

Clefting and question formation across Indonesia

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Philippine and Formosan languages, almost without exception, employ clefting in interrogatives that question an argument (rather than an adjunct or oblique phrase). The distribution of this strategy in present-day languages strongly suggests its reconstruction to the PMP and PAn levels. Across Indonesian languages, however, this pattern breaks down in two ways. Some languages allow the fronting of interrogative pronouns without clefting, and, more commonly, other languages have an in-situ strategy for question formation. In this presentation, I investigate the distribution of in-situ strategies and explore the basis for the clefting requirement and what other typological properties it correlates with. I argue, along the lines of Kaufman 2009, that the emergence of the in-situ strategy is best understood as a contact phenomenon on the peripheries of the Indonesian language area.