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**V=NYA IN COLLOQUIAL MALAY**

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## PREFACE

The 26th Annual Meeting of the Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association (AFLA 26) was held on May 24-26, 2019 at the University of Western Ontario (Canada). The programme consisted of 24 presentations in addition to four plenary talks by Juliette Blevins, Vera Hohaus, Marian Klamer and Becky Tollan. This volume includes 13 papers from the conference.

As conference organizer, I received generous support from a variety of sources. Financial support came from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Research Western, the Joint Fund (Research Western, SOGS, SGPS), the Theoretical and Applied Linguistics Lab, the Canadian Linguistic Association, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Graduate Program in Linguistics and three departments (French Studies, Modern Languages and Literatures, and Anthropology). The conference would not have been possible without the student volunteers (Sonia Masi, William Tran, Caylen Walker and Kang Xu), plus several others who helped out at the registration desk. Finally, I am grateful to the Department of French Studies for administrative support.

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## V=NYA IN COLLOQUIAL MALAY\*

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This paper discusses a construction in colloquial Malay where VSO word order obtains together with a morpheme, =*nya*, on the verb. This V=*nya* construction is argued to mark broad focus. Syntactically, it sheds light on the existence of an information-structural head between Voice and T in colloquial Malay. This is the head the verb moves to in every clause; in V=*nya*, the arguments stay in situ, yielding VSO word order. Specifically, the head is a Cat(egoricality) head, which identifies its specifier as the sentence's subject of predication (Cardinaletti 2004). The morpheme =*nya* is argued to be an expletive subject, merged to satisfy an EPP feature, precisely when all arguments are in situ in V=*nya*. Hence, Malay displays overtly an expletive subject that is lower than the derived subject position of Spec-TP, coinciding with the hypothesis that English-type languages generate expletives lower than the derived subject position, too.

### 1. Introduction

While colloquial Malay is typically an SVO language (1a), it also has a construction where VSO word order obtains, together with a morpheme, =*nya*, on the verb (1b).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Ali sudah makan kuih.  
Ali IAM eat kuih  
'Ali has eaten a kuih.'
- b. Sudah makan=*nya* Ali kuih.  
IAM eat=*nya* Ali kuih  
'Ali has eaten a kuih.'

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\*All uncited data are from consultation with Hazim Ismail, Aiman Hadif bin Abdul Razak, and Ryan Kam, whom I thank for their help and insights. I also thank Nico Baier, Jessica Coon, Junko Shimoyama, and Lisa Travis for their guidance on this project; Scott AnderBois, Jason Borga, Henrison Hsieh, Schuyler LaParle, Justin Royer, Bernhard Schwarz, Vesela Simeonova, and Carly Sommerlot for helpful discussion; and audiences at the McGill Syntax Reading Group, MOTH 19 at Carleton University, CLA 2019 at UBC, and, of course, AFLA 26 at the University of Western Ontario. All errors are my own.

<sup>1</sup>Specifically, this paper discusses colloquial Malay as spoken in and around Kuala Lumpur. 'Malay' and 'colloquial Malay' are used interchangeably. The following abbreviations are used: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ABS = absolutive, AV = agent voice, DAT = dative, DEM = demonstrative, EMPH = emphasis, ERG = ergative, IAM = iamitive, PL = plural, REFL = reflexive, SG = singular.

This construction raises some related syntactic and information-structural questions: what does  $V=nya$  mean, how is the VSO word order derived, and what is  $=nya$ ?

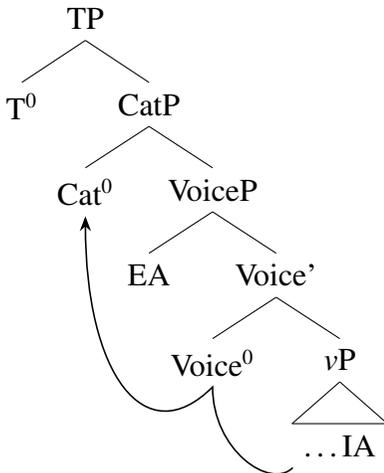
While the Malay data are new, a very similar construction has been described before by Sommerlot (2018, to appear) for Indonesian.

- (2) Ber-nyanyi=*nya* mereka di gejera. (Indonesian)  
 ber-sing=*nya* 3PL in church  
 ‘They sing in church.’  
 (Sommerlot to appear, 3)

The Indonesian construction differs from Malay in that it disallows transitives, and it obligatorily takes the morpheme *ber-* on the verb.

