

Topic and focus in Indonesian joking conversations

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This paper will examine how information topic and focus is realized in the humorous Indonesian questions and answers. Based on data from ad-lib scenes between the puppeteer and an American singer in an artistic performance called *wayang kulit* ‘shadow puppet play’, I argue that the information structure manifests itself in 1. cleft, 2. fronting, 3. inversion, 4. dislocation, 5. passive form, 6. discourse marker, and 7. adverbial clause.

In the humorous question and answer sequences, manipulation of 7. adverbial clause is prominent, compared with other syntactic features above. For example, in the conversation sequence (1), the puppeteer adds adverbial clause after a second pause.

(M: Megan, an American singer, D:Dhalang, the puppeteer)

Talking about *sega-jago*, ‘corn meal’, a country food:

- (1) M. *jenengan* *suka?*
you (DEFER)¹ like
‘Do you like (that)?’
D. *suka* --- (.....) *kalau mateng*
like if cooked
‘I like it, (-----) if it is cooked.’

Likewise, in (2), the adverbial clause added by the puppeteers is the information focus.

(Being asked if the *dhalang* does not bathe at all ---)

- (2) D. *saya bukan orang termasuk sini*
I NEG person included here
‘I do not belong here.’

saya harus mandi (-----) seminggu sekali.
I have.to take.showers a.week one.time
‘I must bathe (.....) once a week.’

¹ A shortened form of a Javanese deferential second person pronoun.

By adding the adverbial clause at the end of the sentence, after one or two second(s) of pause, the speaker moves the focus of his response from the beginning of the sentence to the end of the sentence, causing laughter. I will discuss other features such as cleft, fronting, etc., to show how topic and focus manifest themselves in these ad-lib joking conversations.