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The structures of Malay language existential sentences

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the syntactic structures of existential sentences in Malay and focuses on the verb *ada* to produce generalization regarding existential verbs in Malay. Our findings showed that the transitive verb *ada* is motivated by the position of the verb as it occurs as a ditransitive verb in the *ada-DP-VP* structure, while in the *DP-ada* structure it acts as an unaccusative verb. The position of *ada* is motivated by the Definite Constraint when the DP occurs preceding the verb. The analysis of the derivation the $DP_{Definite}$ for the unaccusative verb of the structure *$DP_{Definite}$-ada* showed that the $DP_{Definite}$ is generated from the complement position of *ada* and is moved to the [Spec,TP] in the syntactic structure. The derivation of the $DP_{Definite}$ is due to two factors: one, is the need for feature checking by the EPP with regards to the uninterpreted feature[uN*] at Tense node and secondly, due to the feature checking of uninterpreted zero case marking at $DP_{Definite}$ which loses its accusative case due to it being a complement to the verb *ada*. We assume that the existential construction for *ada-DP-VP* is not the output from the derivational process as claimed by previous researchers, but rather both constructions have different syntactic structures in the VP shell.

Keywords: Malay language; Existential; Ditransitive; Corpus; Unaccusative; Definiteness; Constraint; Morphosyntactic features; Complement

Introduction

Existential sentences in the Malay language (henceforth Malay) have different syntactic structures when compared to the typical sentences. Generally, Malay sentences have the subject-verb-object (S-V-O) word order, whereas existential sentences have the non-canonical order Verb-Object-Prep (V-O-Prep). The verb *ada* is placed in front of the sentence (Hassan, 2006; Kader, 2003). Some examples of existential sentences in Malay by traditional grammarians are presented in (1).

(1) a. ***Ada*** *sebuah rumah di atas bukit.*   (Sato, 2011)
    exist classifier house at above hill
    'There is a house on top of the hill.'

  b. ***Ada*** *seekor ular di dalam lubang itu.*   (Kader, 2003)
    exist classifier snake at inside hole that
    'There is a snake in that hole.'

  c. ***Ada*** *lima bangunan di sana.*   (Othman, 1984)
    exist five building at there
    'There are five buildings there.'

  d. ***Ada*** *buah di atas pokok.*   (Hassan, 2006)
    exist fruit at above tree
    'There are fruits on the tree.'

  e. ***Ada*** *buku di atas meja.*   (Moeljadi, 2016)
    exist book at above table
    'There exist books on the table.'

From the examples in (1), the existential sentences[1] can be easily identified with the presence of the lexical *ada* in front of the sentence followed by a DP[2] and the predicate. (Hassan, 1980; Kader, 2003; Nomoto, 2006 and Sneddon et al., 2010).

Among the traditionalist grammarians, Hassan (2006) stated that the existential sentences in (1) are unique because they do not have the 'theme/benda' and the 'rheme/*cerita*'[3] structure of a basic sentence structure as suggested by Za'aba (2000). Hassan (2006) reiterated that the existential sentence in Malay is built only with the rheme/cerita (predicate) without the presence of the theme/benda (Determiner Phrase, DP) subject.

Othman (1984) analyzed existential differently. He stated that the existential sentences in (1) have the inverse word order/*ayat songsang*. According to him, the DP which follows the verb *ada* originated from sentential initial position and is then moved following the movement of the verb. However, Othman (1984) did not provide evidence to support his contention of the inverted form/*ayat songsang* and did not clarify reasons for the moved DP.

Even though the lexical *ada* in (1) conveyed the existential meaning, it should be emphasized also that *ada* conveys multiple meanings in Malay. Semantically, *ada* also conveys the meaning of possession (2) and emphasis (3).

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[1] Kader (2003) and Yusof (2018) used the term 'existential sentence' to refer to existential sentences in Malay.

[2] According to Adger (2003) the determiner is the head of a noun phrase. Accordingly, this study will also use the term Determiner Phrase or DP to refer to the noun phrase.

[3] Ahmad (2000) posited structural conditions in which Malay sentences could be grammatical, one of which is that a sentence consist of the rheme (*benda*) which is referred to as the subject and the element of 'theme' (*cerita*) which is referred to as the 'predicate'.

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(2)   a. *Fatin **ada** tanah sawah di kampung.*
      Fatin have land paddy field at village
      'Fatin owns paddy field land at her village.'
  b. Dia **ada** kereta.
      He/she has car
      'He/she owns a car.'
  c. *Zulaikha **ada** dua ekor kucing.*
      Zulaikha has two classifier cat
      'Zulaikha has two cats.'

(3)   a. ***Ada** dua orang budak bermain di sana.*
      exist two classifier child prefix-play at there
      'There are two children playing there.'
  b. *Saksi   itu **ada** melihat   kejadian rompakan bersenjata.*
      Witness that **do** ACTIVE-see incident robbery   prefix- weapon
      'The witness did see the armed robbery incident.'

The meaning of *ada* in sentences (2) and (3) did not convey the meaning of existentiality as in (1). In sentence (2), *ada* expresses the meaning of possession of a certain object DP i.e., an object being owned by a person. Sentences in (3) on the other hand, have a different meaning as the verb *ada* functions as an emphasis on the part of the reader/hearer/speaker in that the action '*bermain*/play' and '*melihat*/see' did really happen. In the context of sentences in (3), *ada* is considered as a word whose function is to emphasize. Without the presence of *ada* in (3), the expression of the sentence would be to state an event as declarative sentences normally do.

From the lexical aspect, Malay has unique structures for existential sentences. This is so because there are also two other lexical items which convey the meaning of existentiality, that is the verbs *wujud*/exist and *terdapat*/exist. However, these constructions have not been discussed by Malay grammarians due to the fact that traditional Malay grammar considered *ada* as the sole lexical item which conveys the existential meaning in Malay. For example, consider sentences in (4).

(4)   a. ***Wujud** polarisasi kaum dalam kumpulan tersebut.*
      exist polarization ethnic in group the
      'There exists ethnic polarization in the group.'
  b. ***Wujud** hubungan mesra   antara pemimpin negara-negara ASEAN.*
      exist relationship friendly among leaders   countries   ASEAN.
      'There exist friendly relationships among leaders of the ASEAN countries.'
  c. ***Terdapat** mutiara putih yang   dijual   di kedainya.*
      exist diamond white that prefix passive-sell at shop his/hers
      'There are white diamonds sold at her/his shop.'
  d. ***Terdapat** permintaan tinggi bagi pembelian minyak sawit dari Malaysia.*
      exist   demand   high   for purchase   oil   palm from Malaysia
      'There are high demands for the purchase of palm oil from Malaysia.'

Based on these examples, we discovered two research gaps in previous studies. First, the previous studies had only discussed the sentence patterns of existential sentences in a restricted manner i.e. *ada-DP-Predicate* phrase structure as in (1). They did not discuss alternative sentence patterns of the existential sentences used by native speakers. Secondly, the studies discussed the existential sentences only in terms of *ada*. No examination has yet to be made on other lexical items such as *wujud* and *terdapat*

which convey similar syntactic structures and semantics of existentials.

They did not discuss the other sentence patterns in existential sentences in the language which are used by native speakers. Secondly, the studies discussed the existential sentences only in terms of *ada*. No examination has yet to be carried out on the other lexical items *wujud* and *terdapat* which

(5)   a. **There** are unicorns.
       b. **There** exist unicorns.

Hazout (2004) labelled these constructs in (5) as existential sentences. The sentences contain the expletive subjects there or it in the subject position (Hazout, 2004). The phrases in the predicate are known as Post Copula

(6)   a. [$_{Exp}$ **There**] [$_{Cop}$ are [$_{DP}$ people for whom dignity is important]].
       b. [$_{Exp}$ **It**] [$_{Cop}$ is [$_{AP}$ cold]].
       c. [$_{DP}$ John and Bill] [$_{Cop}$ are [$_{DP}$ students in this class]].   (Hazout, 2004)

In (6c), the canonical word order is SVO, the subject slot is filled by the DP John and Bill and the predicate slot is filled by the DP predicate students in this class and are linked by the linking verb copula BE.

The second interesting feature with this structure is that the constituent order in the existential sentences is quite rigid: the expletive subject there or it cannot be deleted nor put in a position following the DP

(7)   a. * [$_{Cop}$ Are [$_{DP}$ people for whom dignity is important]].
       b. * [$_{Cop}$ Is [$_{AP}$ cold]].
(8)   a. *[$_{Cop}$ Are [$_{DP}$ people for whom dignity is important]] **there**.
       b. *[$_{Cop}$ Is [$_{AP}$ cold]] **it.**

In conclusion, previous studies had examined existential sentences in Malay but were restricted in the scope of analysis. They did not include the other two other existential structures *wujud*/exist and *terdapat*/exist. Therefore, this study specifically aims to analyze the structure of existential sentences as they are used by native speakers of Malay. We will discuss the three existential verbs of *ada*, *wujud* and *terdapat* and show that they exhibited similar syntactic structures, function

convey similar syntactic structures and semantics to the existential verb *ada*.

In comparison, existential sentences in Malay and English demonstrated differences: the English sentences show existential meaning with expletive subject there in front of the sentence followed by the copula BE or the verb exist (Haegeman, 1994; Hartman, 2008; Heusinger, 2011; Sabbagh, 2009, Cruschina, 2012). Examples are shown in (5).

(Moro, 2006)

Predicate in terms of the Determiner Phrase (DP) in (6a), the Adjective Phrase (AP) in (6b) or the DP as in (6c) and each of these phrases are linked to the subject by the copula linking verb BE are/is.

(Hazout, 2004; Carnie, 2006). If the expletive in (6a) and (6b) is deleted or is positioned following the predicate based on the Post-Copular Predicate DP or Adj Phrase, the sentences become ungrammatical as in (7) and (8). This is due to the Extended Projection Principle which requires all sentences to have subjects and in the case of no subjects then it has to be filled by expletive subjects there and it.

and meaning. Consequently, we will describe the verb *ada* in detail, delving further into the nature of transitivity of the verb *ada*. The discussion on *ada* will hopefully achieve explanatory adequacy in that it will cover the scope of existential sentences in Malay.

Existential lexical items of Malay

We found that previous works seemed to focus on the existential *ada* without discussing the other existential verbs in the

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language. The sentences in (1) are presented again below as (9). The verb *ada* is positioned at the front of the sentence (Mees, 1969; Fokker, 1972; Hassan, 2006; Ahmad, 2000;

Othman, 1984; Harahap, 1989; Sneddon et al., 2010; Sato, 2011; Moeljadi, 2016; Nomoto, 2006; Yusof, 2018; Zawawi et al., 2022; Zawawi and Sultan, 2023).

(9)   a. ***Ada***   *sebuah rumah di atas bukit.*
      exist classifier house at above hill
      'There exists a house on top of the hill.'

(Sato, 2011)

   b. ***Ada*** *seekor ular di dalam lubang itu.*
    exist classifier snake at inside hole that
    'There exists a snake in that hole.'

