

**Localising perspective:  
Interactional particles in Indonesian  
as spoken in Bandung**

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# **Indonesian Heteroglossia – Polyglossia – Heteroglossia**

- 300-700 regional languages
- Indonesian as national language
- Transnational languages, e.g. English and Arabic
- Centrifugal and centripetal force (Bakhtin 1981, Maier 1993)
- Historical shift from heteroglossia to polyglossia
- Current shift towards heteroglossia

## **Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century**

Indonesian as:

- language of inter-ethnic communication
- language of national government, media, education
- language of public life

Regional languages as:

- language of intra-ethnic communication
- language of family, local community, traditional practices
- language of private life

## Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Growing use of Indonesian in wider range of domains
- Endangerment of several regional languages
- Rise of 'hybrid' colloquial forms of Indonesian
- Particularly salient visibility of urban youth Indonesian
- Shift from heteroglossia to polyglossia and back to heteroglossia:
  - More about shifts in the views of language gate-keepers than shifts in actual usage

## Indonesian youth language styles

- *Bahasa Gaul* - 'the language of sociability'
- Essentially colloquial Indonesian with:
  - Jakartan Indonesian elements
  - Slang: ephemeral abbreviations, lexical items and idiomatic expressions;
  - Local language resources (e.g. Javanese, Sundanese)
  - Transnational resources (e.g. English, Arabic)
  - Mixing of all of these

Smith-Hefner 2007; Tamtomo 2012; Djenar, Ewing and Manns 2018

Today's talk: Indonesian youth language in Bandung, capital of West Java and urban centre of the Sundanese speaking area (second largest regional language)

- Distinct for the Javanese
- Near the national capital Jakarta
- Maintains a strong, self-conscious sense of distinct cultural identity
- Young speakers in Bandung draw on various linguistic resources: Jakartan, *gaul*, local, national and transnational.

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Our speech exhibits: “varying degrees of otherness and varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness’, [which] carry with them their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework and re-accentuate” (Bakhtin 1986 cited in Coupland 2007: 102).

Hybridity – otherness and our-own-ness

Default font = (colloquial) Indonesian

BLUE Jakarta

PURPLE Gaul

RED Sundanese

ORANGE Javanese

*Italic* English, Arabic



## (1) Hybridity – otherness and our-own-ness

Asdit: Eh tapi gimana **ya**?

..(1.3) Laku **moal**?

Bani: Laku-**lah** [kayaknya **mah**].

Asdit: [Target pasar].

Bani: .. Des **gue** **pangjualkeun**,

**Sok** **elu** makan **kagak**?

Desti: ... Ya nggak tahu.

Asdit: [**Kok** nggak tahu].

Desti: [Enak ngga=k].

A: What do you think **huh**?  
will it sell **or not**?

B: It **will** sell it seems [**mah**].

A: We'll *target* the market.

B: Des I'm **selling something**  
(for our class),

**Tell me**, will **you** eat it **or**  
**not**?

D: Yeah I don't know.

A: **What do you mean** you don't  
know?

D: Does it taste good or not?

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- The semiotic potential of these various resources is enacted or 'voiced' for on-the-spot strategic purposes.
- This often involves stance-taking (identity, epistemic and affective stances)

## (2) Hybridity – otherness and our-own-ness

Asdit: Eh tapi gimana **ya**?  
..(1.3) Laku **moal**?  
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Asdit: [Target pasar].  
Bani: .. Des **gue pangjualkeun**,  
  
**Sok elu** makan **kagak**?  
  
Desti: ... Ya nggak tahu.  
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Desti: [Enak ngga=k].

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- The semiotic potential of these various resources is enacted or ‘voiced’ for on-the-spot strategic purposes.
- This often involves stance-taking (identity, epistemic and affective stances)
- How are the meaning potentials of **interactional particles** exploited in stance-taking by young Indonesian speakers in Bandung?

