

**With or Without *meN*-:
How Jakarta Indonesian Children Distinguish
the Formal and Informal Indonesian Word Formation**

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This paper is dealing with the acquisition of the two Indonesian varieties, the informal and formal Indonesian. In general, Jakarta children are confronted with the colloquial Jakarta Indonesian (the informal variety, henceforth referred to as CJI) and the *Bahasa* Indonesia (the formal variety, henceforth referred to as BI). While they acquire the informal variety as their first language in less formal situations, they also learn how to use the formal variety in more formal situation, such as in story-telling, television program, and schooling.

There are some indicators which distinguish the CJI from the BI. In the morphological aspects, there are omissions or replacements of certain affixes in word formation.

The main focus of this paper is the use of the affix *meN*- and its omission or replacements. In the BI's verb formation, it can be omitted or replaced by its nasalization *N*- or *nge*- in the CJI. From very early age, Jakarta children learn how to use these varieties.

To try to understand how Jakarta children acquire these existing Indonesian varieties, I conduct an experimental research. In this study, 76 Jakarta children (aged 3;0 to 4;5) are asked some questions with conditioned words *sedang apa* 'what is/are S doing (BI) and *lagi ngapain* 'what is/are S doing (CJI)'. The conversations are conditioned by two different situations, using specific pictured stories to elicit certain verbs, presented by two different interviewers. The first interviewer uses the formal Indonesian in a session, and the second interviewer uses the informal Indonesian in another session. In the initial findings, some of them can distinguish the verb with and without *meN*- in their answers. For examples:

- (BI) Adult A: *Tito sedang apa?* 'what is Tito doing?'
 tito is what
- Child 1: *(dia sedang) men-cuci piring.* '(he is) washing the dishes'
 (he is) *meN*-wash plate
- (CJI) Adult B: *Ibu ini lagi ngapain?* 'what is the woman doing?'
 mother this is *N*-what-in
- Child 1: *(dia lagi) nyapu.* '(she is) sweeping'
 (she is) *N*-sweep

The extent the children use the prefix and how they learn the rule of verb formation with or without the prefix will be discussed. Factors which influence the children's use of these varieties are also discussed.