

Intransitive-like *suru* 'do' in Japanese and '*ber-* + N' in Indonesian

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- 'Ber- + N' in Indonesian resembles intransitive-like *suru* 'do' in Japanese.
- Questions:
 - ① To what extent do the nouns occurring the two overlap?
 - ② Does the analysis of the latter shed any light on that of the former?
- Answers:
 - ① Both take nouns denoting external percepts.
 - ② *Suru* takes nouns denoting illnesses whereas 'ber- + N' does not.
 - ③ Despite their initial resemblance, the two should be analysed differently.

Suru in Japanese (1)

Suru is basically a transitive verb meaning 'to do'.

Transitive *suru*

- (1) Saikin musuko ga mainiti **arubaito** o **si**-tei-ru.
recently son NOM every.day part.time.job ACC do-IPFV-NPST
'Recently my son has been **working part-time** every day.'
- (2) Titi ga totuzen, ookina **kusyami** o **si**-ta.
father NOM suddenly big sneeze ACC do-PST
'Suddenly, my father **sneezed** loudly.'
- (3) Saburoo kun wa itumo, totuzen henna **kao** o **su**-ru.
Saburoo TITLE TOP always suddenly strange face ACC do-NPST
'Saburo always suddenly **makes a strange face.**' (Pardeshi 2023)

Suru in Japanese (2)

Some transitive *suru* examples correspond to *ber-* verbs.

Transitive *suru* and corresponding *ber-* verbs

- (4) hanasi o su-ru \approx berbicara, bercerita
story ACC do-NPST
'to talk, tell a story'
- (5) supootu o su-ru \approx berolahraga
sports ACC do-NPST
'to play sports'
- (6) masuku o su-ru \approx bermasker
mask ACC do-NPST
'to wear a mask'
- (7) siroi ha o si-tei-ru \approx bergigi putih
white tooth ACC do-IPFV-NPST
'to have white teeth'

Suru in Japanese (3)

- *Suru* also has an intransitive-like use, meaning ‘can be perceived’ (Pardeshi 2023).
- This use has received much less attention than the transitive uses.

Intransitive-like *suru*

- (8) Kono hana wa/kara ii **kaori ga** su-ru. (cf. *berbau*)
this flower TOP/from good smell NOM SURU-NPST
‘This flower **smells** good/**A** good **smell can be perceived** from this flower.’
- (9) Huto hukituna **yokan ga** su-ru.
suddenly ominous premonition NOM SURU-NPST.
‘Suddenly, I **have an ominous premonition.**’

Hasegawa, Kanta. 2025. *Nihongo niokeru Doushi Aru to Suru to Kyoukisuru Meishi no Jouken* [Conditions for Nouns Cooccurring with the Verbs Aru and Suru in Japanese]. MA thesis, TUFS.

- Examines nouns co-occurring with the verbs *aru* 'to be, exist' (cf. *ada*) and *suru* 'to do' in Japanese in different patterns:
 - ① ... *ni* (DAT) N *ga* (NOM) *aru* 'N is/exists at ...'
 - ② ... *de* (at) N *ga* (NOM) *aru* 'N is/happens at ...'
 - ③ N *ga* (NOM) *suru* 'N can be perceived' ← This study's focus
 - ④ N *o* (ACC) *suru* 'to do N'
- Proposes descriptive generalizations on the possible/impossible nouns.
- Investigates to what extent the generalizations hold also in 'ber- + N' in Indonesian.
 - ▶ Can Indonesian facts be understood better from the Japanese perspective?
 - ▶ Can/should 'ber- + N' be understood as 'N can be perceived' (intransitive) instead of 'to have/emit N' (transitive)?

Nouns co-occurring with intransitive-like *suru*

The intransitive-like *suru* takes nouns denoting objects of perception, which can be external or internal.