## Discourse markers

- “a functional class of verbal (and non-verbal) devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk” (Schiffrin 1987: 41)

Indonesian, Javanese and Sundanese all have extensive repertoires of discourse markers:

- Properties of information flow and information structure
- Psycho-ostensive particles (Errington 1998) indicating various epistemic and affective stances – **interactional particles**

# Interactional Particles

- The subset of discourse markers that “demarcate an interactionally relevant unit by their attachment to a piece of talk.” (Morita 2012: 1721; emphasis in original).
- And which create “interactional opportunity space wherein participants can indicate, negotiate, and/or preempt actual or potential contingency” (Morita 2012: 1721).
- They are resources for stance building and can only be interpreted in context, rather than having an a priori context-free meaning which is added to a proposition.

# Interactional Particles

- Provide handling instructions for how a particular stretch of discourse is to be treated in the context of the relationship between speaker, hearer and discourse
- Relationality:
  - Indonesian interactional particles primarily index a basic relational meaning
  - This involves the relationship and expectations that speaker and addressee have toward each other and towards a particular discourse object.
  - Specific epistemic or affective stances are not part of this basic meaning but emerge when interactional particles are deployed in context.
  - Using interactional particles enables interlocutors to engage in public stance building and negotiate intersubjective alignment.

## Discourse Data

- Casual conversations between university students recorded early 2014 in Bandung – about 5 hours of recordings
- All speakers have Sundanese background or have lived in Bandung several years
- Conversations are predominantly Indonesian, while exhibiting frequent high levels of ‘hybridity’



Indonesian/Malay (Ewing 2005, Wouk 1998, 2001)

kan – isn't it?; you should know

ya – softens utterances; ok?

-lah – imperative softener, focus marker

pun – even

Jakarta particles (Sneddon 2006)

sih – you know; question softener; (contrastive)  
topic marker

deh, deng – urging, agreement; emphasising that  
something is true

dong – strong command; what I'm saying is true,  
although you don't seem to believe it

## Javanese (Errington 1998)

**kok** – surprise, often implying request for explanation.

**lho** – addressee should be aware of significance of the statement.

## Sundanese particles (Müller-Gotama 1996, Zimmer 2000)

**atuh** – you should know, mild reprimand

**mah** – contrastive topic

**teh** – identifiable information

## Sundanese particles (Müller-Gotama 1996, Zimmer 2000, Ewing 2014)

**atuh** – you should know, mild reprimand

**mah** – contrastive topic

**teh** – identifiable information

**sok** – come one, go ahead, let's go

**euy** – hey, vocative like *man*, *dude*

**we** – only, just

**da** – so, because of that, you know

All these particles – and *mah* particular – are recognised explicitly by speakers as indexes of Sundanese identity

- “Wherever there are Sundanese people, *mah* is sure to appear”
- “The Sundanese have *sakit mah*” ‘*mah* sickness’ (pun on the Indonesian *sakit mag* ‘stomach ache’)

The use of Sundanese particles, along with Sundanese names and vocatives, used in Indonesian media to evoke a West Javanese locale in dramas and to highlight Sundanese identity in the press (Zimmer 2000, Goebel 2015).

### (3) atuh – other directed

Weni: ... A=ku belum dikasih  
minum nih.

Asdit: .. Sa=ma nih.  
Aku juga.

Rief: @@ <@ Ambil atuh @>.

W: I haven't been given  
anything to drink.

A: The same.  
Me too.

R: @@ **Just** get something  
**already**.

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## (4) atuh – self directed

Hani: Kan,  
kalau air putih **mah** tiap  
hari juga di .. ruma=h  
**teh**.  
**Atuh** **ari** kita kesini **mah**,  
agak-agak beda gitu,  
gitu=.

H: You know,  
As for water **[mah]** I  
have it every day at  
home **you know**.  
**Gosh** when I come here  
**[mah]**,  
something different  
would be nice.  
it would.

