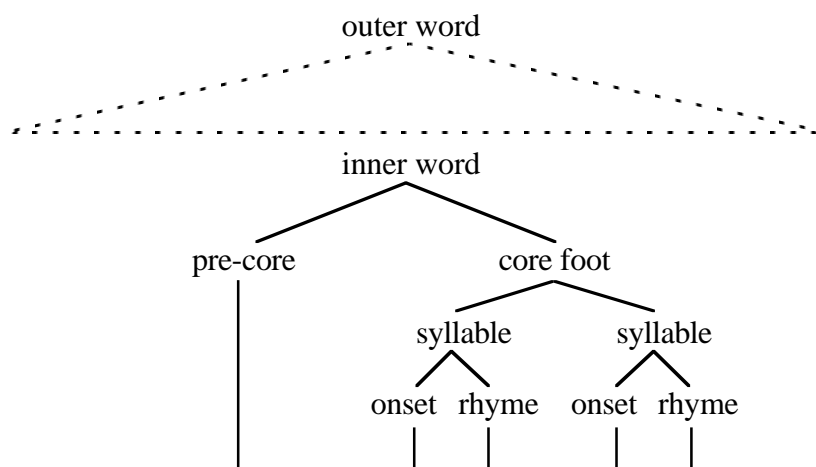


THE HANDPHONE KEYBOARD SPACE BAR,  
AND WHAT IT CAN TELL US ABOUT WORD STRUCTURE IN RIAU INDONESIAN  
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Isolating languages pose a particular problem for the notion of word. In languages with a substantial amount of morphology it is generally possible to identify a set of criterial features, some universal, others language-specific, distinguishing word-external syntactic structure resulting from the concatenation of words and phrases, from word-internal morphological structure resulting from processes such as affixation, compounding and the like. Such criteria form the basis for the existence, within linguistic theory, of autonomous disciplines of syntax and morphology. However, in isolating languages, characterized by a paucity of morphological structure, there may not be enough morphology to support a robust and systematic distinction between morphological and syntactic structure. Accordingly, in isolating languages, there may be relatively little evidence for the existence of words as a viable unit of linguistic structure, as distinct from morphemes.

This paper is part of an ongoing investigation of the notion of word in one extreme exemplar of the isolating language type: Riau Indonesian. In general, it is argued that, compared to other, non-isolating languages, the word plays a much smaller role in the grammar of Riau Indonesian. Nevertheless, it is still possible to support a distinction between morphological and syntactic structure in Riau Indonesian. Work in progress points towards the following morphological structure underlying words in Riau Indonesian:



Evidence for the above structure is derived from a number of different sources of evidence, as summarized in the following table, representing work mostly presented or published elsewhere:

	CORE FOOT	INNER WORD (terminal)	INNER WORD (non-terminal)	OUTER WORD
focus intonation	X			
no reduction	X			
epenthesis	X			
loanword expansion	X			
obligatory <i>si-</i>	X			
<i>N-</i> realized as <i>nge-</i>	X			
Warasa ludling	X			X
final <i>k</i> realized as ?		X		
Sabaha ludling		X		
Bahasisa ludling		X		
Pantun rhythm		X		
reduplication			X	
spelling		X	X	X
<i>Evidence for Word Structure Categories</i>				

This paper focusses on the last source of evidence represented in the above table, namely, spelling. In particular, it presents an quantitative and qualitative examination of a corpus of approximately 4000 SMS (short text messages) in Riau Indonesian received on my handphone in the course of 2003. The SMSs are of particular interest since they are produced by semi-literate speakers who, until their very recent acquisition of handphones, rarely had occasion to write. As such, they show how speakers improvise spellings as they type their messages into their handphones, thereby providing a window into their mental representations, and, in particular, their tacit knowledge of grammar. As suggested in the above table, the SMSs provide strong support for for the structural unit of terminal inner word, and weaker support for the structural units of non-terminal inner word and of outer word. In particular, most speakers tend to insert spaces before and after each terminal inner word, while a few prefer to insert spaces before and after each non-terminal inner word or outer word. The use of the handphone space bar thus provides further evidence for a classification of grammatical morphemes into affixes (including *N-*, *si-* and *se-*), clitics (including *di-*, *ter-* and *-kan*), and separate stems (including *yang*, *pun* and *aja*). In addition, they suggest that some grammatical morphemes might be ambivalent between affixes and clitics (including *ber-*, *ke-* and *-an*), and between clitics and separate stems (including *tak-*, *-ni* and *-nya*). This classification is largely consistent with that supported by other sources of evidence; however, it diverges significantly from that presupposed by the conventional spelling of Standard Indonesian.