Affirmative *saya* in Ternate

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Ya as affirmative is used in spoken interaction with diverse comparable expressions in other dialects spoken across Indonesia. In Ternate, one comparable expression is *saya*. The present paper attempts to describe the relevant local-cultural contribution to the use of the comparable affirmative. I created a log of *saya* based on spoken interaction with two Ternate natives in two separate occasions in 2010. I conducted a separate interview with another Ternate native to generate an 'insider' perspective on the use of the expression.

I propose some interactional explanations for affirmative *saya* as the expression of choice used by the Ternate speaker to mark that the interlocutor's statements and social representation yield direct consequences that are favorable to the speaker, which clarifies better the elusive idea of 'respect' in the typical Indonesian spoken interaction.

The new perspective contributes to the meanings of *saya* in the Indonesian lexicon and thus, has given the reason for its development. The lexical, documented as early as in 1852 is defined as "[a] slave. Personal pronoun of the first person" (Crawfurd, 1852, p. 164). *Saya* is also used as person deixis (*it's me* or *that's me*) as a response in a more formal setting. An entry in Poerwadarminta's dictionary defines *saya* correctly as affirmative but with an example that connotes a colonial-era-mindedness, i.e., "*ya* mis. *[saya]* tuan" (p. 878). However, contemporary Indonesian has abandoned the use of *tuan* in spoken interaction, although a printed version of the word may be common for instance in medical prescription forms, and encourages instead *bapak* or *ibu*. Perhaps the closest meaning of *saya* is offered by Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings (2004) that state *saya* as "yes (I have heard and I will obey)" (p. 883). Affirmative *saya* in Ternate is an alternate of *ya*, as reiterated by the Ternate native in the interview, adding that the expression indicated *hormat*. As an affirmative and confirmation and acknowledgement marker *saya* is used by the Ternate speaker to highlight the interlocutor's status as perceived to be more important than that of the speaker. In examples (1) and (2) the interlocutor is a customer (B) at a local diner who was waited on by a Ternate speaker (A), while in (3) the interlocutor being a reviewer (D) who was perusing a research proposal written by a Ternate native. Both interlocutors were perceived as favorable in terms of their respective roles as customer and reviewer to each Ternate speaker who then chose to use *saya* in the interaction.

(1)   B: tolong garpunya *ya* dik
           the fork please
      A: *saya*.
           yes

(2)   B: gurakanya lima pisang goreng satu
           five gurakas one (portion of) fried banana
      A: *saya*.
           yes

(3)   D: dia temannya bapak *ya*
           He is your friend
      C: *saya*
           yes

References
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