxiliary may follow any subject pronoun as we have seen from various Indonesian sentences previously.

### The Passive in Indonesian

Alisjahbana (1976) states that affixes are the core of Indonesian grammar. The discussion about affixes in Indonesian is so broad and complex that, in this paper, it is only possible for us to discuss them in relation to passive sentences. To put it simply, let us analyze the transformation of active sentences to passive sentences in Indonesian and English below:

<u>Indonesian</u>	<u>English</u>
Ali <i>menonton</i> televisi Televisi <i>ditonton</i> (oleh) Ali	Ali <i>watches</i> television Television <i>is watched</i> by Ali
Para petani <i>menunggang</i> kuda-kuda itu Kuda-kuda itu <i>ditunggang(i)</i> (oleh) para petani	Farmers <i>ride</i> the horses The horses <i>are ridden</i> by farmers

The examples above indicate simpler transformational process of active sentences to passive in Indonesian when compared to the transformation in English. The transformation of active sentences to passive in Indonesian is largely a matter changing prefix *me* in the predicate (other possible prefix is *ber* such as the one in *bermain*) into *di* in addition to changing the position of subject and object. All elements in brackets in the examples above are optional in passive sentences in Indonesia.

Thus, based on the discussion and examples presented above we can now formulate a more complete structural composition of the AUX of each language as follows:

Indonesian:

**AUX** → **(Modal) (Perf / Progr) (Pass)**

English:

**AUX** → **-Tns (Modal) (Perf) (Progr) (Pass)**

### Conclusion

In general, the structural composition of the AUX in Indonesian is heavily based on function words (*sedang*, *akan*, and other equivalents of Modals in English). These function words remained unchanged whatever the tense of the sentences is. English, on the other hand, is significantly affected by its structural composition of the AUX. Therefore, it takes quite significant time for Indonesian learning English to get used to the usage of English auxiliary system as it is much more complicated than Indonesian auxiliary system. Conversely, English speakers learning Indonesian most probably will find the structural composition of the AUX in Indonesian fairly simple to master. One potential problem for English speakers learning Indonesian is the affixes, which are not discussed in detail in this paper.

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