(Kader, 2003)

From the database search, we found other lexical items which express existentiality such as verbs *wujud* and *terdapat* that are used regularly by speakers/writers as in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of Existential Sentences With The Lexical Item *wujud* and *terdapat* From The DBP Corpus

Lexical items	Example Sentences

wujud	1. ***Wujud*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.*
	   exist ship war at Sea China South
	   'There exist war ships in the South China Sea.'

	2. *Bangunan itu* ***wujud*** *pada zaman penjajah.*
	   building that exist at period colonial
	   'That building existed during the colonial period.'

terdapat	1. ***Terdapat*** *manusia kenit di kawasan pergunungan Hilves.*
	   exist human tiny at area mountainous Hilves
	   'There exist midgets at the mountainous area Hilves.'

	2. *Pameran bunga hiasan itu* ***terdapat*** *di sana.*
	   exhibition flower decorative that exist at there
	   'The decorative flower exhibition is there.'

Based on Table 1, there seems to be a regular pattern of use for lexical verbs *wujud* and *terdapat* in existential sentences. This goes to show that there are other existential lexical verbs which were neglected in the previous studies with the focus just on the lexical verb *ada*.

The three lexical items convey similar existential meaning. This was proven by the substitution test done to the data in Table 1. The purpose of this test was to show that the three lexical items share the semantic meaning of existentiality. The outcome of the test showed that the lexical items tested were grammatical and carry similar meanings of existentiality.

Even though *ada* was substituted with a different lexical item *wujud* and *terdapat* (see Table 2), the interchangeability between *ada, wujud* and *terdapat* goes to show that they possess the same existential meaning as *ada*.

Table 2. Substitution Test For Lexical Items *ada, wujud* and *terdapat*

Lexical Tested	Outcome Of The Test	
	Substitution Of Verb At The Front Of The Sentence	**Substitution Of The Verb In Predicate Position**
ada	***Ada*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* exist ship war at Sea China South 'There are war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu* ***ada*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that exist at period colonial 'The building existed during the colonial period.'
wujud	***Wujud*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* exist ship war at Sea China South 'There are war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu* ***wujud*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that exist at period colonial 'The building existed during the colonial period
terdapat	***Terdapat*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* exist ship war at Sea China South 'There was war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu* ***terdapat*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that exist at period colonial 'The building existed during the colonial period.'

Next, three tests were conducted to test the lexical verb status of the three verbs. These tests consisted of 3 tests of distribution of verbs: namely the aspect test, the auxiliary test and the negation test. Table 3 displayed the aspect test. The test showed that all three lexical items can take on the aspect word and still convey the existential meaning regardless of the position of the existential word either in initial sentence position or the predicate position. This goes to show the salient verbal characteristics which run across all three lexical words.

Table 3. The Aspect Test On The Lexical Verbs *ada, wujud* and *terdapat*

Lexical Tested	Outcome of the Aspect Test	
	Data 1	**Data 2**
ada	*(Masih)* ***ada*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (Still) exist ship war at Sea China South 'There are still war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu (pernah)* ***ada*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (have) exist at period colonial 'The building once existed during the colonial period.'
wujud	*(Akan)* ***wujud*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (will) exist ship war at Sea China South 'There will be war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu (belum)* ***wujud*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (not yet) exist at period colonial 'The building had not yet existed during the colonial period.
terdapat	*(Sudah)* ***terdapat*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (have) exist ship war at Sea China South 'There was already war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu (telah)* ***terdapat*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (have) exist at period colonial 'The building have existed during the colonial period.'

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Table 4 shows the Auxiliary Modal Test where the auxiliary modal precedes the three verbs in the sentences. According to Omar (2015), Nomoto (2009) and Ahmad (2008), the modal auxiliary functions to explain the lexical verb in conveying the intended meanings of the action or state expressed by the lexical verbs. Table 4 showed that the lexical verbs *ada*, wujud and *terdapat* are indeed lexical verbs due to their ability to take on the modal auxiliary to occur with it. The outcome of the test produced existential verbs which are equally salient in their verbal characteristics and thus produced grammatical existential sentences.

Table 4. The Auxiliary Modal Test On Lexical Verbs *ada, wujud* and *terdapat*

Lexical Tested	Outcome of the Auxiliary Modal Test	
	Data 1	**Data 2**
ada	*(Mungkin)* ***ada*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (Maybe) exist ship war at Sea China South 'There might be war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu (mungkin)* ***ada*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (might) exist at period colonial 'The building might have existed during the colonial period.'
wujud	*(Boleh)* ***wujud*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (can) exist ship war at Sea China South 'There could be war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu (boleh)* ***wujud*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (could) exist at period colonial 'The building could have existed during the colonial period.'
terdapat	*(Mesti)* ***terdapat*** *kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (Must) exist ship war at Sea China Southern 'There must be war ships at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu (mesti)* ***terdapat*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (must) exist at period colonial 'The building must have existed during the colonial period.'

The lexical verbs *ada*, *wujud* and *terdapat* were also tested with the Negation Test that is using the negative word and placed the negative word preceding the lexical verb. This is supported by grammarians Karim et al. (2010), Zawawi et al. (2022) and Omar (2015) who stated that a verb can be negated by putting the negative word preceding the verb. Table 5 displays the results of the Negative Test.

Table 5. The Negation Test On Lexical Verbs *ada, wujud* and *terdapat*

Lexicals Tested	Outcome of the Negative Test	
	Data 1	**Data 2**
ada	Tidak **ada** kapal perang di Laut China Selatan. (NEG) exist ship war at Sea China South	*Bangunan itu tidak* ***ada*** *pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (NEG) exist at period colonial

	'There are no war ships at the South China Sea.'	'The building was not there during the colonial period.'
wujud	*Tidak **wujud** kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (NEG) exist ship war at Sea China South 'No war ships existed at the South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu tidak **wujud** pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (NEG) exist at period colonial 'The building did not exist during the colonial period.'
terdapat	*Tidak **terdapat** kapal perang di Laut China Selatan.* (NEG) exist ship war at Sea China South 'There were no war ships at South China Sea.'	*Bangunan itu tidak **terdapat** pada zaman penjajah.* Building that (NEG) exist at period colonial The building was not there at the colonial period.'

The three tests used to test the verb *hood* of the lexical verbs demonstrated that the lexical verbs *ada*, *wujud* dan *terdapat* can be categorized as lexical verb elements. This is attested through the ability of the lexical verbs to take on the aspect word, the auxiliary modal and the negation words which are tests to determine whether certain words are full-fledged verbs.

Another feature of English existential sentences is the use of the expletive *there* (sentences (10)) to fulfill grammatical function and acts as fillers to fill the gaps in the subject position. This is to satisfy the condition that all sentences must have subjects.

(10) a. **There** should be some students who obtained distinctions.
      b. **There** are lots of students who missed the classes.
      c. **There** must be someone who ate the apples.

There here is a zero semantic word in that it does not convey any meaning. Sentences in (10) are called expletive sentences. The empty *there* is not the same as the preposition *there*. The preposition *there* in (10 and (11) makes different structures: *there* in (10) is a filler with zero semantics but it performs a grammatical function while *there* in (11) is a deictic spatial word and carries the locative meaning, and functions as an adverbial word as it gives information regarding the location of the DP object in relation to the action in the verb within the sentence.

(11) a. Someone has eat the apples **there**.
      b. I saw Hafiy **there** last week.

There are three tests for expletives which can be carried out to demonstrate the difference between the two types. The first test is that expletive sentences in English cannot be queried with the interrogative wh-word where. However, the deictic spatial word there could be queried or questioned with the wh-word whereas in Table 6.

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Table 6. Interogative Test Wh-word *where*

there: expletive	*there*: locative
1. **There** are some students who got distinctions. Q:*where are some students got distinctions? A:*there. 2. **There** are lots of students who missed the classes. Q:*where are lots of students who missed the classes? A: *there.	1. Someone has eaten the apples **there**. Q:where did someone eat the apples? A:there. 2. I saw hafiy **there** last week. Q:where did you see hafiy last week? A:there.

The second expletive test is the deletion of *there*. The findings of this test showed that after the word *there* has been deleted in the expletive sentence, it produced an ungrammatical sentence. On the other hand, *there* as the deictic spatial locative when deleted, still produced a grammatical sentence as it is the adverbial locative and an adjunct that brings additional meaning to the verb.

On the other hand, *there* as a deictic spatial locative when deleted still produced a grammatical sentence as the adverbial locative and functions as an adjunct which brings additional meaning to the verb. The deletion of *there* locative did not have an effect on the core meaning of the sentence at all as demonstrated in Table 7.

Table 7. Deletion Of *there* Test

there: Exspletive	*there*: Locative
1.**There** should be some students who got distinctions. *Should some students who got distinctions. 2. **There** are lots of students who missed the classes. *Are lots of students who missed the classes.	1. Someone has eaten the apples **there**. Someone has eaten the apples. 2. I saw Hafiy **there** last week. I saw Hafiy last week.

The third test aims to distinguish between expletive and deictic spatial locative *there* by replacing *there* with the deictic spatial word *here*. The findings of this test showed that in expletive sentences, the substitution of the expletive *there* with a deictic spatial locative *here* produced

ungrammatical structures. In contrast, *there* which has the deictic spatial locative meaning when substituted with *here*, would produce a grammatical sentence because both words, *there* and *here* are both words conveying similar meaning i.e. the deictic spatial locative meaning. This is displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Substitution With Deictic Spatial *here* Test

there: Expletive	*there:* Locative
1.**There** should be some students who got distinctions. *Here should be some students who got distinctions. 2. **There** are lots of students who missed the classes. *Here are lots of students who missed the classes.	1. Someone has eaten the apples **there**. Someone has eaent the apples here. 2. I saw Hafiy **there** last week. I saw Hafiy here last week.

The expletive constructions in English as stated by Haegeman (1994), Adger (2002), Carnie (2006) and Chomsky (2015) are similar to the existential sentences in Malay as shown in Table 9. Interestingly, the expletive *there* in English has no Malay equivalent. In the context of translation, the slot *there* is filled by the Verb*existential* *ada* in Malay as a marker of existence (Zawawi et al., 2023). This shows that Malay has the expletive structure which can correspond to the expletive structure *there* in English but no expletive empty subjects equivalent to empty *there* and *it* in Malay.

Table 9. Expletive Structures In English and Malay

English	Malay
1. **There** are many fish in the sea.	1. *Ada banyak ikan di laut.* exist many fish at sea 'There are many fish in the sea.'
2. **There** is a man here.	2. *Ada seorang lelaki di sini.* exist classifier man at here 'There is a man here.'

The status of predicate phrase in Malay existential sentences

Previous studies did not provide a stance on whether it is obligatory for the predicate phrase to exist in Malay existential sentences. Most researchers treat the occurrence of DP and predicate phrase (PredP) as generally obligatory in a sentence. However, Nomoto (2006) stated the opinion that the Malay existential sentences do not require the presence of a predicate phrase.

They, however, did not posit any evidence to support their respective views.

