Malay / Indonesian

What is Malay / Indonesian?

✩ A family of colloquial languages with as much internal diversity as Romance or Slavonic; plus also a single standard language with two closely related variants, Standard Malay and Standard Indonesian

✩ This paper focusses on a single variety of Malay / Indonesian, namely Jakarta Indonesian.

✩ However, the main results are probably valid for most of the Malay / Indonesian varieties spoken in the western archipelago and Malay peninsula, including Kuala Lumpur Malay.

What is Jakarta Indonesian?

✩ Jakarta Indonesian is the general colloquial language of Jakarta, used in most everyday contexts for inter-ethnic and ethnically-neutral communication, and increasingly also for intra-ethnic communication; it is acquired naturally and completely at a young age by most children growing up in Jakarta. In addition, Jakarta Indonesian is beginning to gain currency as a colloquial koiné in other parts of Indonesia, alongside other regional varieties of Indonesian.

✩ Jakarta Indonesian is not:

• Standard Indonesian, used in more formal contexts in Jakarta and throughout Indonesia; acquired by children at a later age, often "imperfectly", largely from the media and via conscious schooling;

• Betawi Malay, the native dialect of the indigenous ethnic community of Jakarta, now a small minority of the total the population of Jakarta.

✩ However, there exists a continuum of language varieties between Jakarta Indonesian and Standard Indonesian, and between Jakarta Indonesian and Betawi Malay.
Syntactic Categories and Cross-Linguistic Variation

Superficial similarities ...

JAKARTA  Arip baca buku hijau di rumah Bowok
INDONESIAN Arip read book green LOC house Bowok

S V O N A Prep N G

FRENCH Alain lisait le livre vert dans la maison de Bertrand

Alain read-IMPF:3SG DEF:SGM book green-SGM in DEF:SGF house of Bertrand

'Allan was reading the green book in Bill's house'

...conceal deeper differences ...

JAKARTA  INDONESIAN  ENGLISH

Ayam makan The chicken is eating

FORM

symmetry symmetric  asymmetric:
agreement: The chicken → is
government: is → -ing

MEANING

number unmarked: also ...
(on CHICKEN) 'The chickens are eating'
marked: singular

definiteness unmarked: also ...
(on CHICKEN) 'A chicken is eating'
marked: definite

tense unmarked: also ...
(on EAT) 'The chicken was eating'
'marked: present
'The chicken will be eating'

aspect unmarked: also ...
(on EAT) 'The chicken eats'
'marked: progressive
'The chicken has eaten'

thematic role unmarked: also ...
(on CHICKEN) 'Someone is eating the chicken'
marked: agent
'Someone is eating for the chicken'
'Someone is eating with the chicken'

ontological type unmarked: also ...
(on CHICKEN EAT) 'The chicken that is eating'
marked: activity
'Where the chicken is eating'
'When the chicken is eating'
...which suggest the following analyses ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JAKARTA INDONESIAN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S⁰</td>
<td>S⁰</td>
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<tr>
<td>S⁰ (sentence)</td>
<td>S⁰ (sentence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ayam  makan  The chicken  is eating

CHICKEN  EAT

A ( CHICKEN, EAT)

'entity associated with chicken and with eating'

Syntactic Categories and Universal Grammar
[following Gil (2000a)]

(1) **Syntactic Categories: Basic Properties**
(a) Syntactic categories are defined exclusively in terms of syntactic properties;
(b) Syntactic categories consist of words and of larger constituents;
(c) Syntactic category membership is defined in terms of prototypes;
(d) Syntactic categories exhibit different degrees of productivity.

(2) **Syntactic Categories: Categorial-Grammar**
Syntactic categories are of two types, primitive and derived. Derived categories are obtained by the application of category-formation operators to other (primitive or derived) categories. Resulting is a "family tree" of syntactic categories [such as in box 5 below].

(3) **Category Formation (Paradigmatic)**
(a) One primitive category, S⁰, corresponding roughly to the intuitive pre-theoretical category of Sentence.
(b) Two category formation operators:
   (i) Slash Operator:
   For any two categories X and Y, X/Y is a category, called "X slash Y".
   (ii) Kernel Operator:
   For any category Xⁿ, Xⁿ⁺¹ is a category, called "the kernel category of Xⁿ".

(4) **Category Combination (Syntagmatic)**
(a) Identity Combination: X ↔ [X, X, X ...]
(b) Slash Combination: X ↔ [Y, X/Y, X/Y ...]
(5) **Ancestor categories:**
For any syntactic category, all of the categories that dominate it in the syntactic category tree are its ancestor categories. If \( Y \) is an ancestor of \( X \), \( Y \) is simpler than \( X \).