- **External percepts:** outside stimuli perceived through the five senses.
e.g. sound, voice, smell, taste, touch, sign, atmosphere
- **Internal percepts:** physical and mental states experienced by the speaker.
e.g. feeling, hunch, dizziness, headache, palpitation, sickness

External percepts

Nouns denoting external percepts

- (10) Humikiri kara **oto** ga suru/*aru.
railroad.crossing from **sound** NOM SURU/exist
'There's a noise coming from the railroad crossing.'
- (11) Gyouza no **nioi** ga suru/*aru.
dumpling GEN **smell** NOM SURU/exist
'It smells like dumplings.'
- (12) Namamono kara henna **azi** ga suru/*aru.
raw.food from strange **taste** NOM SURU/exist
'Raw food has a strange taste.'
- (13) Sono huku wa sarasaratosisita **tezawari** ga suru/*aru.
the clothes TOP smooth **touch** NOM SURU/exist
'The clothes feel smooth to the touch.'

Exception: *hikari* 'light'

Hikari 'light' is an external percept but does not take *suru* but *aru*.

Hikari 'light'

- (14) Dookutu no deguti kara **hikari** ga aru/*suru.
cave GEN exit from **light** NOM exist/SURU
'There is light coming from the exit of the cave.'

Internal percepts (1): Feelings and thoughts

- (15) Kotoba no tukaikata ga tigua **ki** ga suru/*aru.
words GEN usage NOM wrong **feeling** NOM SURU/exist
'I feel like the words are used wrongly.'
- (16) Dokoka kanasii **kimoti** ga suru/?aru.
somewhat sad **feeling** NOM SURU/exist
'I feel a little sad.'
- (17) Sono hyoogen ni **iwakan** ga suru/aru.
the expression DAT **uncomfortable.feeling** NOM SURU/exist
'I feel uncomfortable with the expression.'
- (18) Sesuzi ga kooru yoona **omoi** ga suru/?aru.
spine NOM freeze like **experience** NOM SURU/exist
'A chill runs down my spine.'

cf. *yokan* 'premonition' (9)

Internal percepts (2): Illnesses

Nouns denoting illnesses

- (19) Saikin yoku { **memai** / **zutuu** / **dooki** / **tatikurami** }
recently often **dizziness** **headache** **palpitation** **giddiness**
ga suru/*aru.
NOM SURU/exist
'I've been {dizzy/getting headaches/palpitations/dizzy standing up} a lot these days.'
- (20) Saikin yoku { **hakike** / **miminari** / tuyoi **itami** } ga
recently often **sickness** **ringing** severe **pain** NOM
suru/(?)aru.
SURU/exist
'I've been {nauseous/having ringing in my ears/experiencing severe pain} a lot these days.'

Illnesses that are not internally perceived

- Not all nouns denoting illnesses can co-occur with *suru*.
- Illnesses that are not internally perceived but objectively observed/measured/diagnosed do not co-occur with *suru*.

Nouns denoting illnesses that are not internally perceived

- (21) Haha wa kinoo { **syukketu** / **netu** / **sinzoo**hossa } ga
mother TOP yesterday **bleeding** **fever** **heart.attack** NOM
at/*si-ta.
exist/SURU-PST
'My mother had {bleeding/a fever/a heart attack} yesterday.'

Six categories of 'ber- + N' by Sneddon et al. (2010)

① 'have, own [base]' (1.170)

e.g. *berguna, berisi, berduri, berumur, bermaksud, bernama, beristeri, berbau, berdebu, beranak, berhasil, berpendapat*

② 'to use, wear, travel by [base]' (1.171)

e.g. *bertopi, berdasi, berjasa, bersepatu, berbedak, berkuda, berperahu, bersepeda*

③ 'produce [base]' (1.172)

e.g. *berkeringat, bertelur, beranak, berbuah, berteriak, berkata, berbohong, berdesing, berkokok, berderit, berbunyi, bercerita*