The  $V=nya$  construction in Malay, which I argue to correspond to a broad-focus interpretation, sheds light on the existence of an information-structural head. This head is located below INFL but above Voice (Voice defined as the head that introduces the external argument), and I argue it is Cardinaletti’s (2004) ‘subject of predication’ head *Subj*, renamed as *Cat(egoricality)*. *Cat* singles out the DP in its specifier as the sentence’s ‘subject of predication’ (Cardinaletti 2004). In colloquial Malay, *Cat* hosts a [uD] probe, so in SV(O) sentences, it is inevitably the highest argument that moves to *Spec-CatP*, before moving on to *Spec-TP*. But in  $V=nya$ , no DP raises to *Spec-CatP*, yielding the broad-focus interpretation.

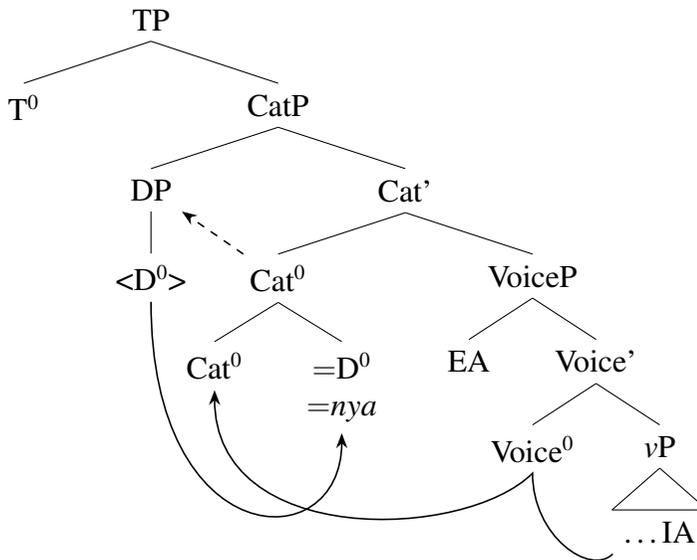
- (3) VSO in Malay



Given that it appears just when all arguments stay in-situ, and that it is phonologically identical to the third-person pronoun  $=nya$ , the  $=nya$  morpheme in  $V=nya$  is argued to be an expletive subject (Expl).  $=nya$  is merged in *Spec-CatP* just when all arguments stay low, explaining the concurrence of VSO and  $=nya$  on the verb. From the perspective that expletives are merged to satisfy a D feature (Chomsky

2001), *=nya* is the ideal morphological candidate for Expl in colloquial Malay, since it is the most featurally impoverished of Malay’s third-person pronouns, being unmarked for case, number, and animacy. The fact that Expl occurs lower than Spec-TP, despite Spec-TP being the canonical derived subject position in Malay (Chung 2008), coincides with the hypothesis that expletives are generated lower than Spec-TP even in English-type languages, as argued by Basilico (1997), Nomura (2004), Butler (2004), Hazout (2004), Richards and Biberauer (2005), Richards (2007), Deal (2009), Alexiadou and Schäfer (2010, 2011), Bjorkman and Cowper (2015), and Abe (2016), among others. Expl surfaces low overtly in Malay because it needs to encliticize in order to be spelled-out as *=nya*, the only acceptable morphological candidate. (4) elaborates on (3) in showing that *=nya* arises through clitic-doubling (Kramer 2014; Preminger 2019) of an expletive DP in Spec-CatP; Agree is marked by a dotted arrow.

(4) VSO in Malay



This paper is organized as follows. First, section 2 argues that *V=nya* denotes broad focus in Malay. Then, section 3 elaborates on the syntactic proposal just sketched out. Section 4 concludes.

**2. *V=nya* as Broad Focus**

I argue that *V=nya* marks broad focus (also variously known as ‘sentential focus,’ ‘theticity,’ and a host of other names). This means it corresponds to an answer to the question ‘What happened?’ rather than a question about some particular component of the sentence (see a.o. Lambrecht 1987; Sasse 1987, 1996; Sæbø 2006; Zimmermann and Hole 2008). Sentences which are not in broad focus, but rather are about

their subject, are said to be ‘categorical’ (Lambrecht 1987; Sasse 1987, 1996). The distinction between categoricity and broad focus corresponds to the distinction between SV and VS in languages like Italian. The following are from Lambrecht (1987, 366).

- (5) Q: What happened? → broad focus
- a. My CAR broke down.
  - b. Mi si è rotta la MACCHINA. (Italian)  
1SG.DAT REFL is broken the car  
‘My car broke down.’
- (6) Q: What happened to your car? → categoricity
- a. My car broke DOWN.
  - b. La macchina si è ROTTA. (Italian)  
the car REFL is broken  
‘My car broke down.’

Rather than being about a particular argument, a broad-focus sentence reports on an eventuality as a unit. As argued by Zimmermann and Hole (2008), broad-focus sentences are ones with “focus on an *event* that is characterized by the content of the entire proposition”, meaning that the focus alternatives are entire propositions, not subparts thereof.