(6) **Three empirical consequences of the Syntactic Category Tree:**
(a) *Typological / Cross-Linguistic:* [Gil (2000a)]
If a language has a certain syntactic category, it has all of its ancestor categories.
(Categories higher on the tree are more cross-linguistically widespread.)

(b) *Evolutionary:* [Gil (2000b)]
If a stage in the evolution of language has a certain syntactic category, it has all of its ancestor categories.
(Categories higher on the tree evolved earlier.)

(c) *Acquisitional:* [this paper]
If a stage in the first-language acquisition of language has a certain syntactic category, it has all of its ancestor categories.
(Categories higher on the tree are acquired earlier.)
Syntactic Categories in Jakarta Indonesian
[following Gil (1994, 2000a, 2001) for Riau Indonesian]

Jakarta Indonesian on the Syntactic Category Tree

(7) Syntactic Categories in Jakarta Indonesian
(a) $S^0$
An open category, containing all multi-word expressions and almost all single-word expressions.
$S^0$ expressions may stand on their own as complete non-elliptical sentences.

(b) $S^0/S^0$
A closed category, containing a small, finite set of single-word expressions.
$S^0/S^0$ words cannot stand on their own as complete non-elliptical sentences. Rather, they combine with $S^0$ expressions to yield $S^0$ expressions. $S^0/S^0$ words belong to two subtypes, those which occur before their $S^0$ arguments, and those which occur after their $S^0$ arguments.

The three basic constructions of Jakarta Indonesian

(a) $S^0$
Ayam makan
chicken eat

(b) $S^0/S^0$
Yang makan aja
REL eat just
A Partial Lexicon of Jakarta Indonesian:  $S^0$ words

- a. ayam (chicken)
- b. buku (book)
- c. rumah (house)
- d. ijo (green)
- e. gede (big)
- f. lapar (hungry)
- g. lari (run)
- h. makan (eat)
- i. kasi (give)
- j. Pian [name of person]
- k. Mangga Besar [name of place]
- l. Lebaran [name of holiday]
- m. abang (elder.brother)
- n. gue (I:SG)
- o. ini (DEM:PROX)
- p. gini (like-DEM:PROX)
- q. sini (LOC-DEM:PROX)
- r. tadi (PAST:PROX)
- s. tiga (three)
- t. semua (all)
- u. lain (other)
- v. apa (what)
- w. mana (where / which)
- x. kapan (when)
- y. ada (exist)
- z. punya (have)
- aa. bisa (can)
- bb. udah (PFCT)
- cc. paling (SUPERL)
- dd. nggak (NEG)
- ee. lagi (also / more / again / next / FUT / CONTR)
- ff. sendiri (only / alone / SUPERL / REFL / CONTR)
- gg. sama (with / and / same / NON.ABS)

A Partial Lexicon of Jakarta Indonesian:  $S^0$/$S^0$ words

**Preceding**

- a. kayak (like)
- b. untuk (for)
- c. buat (for)
- d. di (LOC)
- e. ke (to)
- f. dari (from)
- g. dengan (with / and / by)
- h. tentang (about)
- i. gara-gara (because:ADVRS)
- j. tiap (every)
- k. pada (PL)
- l. ato (or)
- m. yang (REL)
- n. si (PERS)
- o. kalo (TOP)

**Following**

- p. doang (only)
- q. aja (just)
- r. juga (also, then)
- s. kek (UNCRT)
- t. diri (REFL)
- u. dong (EMPH)
Predictions for Acquisition

Prediction
Since $S^0$ is the ancestor category of $S^0/S^0$, $S^0$ should be acquired before $S^0/S^0$.

Subsidiary prediction
After $S^0/S^0$ is acquired, specific words belonging to $S^0/S^0$ will first be assigned to $S^0$, and then subsequently reassigned to $S^0/S^0$.

Testing the prediction through errors of overgeneralization
If the prediction is true, we would expect to find errors of overgeneralization: instances of $S^0/S^0$ words behaving like $S^0$ words.

Type A overgeneralization:
$S^0/S^0$ words occurring on their own as complete non-elliptical sentences.

Type B overgeneralization:
$S^0/S^0$ words occurring in larger constructions, but without their $S^0$ arguments.

Type C overgeneralization:
$S^0/S^0$ words occurring in construction with their $S^0$ arguments, but in the wrong order.

