Silent Syntactic Structures in Malay: Copular Clauses[1]

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Abstract

Phonetic realisation does not absolutely determine whether syntactic structure exists. Certain constructions might lack overt syntax, but once thoroughly examined, show telltale signs of silent syntactic structure. Copular constructions in Malay are certainly one of such constructions as subjects and complements in nonverbal predication are not mediated by a copula; therefore, by Occam's razor, the simplest analysis would be that there is no structure between the two constituents. This study examines copular clauses in Malay and attempts to substantiate the claim that there is more syntactic structure than meets the eye (or ear) through the use of certain diagnostic tests such as the use of adverbials and auxiliaries, to detect the presence of inflectional and verbal projections. It is found that copular clauses possess both inflectional and verbal layers as it is possible for certain auxiliaries and adverbials to occur in copular clauses in Malay.

Keywords: Syntax, copula, *pemeri*, Malay, nonverbal, predication

1.   Introduction

In a great deal of the world's 7000 or so languages, there is usually some form of linguistic element, usually auxiliary-like, which occurs between a subject and its

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complement. In English, this element, often called a *copula,* comes in the form of the verb *be* and is also an auxiliary that occurs in progressive and passive constructions, e.g. "the crow is eating his sandwich", and "his sandwich was eaten by the crow". Den Dikken (2006) calls this element a *relator*, a constituent which would "mediate the relationship between a predicate and its subject in the base representation of predication structures," (p. 1) and maintains that relators are not exclusively constrained to the verbal category. For example, they could also occur as prepositions, as in the following example:

(1)   *We have* [RP [DP *an idiot*] [R̄ RELATOR=*for* [DP *a doctor*]]]

(Den Dikken, 2006, p. 37)

Typically a verbal element, the item in question could also come in the form of a pronominal element such as a demonstrative pronoun (*pro-copula*), or a discourse particle such as an emphatic marker (*particle copula*), as cited by Stassen (2013) in the following examples.

(2)   Moše hu   student
        Moshe   3.SG.M student
        Moshe is a student.

Hebrew (Li & Thompson, 1977, p. 428)

(3)   mō kóro mú   nda
        man old   FOC/COP I
        I am an old man.

Vai (Koelle, 1854, p. 92)

The pro-copula in Hebrew in (2) is visibly a pronominal element intervening the true subject and its nominal predicate. The same item can be used as a regular pronoun in a clause with a verbal predicate. On the other hand, the particle copula in Vai is a focus marker which also occurs in clefts, which are attested to be focus constructions. Welmers (1976) calls *mú* an *identifier* and believes that it is comparable to "it is" in English.

In many languages, nonverbal predication is merely a juxtaposition of subject and complement. This is common in Austronesian languages such as

Malagasy and Tagalog. For instance, Tagalog does not have an overt copula, as demonstrated in the examples below by Richards (2009):

(4)   a. Doktor   ako   [nominal
               doctor   ANG.I   predicate]
               I'm a doctor.

       b. Maganda   ako   [adjectival
               beautiful   ANG.I   predicate]
               I'm beautiful.

       c. Nasa   gitna   ako   [prepositional
               PRED.LOC   middle   ANG.I   predicate]
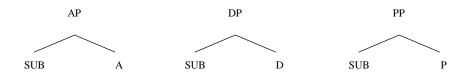   *I'm in the middle.*

Although there seems to be nothing mediating the two constituents, it does not seem to be the case that there is no syntactic structure at all that acts as a scaffold to support them, other than a single node dominating subject and predicate; this is because it is counter intuitive to say that there are structurally minimal bi-constituental copular clauses which are exceptional alongside canonical copular clauses that are attested to have intermediate linguistic material and structure. Besides, it is conventional wisdom that a clause requires a linking element to express a proposition in both linguistic and philosophical terms, and this linking element often occurs as a verb or some other verbal element, e.g. a copula:

> *It must be noted here that linguistic expression is pervaded throughout by linkings, a fact often obscured by the stress in logic upon the one particular linking which is supposed to be the essential function of the proposition. Even in so simple a statement as 'Caesar invaded Britain', each word must be linked with each other word...*

(Sisson, 1939, p. 60)

Therefore, one can immediately eliminate fully derived clauses of the likes of Figure 1, as there is no linking element, either overt or covert, to link subject with predicate and to pass them for actual propositions i.e. without a *linker* in Sisson's terms, these are nothing but phrases, e.g. *book black*, *Mary girl*, and *book on the table*.