We would like to present the *Argument Test* to determine the status of the presence of the prepositional phrase. Two sets of data are provided for each test, i.e. data which has *ada* in front of the sentence (Set 1) and *ada* in the prepositional phrase position following the DP (Set 2). The findings from the two tests are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Argument Test: Existential Sentences and Preposition Phrase

DATA TESTED	TEST OUTCOMES

Set 1: *v*_ada_*-DP-PrepP*
     a. *Ada [DP rumah] [PrepP di kaki bukit].*
         exist house   at foot hill
         'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'
     b. *Ada [DP kapal perang] [PrepP di Laut China Selatan].*
         exist ship war   at Sea China South
         'There exist war ships in the South China Sea.'
     c. *Ada [DP manusia kenit] [PrepP di kawasan pergunungan Hilves].*
         exist human tiny   at   area   mountainous
         There exist midgets at the mountainous area Hilves.'
	Set 1'
	     a. *?Ada⁴ [DP rumah].*
	         exist house
	     b. *?Ada [DP kapal perang].*
	         exist ship war
	     c. *?Ada [DP manusia kenit].*
	         exist human tiny

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⁴ *ada* in this construction does not refer to the possession meaning as in 'in possession of the house' but has the existential meaning.

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Set 2: *DP-V_{ada}-PrepP*	Set 2'
a. [*DP Rumah itu*] **ada** *(PrepP di kaki bukit).* House that exist at foot hill 'The house exists at the foot of the hill.' *b.* [*DP Kapal perang itu*] **ada** *(PrepP di Laut China Selatan).* Ship war that exist at Sea China South 'The war ship exist in the South China Sea.' *c.* [*DP Manusia kenit itu*] **ada** *(PrepP di kawasan pergunungan Hilves).* Human tiny that exist at area mountainous 'The midget exists at the mountainous area of Hilves.'	*a.* [*DP Rumah itu*] **ada.** 'The house exists.' *b.* [*DP Kapal perang itu*] **ada.** 'The war ship exists.' *c.* [?][*DP Manusia kenit itu*] **ada.** 'The tiny human exists.'

The test in Set 1' produced a disjunctive and weird construction (it is acceptable in colloquial Malay but, ungrammatical in formal Malay), thus the (?) mark. The phrasing of the existential meaning with the DP *rumah/house*, *kapal perang/war ships* and *manusia kenit/midgets* and the verb *ada* is incomplete without the location of the DP. The focus of the sentence is on the entity DP and the existential verb *ada* with the location of the entity DP made unknown. These examples showed that the predicate phrase is obligatory in Set 1 in order to complete the meaning of the existential sentences. On the other hand, the outcome of the test in Set 2' is different from Set 1'. The DP subject which precedes the verb *ada* when combined with the Verb ada was able to produce grammatical existential sentences despite the preposition phrase locative being deleted. In Set 2', the test showed that the presence of the preposition phrase following the DP is optional and thus functions as an adjunct. In Set 1' when the verb *ada* precedes the DP, the presence of the preposition phrase is obligatory and is important to ensure the grammaticality of the sentence. The implication of this pattern of behavior will be discussed later in another section of the article which looks at the nature of transitivity of the existential verb *ada*.

Implication of the definitive constraints

The findings of the preposition phrase tests in (Set 1') and (Set 2'), raised questions regarding the DP constraints of the data. It was found that there was an overt constraint on the DP which is named *Definiteness Restriction*. The constraints on the DP brought implication towards the grammaticality of the existential sentences. As evidence, the DP in data set 1 was the DP_{Indefinite}, while the DP in Set 2 was the DP_{Definite}. In order to prove the effect of the Definitive Restriction on the DP, data set 1 had to be modified as in (12)-(14).

(12) a. ***Ada** [rumah] di kaki bukit.*
    exist [house] at foot hill
    'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'

  b. [?]***Ada** [rumah itu] di kaki bukit.*
    exist house that at foot hill
    '[?]There exists the house at the foot of the hill.'

(13) a. ***Ada** [kapal perang] [di Laut China Selatan]*
    exist ship war at Sea China South
    'There exists a war ship at the South China Sea.'

b. *?**Ada** [kapal perang itu] [di Laut China Selatan]*
   exist ship war that at Sea China South
   'There exists the war ship at the South China Sea.'

(14)   a. ***Ada** [manusia kenit] [di kawasan pergunungan Hilves].*
     exist human tiny   at area   mountainous Hilves
     'There exists a midget at the mountainous area of Hilves.'

     b.*?**Ada** [manusia kenit itu] [di kawasan pergunungan Hilves].*
     exist human tiny that at area   mountainous Hilves
     'There exists the midget at the mountainous area of Hilves.'

The Definite Restriction in (12-14) showed that when the DP is definite, the resultant sentence was a bit strange semantically but still grammatical (12b), (13b), (14b). In addition, when the DP is placed at the front of the sentence, the DP is normally definite as in (15a) dan (16a). However, if the determiner itu/that is deleted, the sentence becomes weird, but still grammatical as in (15b) dan (16b).

(15)   a. *[Rumah itu] **ada**.*
     House that exist
     'The house exists.'
     b. *?[Rumah] **ada**.*
     House exist
     'The house exists.'
(16)   a. *[Kapal perang itu] **ada**.*
     Ship war that exist
     'The war ship exists.'
     b. *?[Kapal perang] **ada**.*
    Ship war exist
    'The war ship exists.'

The implication of the Definite Restriction on DP is interesting because Malay has the existential construction V_{ada} - $DP_{indefinite}$-PrepP in (12a), (13a), (14a) similar to the expletive construction in English as stated by Chomsky (2015), Adger (2002), Carnie (2006), Radford (2009) and Haegeman (1994) in (17). The expletive there fills the subject position and functions as the subject of the sentence followed by the indefinite DP together with the locative preposition phrase. The examples are shown in (17).

(17)   a (i) English: **There** are [DP indefinite many fish] [PrepP in the sea].
     (ii)Malay: *Ada [DP indefinite banyak ikan] [PrepP dalam laut].*
    b (i) English: **There** is [DP indefinite a man] [PrepP here].
     (ii) Malay: *Ada [DPindefinite seorang lelaki] [PrepP di sini].*

When the English and Malay sets of sentences are examined in (17a) dan (17b), *there* seemed to be a correspondence between the existential sentence *there* and the verb *ada*. The difference is the constituent element which fills the subject position of the expletive sentence which in English is the null expletive that does not carry any case feature (Radford, 2009) and does not receive any theta role from the Verb (Carnie, 2006). According to Carnie (2006) and Radford (2009), the expletive *there* which occupies the

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subject position originates from the [Spec, Tense] in the Expletive Insertion Rule. This rule showed that the expletive *there* is assumed as a third person default pronoun which is inserted into the syntactic structure to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) (Carnie, 2006).

Therefore, based on (17), we would like to put forth that Malay has an expletive sentence just like English which is the existential sentence with V_{ada}-$DP_{indefinite}$-PrepP

pattern. However, in Malay, this subject position is not filled by any overt constituent.

The Definiteness Restriction on DP also leads to a unique implication towards the features contained in the position [Spec, Tense] in existential sentences in Malay. We are of the opinion that there is one specific feature that is [+ Definite] found at the position of [Spec, Tense Phrase]. That is why the DP of existential sentence co-occur with the definite marker itu/that as in (18a).

(18)　　a. *[DP Definit Rumah itu] **ada**.*
　　　　　　House that   exist
　　　　　　'The house exists.'
　　　　b. [*DP Definite Rumah itu] **ada** (FP di kaki bukit).*
　　　　　　 House that exists at foot hill
　　　　　　'The house exists in at the foot of the hill.'
　　　　c. ***Ada** [DP indefinit rumah] [FP di kaki bukit].*
　　　　　exist　　　　　 house　　 at foot hill
　　　　　'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'

The indefinite DP realized in the subject position (18b), is grammatical. This is because the Indefinite DP (18c) moves to [Spec, Tense Phrase) at the Logical Form and occupied that position as the surface subject. At the Spell-out stage, the Indefinite DP is at the complement V position (18c). In short, we postulated that the subject $DP_{Definite}$ (18a, b) moves to the position [Spec, Tense Phrase] after going through the Spell-Out phase i.e. at the Logical Form. However, the real position of the $DP_{indefinite}$ at Spell-Out is (18c). This is the reason sentence (18b) is still grammatical even though the Indefinite DP is occupying the subject position. The tree diagram analysis of sentences (18a) and (18c) will be discussed in the forthcoming VP Shell section.

Transitivity in Malay existential sentences

The argument structure and subcategorization are two important concepts in the description of existential sentences in Malay specifically the transitivity nature of the verb. Tallerman (2011) stated that a predicate is generally represented by its verb or adjective. In Malay, the predicate could

also be an adjective, a noun or a prepositional phrase. According to Carnie (2006), the argument structure is the number of arguments which a certain predicate could take. A verb might take one argument as in intransitive verbs or it might take 2 arguments for ditransitive verbs. Carnie (2006) added that a predicate can be explained in terms of a string of expression that expresses a relationship between one entity and another entity. The entity with which the predicate is expressed is called an argument. The entity could either be a DP, PrepP or a sentence.

Subcategorization involves all heads and its projection which includes verbs, nouns, adjectives, prepositions, etc (Haegeman and Gueron, 1999). The verb head, V takes on internal and external arguments i.e. complements of the V head. The head verb also designates the external argument that it could take. The subcategorization frame contains among other things the argument structure of the heads, thematic role, agreement of morphological features including case, subject-verb agreement, person, number, etc (Miyama, 2011; Sato, 2021; Donohue, 2020).

In this study, two existential sentences with constructs *ₐda -DP-PrepP* and *DP-V$_{ada}$* are provided in (19) as a comparison. The existential verb *ada* in the predicate is in bold font and the argument is placed in square brackets […].

(19) a. Argument Structure *V-DP-PrepP:*
        Ada *[DP rumah] [PrepP di kaki bukit].*
             [THEME]   [LOCATIVE]
        exist   house   at foot hill
        'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'
      b. Argument Structure DP-*V*:
         [Bangunan itu] **ada.**
           [THEME]
          building   that exist
         'The building exists.'

In the argument structure *V-DP-PrepP* (19a), *ada* is considered as a two-place predicate as it requires two arguments the DP *rumah/house* and PrepP *di kaki bukit/ at the foot of the hill*. PrepP *di kaki bukit/at the foot of the hill* (19a) cannot be considered as an adjunct as its occurrence is obligatory to complete the meaning of the sentence. (19a) is presented again in (20a). The deletion of the PrepP will result in (20b).

(20) a. **Ada** *[rumah] [di kaki bukit].*
        exist house   at foot hill
        'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'
      b. ***Ada** [rumah].*

For the constructin DP-*V* (19b and presented again as (21b)), *ada* is considered as a one-place predicate because V only needs one argument that is the DP *Bangunan itu/ that building* to enable the predicate to construct a grammatical existential sentence. This is shown in (21).

(21) a. *[Bangunan itu]* **ada** *(sejak zaman penjajah).*
         building that exist since period colonial
          'The building exists since the colonial period.'
      b. *[Bangunan itu]* **ada.**
         building that exist
         'The building exists.'
      c. ***Ada** (sejak zaman penjajah).*
         exist (since period colonial
         'It exists (since colonial period.