Type D overgeneralization:
$S^0/S^0$ words functioning as arguments of other $S^0/S^0$ words.

Syntactic categories and the acquisition of utterance length
★ Maximal utterance length imposes logical constraints on syntactic category inventories:
★ One-word stage: maximal inventory: $S^0$
★ Two-word stage: maximal inventory: $S^0$, $S^0/S^0$, $S^1$, $S^0/S^1$

★ A corollary of (6c) is that the first syntactic category to be acquired is $S^0$. Thus, (6c) is consistent with the existence of a one-word stage in early language acquisition.

★ However, (6c) does not entail the existence of a one-word stage, since one could imagine a hypothetical language-acquisition scenario in which the child began with multi-word utterances consisting entirely of $S^0$ expressions. Rather, the occurrence of one- and two-word stages in language acquisition most probably reflects the development of syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic competence.

★ Thus, in order to test the prediction, it is necessary to examine the development of syntactic categories at two- or multi-word stages of development, where the effect of utterance length on syntactic category inventories can be factored out.
### The MPI Jakarta Corpus


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Child</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Age at First Recording</th>
<th>Age at Last Recording</th>
<th>11 Utterances Coded to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timothy</td>
<td>28.8.98</td>
<td>1;06</td>
<td>5;02 (projected)</td>
<td>17,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hizkia</td>
<td>6.9.97</td>
<td>1;07</td>
<td>6;01 (projected)</td>
<td>23,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riska</td>
<td>24.7.97</td>
<td>1;08</td>
<td>6;03 (projected)</td>
<td>31,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>22.2.98</td>
<td>2;00</td>
<td>3;11</td>
<td>17,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priska</td>
<td>30.7.97</td>
<td>2;07</td>
<td>6;03 (projected)</td>
<td>26,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larissa</td>
<td>16.4.97</td>
<td>2;10</td>
<td>6;06 (projected)</td>
<td>19,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ido</td>
<td>1.1.96</td>
<td>3;04</td>
<td>6;06</td>
<td>30,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipit</td>
<td>30.11.94</td>
<td>4;04</td>
<td>8;11 (projected)</td>
<td>24,372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL: Target children** 191,921

**Other children** 65,899

**TOTAL: all children** 257,820

**TOTAL: all adults** 282,793

**TOTAL** 540,613
Type A Overgeneralizations

(10) **Context:** Older brother Timo is drawing in a book; experimenter, mother and grandmother are giving him advice, while Ari is off to one side echoing Timo’s speech.

(-5) Nih aku cuman coret-coret.  
DEM:PROX 1:SG only DISTR:scribble  
'See, I can only make scratches.'

(-4) Jangan pake ...  
NEG:IMP use  
'Don’t use …'

(-3) Cuman begitu doang.  
older brother  
only like-DEM:PROX only  
'It’s only like this.'

(-2) Tangan kiri, dong!  
mother  
hand left EMPH  
'Use your left hand!'

(-1) Nih Tante pegangin.  
experimenter  
DEM:PROX aunt hold-EN.D.POINT  
'Here, let me hold it for you.'

☞ (0) Doang  
only  
'Only.'

(1) Timo gambar yang benar!  
experimenter  
Timo picture REL right  
'Draw it right.'

(2) Bagus.  
experimenter  
good  
'Good.'

(3) Paket tangan mana?  
mother  
use hand which  
'Which hand are you using?'

(-3') Ah, nggak bisa ini.  
older brother  
EXCL NEG can DEM:PROX  
'I can’t do this.'

(-2') Bisa.  
experimenter  
can  
'Yes you can.'

(-1') Masa nggak bisa udah segede gini?  
experimenter  
SURPR NEG can PFCT one-big like-DEM:PROX  
'How come a big boy like you can’t do it?'

☞ (0') Doang.  
only  
'Only.'

(1') Aku cuman begini doang.  
older brother  
1:SG only like-DEM:PROX only  
'I can only do it like this.'

(2') Heh...  
EXCL  
grandmother
(11) **Context:** Experimenter notices that Ari’s hands are dirty.

(-6) Kotor 'kan tanganmu, 'kan? 
dirty Q hand-2 Q
'You’re hands are dirty, aren’t they?'

(-5) Cuci, cuci!
wash wash
'Wash them, wash them.'

(-4) Dicuci?
PAT-wash
'Will you wash them?'

(-3) Mo cuci?
want wash
'Do you want to wash them?'

(-2) Nih, tanganku juga.
DEM:PROX hand-1:SG also
'Here, my hand as well.'

