

The intonation of interrogatives and focused elements in the Bantik language

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Abstract

The relationship between intonation patterns and information structure has not been well described in many languages in Indonesia, although prosody is one of the most important aspects for the correct understanding of the uttered sentence. This talk focuses on how pitch contours mark information structure, especially interrogative sentences and focused elements in Bantik.

Interrogative sentences in many languages show different intonation pattern from declarative counterparts. For example, the Tokyo dialect of Japanese shows rising intonation at the end of the interrogative sentences, but a falling intonation at the end of declarative sentences. The intonation pattern of the interrogatives, however, may differ from dialect to dialect even within the same language. The Kagoshima dialect is one of the Japanese dialects that show falling intonation in interrogative sentences, the same pattern with declarative ones (Kibe 2013). Speakers can distinguish the two types of sentence by different discourse particles posited at the end of the sentence, i.e. question markers or declarative markers.

Bantik shows intonation patterns similar to the Kagoshima dialect. Declarative sentences and some question sentences show the same intonation pattern; the falling intonation at the end. There is a question marker, *yo?o*, in Bantik. Some polar questions use this particle to indicate that they are interrogatives. In this type of question sentence, a falling intonation is observed on *yo?o*, that is placed sentence-finally. Content question sentences, which are lexically indicated by interrogatives such as *pida* 'how much' and *ngeden* 'when', also show the falling intonation at the end. Only polar questions without *yo?o* show gradual rise in intonation towards the end of the sentence.

Non-final illocutionary units (IU) normally show rising intonation to indicate they are not sentence-final. Topic containing IUs are exceptions to this. A falling intonation followed by a brief pause is observed in a topic containing IU.

Focused NPs also show a distinctive pitch contour. An extremely high pitch followed by a falling intonation appears on a focused IU. An NP that serves as an answer to the question, or the correction to the former speech, shows this rise-fall intonation.

In this talk, data taken from naturalistic discourse will be shown to describe intonation patterns characteristic to interrogatives, topic, and focus.