

How Reliable are Standard Indonesian Judgments?

Pronouns as a Case Study in L1 Interference

Dalan Peranginangin (MPI EVA, Jakarta)

Yessy Prima Putri (MPI EVA, Padang)

Timothy Mckinnon (MPI EVA, Jakarta & U. of Delaware)

Linguists working on the grammatical structure of Standard Indonesian face a confounding sociolinguistic reality: Practically all fluent speakers of Standard Indonesian are also first language speakers of either a non-Malay/Indonesian language or a colloquial/indigenous variety of Malay/Indonesian with substantially different structural properties from the standard language. Despite the methodological challenges that this complex sociolinguistic situation poses, a large share of the linguistic research on Malay/Indonesian has focused on its standardized varieties rather than varieties which have L1 speakers.

Linguists who take the issue of interference seriously often qualify the term ‘Indonesian’ by mentioning the location/linguistic group from which they elicit Standard Indonesian data (e.g. Indonesian spoken in Jakarta; Indonesian spoken by L1 Javanese speakers etc.). An alternative strategy is to cite examples from grammars of Standard Indonesian rather than eliciting data directly from speakers. Although linguists are generally aware of potential L1 interference, little work has been done to understand in what ways and to what extent speakers judgments about Standard Indonesian are affected by their L1.

The aim of this paper is to better understand L1 interference in Standard Indonesian. We focus on a key aspect of the the grammar: the syntax of pronouns. Standard Indonesian has two 3rd person pronouns which exhibit distinct yet overlapping syntactic distributions: *(d)ia* and *nya*. For example, Kaswanti Purwo (1984) claims that *dia* (but not *nya*) can occur after certain prepositions (1); whereas, with other prepositions, both *dia* and *nya* are permitted (2). In other environments *nya* may occur, but not *dia* (e.g. between a possessor and possessum: *buku nya/*dia Ali* ‘Ali’s book’).

- (1) Prepositions that take *dia* but not **nya*

seperti ‘like’	dia
tanpa ‘without’	
tentang ‘about’	
mengenai ‘about’	
buat ‘for’	
demi ‘by/for’	
menurut ‘according to’	*-nya
sama ‘with’	
lewat ‘through’	

- (2) Prepositions that take *dia* and *nya*

kepada ‘to’	dia
-------------	-----

kepada 'to'	dia
dengan 'with'	
bersama 'together'	
untuk 'for/to'	
bagi 'for'	
oleh 'by'	

Interestingly, even highly educated speakers of Standard Indonesian show considerable variation in their judgments regarding the distribution of pronominal forms.

We present the results of a survey in which we interview 15 university graduates who majored in Bahasa Indonesia from three different L1 backgrounds: Javanese, Jakarta Indonesian, and Minangkabau. We describe variation in these speakers' judgements regarding the syntactic distribution of the pronouns *(d)ia* and *nya*, and consider the extent to which this variation reflects speakers' L1 background.

References:

Purwo, B. K, (1984). Deiksis dalam bahasa Indonesia (Deixis in Indonesian). Jakarta. Balai Pustaka