Figure 1: Non-Propositional Phrases

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        AP                      DP                      PP
       /  \                    /  \                    /  \
      /    \                  /    \                  /    \
   SUB      A             SUB      D              SUB      P
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This problematic view is advocated by Karim, Onn, Musa, and Mahmood (2014) for copular clauses in Malay. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the main authority on the Malay language in Malaysia, through Karim *et al.* (2014), has identified 4 types of predication, which they call *sentence poles*. The so-called *poles* are based on a clause's perceivable constituents such that if a sentence only has a subject and a nominal predicate, the *pole* would be DP–DP. In other words, constituents that are not directly perceivable are not postulated.

Table 1: The 4 Sentence Poles by Karim *et al.* (2014)

	Subject	Predicate
Pole 1	DP	DP
	Ali Ali	guru teacher
Pole 2	DP	VP
	Adik-ku Sibling-1.SG	sedang tidur PROG sleep
Pole 3	DP	AP
	Pegawai itu Officer DIST	amat rajin very diligent
Pole 4	DP	PP
	Rumah-nya House-3.SG	di Kampung Sungai Pencala at Kampung Sungai Pencala

By Occam's Razor, no assumptions should be made than are necessary, and this applies to the structure of copular clauses in Malay being restricted only to its attested constituents; however, this might be oversimplifying the analysis as it turns out that, after further examination, the structure of copular clauses in Malay is more than just its perceivable constituents. Although it may be true at

first glance that predication in Malay comes in these forms, it is premature to have assumed that these so-called *poles* are mutually exclusive.

Based on evidence presented in this paper, this classification seems to be missing a generalisation as they all could be collapsed into just one type: DP–VP. Although in most cases the copula is superficially absent, one should not jump to the conclusion that any structure that could host a zero copula is also absent.

The purpose of this study is to examine instances of nonverbal predication in Malay in which an overt copula is absent and to provide evidence that there exists invisible syntactic structure intervening the subject and its complement. It is hypothesised that there exists a verbal and inflectional layer above the nonverbal predicate which may host VP modifiers such as temporal adverbials and inflectional heads such as auxiliary verbs. This could refute the claim by Karim *et al*. (2014) that there are 4 sentence *poles* in Malay, and argue that copular clauses without overt copulas are like any other clause in Malay with an overt VP.

This study is organised as follows: Section 2 is an exposé of the copular constructions in Malay which provides a description of the properties of the copulas; Section 3 is an analysis of copular constructions in Malay which puts forth evidence to support the hypothesis; Section 4 is the conclusion of this study.

2.　　An Overview of Copular Clauses in Malay

According to Karim *et al*. (2014), the Malay copulas (*kata pemeri*) can only occur with certain types of nonverbal predicates. *Ialah* is only possible with nominal predicates whereas *adalah* is possible with adjectival and prepositional predicates. A mismatch is said to result in ungrammaticality. Below are some examples of copular clauses in Malay:[2]

> (5)　a.　Beliau　　ialah　　seorang　isteri
> 　　　　3.SG　　COP　　CL.one　　wife
> 　　　　*She is a wife.*

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[2] All cited examples in Malay are taken from Utusan newspapers and all other uncited examples are analogic to the ones that have been cited.

(Mohd. Radzi, 2017)

    b. Ros   adalah   merah
         rose   COP   red
         Roses are red.

(AFP, 2016)

    c. Kawasan   tumpuan   adalah   di sana
         area   attraction   COP   at there
         The area of attraction is there.

("Semuanya hampir musnah," 2012)

Ialah is said to only occur with nominal predicates, whereas *adalah* can never occur with nominal predicates; however, there is no unanimous agreement among linguists with regard to the (un)grammaticality of the copulas and the types of predicate. There are those who say that both *ialah* and *adalah* are compatible with nominal predicates and those who argue otherwise. For example, Omar (2014), Omar and Rama (1968), Harahap (1991), and Arbak Othman (1987) agree that nominal predicates can occur with *adalah*, whereas Awang Sariyan (1984) and Karim *et al*. (2014) argue otherwise. Additionally, Kader (1986) and Harahap (1991) argue that adjectival predicates are incompatible with *adalah*.

Table 2: The Malay Copulas and Their Possible Predicates According to Karim *et al*. (2014)

	Nominal	Adjectival	Prepositional
Ialah	✓	✗	✗
Adalah	✗	✓	✓

Although Table 2 may be the official prescribed rule for the Malay copulas, the reality is that native speakers do not adhere to this rule. It most often is the case that *ialah* is used exclusively with nominal predicates, but *adalah* is not restricted to adjectival and prepositional predicates, as it turns out that it is also used with nominal predicates. This is attested in the findings of Khairul Taufiq and Nor Hashimah (2017) who report the use of *adalah* preceding nominal predicates in 59.3% of 3217 occurrences of the word in their subcorpus of Berita Harian newspapers. To consolidate their findings, a simple search in the corpus

of Utusan newspapers by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2013) reveals that *adalah* is used with nominal predicates more than it is used with other types of predicates.