While broad focus is often associated with discourse-novelty (for example, Lambrecht (1987) equates broad focus with the presentational, and Zimmermann and Hole (2008) call it ‘all-new focus’), it is important to point out that complete discourse-novelty does not follow from the above description. Indeed, it is not the case that ‘What happened?’ needs to be answered with only new information:

- (7) A: My brother is very upset.  
B: Oh no, what happened?  
A: {He fell down the stairs, Greenland lost 55 billion tons of ice, ... }

In (7), A can answer the question ‘What happened?’ either with old material (‘he’ in ‘he fell down the stairs’) or not (as in ‘Greenland lost 55 billion tons of ice’). Sasse (1996, 5 fn. 8) even points out that “the term ‘all-new’ is also a particularly bad choice with regard to languages such as Hungarian, in whose VS constructions the subjects are obligatorily definite”.

Malay does not allow *V=nya* as an answer to questions, so a simple test like (5) and (6) isn’t possible. However, it is still clear that *V=nya* corresponds to broad focus, because it appears in contexts where the entire event is the topic, rather than any particular argument. The next examples test a sentence, ‘my phone rings,’ in two different contexts. Each context is tested for both SV and *V=nya*. The first context lends itself to a categorical reading because the text is about the phone. Note that we

are dealing with preferences, and ‘#’ should not be read too strongly in the following examples.

- (8) ‘Mestinya telefonku depecahkan. Ia lakukan segala macam perkara yang pelik. Sebagai contoh, walaupun tiada siapa yang panggilku, ...’  
‘My phone must be broken. It does all sorts of strange things. For example, even though no one ever calls me, ...’
- a. telefon=ku berdering setiap lima minit.  
phone=1SG ring every five minute  
‘... my phone rings every five minutes.’
- b. #berdering=nya telefon=ku setiap lima minit.  
ring=nya phone=1SG every five minute  
‘... my phone rings every five minutes.’

In (8), a context prompting a categorical version of ‘my phone rings’ privileges SV over V=*nya*. The next context, on the other hand, lends itself to a broad-focus reading of ‘my phone rings,’ because the text is not about the phone; it merely has the ringing of the phone as an event within the text.

- (9) Aku sangat kesal. Semalam aku buat kesilapan letak nombor telefonku online. Sekarang, ...  
‘I’m so annoyed. Yesterday I made the mistake of putting my phone number online. Now, ...’
- a. #telefon=ku berdering setiap lima minit.  
phone=1SG ring every five minute  
‘... my phone rings every five minutes.’
- b. berdering=nya telefon=ku setiap lima minit.  
ring=nya phone=1SG every five minute  
‘... my phone rings every five minutes.’

In (9), it is not the phone that is being discussed in the previous discourse, so when the phrase ‘my phone rings’ is uttered, it is about the event of the phone ringing, not about the phone. In fact, in the English translation, it would be appropriate to use the accented-subject intonation ‘my PHONE rings’ (marking broad focus) in (9) but not in (8).

In addition to judgements like those above, there are other reasons to think V=*nya* marks broad focus. First, a comment by Hazim Ismail (p.c.) on the meaning of V=*nya* speaks well to the broad-focus effect. It was based on the following minimal pair, this time presented without context.

- (10)a. Ali makan kuih.  
 Ali eat kuih  
 ‘Ali ate a kuih.’  
 b. Makan=nya Ali kuih.  
 eat=nya Ali kuih  
 ‘Ali ate a kuih.’

Asked whether these mean anything different, they said, “In the first one, Ali is the agent. In the second, there isn’t a doer. It’s just: the kuih was eaten by Ali. It’s not someone doing something to something. It just is.” This captures well the intuition that the subject is non-topical in *V=nya* (viz. the paraphrase as a passive), and the comment that “it just is” sums up that broad focus is about a situation (‘the situation is that ...’).

Second, as hinted at above, *V=nya* fits in well with the forms associated with broad focus crosslinguistically. Indeed, Sasse (1996) shows that across languages, VS in otherwise SV languages is a common feature of broad focus, as shown in (5) for Italian. Sasse (1996, 4) takes this marked verb-first order as marking broad focus not just in Italian but also in Spanish, Russian, Serbocroatian, Albanian, Modern Greek, and Hungarian. Hence, Malay *V=nya* patterns with other languages.

Finally, many languages only allow their broad-focus constructions to appear with arguments of a particular pragmatic or syntactic status. For example, English accented-subject sentences only allow passives and unaccusatives (Sæbø 2006), and as mentioned above, Hungarian VS sentences only allow a definite subject (Sasse 1996, 5 fn. 8). As such, it is not surprising that Malay *V=nya* also displays a restriction, in this case a pragmatic one. Whether a DP argument is definite or indefinite, old or new (i.e. whether it has an overt linguistic antecedent), and whether or not it is inferrable all play a role in its acceptability. Inferrability refers to whether a new DP’s referent is assumed to be part of the discourse domain despite not having been previously mentioned (Farkas 2000, 3 fn. 6). The results are summarized in Table 1, for the argument of intransitives, the object of transitives, and the subject of transitives. No distinction between unaccusatives and unergatives has been found.