PrepP *sejak zaman penjajah* dalam (21a) cannot be considered an argument of the verb because without the occurrence of the PrepP, sentence (21b) remains grammatical. Therefore, the PrepP is an adjunct and brings additional information to the sentence.

The subcategorization in (22) and (23) showed that the V in the construction *ada-DP-PrepP* subcategorizes two internal arguments that is DP dan PrepP. This implies that in the construct *ada-DP-PrepP*, the verb *ada* is considered as the V$_{ditransitive}$. On the other hand, the verb *ada* in the construction *DP-ada* is a different type of transitive construct i.e. V$_{intransitive}$, or specifically V$_{unaccusative}$. Accordingly, the subcategorization of the two verb *ada* are different as represented as in (22).

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(22)   a. Argument Structure for construct *Ada-DP-PrepP*
    Ada *[DP rumah] [PrepP di kaki bukit]*.
        [THEME]   [LOCATIVE]
      exist   house   at foot hill
    'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'

The subcategorization below shows that *ada* is a verb and is ditransitive, i.e. having two internal arguments, i.e. DP and PrepP as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Argument Structure for *Ada-DP-PrepP* Construction

Ada

CATEGORY

V

SUBCAT

INTERNAL <DP, PrepP>
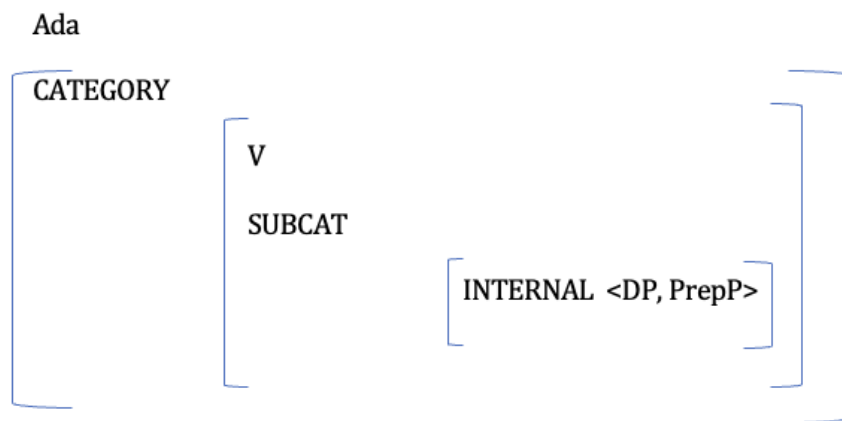
The subcategorization in Figure 1 shows that the verb *ada* here is an intransitive/unaccusative verb as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Argument Structure for *DP-V* Construction

Argument Structure DP-V   :   *[Bangunan itu]* **ada**.
            [THEME]
            Building that exist
            'The building exists.'

Ada

CATEGORY

V

SUBCAT   EXTERNAL DP
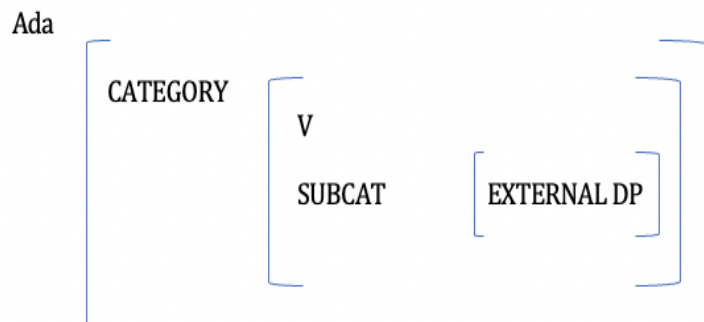
We have shown that the verb *ada* in the construct *DP-ada* is an unaccusative verb (23). Soh and Nomoto (2011) described unaccusative sentence as having its sole argument as its internal argument (in post-verbal position i.e.. an object position). The

argument then undergoes DP movement to appear in the subject position.

This is in line with Perlmutter's Unaccusative Hypothesis which specifies that an unaccusative verb has an internal argument. They also stated the verbal structure of an accusative sentence is headed by a v. The v of an unaccusative sentence lacks an external argument. Soh and Nomoto (2011) presented two pieces of evidence to show that Malay syntax is sensitive to the unergative/unaccusative dichotomy i.e. (i) the argument position of the class of accusative verbs and (ii) the patterns of causativization with the suffix *-kan*. In this study, we also use the *Causativization Test* to prove the accusative nature of *ada*. In this test, we proved that *ada* in the construct *DP-ada* is unaccusative by moving the subject to the complement position of the verb *ada* and introduced a new subject into the sentence as in (11).

Table 11. Causativization Test on *ada* In The DP-*ada* Construction

Data Tested	Output of Test
a. *Polarisasi itu **wujud** .* polarization that exist 'Polarization exists.' b. *Pameran parang itu **ada.*** exhibition machete that exist 'The machete exhibition exists.'	a. *Pihak pemerintah **mewujudkan** polarisasi itu.* party government ACT-exist-benfac polarization the "The government created the polarization.' b. *Pihak polis **ada**kan pameran parang penjenayah.* party police exist-benefac machete criminals 'The police organized a criminal machete exhibition.'

The *Causativization Test* on the verb *ada* in the *DP-ada* construct showed that the sentence is grammatical after the DP subject is moved to the complement position of *ada* and a new DP is introduced in the subject position. This proves that *ada* in the *DP-ada* construct is unaccusative. If it were unergative, the *Causativization Test* would not be successful. For example, in the sentence *Bayi itu menangis.* /*The baby is crying* and *Sarimah menari.* / *Sarimah is dancing*. If the *Causativization Test* is applied, it will produce ungrammatical sentences i.e. **Saya menangiskan bayi itu*/ **I cried for the baby* and **Pak Samad menarikan Sarimah./ *Pak Samad danced Sarimah*. This proves that the verbs *menangis/crying,* and *menari/dancing* are not unaccusative verbs. In fact, they are unergative verbs due to the fact that the *Causativization Test* could not be applied on them.

In conclusion, both patterns of the existential sentences showed that the verb *ada* has an internal argument only and no external argument. In the unaccusative pattern, the verb *ada* has only one internal *default* argument which is the DP that originated from the complement position of the V in the sentence. This DP is moved to the [Spec, Tense Phrase]. Meanwhile, in the ditransitive pattern, the V [DP] [PredP] *ada* has two arguments which are DP and PrepP. We will elaborate this further in another section.

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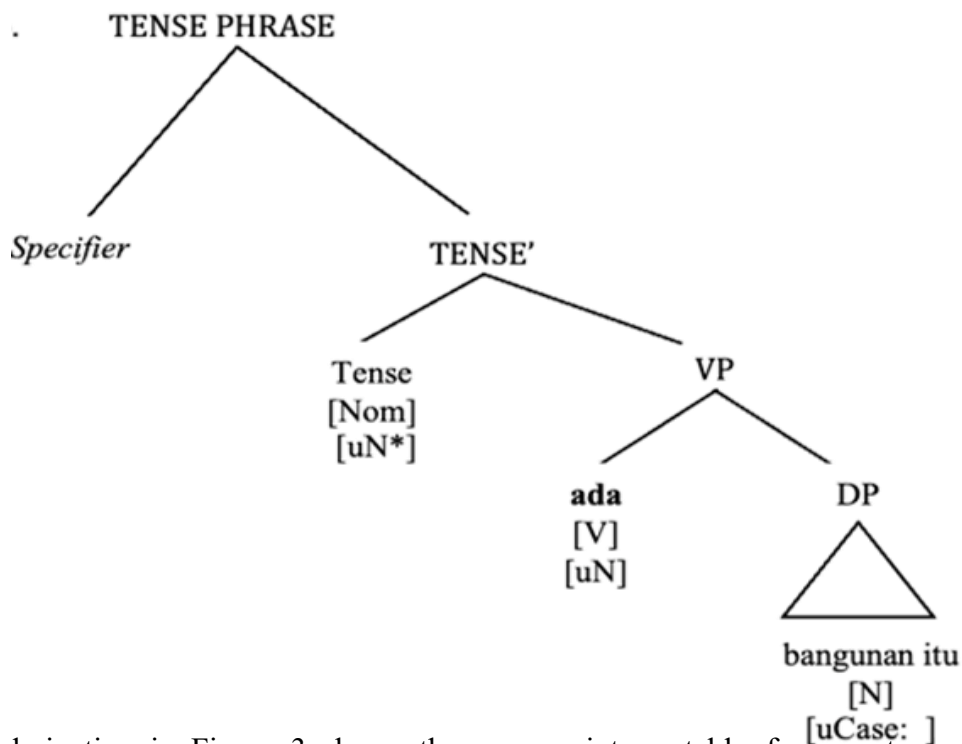**Derivation of the DP for existential unaccusative verb**

With the verb *ada* in the *DP-ada* construct being intransitive in nature or to be more specific unaccusative verb, we will describe the derivation of the sentence. We are assuming that the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ subject in DP-*V* is generated from the complement position of the verb (the internal argument position) in the syntactic structure. The DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ moves to occupy the [Spec, Tense Phrase] in order to fulfill the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) as in (23a).

(23) a. *[DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ Bangunan itu] ada.*
'The building exists.'

We illustrate the movement of the DP Definite *Bangunan itu /the building* from the complement position of the verb *ada* to the [Spec, Tense Phrase] position and thus produced the syntactic structure of the existential unaccusative *DP-ada* as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Movement of DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ to [Spec,TP] Position

The derivation in Figure 3 shows the structure of the existential *ada* accusative verb. The important thing to note is that the V *ada* is generated from the position of the head of VP. The verb *ada* possesses the feature category [V] and the feature selectional uninterpretable, [uN]. The DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* is in the complement position which carries the feature category [N]. The Tense Phrase (TenseP) is headed by the functional feature Tense, which carries the interpretable nominative case feature [Nom] and the strong feature uninterpretable EPP, [uN*]. The position [Spec, TenseP] is unfilled.