④ Two people stand in a reciprocal relationship (1.173)

e.g. *berteman, bermusuhan, bersahabat, berkenalan, berkerabat*

⑤ Refer to work which is regularly performed or done for a living (1.174)

e.g. *berdagang, berkebun, berkuli, berladang, bersawah, bertani, bertukang, beternak*

⑥ 'engage in the activity specified by the base' (1.175)

e.g. *berolah raga, bertingju, bergulat, berpiknik, berperang, berbelanja, bertamasya, berdarmawisata*

Reference to noun types by Sneddon et al. (2010)

The question of which nouns are compatible/incompatible with *ber-* is an aspect not covered well by Sneddon et al. (2010).

① 'have, own [base]' (1.170)

None

② 'to use, wear, travel by [base]' (1.171)

None

③ 'produce [base]' (1.172)

"Many of these refer to production of the sound indicated by the base"

④ Two people stand in a reciprocal relationship (1.173)

Nouns denoting a reciprocal relationship

⑤ Refer to work which is regularly performed or done for a living (1.174)

None

⑥ 'engage in the activity specified by the base' (1.175)

"[M]any of these are based on nouns referring to types of sport"

Our modest attempt

- This study describes which nouns compatible with the intransitive-like *suru* are also compatible with *ber-*.
- By doing so, it reveals which nouns are incompatible with *ber-*, an aspect not covered in grammars such as Sneddon et al. (2010).
- **Data:** The Indonesian subcorpora from the Leipzig Corpora Collection (Goldhahn et al. 2012) available on MALINDO Conc (Nomoto et al. 2018). <https://malindo.aa-ken.jp/conc/>

Table: Corpus size (<https://malindo.aa-ken.jp/>)

Subcorpus	Sentence	Token
IND MXD2012	300,000	5,428,067
IND WEB2012	300,000	5,540,573
IND WKP2016	300,000	5,634,138

Results

External percepts	Internal percepts	
	Feelings & thoughts	Illnesses
✓ <i>berbunyi,</i> <i>berbau,</i> <i>berasa</i> (taste), <i>bersinar, bercahaya</i> ¹ <i>bergelagat,</i> <i>bersuasana</i>	✓ <i>berasa</i> (feel), <i>berpikiran,</i> <i>berfirasat</i>	✗ <i>*berpening,</i> <i>*berpusing,</i> <i>*bermual,</i> <i>*bersakit</i> <i>kepala/jantung/...</i> , <i>*berdemam</i>

Note: Examples of forms marked with * can be found via Google searches, but their occurrences are rare or used with a different sense (e.g. *demam* for 'boom' rather than 'fever').

¹*Hikari* 'light' in Japanese is incompatible with *suru* (**hikari ga suru*).

Examples: External percepts

Ber- + *Ns* denoting external percepts

- (22) Roda **berbunyi** berderit-derit.²
'The wheels squeaked.'
- (23) Kuenya **berbau** buah mangga.
'The cake smells of mango.'
- (24) ... dia sudah **bergelagat** aneh sejak pagi.
'... s/he's been acting strange since morning.'
- (25) Namun, banyak toko yang telah diberi hiasan **bersuasana** Natal.
'However, many shops have been decorated with Christmas motifs.'

²See Hasegawa (2025) for the sources of this and the following Indonesian example sentences.

Non-eventive '*ber-* + N'

- While the eventive '*ber-* + N' correspond to the intransitive-like *suru*, some of the same *ber-* forms also have a non-eventive, possessive meaning.
- The possessive '*ber-* + N' can be paraphrased by '*memiliki* N'.
- It usually corresponds to 'N *ga aru* (exist, have)' in Japanese.

Possessive '*ber-* + N'

- (26) Tanaman ini memiliki bau seperti bumbu, dan **berasa** pedas tajam seperti lidah tergigit.
'This plant has a spice-like smell, and a sharp, spicy taste as if your tongue was bitten.'