Table 1: Informational constraints in *V=nya* (and SV for comparison)

			SV	intrans.	object of tr.	subject of tr.
<i>old</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
		<i>indef.</i>	✓	✓	✓	%
<i>new</i>	<i>inferrable</i>	<i>def.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✗ <sup>(13, 14)</sup>
	<i>non-inferrable</i>	<i>indef.</i>	✓	✓	✗ <sup>(12)</sup>	✗
		<i>def.</i>	✓	✗ <sup>(11)</sup>	✗	✗

A full exemplification of this table, with an example for each cell, is provided in Paillé 2019. It will suffice here to provide an example of the relevant contrasts, working through Table 1 from left to right.

First, new non-inferrable definites are accepted for intransitives as SV but not as V=*nya*. This is shown in the following example, through ‘Ali’ as new material.

- (11) Semalam saya pergi ke konsert.  
 ‘Yesterday I went to a concert.’
- a. **Ali** naik ke atas pentas. SV  
 A. get.up to on stage  
 ‘Ali climbed on the stage.’
- b.#Naik=*nya* **Ali** ke atas pentas. VS  
 get.up=*nya* A. to on stage  
 ‘Ali climbed on the stage!’

Second, new non-inferrable indefinites are acceptable in intransitive V=*nya*, but not as the object of a transitive V=*nya*. (12a) shows a felicitous example of V=*nya* with a new non-inferrable indefinite (‘politicians,’ which is non-inferrable because the example takes place in a restaurant); this example is intransitive. (12b) and (12c) then test a new non-inferrable indefinite argument as the object of a transitive, namely ‘kuih’ (a Malaysian pastry), which is non-inferrable because restaurants do not necessarily have kuihs. (12b) shows that ‘kuih’ is acceptable in SVO. But, as shown in (12c), the same argument is not acceptable in V=*nya*.

- (12) Semalam saya pergi ke restoran dengan Ali. Semasa kita sedang makan, ...  
 ‘Yesterday I went to the restaurant with Ali. While we were eating, ...’
- a. sampai=*nya* **ahli-ahli politik** ke restoran tu. VS  
 arrive=*nya* expert.RED political to restaurant DEM  
 ‘... politicians arrived at our restaurant.’
- b. dia baling **kuih** ke atas lantai! SVO  
 3SG throw cake to on floor  
 ‘... he threw a cake on the floor!’
- c.#baling=*nya* Ali **kuih** ke atas lantai! VSO  
 throw=*nya* A. cake to on floor  
 ‘... he threw a cake on the floor!’

Finally, new inferrable definites are acceptable in both intransitive V=*nya* and as the object of transitive V=*nya*, but they are barred from being subjects of transitive V=*nya*. (13) shows that a new inferrable definite, here ‘his plate’ (inferrable because the example takes place in a restaurant, which ones assumes to have plates), can occur as the object of a transitive V=*nya* sentence.

- (13) Semalam saya pergi ke restoran dengan Ali.  
 ‘Yesterday I went to the restaurant with Ali.’  
 Baling=nya Ali **pinggan dia** di atas lantai! VSO  
 throw=nya A. plate 3SG in on floor  
 ‘Ali threw his plate on the floor!’

In contrast, new inferrable definites are barred from being external arguments in  $V=nya$ . In (14), the argument is ‘the waiter’ (inferrable because the context specifies the location to be an upscale restaurant). (14a) shows that ‘the waiter’ can appear as the external argument in SVO, while (14b) shows it cannot appear as the external argument of  $V=nya$ .

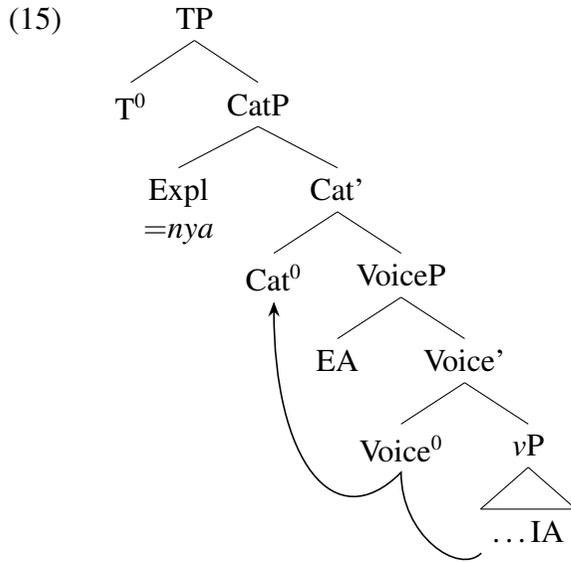
- (14) Semalam saya pergi ke restoran cantik-sikit dengan Ali dan kita beli kuih-muih. Semasa kita sedang makan, ...  
 ‘Yesterday I went to a fancy restaurant with Ali and we bought some kuihs. While we were eating, ...’
- a. **waiter tu** baling kuih kita ke atas lantai. SVO  
 waiter DEM throw kuih 1PL to on floor  
 ‘... the waiter threw our kuihs on the floor!’
- b. #baling=nya **waiter tu** kuih kita ke atas lantai. VSO  
 throw=nya waiter DEM kuih 1PL to on floor  
 ‘... the waiter threw our kuihs on the floor!’

