Information structure in Javanese conversational sequences

Yoshimi Miyake

Akita University

This paper will examine how information-giving, given information, and the response to it, are realized in prosodic features of Javanese dialogue. I will argue that pause, delay, and intonation are deeply related to the understanding of the information structure of Javanese dialogue; this based on data from adlib scenes in an artistic performance called *wayang kulit* ('shadow puppet play'), in which the puppeteer conducts spontaneous dialogue with his accompanying musicians and his audience.

As Javanese is a language where the colloquial style does not necessarily have rigid grammatical structure, focused information in a Javanese sentence sequence can be just uttered as simply as (1):

(at a *warung* 'stall')

(1)　A:　*Kowe*?

　　　　you

　　　　'You?'　(What are **you** going to order?)

　　B:　*Soto ayam.*

　　　　soup chicken

　　　　'Chicken soup. (I am going to have chicken soup.)

　　C:　*Aku　　gudheg.*

　　　　I　　　　gudheg

　　　　'I (take) gudheg.' (As for me, I will have *gudheg*.)

In this kind of conversation sequence, intonation and pause plays a crucial role. I will show how Javanese dialogues actually convey connotation and intention using this prosodic device, especially in managing pause, intonation, and delayed response.

I will also describe the function of the particle '*iya*', by classifying it based on the length and rising and falling intonation. The particle '*iya*', which is used for back-channeling and interjection, as well as for fillers, should also be studied in the framework of information structure. A conversation sequence sample (2) shows a parallelism in which the particle '*iya*' is used.

(2)

(being asked whether the puppeteer is tired or weak)

Puppeteer:　　*Dong*　**iya**　*iso*　**lemaaas**

　　　　　　　sometimes *iya*　can be　weak

dong	*iya*	*iso*	*ora*	*pathi*	*lemaas*
sometimes	iya	can be	not	so	weak

'Sometimes I can be weak, other times I can be not that weak'.

(....PAUSE) Dong	*iya*	*iso*	*kakuu*
sometimes	iya	can be	stiff

'Sometimes I can be stiff.'

(.)	Ngene.
	Like that

Audience: LAUGH

In this sequence, the puppeteer slowly transforms his response to a question into a joke, using parallelism. The final syllable of the end-of-sentence words, that is, the focused adjectives, *lemas* 'weak' and *kaku* 'hard, stiff' is lengthened and high-pitched, with its final syllable raised.

I will argue that the delay, pause, intonation variation, and parallelism in conversation sequences, and the combination of them using '*iya*', are linguistic strategies which the *wayang kulit* puppeteer uses in order to elicit laughter from the audience.