The basic principle that needs to be observed during the Merge operation is the *Full Interpretation Principle* that requires all uninterpretable features to be checked and deleted through the feature checking operation. In general, a feature checking process is carried out under the principle AGREE which emphasized the relations between Probe and *Goal*[5].
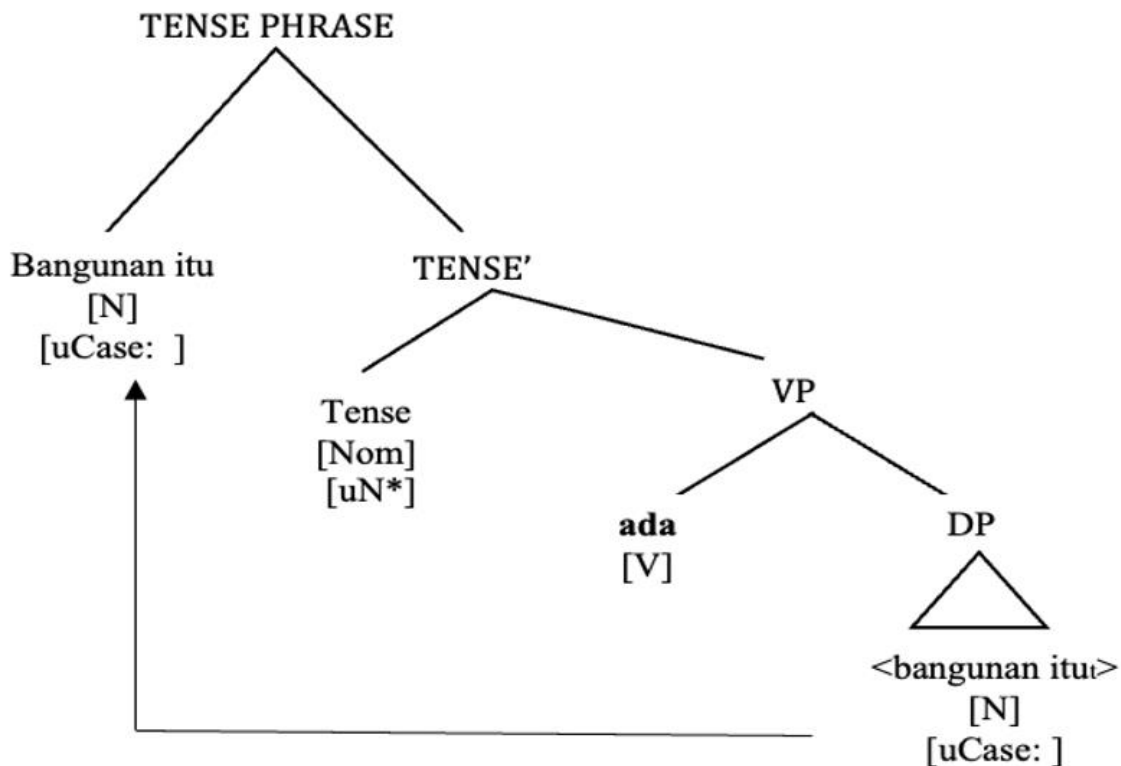
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[5] According to Chomsky (2001), *Probe* is an element which contains uninterpretable feature that looks for and detects a certain c-commanded *Goal* in its domain. The Goal is an element which contains features which matches with the needs of the Probe. For example, V *makan/eat* is the Probe because it contains uninterpretable feature [uN] whereas the N *nasi/rice* is the Goal because it contains the interpretable feature [N] that is needed by the V *makan/eat*. Therefore, the merge between VP *makan nasi/eat rice* adheres to the *Principle of Feature Matching* via *Agree* due to the fact that each element, Probe and Goal, need each other.

Before merging the V node and the DP_Definite *bangunan itu*, the external merge between the N *bangunan* dan Determiner *itu* occurs forming the DP_Definite *bangunan itu*, as shown in Figure 3. Subsequently, the V which carries the uninterpretable feature [uN] needs to be combined with the DP_Definite *bangunan itu* which has the interpretable feature [N] to form the VP *ada bangunan itu*. This merge enables the checking of the uninterpretable feature [uN] on V under the *AGREE* principle (Chomsky, 2008), whereby the agreeable feature will be checked and deleted. Thus, enabling the uninterpretable feature [uN] to be checked and deleted, as [uN̶].

Meanwhile the construction in (24b) demonstrates the external merge process. The construction in Figure 3 is still not completed because the *Definitive Restriction* which is imposed on DP blocks the DP_Definite from occupying the complement V position. Therefore, the DP_Definiete *bangunan itu* must move to the surface subject position in order for it to enable the sentence *Bangunan itu ada/The building exists* to be formed. This is supported by an assertion by Ouhalla (2001), Crystal (2008) and Zawawi and Sultan (2023) which stated that in the unaccusative V, a DP subject originates from the complement position of V internally. This basically means the unaccusative verb only marks for THEME as its theta role at the surface subject stage and ultimately will be moved from its usual complement position to the [Spes, TenseP] position (Zawawi and Sultan, 2023; Zawawi et al., 2022). The movement of DP_Definite *bangunan itu* from the complement position to the [Spec,TenseP] is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** The Movement of DP_Definite to [Spec,TP]

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There are two main factors which caused the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ to undergo the derivation as shown in Figure 4. The first factor is the requirement for feature checking of the strong uninterpretable EPP [uN*] feature by the Tense head. This is because the Tense head still has one uninterpretable feature which has not been checked and considered for deletion. The strong uninterpretable feature which has yet to be checked by Tense is not allowed to pass through the Spell-Out stage for it to reach the interface between Logical Form and Phonetic Form. According to the *Full Interpretation Principle*, all uninterpretable features must be checked and deleted before passing through Spell-Out (Chomsky, 2008). Thus, because DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* has the matching categorial uninterpretable feature [N], it is moved to [Spec, TenseP] by the specifier merge (S-Merge). This would enable the uninterpretable strong feature EPP [uN*] at the Tense node to be checked and deleted, [uN*]. The movement of DPDefinite in the unaccusative existential sentences is seen as parallel to the DP object movement in Malay passive[6] sentences.

The second factor which motivates the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ movement is the case assignment. Definite *itu* had absorbed the accusative case from the N *bangunan* through *AGREE* between N *bangunan* and definite *itu* and thus has caused the DP *bangunan itu* to lose its accusative case. Therefore, the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* has been left with no case assigned to it. This resulted in the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* to have an uninterpretable case which is checked and valued, that is feature [uCase:]. This situation caused the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* to have to look for a new position to enable the uninterpretable case feature to be checked and valued. Based on (19), the Tense head has an interpretable case feature, i.e., the Nominative Case [Nom]. This enabled the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* to be moved to the [Spec, TenseP] so that the uninterpretable case feature can be checked, valued and deleted [~~uCase~~: Nominative].

Therefore, both factors above were the main reasons which strongly motivated the DP$_{\text{Definite}}$ *bangunan itu* to economically move from the complement V to the [Spec,TenseP] position. The complete derivation is shown again in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The Complete Derivation of *DP-ada* Structure

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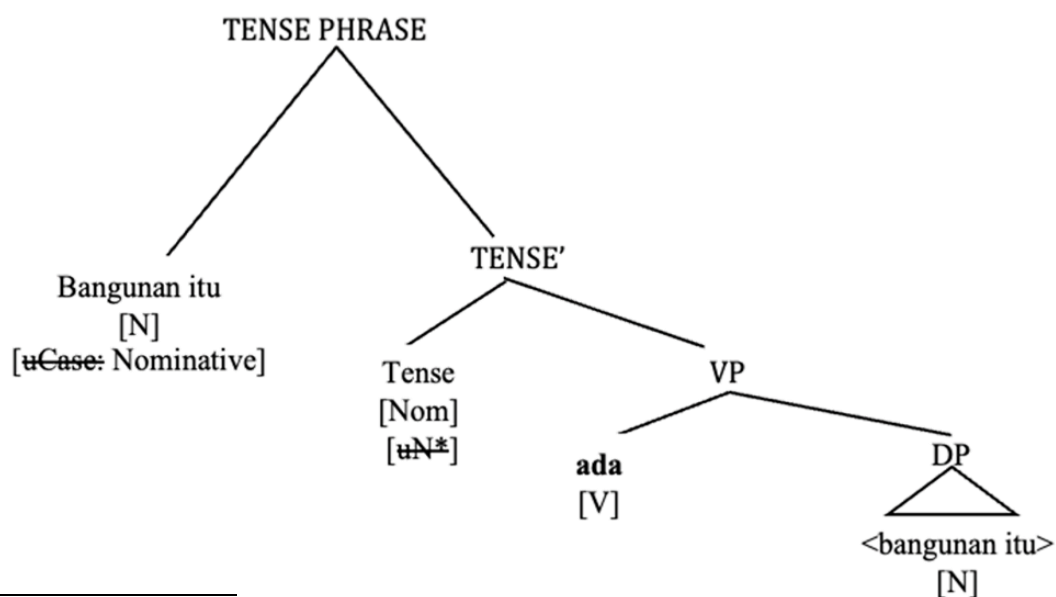
[6] Sultan et al. (2011) analyzed the movement of the DP at the complement position of the Vpassive in Malay. According to Sultan et al. (2011), the movement of the DP from [V, Comp] in the passive structure is motivated by the need to check the strong feature of the uninterpretable EPP [uN] feature possessed by the small v in the vP Shell.

Structure of the ditransitive existential sentence

The syntactic structure of the ditransitive existential sentence is analyzed according to the *vP Shell* analysis (Chomsky, 2015). This analysis is important to establish that the *ada*existential structure has two attributive types of transitivity i.e. the *ada*ditransitive and *ada*unaccusative. The distinction between the two *ada* is motivated by the position of the verb *ada* in the syntactic structure of the existential sentence. Example (24) shows the derivation of the sentence pattern of the ditransitive existential sentence for the *Ada-DP-PrepP* construct.

(24) a. *pro*[7] *KAda* [DP *rumah*] [PrepP *di kaki bukit*].
      exist house   at foot   hill
      'There exists a house at the foot of the hill.'

   b. Lexical Array List: *{k, pro, ada, rumah, di, kaki, bukit}*

In the lexicon, it is assumed that the sentence (24a) consists of six lexical items in the lexical array list (24b). According to Chomsky (2015), the small v is assumed to have existed as a lexical entry in the human's lexicon. These lexical items are then sent to the second stage i.e., the numeration stage. At the numeration stage, the development of the phrase will occur via the merge operations. The structure of the verb construct starts with the MERGE for the Verb *ada* as a head to merge with its complement V' to form the derivation as in Figure 6. The ditransitive verb *ada* has three features: the interpretable verb feature [V] and two selectional categorial uninterpretable features which are [uP] dan [uN]. The features [uP] and [uN] are two uninterpretable features which need to be obligatorily checked according to the *Principle of Feature Checking*. According to this principle, all uninterpretable features must be checked first before the derivation can proceed to the Spell-Out stage. If this does not happen, the sentence will be marked as ungrammatical at the interface of the Logical Form.
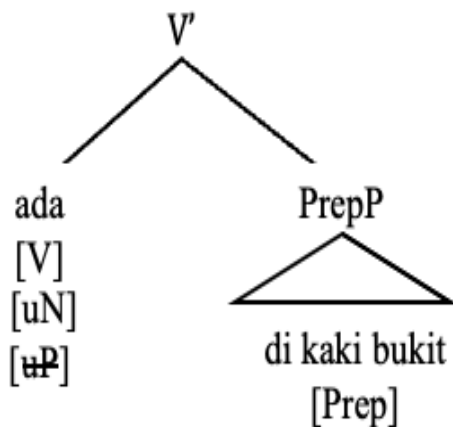
The feature checking process is carried out based on the sisterhood relations of the nodes in the derivation. For the purposes of feature checking, the PrepP *di kaki bukit* with the interpretable feature [Prep] is selected from the lexical array and merged with the verb head *ada*. Feature matching will occur with the uninterpretable feature of [uP] at the V *ada* where it will be checked and deleted, [uP]. The merge will enable the V *ada* to theta-mark and assign thematic role LOCATIVE to PrepP *di kaki bukit /at the foot of the hill*. The preposition *di/at* then case marks *the* OBJECTIVE case to the *DP kaki bukit/foot of the hill*. The merge between these two nodes will result in the formation of the maximal projection *V'* as demonstrated in Figure 6.