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## (5) atuh – indeterminate

Alfa: .. Alfa **ga** ke **Teh** Irsa=.  
.. **Atuh** jauh **pisan**.

A: I'm **not** going to **Sister** Irsa's.  
**Gosh you know** it's **really**  
far.

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# Atuh

- Speakers and commentators often equate Sundanese *atuh* with Indonesian *dong*, *deh* and *lah*
- *dong* and *deh* (*deng*): speaker believes there is a dissimilar relationship between interlocutors relative to common ground and by use of these particles, speaker alerts hearer to the need to update common ground in line with speaker's expectations (Djenar, Ewing & Manns 2018).
  - *dong*: emphatically demands hearer update common ground
  - *deh*: speaker is relatively indifferent as to whether hearer follows through
- *lah* indicates that the predicate is used in a marked way – including emphasis, imperatives and marked word order



- *atuh*
  - speaker highlights need for hearer to update common ground in line with speaker's expectations
  - Specific epistemic or affective stances – including any emphatic quality – emerge when it is deployed in context
- *atuh* differs from *deh* and *dong* in that any emphatic quality emerges in context and also in its positional possibilities.
- *atuh* is not equivalent to *lah*, but rather overlaps in that both can be used with imperatives.
- *atuh* is also differs from *dong*, *deh* and *lah* in its structural distribution

## (6) mah - Negative evaluation

Dewi: ... Trus kamu *download*-in  
aja.

Nanti *Bluetooth*-in ke aku.

Febiola: .. Tapi ini **mah** jelek ah.  
.. Kaya gini-gini.

D: So just *download* it.  
Then *bluethooth* it to  
me.

F: But this **[mah]** is so bad.  
This kind of thing.

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## (7) mah - Negative evaluation – self-deprecating

Sri: *Topping* dua,  
sama= .. roti.  
Bani: He-eh.  
Adib: .. Bisa.  
Bani: ... Aku,  
.. aku **mah**,  
**teu ngarti** harga.  
Kamu.  
Duaan **we** ya=ng nawarin  
harga.

S: Two *toppings*,  
with bread.  
B: Uh-huh.  
A: That's ok.  
B: I,  
I [**mah**],  
**don't understand** prices.  
You.  
You two **just** sort out the  
prices.

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## (8) mah - Disagreement/Negotiation

Bani: Udah gitu=,  
.. jadi tujuh.  
Asdit: .. Jadi tujuh gitu?  
Bani: *Styrofoam* **mah** nggak usah  
diitung.  
  
Tujuh ratus gitu **mah**,  
  
nggak keitung yah.  
  
Asdit: .. Diitung **atuh**.  
Bani: .. Jadi satunya serebu.

B: Okay that's okay,  
so it's seven.  
A: So it's seven then?  
B: The *styrofoam* **[mah]**  
doesn't need to be  
figured in.  
(It's) seven hundred  
**[mah]**,  
(the Styrofoam) isn't  
figured in right.  
A: It **is too** figured in.  
B: So one will be a  
thousand.

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## (9) mah - Disagreement/Negotiation

Bani: Enak **pisan euy**.  
Asdit: Berapa?  
Bani: Mahal **pisan**.  
Minumnya doang [**genep**  
ribu].  
Asdit: [Ya itu  
**teh**] babi berarti=.  
Sri: Babi **eta mah** Bani.  
Asdit: Bani.  
Bani: .. Nggak.  
Nggak babi.

B: It's **really** tasty **man**.  
A: How much?  
B: Its' **really** expensive.  
Just a drink is **six**  
thousand.  
A: Yeah so that means it  
**[teh]** is pork.  
S: **That [mah]** is pork Bani.  
A: Bani.  
B: No.  
It's not pork.

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## (10) mah - Opinion

Bani: .. Mending dicampur,  
mending .. [dipisah]?

Dale: **Ceuk aing mah**,  
mending dipisah.