Table 3: The Types of Predicates Following *Adalah* in DBP Corpus of Utusan Newspapers

				Post-Copular Constituent			
	DP	AP	PP	VP[3]	CP/TP	Others	Total
n	9458	3873	2687	1909	71	28	18026
%	52.47	21.49	14.91	10.59	0.39	0.15	100

The classification according to the type of predicate is therefore unable to provide an explanation as to why *adalah* is naturally used with nominal predicates. The definitions provided by Karim *et al*. (2014) in terms of syntactic categories and the possible predicates with which either copula can occur, are too narrow. The grammatical rule would undergenerate and leave out natural occurrences of *adalah* with nominal predicates.

It is more appropriate to classify the copulas according to the semantic relationship between subject and predicate. Mikkelsen (2011) identifies 4 types of copular clauses: predicational, specificational, identificational and equative. The subject of a predicational copular clause is ascribed a property by the complement, which may come in the form of a nominal, adjectival, or prepositional predicate. On the other hand, the subject of a specificational, identificational or equative copular clause stands in a relationship with a referent, which is necessarily a nominal predicate.

This would provide an account as to why *ialah* is never used with predicates other than DPs, and why *adalah* is possible with all nonverbal

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[3] *Adalah* may occur before verbal predicates and resemble an auxiliary but it does not possess the interpretation of its actual auxiliary counterpart, i.e. it is meaningless like a normal copula. Omar (2014, p. 241) calls this type of *adalah* "pengantar judul" (topic introducer).

    (i)   Adalah   di-dapati   bahawa   [clause]…
            COP   PASS-found   COMP   [clause]…
            It is found that…

predicates. APs and PPs can only function as predicates, whereas DPs can function as predicates as well as referents.

(6)   Predicational

a.   Ros   adalah   sejenis   tumbuhan   [DP]
     rose   COP   type   plant
     Roses are a type of plant.

b.   Ros   adalah   merah   [AP]
     rose   COP   red
     Roses are red.

c.   Ros   adalah   seperti   lambang   cinta   [PP]
     rose   COP   like   symbol   love
     Roses are like symbols of love.

(7)   Specificational

Bunga   yang   saya   paling   suka   ialah   ros   [DP]
flower   REL   1.SG   most   like   COP   rose
The flower that I like the most the rose.

(8)   Identification

Bunga   itu   ialah   ros   [DP]
flower   DIST   COP   ros
That flower is a rose.

(9)   Equative

Ros   ialah   mawar   [DP]
rose   COP   rose
Roses are roses.

Therefore, the distribution of *ialah* and *adalah* is not based on syntactic category but underlyingly the relationship between subject and predicate. The difference in the kind of relationship between subject and complement tallies well with the type of predicate which can occur with either copula in Malay. *Adalah* occurs in predicational copular clauses as demonstrated by the possibility of adjectival, prepositional and nominal predicates; *ialah* occurs in copular clauses that only permit nominal predicates due to the need to link the subject to a referent, such as specificational, identificational and equative copular clauses.

2.1.   The Properties and Distribution of the Malay Copulas

Although there exist overt copulas in Malay, they are said to be "limited and actually not encouraged in the formation of Malay sentences" (Karim *et al.*, 2014, p. 264). It is not entirely known why the copulas in Malay are optional; there might be pragmatic, semantic or syntactic restrictions on their distribution, which limit their use. [4] Due to this optionality, they are often omitted in nonverbal predication, especially in lower registers and casual speech; they are, however, quite robust in higher registers such as formal speech and in writing.

(10) a. Lantai   (adalah)   bersih
   floor   (COP)   clean
   The floor is now clean.

  b. Kulit-ku   (adalah)   cerah
   skin-1   (COP)   fair
   My skin is fair.

   Linguists such as Kader (1986) claim that the copula is verbal, but there is a multitude of evidence that suggests that they are more auxiliary-like than they are verbal. Based on distributional and morphological evidence, the copulas do not exhibit characteristics typical of verbs and they behave more like auxiliaries.

