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A prosodic aspect of the Indonesian pragmatic particle *sih*

Research in Indonesian *sih* has yielded some functional descriptions about the pragmatic particle. For example, *sih* expresses the speaker's assertion that his or her statement is true (Ikranagara, 1975, p. 101). Additionally, *sih*, labeled as emphatic particle, is used to give emphasis to topic, express the speaker's standpoint of truth, or as an intensifier (Wouk, 2006, p. 1474). Both studies, however, do not discuss explicit descriptions of intonation contours of the particle, leaving a gap in the particle functions, which practically bears an interactional consequence in terms of how to use and respond to the particle in interaction (cf. Sari, 2008). In this study, I argue that particle intonation is central to the emphatic particle use in that it cushions the speaker's emotional involvement in interaction and enhances the discourse, which ultimately provides the interlocutor with pragmatic clues before giving response.

This paper reports an intonation analysis of *sih* from spoken Indonesian data involving 29 native Indonesians in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 2006-2007. The study set out to clarify the functional range of *sih* in different contexts by investigating possible intonation contours associated with the particle. A research method triangulating the following was conducted: a playback analysis of naturally-occurring conversations, a review of functional analysis of the particle building on the previous studies by Ikranagara and Wouk, and an experiment with the 'involvement' parameter in a cross-linguistic model of theoretical framework for pragmatic particle analysis introduced by Östman (2006). Östman proposes that affective or emphatic particles could be those primarily constrained by the expression of attitudes or emotion and that the emphatic function of a particle, often characterized by a specific intonation contour helps explain the speaker's feelings and opinions and expressions of attitude (Östman, 2006, p. 1760). The study uses an explicit description of particle contours that adhere to the intonation contour symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), particularly the falling tone (↘) and the rising tone (↗). The tones suggest different meanings that a speaker wants to convey (Leech & Svartvik, 1994). Prototypically, a rising tone expresses "'uncertainty' or 'incompleteness' or 'dependence'" while the falling intonation expresses "'certainty', 'completeness', 'independence' that asserts a fact of which the speaker is certain" (Leech & Svartvik, 1994, p. 24).

Results of 24,800 Indonesian corpus indicated that *sih* has two distinct intonation contours: falling and rising. To illustrate, in (1) the falling tone indicates an emphasis of the speaker's certainty of the existing topic.

(1) Sr: |tapi alhamdulillah *sih* kalo saya, mahasiswa saya bandel-bandel|

↘

sih

but thank God [*sih*] as for me, my students were (behaving) bad
|tapi setelah lulus hampir mereka bekerja semuanya|
but after graduating almost all of them got a job.

The speaker emphasized gratitude by using a terminology of her faith as she asserted her opinion about the situation with her students after graduation. On the other hand, when preceded by a question word, *sih* has a rising intonation. In (2) and (3), *sih* becomes the emphasis of the inquiry respectively.

(2) M: |Di mana *sih* kosnya?|

↗

sih

Where is [*sih*] your rented place?

(3) M: |berapa *sih* sebulan?|

↗

sih

How much [*sih*] is the rent per month?

In this instance, *sih* provides a sense of urgency from the speaker to expect response to the question ‘dimana’ (where) and ‘berapa’ (how much). The speaker asserted her enthusiasm in finding out about the rent’s cost and location. When *sih* is used to emphasize an interrogative statement, the particle follows the question word used by the speaker. Thus, *sih* has a rising intonation. The intonation analysis also reveals textual and contextual properties of the particle. The particle is never used in the beginning of a sentence or without a preceding word that predetermines the emphasis. The particle deals with currently existing information, implying that the speaker is responding to what is discussed.

The intonation contour analysis helps establish a detailed account of involvement presented by Indonesian *sih* by clarifying the functions introduced in the earlier studies. The combination of methods offers a systematic look at a pragmatic particle function. Conversation partners, especially those learning Indonesian further down the road, will have a more comprehensive picture of what *sih* represents and understand the interactional consequences the particle entails. Research and pedagogical implications are discussed. Transcription conventions and conversation data are provided.

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