This sums up the examples of the contrasts in Table 1. To be sure, a proper explanation of these facts lies outside the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, they show that Malay takes part in a crosslinguistically common pattern of languages only allowing formally broad-focus constructions with certain types of arguments.

To recapitulate the argument made in this section,  $V=nya$ ’s felicity conditions are definable as broad-focus contexts. This means that in  $V=nya$ , it is not presupposed that the sentence is about a particular topic; as such, the set of alternatives contains entire propositions. Having established the meaning of  $V=nya$ , I now turn to its syntax.

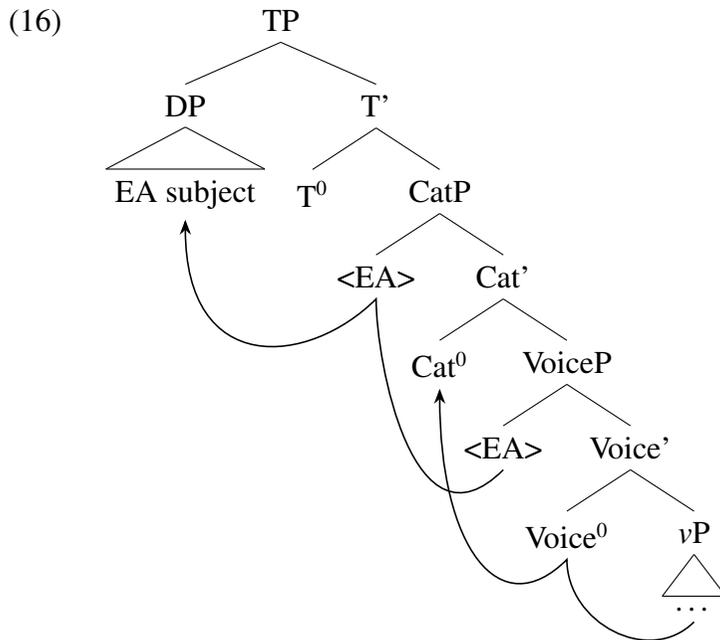
### 3. $V^0$ -Movement, Expl, and Cat

In this section, I discuss the syntactic proposal sketched out in the introduction. First, in section 3.1, I argue that  $V=nya$ ’s V1 word order is derived not via VoiceP-fronting, but via  $V^0$ -movement to a head between Voice and INFL. Then, in section 3.2, I argue that the verb’s arguments stay in-situ in  $V=nya$ , and that  $=nya$  is an expletive subject. Finally, in section 3.3, I argue that the head the verb moves to is a categoricity head with a [uD] feature. As such,  $V=nya$  has a syntax like the following:



=nya morphologically adjoins to the verb through a clitic-doubling operation, discussed in section 3.3.

My proposal contrasts V=nya with SV(O) sentences minimally. The only difference is that in the latter, the highest argument moves to Spec-TP via Spec-CatP. I follow Chung (2008) in taking Spec-TP to be the canonical subject position in Malay/Indonesian.



### 3.1. VSO Through V<sup>0</sup>-Movement

I take the idea that VSO is derived via V<sup>0</sup>-movement to be a default hypothesis, more straightforward than remnant VoiceP movement. However, V1 in Indonesian has been analyzed as XP-movement by both Chung (2008) and Sommerlot (2018, to appear), and VSO has also been analysed as XP-movement by Massam (2001, 2010) for Niuean. Therefore, in this section I show that reasons to consider XP-movement appealing in those other languages do not hold up for Malay. This leaves us with the default hypothesis that V=*nya* is in fact derived by head-movement. I conclude by showing that the head in question needs to be lower than INFL.

Writing on Indonesian VOS (which does not take the morpheme =*nya*), shown in (17), Chung (2008) argues that the V1 word order is derived via predicate-fronting of VP to the specifier of some FP above TP, with the subject in its derived position in Spec-TP.

- (17) Me-lihat mereka guru itu. (stan. Indonesian)  
AV-see 3PL teacher DEM  
'The teacher saw them.'  
(Chung 2008, 1557)

This is an appealing hypothesis not only because of the VOS word order, already something which does not hold for Malay V=*nya*, but also because Chung shows that this variety of Indonesian fronts predicates generally, not just when they are verbal.