   In terms of morphology, the Malay copulas cannot be affixed by and cannot become host to any kind of clitic or affix. Affixes and clitics can attach to both dynamic and stative verbs quite freely, which makes it very mysterious why the copulas cannot host them if they truly constitute a verbal category. The copulas pattern with many auxiliaries in this respect.[5]

(11) a. Ali me-manggil seorang guru b. Ali me-manggil-nya [Dynamic]
   Ali ACT-call   one.CL teacher Ali ACT-call-3
   Ali is calling a teacher.   *Ali is calling him.*

  c. Ali me-mahami   guru-nya   d. Ali me-mahami-nya [Stative]
   Ali ACT-understand teacher-3   Ali ACT-undertsand-3
   Ali understands his teacher.   *Ali understands him.*

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[4] Amir Rashad (2015) attributes the disappearance of the Malay copulas from relative and interrogative clauses to a clash between the clause-wide focus properties of the copulas and the different focus properties of relative and interrogative clauses.
[5] Suffixation of causative *-kan* may derive modals into verbs: mem-*boleh*-kan (ACT-can-CAUS), etc.

e. * Ali meng-ialah seorang guru   f. *Ali ialah-nya   [Copula]
    Ali ACT-COP   one.CL teacher   Ali COP-3

Phonologically speaking, the copulas are never stressed. In clauses with a verbal predicate, primary stress is assigned to the VP; in a copular clause, the nonverbal predicate is stressed instead of the copula. Additionally, the verb can also bear pitch accent which may denote contrastive focus or an assertion of the truth value of the clause, whereas the opposite is true of the copulas as it is not possible for them to bear pitch accent.

(12) a. Orang itu [FOC *mencium Ali*]   b. Orang itu   ialah [FOC   *Ali*]
          person DIST   kiss   Ali   person DIST COP   Ali
          That person kissed Ali.   *That person is Ali.*

(13) a. Orang itu [FOC *mencium*] Ali   b. *Orang itu   [FOC *ialah*] Ali
          person DIST   kiss   Ali   person DIST   COP   Ali
          That person kissed Ali.

As for the distribution of the copulas, the copulas undergo subject-auxiliary inversion in yes/no questions. Verbs are not attested to be able to invert with subjects in Malay. Only auxiliary verbs are able to do so.

(14) a. Ada-kah Ali seorang guru?   b. *Me-manggil-kah Ali seorang guru?
          COP-Q   Ali one.CL teacher   ACT-call-Q   Ali one.CL teacher?
          Is Ali a teacher?   (*Did Ali call a teacher?*)

Negator *tidak* follows *adalah*, whereas it precedes a normal verb. Although it is possible to find examples of linking verbs, such as *kelihatan* (seem), *berasa* (feel), *menjadi* (become), etc., preceding and following negation, copulas cannot follow negation.

(15) a. Fakta itu   tidak menjadi benar   b. Fakta itu   menjadi tidak benar
          fact DIST NEG become true   fact DIST become NEG true
          That fact does not become true.   *That fact becomes untrue.*

      c. * Fakta itu   tidak adalah benar   d. Fakta itu   adalah tidak benar
            fact DIST NEG COP   true   fact DIST COP   NEG true
                                                  That fact is not true.

It is impossible for the copulas to occur in imperative clauses. This seems to be a restriction on nonverbal predication as linking verbs are able to occur in

imperative clauses. As a result, the linking verbs carry an inchoative interpretation.

(16) a. * Ialah seorang guru!   b. Jadi   seorang guru!
          COP one.CL   teacher   become one.CL teacher
                                          Become a teacher!

     Finally, the copulas are semantically vacuous as they only serve to link subject with predicate. The *Dummy Hypothesis* by Stassen (1997) specifies that copulas are abstract linking morphemes and that they appear in nonverbal predication to express grammatical distinctions such as tense, aspect and mood (TAM). Since Malay does not have grammatical distinctions like tense and gender, and since aspect and mood are marked periphrastically, the copulas are not required in nonverbal predication. This might be one of the reasons why they are optional in most copular clauses. Verbs, on the other hand, are lexical and they contribute to the overall meaning of the clause. They are also indispensable elements of a clause.

(17) a. Ali (ialah) seorang guru   b. Ali *(menjadi) seorang guru
          Ali (COP) one.CL   teacher   Ali *(become) one.CL   teacher
          Ali is a teacher.   *Ali became a teacher.*

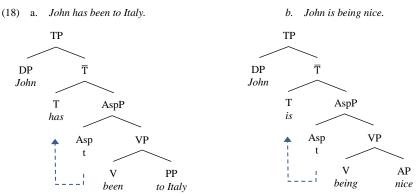## 3. Diagnosing the Presence of Silent Syntactic Structure

In order to substantiate the claim that there exists silent syntactic structure between subject and complement in copular clauses in Malay, one obvious method is to see whether there can be any overt linguistic material in said position. Aside from the fact that subjects and complements can be mediated by an optional copula, certain auxiliary verbs such as aspectual markers and modal verbs as well as adverbials such as temporal adverbs and prepositional phrases can intervene the two constituents.