The second step is the formation of the VP. At this point, the node V' is needed to merge with the DP to form the VP. As shown in Figure 6, there is another feature of the C-select uninterpretable feature [uN] on Verb *ada* which has not been checked and will be projected onto V' as in Figure 7.

[7] *pro* which occurs at the [Spec, TenseP] in this study is based on the analysis of Kader (2003). There were discussions regarding the suitability of *pro* as a null subject in Malay. However, this discussion is not taken up in this article. We assume *pro* in (21) and is positioned as *default* subject in order to simplify the analysis of sentences with no overt subject in Malay.

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Figure 6. Merge Operation Between V *ada* and PrepP

For that purpose, the V' needs to merge with an element which has the interpretable feature [N]. The DP *rumah/house* is a possible element which has the relevant interpretable feature [N] and is suitable to be merged via c-selection of feature [uN] to form the VP. The DP *rumah/house* in the lexicon will be selected and moved to the [Spec, VP] position and merged with the V'. Next, the *Principle of Feature Checking* will be applied to ensure that the uninterpretable feature [uN] on V' could be checked based on sister-relation and will be deleted before Spell-Out. The feature c-selection uninterpretable feature [uN] on V' will be checked and is deleted, [uN], as shown in the derivation in Figure 7.

Figure 7. The Uninterpretable Feature [uN] on V' was Deleted
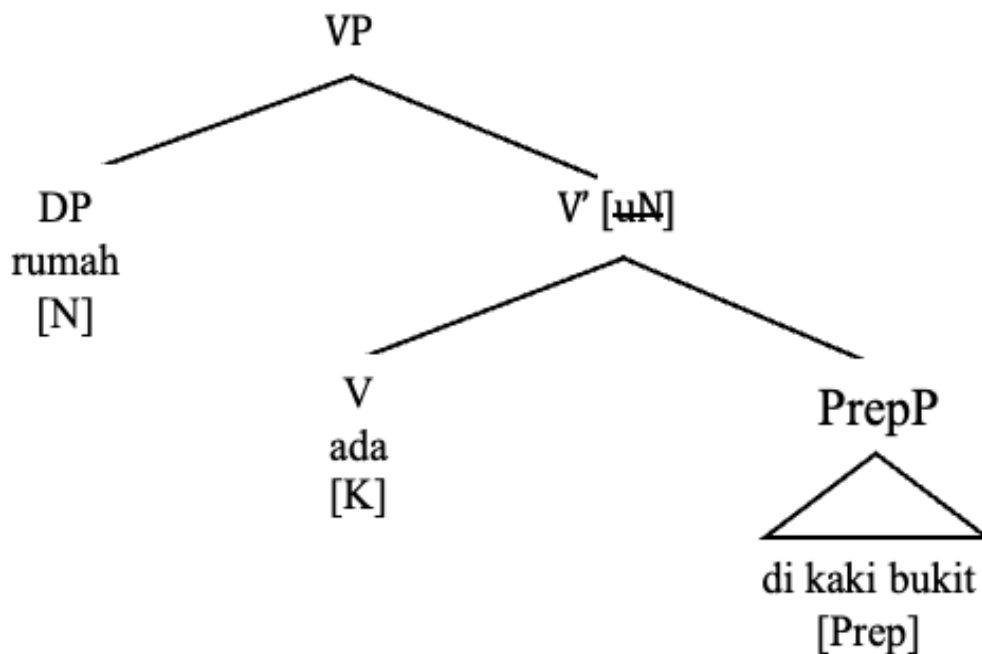
In order to fulfill the layers of the projection of the vP shell, the VP *Rumah ada di kaki bukit /The house is at the foot of the hill* is merged. The merge combined the VP and the v to form v' as in Figure 8. The small v (v) formed a combined structure and is then divided into 2 nodes – one is the V*ada* node and the other one is the v (small v) which contains uninterpretable feature [uTense:], accusative case feature, and the EPP c-select

uninterpretable [uN]. The insertion of the V*ada* is due to the movement of V*ada* from the V position. The movement of V*ada* from

V' to v (small v) leaves a trace <ada> in the extraction site as in Figure 8.

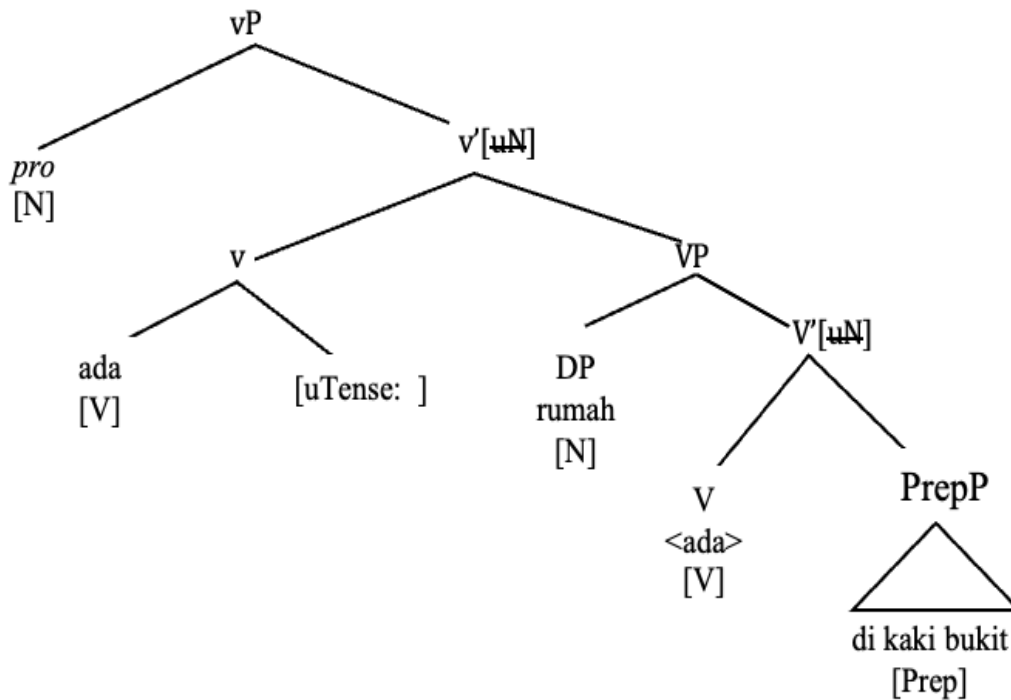**Figure 8.** The Movement of big V Node to Small v Node
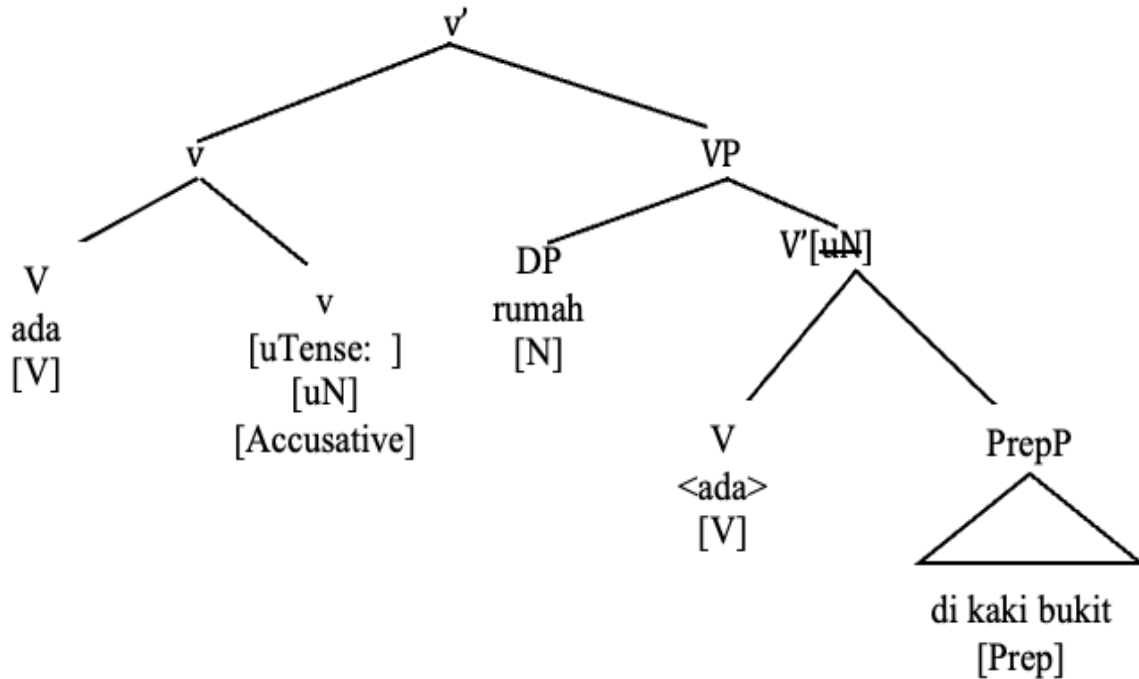
The V *ada* is moved from the position of V and is then attached to the small v node to fulfill the theta marking requirement of the *Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis-UTAH*), Chomsky (2015). The node V*ada* was able to theta mark the thematic role LOCATIVE on the PrepP which also functions as the indirect object of the verb *ada*. After that, V*ada* needs to move and merge with v (small v) to enable another argument, i.e. the DP *rumah/house* to receive its theta role THEME. At the same time, the v (small v) node also has another feature, the accusative case feature which has assigned ACCUSATIVE case to the DP *rumah/house*.

As shown in Figure 8, there is another feature i.e., the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN] at the v (small v) node which has yet to be checked. To enable the EPP to be checked and deleted, this feature will need to be

projected to v' to allow VP to be formed by merging v' and the DP subject. However, we found that there was no overt subject in the V-DP-PrepP existential sentence. This has violated the *Extended Projection Principle* which requires that all sentences must have a subject. To solve this problem, we adopted the analysis of Kader (2003) where he proposed a null category *pro* to be inserted in the subject position. The null category pro has the category feature [N] and will merge with v' which has the uninterpretable feature [uN] to form the VP node. The empty category *pro* then occupies the [Spec,VP], a position specifically for the subject of the VP. Therefore, a matching of features for the combination of *pro* and v' is done to allow the uninterpretable feature [uN] to be checked and deleted, [uN], as in Figure 9.