No possessive use was attested in the corpus for *berbunyi*, *berbau* and *bersinar*.

Examples: Internal percepts denoting feelings and thoughts

Ber- + *Ns* denoting feelings and thoughts

- (27) Yang pertama penempatan bayangan tokohnya **berasa** aneh.
'First, the placement of the character's shadow feels strange.'
- (28) Cameron justru **berpikiran** sebaliknya.
'Cameron thinks the opposite.'
- (29) **Berfirasat** buruk, merasa bernasib sial, atau meramal nasib buruk karena melihat burung, binatang lain, atau apa saja.
'Having a bad hunch, feeling unlucky, or predicting bad luck because of seeing a bird, another animal, or anything else.'³
(the only instance of *berfirasat* in the corpus)

³<http://1jamuntukkebahagiaanduniaakhirat.blogspot.com/>

Internal percepts denoting illnesses

'N *ga suru*' with nouns denoting illnesses in Japanese is expressed by other means than *ber-*:

- ① The same form but as an adjective (e.g. *pening*, *mual*, *sakit kepala*)
- ② As the complement of verbs such as *terasa* and *mengalami*

Ways of expressing the perception of illnesses

- (30) Akhir-akhir ini, dia sering **pening** dan hampir pingsan.
'Lately, s/he often has headaches and almost faints.'
- (31) Seakan melayang sampai-sampai **terasa sakit kepala**.
'It feels like floating to the point of having a headache.'
- (32) Perawat sering **mengalami pusing, lelah**, tidak bisa istirahat karena beban kerja yang tinggi dan menyita waktu.
'Nurses often experience dizziness, fatigue, and cannot rest due to high and time-consuming workloads.'⁴

⁴<http://andaners.wordpress.com/2010/11/28/>

Synopsis (repeated)

- 'Ber- + N' in Indonesian resembles intransitive-like *suru* 'do' in Japanese.
- Questions:
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'can be perceived'
- Answers:
 - ① Both take nouns denoting external percepts.
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 - ③ Despite their initial resemblance, the two should be analysed differently.

The semantics of 'ber- + N' resembling intransitive *suru*

The relevant *ber-* verbs belong to Sneddon et al.'s (2010) categories 1 ('have, own [base]) or 3 ('produce [base]').

Paraphrases by 'have N' and 'produce N'

- (33)
- a. *berbunyi*: produce sound → 'sound'
 - b. *berbau*: have/produce smell → 'smell'
 - c. *berasa*: (i) have/produce a taste → 'taste'
(ii) have a feeling → 'feel'
 - d. *bersinar*, *bercayaha*: produce light → 'shine'
 - e. *bergelagat*: produce a sign → 'act, behave'
 - f. *bersuasana*: have/produce an atmosphere
→ 'having/showing an atmosphere'
 - g. *berpikiran*: have a thought → 'think'
 - h. *berfirasat*: have a hunch → 'have a hunch'

Compositional analysis (1): Source of 'have' and 'produce'

- We agree with Beavers and Udayana (2023) that the predicative meaning such as 'have' and 'produce' comes from the nominal stem.
- × *Ber-* means 'have' and 'produce'.
- If *ber-* meant 'have', the incompatibility of nouns denoting illnesses with *ber-* would remain unexplained.

memiliki sakit jantung but not **bersakit jantung*

- (34) Ayah tidak sadarkan diri sejak sakit jantungnya kambuh, ia memang **memiliki sakit jantung** sejak menikah padahal usianya masih sangat muda.
'Father has been unconscious since his heart disease relapsed, he has had heart disease since he got married even though he was still very young.'⁵

⁵<http://agnesdavonar.gerychocolatos.com/?p=3034>

Compositional analysis (2): The role of *ber-*

Beavers and Udayana (2023)

- *Ber-* is a middle voice marker (Kemmer 1993; Kardana 2011).
- Middle voice suppresses one argument (cross-linguistically).