3.1. TP, AspP and ModP in Copular Clauses in Malay

Although Malay does not have any overt morphological tense distinctions, it is commonly assumed that most (if not all) languages have a Tense Phrase (TP) due to the temporal interpretability of a clause, that is, a language would have a TP provided that it can semantically encode time reference in a clause. This appears

elementary as it parallels the assumption that all languages that can encode focus should also have Focus Phrase (FocP). This forms a desirable point of convergence between syntax and semantics.

Perfective aspect and progressive aspect are marked by *have* and *be* in English. These aspectual markers are periphrastic – they do not attach to the main verb of a clause and are not inflections on the verb – unlike those of morphologically rich languages. Instead, they are separate items that form a string of words with the verb. This makes it possible to see different syntactic projections hosting different auxiliary verbs as well as the copula. In a copular clause in English, the copula is preceded by aspectual markers that have moved from Aspectual Phrase (AspP) to TP to obtain tense, leaving the copula tenseless in VP.

Figure 2: Aspectual Phrase in Copular Clauses

(18) a. *John has been to Italy.*   b. *John is being nice.*

Like in English, because of the morphologically impoverished and analytic nature of the language, aspectual markers in Malay are also periphrastic. Examples (10a-b) are repeated and examined below:

(19) a. Lantai sudah bersih   b. Kulit-ku akan cerah
          floor PERF clean   skin-1 PROS fair
          The floor is now clean.   *My skin will be fair.*

There seems to be a condition on the use of aspectual markers – they cannot co-occur with copulas. Although there is no overt copula in the clause,

nonverbal predication is still grammatical. This means that a zero copula is present underlyingly in the structure. In other words, the copulas are elided and rendered null in the environment of an aspectual marker.
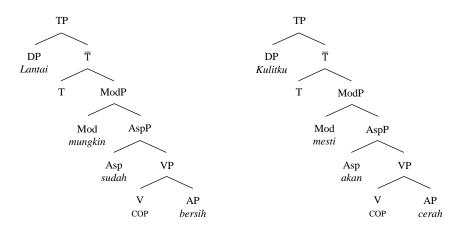
(20) a. Lantai sudah (*adalah) bersih   b. Kulit-ku akan (*adalah) cerah
      floor PERF (*COP) clean   skin-1 PROS (*COP) fair
      The floor is now clean.   *My skin will be fair.*

Epistemic modal verbs can also occur in copular clauses and they have the same restriction with regard to their co-occurrence with copulas as aspectual markers. Both aspectual markers and epistemic modal verbs cause copulas to be rendered null when in the same clause. In addition, epistemic modal verbs and aspectual markers can be stacked, further providing evidence that there is more syntactic structure in copular clauses in Malay. Figure 3 shows AspP and ModP co-occurring in the inflectional layer of the copular clause.

(21) a. Lantai mungkin sudah bersih   b. Kulitku mesti akan cerah
      floor might PERF clean   skin-1 must PROS fair
      The floor might have been clean   *My skin must be fair.*

Figure 3: Multiple Inflectional Projections in Copular Clauses in Malay

An additional point that need be noted is that nonverbal predication with or without an overt copula is not possible in clauses with deontic modals which

encode possibility. It seems that the reason the copulas in Malay cannot occur with deontic modals is that they cannot be inchoative. The intended English equivalents of examples (22a-b) carry an inchoative interpretation, which can be paraphrased as "X can start being Y". The ungrammaticality of the copulas on an inchoative reading is also seen in example (10a) in the imperative mood.

(22)   a. * Lantai ini   boleh (adalah) bersih   b. Kulit-ku dapat (adalah) cerah
            floor PROX can (COP)   clean   skin-1 can (COP)   fair
            (*This floor can be clean*.)   (*My skin can be fair.*)

Such examples can be made grammatical using adverb *lagi* (more), which forces an interpretation where the beginning of the state has passed; an inchoative interpretation is no longer obtained:

(23)   a.   Lantai   ini   boleh   bersih   lagi
            floor   PROX   can   clean   more
            This floor can be cleaner.

       b.   Kulit-ku   boleh   cerah   lagi
            skin-1   can   fair   more
            My skin can be fairer.