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**Figure 9.** The Merge Operation Between Null Subject *pro* and v' Projection

The derivation is continued with choosing the candidate node to merge with the VP node to produce the Tense' node as in Figure 10. As shown in the tree diagram, the present tense is chosen to be the complement of the VP due to the fact that in constructing the vP there are uninterpretable features which have yet to be valued and checked i.e. [uTense:]. In order to check the functional category i.e., the present tense, the agreement process (Agree) is used, whereby the checking of feature is done, and the assignment of value is carried out. According to Chomsky (2001) and Hartmann (2008), a certain feature will acquire the value from the corresponding interpretable feature. The Tense node is the head node for the tense feature for the whole sentence. The tense node in the derivation has three features: interpretable tense feature [present tense], nominative case and the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN]. Accordingly, the checking of uninterpretable feature [uTense:] via the agreement process is carried out since the interpretable feature is still governed via c-command and is matched. The Tense [present

tense] node which c-commands [uTense:] will check the features carried by feature [present tense] to produce the feature [uTense:Present]. After it has been valued via c-command, the uninterpretable feature will be checked and deleted, [uTense: present] as shown in Figure 10.

As shown in Figure 10, the tense node carries another feature which has yet to be checked, i.e., the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN*]. In order to avoid violation of the feature checking requirement, the feature will be projected to the Tense' node as in Figure 11. In order to enable the uninterpretable feature EPP [[uN*] at Tense node to be checked, an empty category *pro* which has the interpretable feature [N] and can occupy the [Spec, TenseP] position will be chosen and moved to the [Spec, TenseP] position. The movement of *pro* from the specifier of vP will leave a trace and *pro* will have the interpretable feature [N]. The interpretable feature [N] will be able to check the sister relation nodes and delete the uninterpretable feature [uN] which will then be marked as [uN].

Figure 10. The Uninterpretable Feature [uTense] in Small v Node was Checked and Deleted
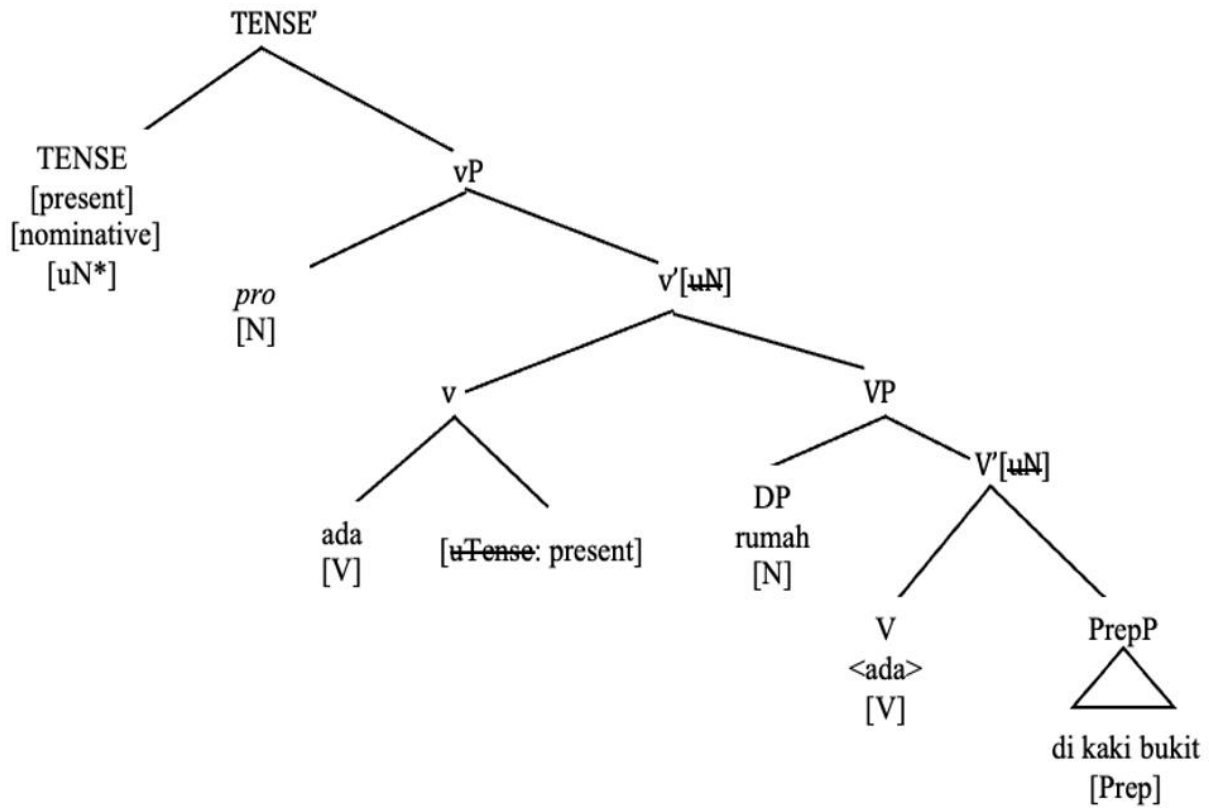
In addition, the Tense feature has another feature that is the nominative case feature. This case feature is marked on the subject *pro*, the covert empty subject of the existential sentence. Finally, there is no more uninterpretable feature which has not been checked and deleted. This is the last stage for the syntactic structure of the existential sentence with the construct V-DP-PrepP *Ada rumah di kaki bukit/ There exists a house at the foot of the hill*. This stage then will allow the structure in Figure 11 to be sent to Spell-Out to form the grammatical sentence *Ada*

rumah di kaki bukit/ There exists a house at the foot of the hill.

Structure of the unaccusative existential sentence

As discussed in the previous section, existential verbs in Malay are unique in that they can occur in the form of an unaccusative verb subject to their position in the the DP-V sentence where the V follows a DP. This section will illustrate the derivation process involving the existential unaccusative verb to prove that the subject in the construction is generated from the complement position of the verb as in (25).

(25)   a. *[[DPBangunan itu] **ada**].*
         Building that exist
        'That building exists.'
    a. List of lexical array = *{bangunan, itu, ada}*

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Figure 11. The Complete Derivation of *V-DP-PrepP* Construction
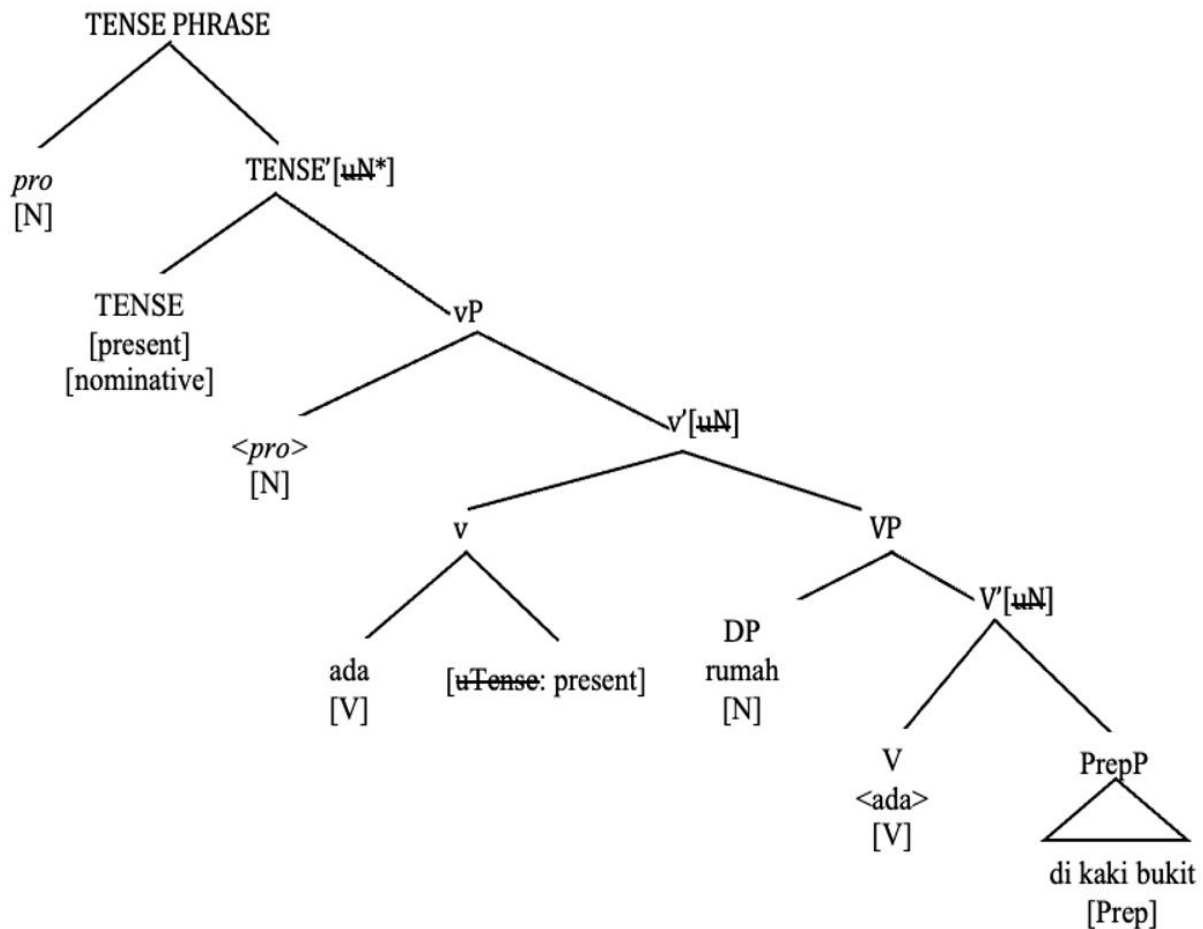

At the lexicon level, the existential sentence with the unaccusative verb (25a) consists of lexical items from the lexical array in (25b). These lexical items are sent to the next level which is the numeration level. At the numeration level, the merge operation of these lexical items occurred to form the VP node. The operation for the formation of the VP node starts with the selection of the V *ada/exist* which has two features: categorial feature [V] and the c-select uninterpretable feature [uN]. The [uN] feature is an uninterpretable feature which must be checked based on the *Principle of Feature Checking*. The N *bangunan/building* and the determiner *itu/that* merged to form the DP *bangunan itu/ the building*.

The DP *bangunan itu/the building* has two features: categorial feature [N] and the uninterpretable feature [uCase:] which needs to be checked. Therefore, the DP *bangunan itu/the building* which has the interpretable feature [N] will be chosen from the lexicon and merged with the node V *ada/exist*. This will enable the uninterpretable [uN] feature at node V *ada/exist* to be checked and deleted, [u̶N̶].

This is possible as the two nodes V *ada/exist* and the DP *bangunan itu/the building* have sister node relationship between them because they share the same mother node i.e., the VP. This merge produced a structure which has the DP *bangunan itu/the building* in the position of the complement to the V *ada/exist* and they combined to form the VP as represented in Figure 12. The V *ada/exist* is a head which will assign the thematic role THEME to the DP *bangunan itu/the building*.