B: Better mixed,  
better separated?

D: **According to me [mah]**,  
better separated.

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# Mah

- *mah* indicates contrastive topic – often, but not limited to, marking noun phrases.
- In some ways *mah* overlaps, but is not equivalent to Indonesian *sih*.
  - *sih* – speaker urges addressee to update common ground; this arises from speaker's desire for addressee to accept what is being said.
  - *mah* implies alternative possibilities and urges hearer to focus on one of these.
- The heightened contrast of *mah* means it is usefully deployed in the informal Indonesian of Bandung youth in emotionally heightened contexts.
  - *mah* seems to be primarily about information flow, the way it is deployed also has stance implications

## (11) Teh – information flow

Weni: Terus Sabtu besok itu  
ngapain ke kampung  
Mahmud lagi?

Rief: .. @@ Ya=h.

Weni: Aku tau itu survei.  
Surveinya mau ngapain  
lagi?

Rief: .. Survei foto-[foto lagi].

Asdit: [Kampung  
Mahmud] **teh** dimana  
**sih**?

Rief: Di [Padalarang],

Dinal: [Itu dekat rumah aku].

Weni: [Itu dekat rumahnya]  
Dinal.

W: So why are you going to  
Mahumud's village  
again next Saturday?

R: @@ Yeah.

W: I know it's a survey.  
Why do you need to do  
a survey again?

R: A photo survey again.

A: **So** where's Mahmud's  
village **[teh]**?

R: In Padalarang.

D: It's near my house.

W: It's near Dinal's house.

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## (12) Teh – information flow

Bani: Tapi yang enak di *cream*  
          *soup* **teh**,  
          ayam potong.

Asri: ... Nemu ayam **teh**  
          seneng=.

B: But what's nice in *cream*  
      *soup* [**teh**],  
      is cut up chicken.

S: Finding chicken [**teh**]  
      makes you happy.

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## (13) Teh – information flow / Mah – strong opinion

Febiola: ...(4.7) *Beauty Camera*,  
... *Colour Touch Effect*,  
*Twin Camera*.  
*Twin Camera* **teh**,  
yang gimana?  
... *Photo Warp*.

F: *Beauty Camera*,  
... *Colour Touch Effect*,  
*Twin Camera*.  
*Twin Camera* **[teh]**,  
is which one?  
*Photo Warp*.

(sixty two lines)

Febiola: ... (1.6) *Li=ne Camera=*.  
Dewi: Aku ini dulu --  
Febiola: .. *Line Camera* **mah** **alay**.

F: *Line Camera*.  
D: First I'll –  
F: *Line Camera* **[mah]** is  
**crap**.

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## Discussion

At one level the mere presence of these particles indexes Sundanese-ness in the context of speaking Indonesian.

Different particles add other layers of Sundanese-ness – *mah* and *atuh* are particular usefully in teasing and self-deprecating joking.

The Sundanese-ness does not come (simply) from “replacing” and equivalent Indonesian form with a Sundanese form. It (also) comes from accessing and deploying forms that do work that cannot be done by Indonesian forms and thus expands intersubjective possibilities.

## Discussion

In the data, use of these forms can index BOTH (a certain aspect of) Sundanese AND youth identity.

It is precisely Sundanese forms that index qualities compatible with a *gaul* persona that are being utilised in young people's Indonesian.

Sundanese forms (such as the deference of speech levels and a honorifics) that index 'old fashioned tradition' are (not surprisingly) NOT being utilised in young people's Indonesian.

## Discussion

This is about LOCAL identity as much as ETHNIC identity.

- Non-Sundanese moving to Bandung will often quickly pick up these practices.

The process of (re-)heteroglossification is also a process of reworking the relationship between 'local' and 'national' in Indonesia.

Whereas the national and local had been seen as complementary but separate domains, now young people, from any background, can be national and local (and transnational) simultaneously.

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