Alternatively, a linking verb such as *menjadi* (become) should be used:

(24)   Lantai   ini   boleh   menjadi   bersih
            floor   PROX   can   become   clean
            This floor can become clean.

The evidence so far supports the hypothesis that there is syntactic structure between subject and complement. Since copular clauses in Malay can support TP elements like auxiliary verbs and epistemic modal verbs, it can therefore be said copular clauses have an inflectional layer which harbours the subject as well as any auxiliary verbs. Moreover, It is attested that auxiliaries occupy an inflectional projection above the VP (Van Gelderen, 2013). However, the examples so far have not determined whether there is a verbal layer in copular clauses in Malay. This is dealt with in the following subsection.

3.2. VP in Copular Clauses in Malay

It is not very easy to determine whether copular clauses in Malay have a verbal nucleus, as the status of copulas *ialah* and *adalah* either being verbal or functional is not at all straightforward. Although they behave more like auxiliary verbs, as explained in Section 2, is there any possibility that they could possess verbal properties as well, just like *be* in English?

One way to detect the presence of a verbal layer is to use constituents associated with verbal elements in a clause. For example, temporal adverbials which specify the time reference of a particular state or action should be modifiers of the projection headed by the expression encoding said state or action, normally the VP. Therefore, if it is possible for a temporal adverbial to occur in a clause, it should mean that the clause has a VP.

(25) *a.   John jogged* [PP *at noon*].   *b. Mary ate a sandwich* [AdvP *yesterday*].

Examples (23a-b) demonstrate the temporal adverbials specifying *when* the actions encoded by *eat* and *jog* happened. Copular clauses could also be modified by temporal adverbials.[6] A temporal adverbial in a copular clause specifies when it is that the subject is ascribed the property given by the predicate, or when it is that the subject is identified as the referent denoted by the nominal predicate. It is semantically an extension of the linking function of the copula generated in VP, and it is syntactically an adjunct of the VP.
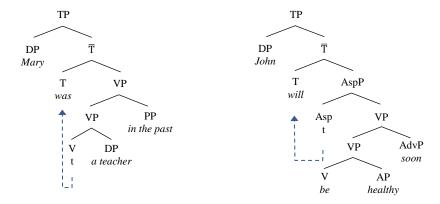
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[6] However, there exist certain copular clauses that do not permit temporal adverbials on a normal, unmarked reading, and this is due to the nature of the predicate either being what work following Carlson (1977) calls *stage-level* or *individual-level* predicates.

(ii)   a.   *#He was a human being previously. b. #He will be kind at noon.*

The predicates in (iia-b) are individual-level predicates, i.e. predicates that remain constant with regard to the subject. The infelicity is caused by the temporal adverbials denoting change of state. These are different from stage-level predicates, i.e. predicates that can change and are transitory, e.g. examples (iiia-b).

(iii)   a.   *He was a teacher previously.   b. He will be ready at noon.*

(26) a. *Mary was a teacher* [PP *in the past*].   b. *John will be healthy* [AdvP *soon*].

Figure 4: Temporal Adverbials in Copular Clauses

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           TP                                    TP
         /    \                                /    \
       DP      T̄                             DP      T̄
      Mary    / \                           John    / \
            T     VP                              T     AspP
           was   /  \                            will  /    \
              VP      PP                             Asp      VP
             /  \   in the past                       t      /  \
            V    DP                                         VP    AdvP
            t   a teacher                                  /  \   soon
                                                          V    AP
                                                          be  healthy
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Although tense and the interpretation of time are intricately intertwined, temporal adverbials exist almost entirely independently of tense. This is because temporal adverbials can occur in tenseless clauses such as non-finite control clauses, as in the following:

(27) a. *I want to jog at noon.*   b. *I expect you to work forever.*

The temporal adverbials in examples (27a-b) modify the VPs in the tenseless control clauses. An infelicitous interpretation would be obtained if they modified the VPs of the tensed matrix VPs. In the following examples, the topicalised temporal adverbials have wide scope over both the subordinate and matrix VPs, but only a narrow interpretation is available:

(28) a. *At noon, I want to jog.*   b. *Forever, I expect you to work.*

In a structure that lacks a VP, it is not possible for a temporal adverbial to be present due to there not being an action or state that could be modified by the temporal adverbial. Since temporal modifiers specify the time of a state or action, it needs to modify something that can allow a temporal interpretation. The semantics of temporal adverbials is the very reason why they cannot modify DPs, APs and locative PPs, which do not encode any information regarding time.