(-1) Mo dicuci?
want PAT-wash
'Do you want to wash it?'

☞ (0) Aja.
just
'Just.'

(1) Nanti, ya?
FUT:PROX yes
'Later, right?'

---

**Diagram:**

![Diagram](image-url)
(12) **Context:** Experimenter is holding doll without any hair on its head; Michael, who also has very short hair, tries to stick something on the doll's head; experimenter pretends to speak for the doll.

(-5) Heh, kamu ape?  
Excl 2 what  
'Hey, what's with you?'

(-4) Hmm...  
Excl  
'Here.'

(-3) "Eh, jangan taro di kepalaku, dong."  
Excl Neg:Imp put Loc head-1:SG Emph  
"Hey, don't put that on my head."

(-2) "Kepalaku 'kan botak."  
Excl head-1:SG Q bald  
"My head's bald."

(-1) "Kayak kepala kamu, nggak?"  
Excl like head 2 Neg  
"Like your head, right?"

☞ (0) **Kayak.**  
Excl like  
'Right.'

Cf. hypothetical grammatical paraphrase with S\(^0\)/S\(^0\) expression *kayak 'like'* replaced by S\(^0\) expression *mirip 'resemble'*:

*Mirip kepala kamu, nggak?*  
*Mirip.*
(13) *Context:* Priska, older child and experimenter playing with hand puppets; Priska is Teddy Bear, older child is Winnie the Pooh, and experimenter is Mr. Elephant.

(-5) "Winnie de Pooh, kamu udah umur berapa?"

(Winnie the Pooh  2  PFCT  age  how.much
"Winnie the Pooh, how old are you?"

(-4) "Empat tahun."

(four  year
"Four."

(-3) Ini apaan ini? [Priska 3;02]

(DEM:PROX  what-AUG  DEM:PROX
'What's this?'

(-2) Trompet, pret. [Priska 3;02]

(trumpet  IMIT
'A trumpet, *pret.*'

(-1) "Kalo kamu Teddy Bear, umur berapa?"

(TOP  2  Teddy Bear  age  how.much
"What about you, Teddy Bear; how old are you?"

 Diseq (0) Untuk. [Priska 3;02]

(for
'For.'

(1) "Tiga tahun."

(three  year
"Three."

(2) "Tiga tahun." [Priska 3;02]

(three  year
"Three."

(3) Oh. [Priska 3;02]

(EXCL
'Oh.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Grammar</th>
<th>Child Grammar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$S^0$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S^0/S^0$</td>
<td>$S^0$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\uparrow$</td>
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<td><em>untuk</em></td>
<td><em>untuk</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentioning</td>
<td>mentioning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(14) **Context:** Larissa, older sister and experimenter sitting in front of the computer.

(-2) Awas! *older sister*

    watch.out

    'Move over!'

(-1) Kak(ak) mo minum dulu, ah. *older sister*

    elder.sibling want drink first EXCL

    'I want to get something to drink.'

☞ (0) **Juga.** [Larissa 4;10]

    also

    'Too.'

(1) Juga. *experimenter*

    also

    'Too.'

(2) He-em. [Larissa 4;10]

    EXCL

    'Uh-huh.'

(3) Om juga. *experimenter*

    uncle also

    'Me too.'

(4) Tunggu. *older sister*

    wait

    'Wait a minute.'

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<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="diagram.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="diagram.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Type B Overgeneralizations

(15) **Context:** Larissa and her older sister have been drawing; older sister has just completed a drawing, and the experimenter turns her attention to Larissa.

(-1) Nah. 

experimenter
'There.'

☞ (0) Sekarang, kok, aku kok, 

[ Larissa 4;06 ]

Now why:EMPH 1:SG why:EMPH

nggak bisa gambar bunga, kek?

NEG can picture flower UNCERT

'Now me, how come I can't seem to draw flowers?'

(1) Bisanya bikin pohon doang. 

[Larissa 4;06]

can-ASSOC make tree only
'I can only do trees.'

(2) Ya udah, bikin pohon! 

experimenter

yes PFCT make tree
'Fine, make trees then.'

(3) Nggak pa-pa. 

experimenter

NEG DISTR-what
'It doesn't matter.'

---

**Adult Grammar**

```
S0
  
S0
  nggak bisa gambar bunga
  kek
```

**Child Grammar**

```
S0
  
S0/S0
  nggak bisa gambar bunga
  kek
```

↑

*not appropriate argument*
Type C Overgeneralizations

(16) **Context:** Michael examining a toy first aid kit.

(-9) Apa ini?
    what DEM:PROX 'What's this?'