- (18)a. Mahasiswa Unpad dia. (stan. Indonesian)  
student Unpad 3SG  
'They are an Unpad (University of Padjadjaran) student.'  
b. Cantik sekali gadis itu.  
pretty very girl DEM  
'That girl is very pretty.'  
(Chung 2008, 1557, citing Sneddon 1996, 257)

But the facts are not the same in colloquial Malay, where subjects and predicates are strictly ordered, with the subject first.

- (19)a. Dia gembira.  
3SG happy  
'They're happy.'  
b. \*Gembira dia.

- (20)a. Mak cikgu.  
mother teacher  
'Mother is a teacher.'  
b. \*Cikgu Mak.

Thus, if Malay were to front an XP in  $V=nya$ , this would be idiosyncratic to  $V=nya$ .

Other reasons to consider VSO to be the result of XP-movement do not apply to Malay, either. For example, an XP-fronting analysis for VSO has been proposed by Massam (2001) for Niuean. This is appealing because, while Niuean normally has VSO word order (21a), it does display VOS when the object is bare (21b).

- (21) *Niuean* (Massam 2001, 157)  
a. Takafaga tūmau nī e ia e tau ika.  
hunt always EMPH ERG he ABS PL fish  
'He is always fishing.'  
b. Takafaga ika tūmau nī a ia.  
hunt fish always EMPH ABS he  
'He is always fishing.'

But in contrast to Niuean,  $V=nya$  in Malay is always VSO, never VOS:

- (22)a. Makan=nya dia ikan.  
eat=nya 3SG fish  
'They eat fish.'  
b. \*Makan=nya ikan dia.  
c. \*Makan ikan=nya dia.

Finally, in analysing the Indonesian *ber-V=nya* construction shown in (2), Sommerlot (2018, to appear) explains the V1 word order by following Chung's (2008) VP-fronting analysis. But recall that Indonesian doesn't allow transitives under *ber-V=nya*, so the evidence is limited to it being VS: we don't know whether its structure would yield VSO or VOS if transitives were possible. This makes an XP-fronting analysis reasonable for Indonesian, but Malay's VSO offers evidence pointing to a head-movement analysis.

Thus far, then, the conclusion is that  $V=nya$  involves  $V^0$ -movement. Crucially, while the  $V=nya$  complex appears linearly to the left of all arguments, it is not sentence-initial; rather, it follows auxiliaries. This goes for both Indonesian *ber-V=nya* and Malay  $V=nya$ .

- (23)a. Sudah main=*nya* dia dengan komputer. (Malay)  
IAM play=*nya* 3SG with computer  
'They played with the computer.'  
b. \*Sudah=*nya* main dia dengan komputer.  
c. \*Main=*nya* sudah dia dengan komputer.  
d. \*Main=*nya* dia sudah dengan komputer.
- (24) Sudah ber-main=*nya* dia dengan komputer. (Indonesian)  
IAM ber-play=*nya* 3SG with computer  
'They played with the computer.'  
(Sommerlot to appear, 4)

As such, the  $V^0$ -movement in  $V=nya$  must be to a head between Voice and INFL.

### 3.2. In-Situ Arguments, and *=nya* as an Expletive

Since all arguments appear to the right of both the verb and the auxiliaries in  $V=nya$ , and since the V1 word order is the result of  $V^0$  movement rather than phrasal movement, it must be the case that no argument moves to Spec-TP in  $V=nya$ . Clearly, if one did, the word order would be SVO.

Chung (2008) and Sommerlot (2018, to appear) argue for both Indonesian VOS and *ber-V=nya* that the subject must be in Spec-TP because it is not in the c-command domain of *hanya* 'only.'

- (25) Hanya ber-enang=*nya* ikan hiu di laut. (Indonesian)  
only BER-swim=*nya* shark in sea  
'Sharks only swim in the sea.'  
# 'Only SHARKS swim in the sea.'  
(Sommerlot to appear, 11)

However, if the interpretation of *ber-V=nya* is broad focus as it is in Malay, then it is to be expected that the first interpretation in (25) is better than the second (although neither is predicted to be perfect). 'Only SHARKS ...' is narrow focus on an argument, whereas the first interpretation is predicate focus of some sort. In fact, something similar could be said about VOS, which "serves to highlight the predicate and background the subject" (Chung 2008, 1557). In other words, the data point in (25) and its VOS counterpart can be explained by information structure, rather than c-command. As such, no problem arises from taking subjects in  $V=nya$  to be low.

Crosslinguistically, it is precisely in those sentences where all arguments stay low, rather than one moving to the derived subject position, that expletive subjects are inserted. Take for example English presentationals.

(26) There appeared a rabbit.