Despite the supposed absence of structure in nonverbal predication in Malay, temporal adverbials can occur in such constructions. Since temporal adverbials cannot modify DPs, APs and locative PPs, the examples below should be rendered ungrammatical but are grammatical nonetheless.

(29) a. | Dia | seorang | guru | pada | suatu | ketika | dahulu |
|-----|---------|--------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| 3.SG | one.CL | teacher | at | one | time | before |

She was a teacher once upon a time.

  b. | Dia | sihat | semalam |
|-----|-------|---------|
| 3.SG | healthy | yesterday |

She was healthy yesterday.

  c. | Dia | di | hospital | tiga | hari | yang | lepas |
|-----|-----|----------|------|------|------|-------|
| 3.SG | at | hospital | three | day | COMP | ago |

She was in hospital three days ago.

This entails that there is additional structure in the copular clause, which can accommodate a temporal adverbial. They specify when it is that the subjects are predicated of the DP, AP and PP predicates.
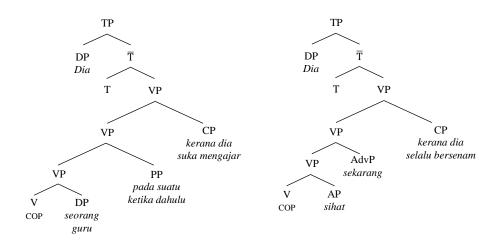
Besides temporal modifiers, VPs could also be adjoined by certain clauses such as reason clauses, purpose clauses and result clauses. A reason clause can be used in a copular clause and serves to explain why it is that the subject is predicated of the complement. The apparent possibility of there being clausal modifiers is also surprising if it is assumed that no VP exists in copular clauses in Malay as reason clauses are not known to modify constituents other than VPs.

(30) a. | Dia | seorang | guru | kerana | dia | suka | mengajar |
|-----|---------|--------|--------|-----|------|----------|
| 3.SG | one.CL | teacher | because | 3.SG | like | teach |

She is a teacher because she likes to teach.

  b. | Dia | sihat | kerana | dia | selalu | bersenam |
|-----|-------|--------|-----|--------|----------|
| 3.SG | healthy | because | 3.SG | always | exercise |

She is healthy because she always exercises.

  c. | Dia | di | hospital | kerana | dia | ingin | menziarahi | adik-nya |
|-----|-----|----------|--------|-----|-------|------------|----------|
| 3.SG | at | hospital | because | 3.SG | want | visit | sibling-3 |

She is at the hospital because she wants to visit her sibling.

Of course, it is also possible to have multiple verbal modifiers in a single clause.

(31) a. Dia seorang guru   pada suatu ketika dahulu kerana dia   suka mengajar
          3.SG one.CL teacher at   one   time before because 3.SG like teach
          She was a teacher once upon a time because she liked to teach.

      b. Dia   sihat   sekarang kerana dia   selalu bersenam
          3.SG   healthy   now   because 3.SG   always exercise
          She is healthy now because she always exercises.

Figure 5: Multiple VP Modifiers in Copular Clauses in Malay

Finally, a VP can be detected by seeing whether any verbal head can be present in a copular clause. There is no English equivalent of a copular clause with a verbal head other than the copula. Progressive and passive constructions in English might appear like copular clauses with verbs following copulas, but such constructions are not copular clauses as they are transitive in nature. Copular clauses are intransitive as the nonverbal predicate is not the object but the complement of the verb. Besides, copular clauses cannot be passivised because they are non-agentive, i.e. neither the subject nor the complement of a copular clause is the doer (agent) of the action denoted by the verb.

(32) a. [SUB, AGENT The crow] is eating [OBJ, THEME his sandwich]   [Progressive]

      b. [SUB, THEME His sandwich] was eaten by [OBJ, AGENT the crow]   [Passive]

    c.   [SUB, THEME John] is [COMPLEMENT, THEME a teacher]   [Copular]

Luckily, it is quite easy to find verbs co-occurring with copulas in the same clause in Malay, as 1909 instances (10.59%) are reported in Table 3. Although linguists such as Kader (1986) and Karim *et al*. (2014) claim that such examples are ungrammatical, they are very productive, which should indicate that native speakers find them grammatical nevertheless.

