

**The indeterminacy of clause structures in conversational interaction:
Examples from colloquial Indonesian**

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Colloquial Indonesian has often been described in terms of its differences from standard Indonesian, and conversational language in particular has been characterised as exhibiting “ellipsis, omission, repetition, redundancy, incomplete sentences and obscuring of sentence boundaries” (Sneddon 2006:109). As linguists interested in understanding language structure, are we satisfied to focus our investigations only on “well-formed sentences” and ignore the kind of language actually produced by speakers in conversation, imagining it to be simply “reduced” forms of complete sentences? Conversational interaction is the most common setting for language use and it is the context in which processes of grammaticisation and language change occur. Usage-based linguistic investigation attempts to uncover the systematic nature of language structure in contexts like casual conversation and to show the relationship between grammatical structure and social actions being performed by speakers. In this presentation I look at how clause structures emerge in informal Indonesian language use and propose a perspective that asks how more complex language is built up from the elements common in spoken language, rather than viewing spoken language as a reduced form of more complex language. I also examine cases of indeterminacy that emerge in conversational language, including indeterminacy in both structure and function.