*There*-insertion coincides with the failure of any argument to move to Spec-TP. I therefore argue that =*nya* in V=*nya* is a third-person pronoun—one of the many uses of the string =*nya* (Perangin-angin 2006). The Malay V=*nya* construction has Expl surface overtly low, rather than in the derived subject position, coinciding with the hypothesis that Expl is generated lower than Spec-TP even in English-type languages. This has been argued by Basilico (1997), Nomura (2004), Butler (2004), Hazout (2004), Richards and Biberauer (2005), Richards (2007), Deal (2009), Alexiadou and Schäfer (2010, 2011), Bjorkman and Cowper (2015), and Abe (2016), among others.

Another reason to think that =*nya* is Expl is that it is the optimal morphological choice for it. Following Chomsky (2001) in taking Expl to check a D or [PERSON] feature, Malay morphology ought to choose the form that has this feature and nothing else (Halle and Marantz 1993). Malay has four third-person pronouns, and their features are shown in Table 2 (where ‘u.m.’ means ‘unmarked’).

Table 2: Third-person pronouns in Malay

<b>pronoun</b>	<b>animacy</b>	<b>number</b>	<b>case</b>
<i>dia</i>	animate	singular	u.m.
<i>ia</i>	inanimate	singular	nominative
<i>mereka</i>	animate	plural	u.m.
= <i>nya</i>	u.m.	u.m.	u.m. <sup>2</sup>

By ‘unmarked,’ I mean that the pronoun can be used regardless of the feature. That is, *dia* and *mereka* can be used in any position (subject, object, complement of a preposition, etc.) so they are unmarked for case; =*nya* can be used for both singular and plural (Sneddon et al. 2010, 171), so it is unmarked for number; and so on. Clearly, =*nya* is the least marked pronoun. As such, if the merger of Expl exists for the satisfaction of a D feature and nothing else, =*nya* is the best choice.

This is why the Malay expletive is unlike more familiar expletives in not ending up in the derived subject position. There is no way for Expl in Malay to both spell-out as =*nya* (requiring it to undergo syntactic cliticization from its locus of base-generation) and end up in the derived subject position. Therefore, Malay has an expletive subject that fails to move to Spec-TP, giving weight to the view that Expl can be generated lower than the derived subject position.

Of course, taking =*nya* in V=*nya* to be a third-person pronoun raises the question of whether it’s a doubled clitic of an argument, rather than an expletive. But that cannot be, because V=*nya* can take arguments of any person.

<sup>2</sup>=*nya* can’t occur higher than Spec-VoiceP or Spec-CatP, but I assume this is due to the mechanics of clitic-doubling, rather than ‘non-nominative’ morphological case.

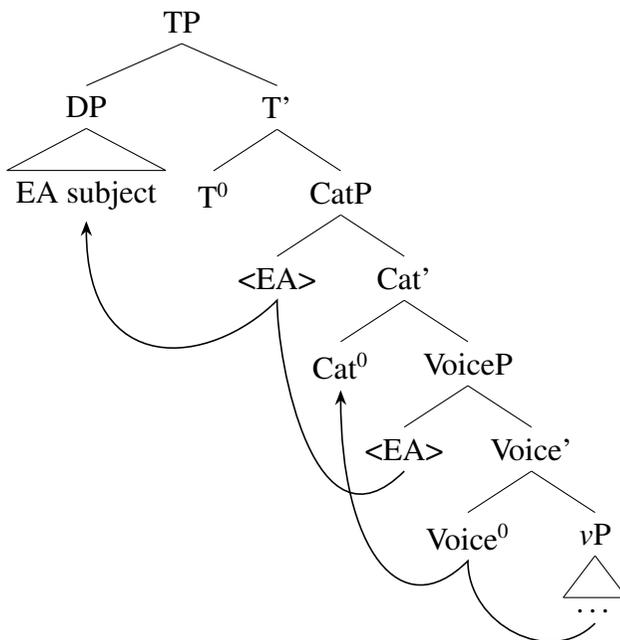
- (27) Sampai=*nya* saya.  
 arrive=*nya* 1SG  
 ‘I arrived’ (theatrical).

### 3.3. A Categoricity Head

So far, I have argued that *V=nya* is derived via head-movement to a head between Voice and INFL, and that the verb’s arguments stay in situ, with expletive *=nya* inserted instead. In this section, I argue that the functional head to which *V* moves is a head which singles out the DP in its specifier as the sentence’s ‘subject of predication’ (Cardinaletti 2004) or ‘category’ (Lambrecht 1987; Sasse 1987, 1996), i.e. the argument the sentence is about. Call it ‘Cat(egoricity).’ I take this head to be a core functional category: it exists in SVO too, and the verb always moves to it. The only difference between SVO and *V=nya* regards whether Spec-CatP is filled by an argument or Expl.