Figure 12. The Merge Operation Between V *ada* and DP
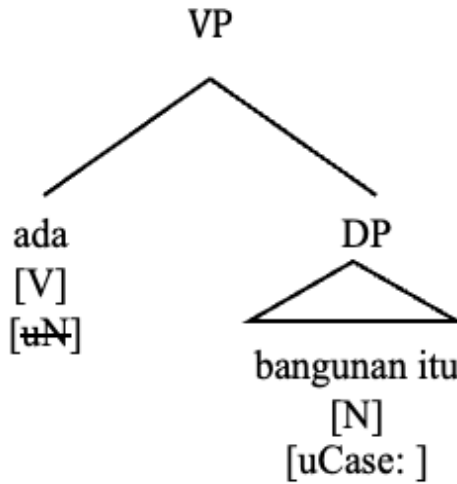
Note that the VP has its head V and a complement but there is no specifier position which is a structural requirement for the unaccusative verb. The DP *bangunan itu/the building* will be assigned the theta-role THEME by the head V node. Intrinsically, the DP needs to be given its theta role by the lexical head V *ada* and s-select (specifier select) the DP *bangunan itu/the building* as an argument of the V. However, the DP cannot be valued for accusative case due to the absence of the specifier position.

The next process is the selection of the Tense which is a functional category to be merged with the VP to form the maximal projection Tense'. According to Chomsky (2001), Sultan and Suhaimi (2012), Matthews (2007), Salleh (1995) and Zawawi et al. (2022) tense basically has three features: present tense feature, nominative case feature and the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN*]. The combination will provide the following output as in Figure 13.

**Figure 13.** Merge Operation Between Tense Node and VP Node
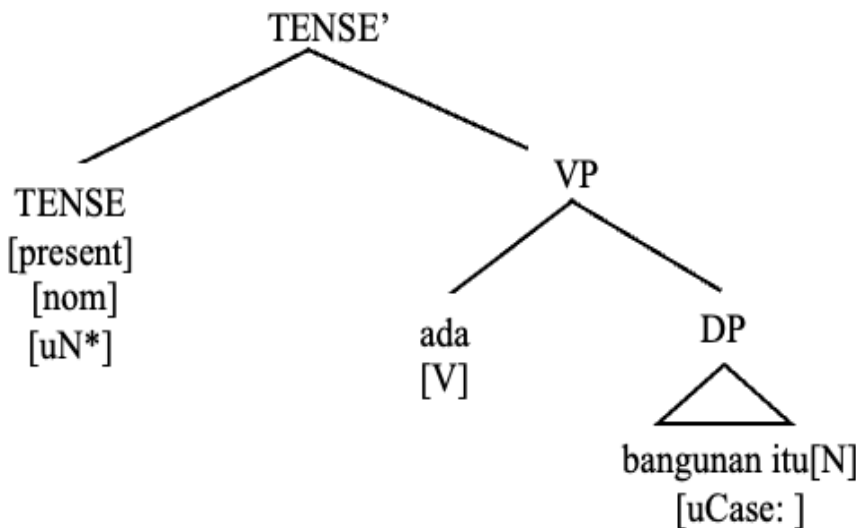
The fact is that the EPP uninterpretable feature [uN*] is not yet checked at this point, therefore the feature will be projected to the Tense' node. It is also noted that the DP *bangunan itu/the building* has another feature i.e. the uninterpretable case feature [uCase:]

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which is not checked and valued. This [uCase:] must be checked and deleted to avoid the derivation to crash. Therefore, the DP *bangunan itu/the building* must be moved to another position to enable the feature [uCase:] to be checked, valued and deleted. The Tense' node still has the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN*] which has yet to be

checked, and this feature will attract the DP to move and be in the position of [Spec, TenseP]. The matching can be done when the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN*] at the Tense' node can be checked and deleted, [uN*] and merged with the DP *bangunan itu/the building* that has the interpretable categorial feature of [N] as in Figure 14.

**Figure 14.** The Movement of DP From Complement VP to [Spec,TP] Position
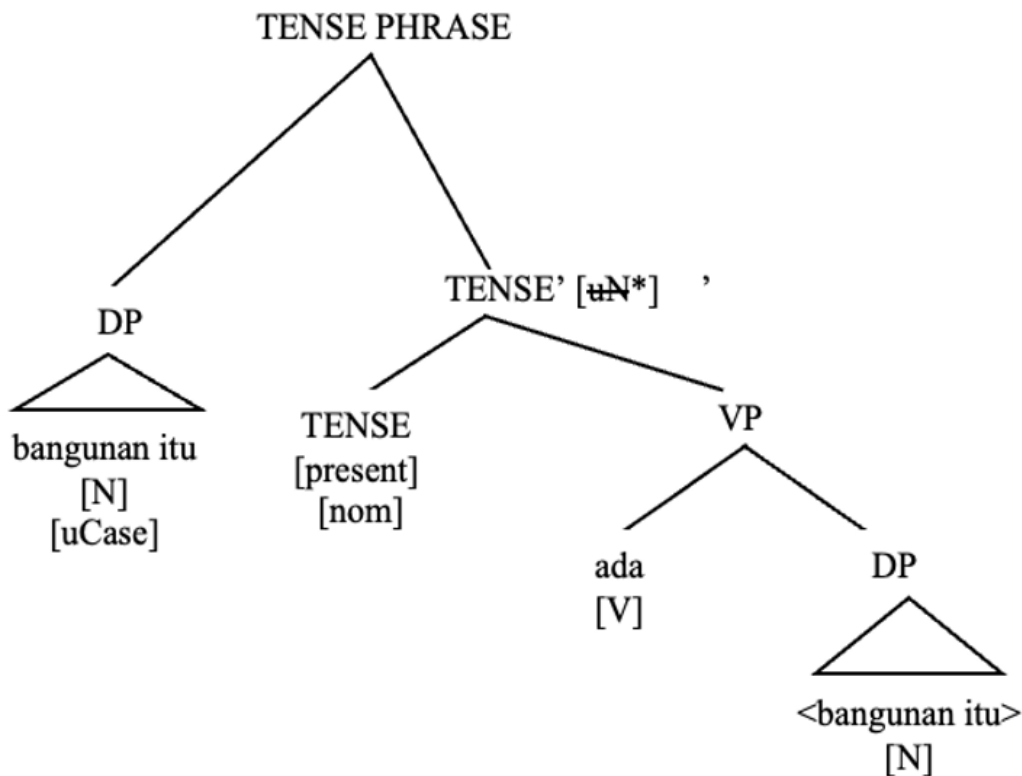
The output of the merge between the DP *bangunan itu/the building* with the categorial feature [N] and Tense' with the uninterpretable EPP feature [uN*] enabled the feature to be checked and deleted, [uN*]. However, note that the DP *bangunan itu/the building* has an uninterpretable feature [uCase]. This feature needs to be checked and deleted to avoid the derivation from crashing. Therefore, the uninterpretable feature [uCase] needs to be checked and valued through a c-command based on operation AGREE. Notice also that the Tense node has an interpretable case feature [Nominative] which is suitable and can be checked, valued and given the

[uCase] feature to the DP node *bangunan itu/the building*. Therefore, the case feature for the DP can be given nominative case and is further checked and deleted through the c-command, [uCase], as demonstrated in Figure 15.

This step is the last stage of the merge of the DP-V existential sentence *Bangunan itu ada* and it has fulfilled the EPP as the sentence now has the subject position filled at [Spec, TenseP]. The figure in (30d) is legitimate and will be sent to Spell-Out and a grammatical existential sentence will be produced.

Figure 15. The Complete Derivation of *DP-ada* Construction
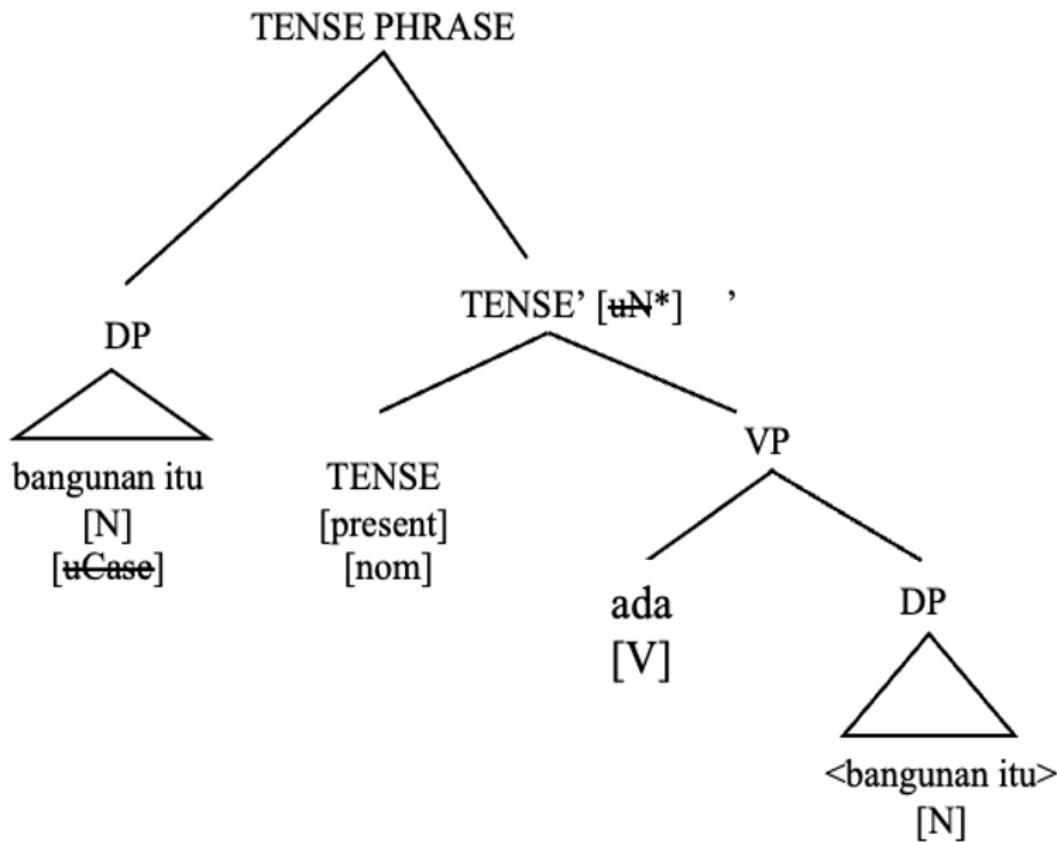
Concluding remarks

This study has described the phenomena of existential sentences in Malay based on the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 2015). We highlighted that Malay, contrary to previous studies, has three existential verbs namely *ada*, *wujud* and *terdapat*. Previous studies had solely focused on *ada*. From the DBP online corpus database, we discovered two other verbs *wujud* and *terdapat* which are also used to convey the meaning of existentiality. However, since they can be used interchangeably and share similar characteristics, we placed our focus on the existential verb *ada* to represent the other two verbs as well. We found that there are two types of existential syntactic structures for the verb *ada* that is *V-DP-PrepP* and the *DP-V*. We proved that the V*existential* has two types of transitivity: it occurs as a ditranstive verb in the construct *V-DP-PrepP* and as an accusative verb in the *DP-V* construct.

We rejected the claim by previous researchers that existential *ada* is an inverse construct as both existential constructs exhibited different syntactic structure patterns. This article has provided an explanatory adequate description and argumentation on the existential sentences in Malay in terms of the existential verbs of *ada* and its variant *wujud* and *terdapat*, its syntactic structures and the transitivity variants involved. It is hoped that this article has shed more light on existential sentences in Malay and can benefit future researchers, students and act as an impetus for further research.

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