(35) [TP Tono [vP *ber-* [vP jual mobil merah]]]
'Tono sells red cars.'⁶ (Beavers and Udayana 2023: (52))

(36) Semantics (simplified)

- a. $[[VP]] = \lambda x \lambda y \lambda e [\text{sell}(y, x, e) \wedge \text{car}(x) \wedge \text{red}(x)]$ ⁷
- b. $[[\text{ber-}]] + (36a) = \underline{\quad} \lambda y \lambda e [\text{sell}(y, \underline{z}, e) \wedge \text{car}(\underline{z}) \wedge \text{red}(\underline{z})]$
(suppression of *x*)
- c. $[[TP]] = \exists e [\text{sell}(t, \underline{z}, e) \wedge \text{car}(\underline{z}) \wedge \text{red}(\underline{z})]$
- d. $\exists e \exists z [\text{sell}(t, z, e) \wedge \text{car}(z) \wedge \text{red}(z) \wedge z \neq t]$
(existential closure of \underline{z} , disjoint/non-reflexive reading)

⁶The syntax is simplified. Original translation: 'Tono sold his red car.'

⁷The pseudo-object *mobil merah* is incorporated. Hence, it does not saturate *x*.

The case of 'ber + N'

- (37) [TP Kuenya [vP ber- [NP bau buah mangga]]] (= (23))
'The cake smells of mango.'
- (38) [[bau buah mangga]]
a. $\lambda x[\text{mango-smell}(x)] \leftarrow$ cannot compose with *ber-*
b. $\lambda x \lambda y \lambda e[\text{have/produce}(y, x, e) \wedge \text{mango-smell}(x)]$
- (39) a. [[ber-]] + (38b) =
 $\lambda y \lambda e[\text{have/produce}(y, \underline{z}, e) \wedge \text{mango-smell}(\underline{z})]$
(suppression of *x*)
b. [[TP]] = $\exists e[\text{have/produce}(k, \underline{z}, e) \wedge \text{mango-smell}(\underline{z})]$
(Note: $k = \iota x[\text{cake}(x)]$)
c. $\exists e \exists z[\text{have/produce}(k, z, e) \wedge \text{mango-smell}(z) \wedge z \neq k]$
(existential closure of \underline{z} , disjoint/non-reflexive reading)

Conclusion

- This study has compared 'N *ga suru*' with the intransitive-like *suru* 'do' in Japanese and '*ber-* + N' in Indonesian w.r.t. the nouns they take.
- The distributions largely overlap, except for nouns denoting illnesses.
- Hence, the paraphrase 'N can be perceived', though suitable for 'N *ga suru*', will not replace the traditional paraphrases for *ber-* + N', i.e. 'have N' and 'produce N'.
- A middle voice analysis à la Beavers and Udayana (2023) is promising.

Implications

- Although analysing Indonesian from a Japanese perspective does not work, the other direction may bring a new light.
- It may be possible to analyse 'N *ga suru*' in Japanese as a middle voice construction.
 - Active (*suru* + v_{act}): N1 *ga* (NOM) N2 *o* (ACC) *suru*
 - Middle (*suru* + v_{mid}): N1 *ni/kara* (DAT/from) N2 *ga* (NOM) *suru*
 - cf. Passive (*suru* + v_{pass}): N1 *niyotte/kara* (by/from) N2 *ga* (NOM) *sareru*
- The cross-linguistic difference w.r.t. nouns denoting illnesses will then lie only in whether they have an additional 'have N' meaning.

Language	(i) 'headache'	(ii) 'have a headache'
Japanese	✓	✓
<i>zutuu</i>	<i>zutuu o keikensuru</i>	<i>zutuu ga suru</i>
Indonesian	✓	—
<i>sakit kepala</i>	<i>mengalami sakit kepala</i>	<i>*bersakit kepala</i>

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