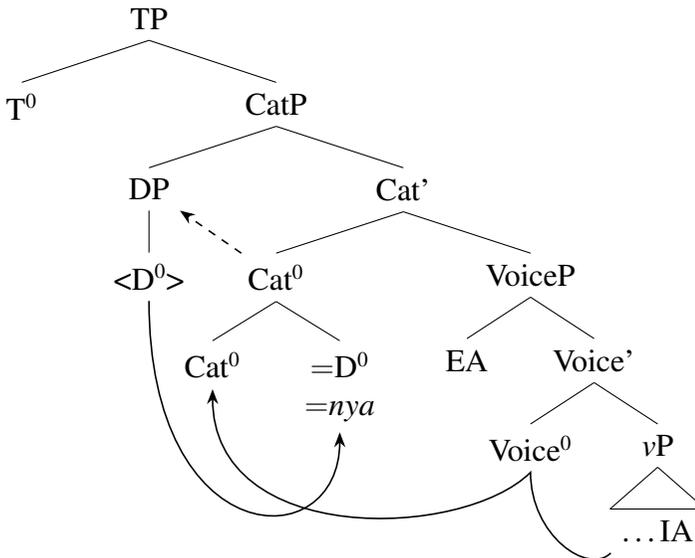
In SVO, the highest argument DP moves into Spec-CatP. Spec-CatP is always taken up by the highest argument (i.e., never by the internal argument in a transitive). *T* then probes as well, and inevitably finds the same argument that has been probed by *Cat* and moved to Spec-CatP. The argument therefore moves to Spec-TP as part of the Agree relation, becoming the subject. Since *Cat* always raises the highest argument to its specifier, it follows that it can’t probe past a DP; I therefore assume that *Cat* hosts a [uD] probe in colloquial Malay.

- (28) SVO in Malay



But in VSO, as argued above, no argument moves into Spec-CatP; this yields the broad-focus interpretation described in section 2. Cat's [uD] feature is satisfied by an expletive DP (=nya) rather than an argument. Unlike T, Cat has an independent EPP feature requiring its specifier to be filled (Chomsky 2004).

(29) VSO in Malay



In (29), the verb head-moves into Cat; Cat Agrees with the expletive DP in its specifier (shown by a dotted arrow), and this triggers clitic-doubling of this DP, to be spelled out as =nya on the verb. For expository simplicity, (29) does not show that Cat is in fact a complex head with V, v, and Voice.

To explain that arguments remain in situ in V=nya, despite the [uD] probe on Cat, I follow Chomsky's (2001) analysis of English presentationals. He bases his analysis on the content of numerations. If Expl is in the numeration, it must be inserted in Spec-CatP (Spec-TP for Chomsky's analysis of English), and therefore the highest argument is not probed by Cat. If Expl is not in the numeration, then Cat probes its domain and the highest argument moves to its Spec.

Cat must be a CFC in Malay. If it wasn't, broad-focus sentences, rather than merging Cat and nullifying its effect by putting no meaningful constituent in its specifier, would simply not merge Cat at all. The simplest case is that the verb always moves into Cat, not just in V=nya but also in SVO, as shown in (28); the effect is string-vacuous in SVO because whatever DP moves into Spec-CatP goes on to Spec-TP.

My proposal that there exists a head identifying the subject of predication builds on previous work. Cat's function is in fact identical to Cardinaletti's (2004) SubjP, "the projection in which the 'subject-of-predication' feature is checked", so

that “the semantic property of subjects is encoded in the syntax” (Cardinaletti 2004, 121). The only difference between my Cat and Cardinaletti’s Subj is the location: my Cat is just above Voice, while Cardinaletti’s Subj is higher—above Italian finite verbs, but below FinP (Cardinaletti 2004, section 6.2). Cat also has much in common with Belletti’s (2001) clause-internal TopicP, which is in the same location as Cat (just above *v*/VoiceP). However, Belletti defines her TopicP as hosting old information in its specifier. This is not what Cat does; its specifier can be new. Rather, Cat marks its specifier as a default topic for the sentence.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I described V=*nya* in colloquial Malay, arguing that this construction is felicitous in broad-focus contexts. I argued that the verb-initial word order is achieved from the arguments staying in situ (in line with the broad-focus interpretation) and the verb moving to a head, Cat, between the external argument and the INFL domain. This Cat head is conceptually equivalent to Cardinaletti’s (2004) higher SubjP in that it marks the element in its specifier as the subject of predication. Since nothing moves into its specifier in broad-focus contexts, the expletive subject =*nya* is merged instead.

The Malay expletive surfaces overtly below the canonical subject position of Spec-TP. This is because =*nya* is the only acceptable morphological candidate, so the expletive must cliticize. Significantly, this low expletive is in line with analyses of English *there*-type expletives, which have been argued to also be generated below Spec-TP.

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