Towards an account of Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian information structure

John Bowden

Jakarta Field Station

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

In this paper I make some preliminary observations about the coding of information structure in colloquial Jakarta Indonesian based on analysis of some of the large archive of conversational Jakarta Indonesian compiled by people at the Jakarta Field Station of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

Jakarta Indonesian is a colloquial variety of the Indonesian language spoken in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta and is the first language of perhaps 10 million or more people in the Jakarta region. Jakarta Indonesian differs quite considerably from standard Indonesian, having developed in large part from Betawi Malay, a creole Malay variety which emerged in the old Dutch East Indies capital of Batavia. Like many creole Malay varieties, Jakarta Indonesian tend towards what Gil (2005) calls an 'Isolating-Monocategorial Associational Language' meaning that the language has little internal morphological structure, litel evidence for the existence of syntactic categories, and a largely associational semantic. Conners, Bowden and Gil (2012) discuss these features of Jakarta Indonesian as the relate to the idea of valence classes in the language, and show that there is very little in the realm of valence classes in the language if it is viewed from the perspective of what is allowable for different groups of verbs. It would appear that principles of information structure and information flow actually account better for the structure of the utterances that are made than do any morphological or syntactic principles. This paper will constitute a first attempt to delineate some of these principles.

References

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