(33) a. Islam   adalah   merupakan   agama   yang   syumul
           Islam   COP   form   religion   COMP   holistic
           Islam is a holistic religion.
                                           (Wan Jemizan, 2010)

      b. Kebebasan individu   adalah ber-sifat   tidak mutlak
          freedom individual   COP   possess-nature NEG absolute
          Individual freedom is not absolute.
                      ("Tolak doktrin hak asasi manusia terpesong," 2015)

This makes it convincing that the two items do not occupy the same position in the syntax as *merupakan* and *bersifat* are true verbs occupying VP whilst the copulas occupy some other phrase. It might seem that the examples above could be comparable to progressive and passive verbs in English with *be* as an auxiliary, but the thematic structure of examples (32a-b) do not follow the regular thematic structure of a transitive clause. They also cannot be passivised due to the absence of actual agents and objects.

34) a. [SUB, THEME *Islam*] *adalah merupakan* [COMPLEMENT, THEME *agama yang syumul*]

      b. * Agama yang   syumul adalah di-rupakan oleh Islam
           religion COMP holistic COP   PASS-form by   Islam

In addition to that, Malay forms the progressive aspect solely by the use of aspectual markers such as *sedang* and *tengah*. *Ialah* or *adalah* are not periphrastic aspectual markers, hence they cannot occupy AspP. They also do not carry any kind of modality, which entails that they neither occupy ModP. Perhaps the Malay copulas occupy *v*P, which intervenes VP and the inflectional TAM layer. Since copulas can undergo subject-auxiliary inversion in interrogatives as in (14a), the copula might move from *v*P to T and then to C. This would mean that

the Malay copulas start out as a sort of light verb, but subsequently take on the role of an auxiliary, much like verb *be* in English.
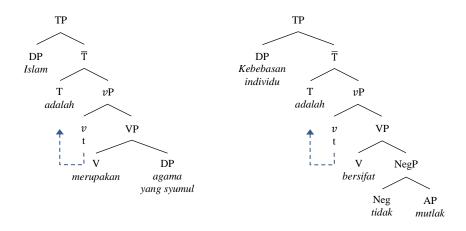
Figure 6: Co-Occurrence of Copula and Verbal Head

The assumption that *adalah* occupies little *v*P can be supported by evidence regarding the auxiliary verb *ada*, which Yap (2007) argues is the root of copula *adalah*. As seen in the examples below, *ada* intervenes the inflectional layer occupied by the modal verb and the main verbal layer occupied by the lexical verb. This auxiliary is comparable to *do* in English, which is essentially a place marker for tense in environments which require *do*-support, such as negation, interrogatives, ellipsis, emphasis, etc. *Ada*-support in the examples below asserts the truth value of the overall clause, much like the use of *do* in emphasis.

(35) a. Mungkin   ada   nampak   sedikit   persamaan
          might   do   see   little   similarity
          One might see some similarity.
                    ("Percaturan Astro - Aznil, Halim kendali program bual bicara," 2005)

      b. Sudah   ada   nampak   sambutan
          PERF   do   see   response
          We do see response.
                    ("Guladama digelar pakar permaidani," 2008)

      c. Kita   tidak   ada   terima   sebarang   panggilan
          1.PL   NEG   do   receive   any   call
          We did not receive any calls.

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Ada is also a lexical verb that functions as a possessive predicate comparable to English *have*. In the negative, negator *tidak* can cliticise onto it, further supporting the claim that *ada* is a sort of light verb which forms copula *adalah* in Malay. This makes evident the lexical-functional dichotomy of the verb, common among light verbs like English *be* and *have*.

(36) a. Dia   ada   sebuah   buku   b. Dia   ti-ada   sebuah buku
        3.SG   have   one.CL   book   3-SG   NEG-have one.CL   book
        He has a book.   *He does not have a book.*

Conclusively, it has been established that a verbal layer is present in copular clauses in Malay based on their property of being able to support verbal modifiers such as temporal adverbials and reason clauses, as well as the possible co-occurrence of linking verbs and copulas in copular clauses.

4.   Conclusion

In summary, this paper argued that copular clauses in Malay are similar to all other clauses in that they have a functional layer and a verbal layer, albeit not overt in many cases. The present findings of this study confirm that copular clauses in Malay have both a functional layer and a verbal layer preceding the nonverbal predicate, judging from the possible occurrence of auxiliary verbs, adverbials and reason clauses.

This directly provides evidence to refute the alternative view that nonverbal predication in Malay is a set of structures that minimally juxtapose subject and complement without any intervening structure. Consequentially, it can also be concluded that the 4 predicate structures, which are referred to as *sentence poles* by Karim *et al.* (2014), can be reduced to one single type of predication, DP-VP. Owing to the discovery of a verbal layer in copular clauses in Malay, the generalisation that copular clauses are like any other clause with a VP can be made. Copular clauses in Malay can therefore be said to be structurally

common such that they do not present exceptional structures and are not exceptional constructions.

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