

## Inferential evidence and Colloquial Malay sentence final *punya*

Sentence final particle *punya* in Colloquial Malay has been described as indicating that the speaker is certain about the truth of the propositional content of the utterance (Koh 1990; Yap 2007a,b; Soh 2014).

- (1) Ali dah tahu (*punya*).  
Ali PERF know PUNYA  
'Ali knew it (for sure).'

I show that in addition to the speaker's certainty, *punya* also signals the source of the information presented as of the inferential type. I show further that while the attitude holder is often the speaker, it can also be the external argument of verbs of saying and beliefs.

*Punya* indicates that the speaker's knowledge that the proposition expressed is true is gained through inference. Thus, in a situation where A and B are at a party, and A saw Minah, but did not see Minah's boyfriend, and A knows that Minah does not go to any party without her boyfriend, A can utter (2) to B felicitously.

- (2) (#)Boyfriend Minah ada di sini *punya*.  
boyfriend Minah have at here PUNYA  
'Minah's boyfriend is here (for sure/inference).'

However, if A saw Minah's boyfriend at the party, it would be infelicitous for A to utter (2) to B as the evidence source would be direct visual experience. The same infelicity is found if the evidence source involves other senses.

That the attitude holder is the speaker in simple sentences is supported by (3), where the speaker, being the attitude holder, cannot express confidence that the proposition [s/he knows it] is true, followed by a denial that the relevant proposition is true:

- (3) #Dia tahu *punya*. Tapi dia sebenarnya tak tahu.  
3SG know PUNYA but 3SG actually not know  
'#S/he knows it (for sure/inference). But s/he actually does not know it.'

Doing so would lead to an expression of contradictory beliefs on the part of the speaker.

In complex sentences involving verbs of saying (*kata* 'say') and beliefs (*ingatkan* 'think'; *fikir* 'think'), the attitude holder may be the external argument of such verbs. In (4), the attitude holder can be the external argument *mereka* 'they', who has confidence that the proposition [s/he knows it] is true. There is no contradiction for the speaker to deny the truth of the relevant proposition since the speaker does not hold the relevant attitude in this case:

- (4) Mereka kata dia tahu *punya*. Tapi dia sebenarnya tak tahu.  
3PL say 3SG know PUNYA but 3SG actually not know  
'They said s/he knows it (for sure/inference). But s/he actually does not know it.'

The embeddability of *punya* under verbs of saying and beliefs suggests that *punya*, which has sometimes been referred to as a discourse particle, may not be analyzed as an illocutionary operator, but rather should be considered an epistemic modal (following Matthewson, Davis and Rullmann 2007). *Punya* thus patterns like English modal *must* (von Fintel and Gillies 2010) in marking both quantificational strength (certainty) and information source (inferential evidence). The current analysis supports the tight connection between epistemic modal and inferential evidence noted in von Fintel and Gillies (2010).