(-8) Ini apa ini?
    DEM:PROX what DEM:PROX 'What's this?'

(-7) Ini apa ini?
    DEM:PROX what DEM:PROX 'What's this?'

(-6) Ini namanya...
    experimenter DEM:PROX name-ASSOC 'This is called ...'

(-5) Ini yang me(rah)-merah apa?
    experimenter DEM:PROX REL DISTR-red what 'What's this red thing?'

(-4) Palang merah.
    experimenter cross red 'A red cross.'

(-3) Yang merah-me(rah).
    experimenter REL DISTR-red 'The red thing.'

(-2) Palang merah apa?
    cross red what 'What's a red cross?'

(-1) Hmm?
    experimenter EXCL 'Huh?'

(0) Palang merah apa untuk?
    experimenter cross red what for 'What's the red cross for?'

(1) Palang merah ini.
    experimenter cross red DEM:PROX 'This is a red cross.'

(2) Bantuan untuk orang sakit.
    experimenter help-AUG for person sick 'It's for helping sick people.'

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<td>S°</td>
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<tr>
<td>apa</td>
<td>apa</td>
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<tr>
<td>untuk</td>
<td>untuk</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(17) **Context:** Michael, playing with a construction kit, smashes his creation and plans to begin afresh and build a temple.

(-2) Yah, rusak lagi, deh.  
*experimenter*  
'Oh no, it’s broken again.'

(-1) Eh, Kel, kemaren Michael ke mana, sih?  
*experimenter*  
'Hey, Michael, where did you go yesterday?'

☞ (0) Candi buat.  
* [Michael 2;06]  
'temple for 'For a temple.'

(1) Hah?  
*experimenter*  
'Huh?'

**Adult Grammar**  
```
S0  
S0  S0/S0  
candi buat
```

**Child Grammar**  
```
S0  
S0  S0  
candi buat
```

↔  
*wrong order*
(18) Context: Michael pretending to be a cook.

(-4) Maunya mi goreng? [Michael 2;09]
    want-ASSOC noodles fry
    'Do you want fried noodles?'

(-3) Sapi aja. [mother]
    cow just
    'I want beef.'

(-2) Mau mi goreng. [Michael 2;09]
    want noodles fry
    'Fried noodles.'

(-1) Oh, iya, mi goreng, deh. [mother]
    EXCL yes noodles fry EXCL
    'Oh alright, fried noodles then.'

(0) Mi gorengnya yang berapa? [Michael 2;09]
    noodles fry-ASSOC REL how.much
    'How many fried noodles?'

(1) Tiga. [mother]
    three
    'Three.'

(2) Tiga. [Michael 2;09]
    three
    'Three.'

(3) He-em. [mother]
    EXCL
    'Uh-huh.'
(19) **Context:** Priska is playing with coloured stickers, and has a little squabble with her mother over a pair of small toy bags.

(-4) Mana? [Priska 4;03]
    which
    'Where is it?'

(-3) ‘Tasnya buat kamu?’
    bag-ASSOC for 2
    'Is the bag for you?'

(-2) ‘He... ya.’
    EXCL yes
    'Yeah.'

(-1) ‘Tasnya yang buat kamu?’
    bag-ASSOC REL for 2
    'Is this the bag that's for you?'

(0) Mana *di* warna kuningnya? [Priska 4;03]
    which LOC colour yellow-ASSOC
    'Where's the yellow?'

(1) Lha? [Priska 4;03]
    EXCL
    'Huh?'

(2) Hi hi hi, ni *dia*.
    EXCL DEM:PROX 3
    'Hee hee hee, here it is.'
(20) **Context:** Discussing ghosts.

(-7) Berarti ada berapa?  
experimenter
MED-meaning exist how.much  
'So how many are there?'

(-6) Satu, dua, tiga, empat, lima.  
[Pipit 4:04]
one two three four five  
'One, two, three, four, five.'

(-5) Banyak banget, takut aku!  
experimenter
much very afraid 1:SG  
'So many, I'm scared.'

(-4) Pipit takut, nggak?  
experimenter
Pipit afraid NEG  
'Are you scared?'

(-3) Takut.  
[Pipit 4:04]
afraid  
'Yes.'

(-2) Tapi kalo berdoa, hantunya takut, nggak?  
experimenter
but TOP MED-pray ghost-ASSOC afraid NEG  
'But if you pray, the ghosts are afraid, aren't they?'

(-1) Kalo berdoa hantunya turun.  
[Pipit 4:04]
TOP MED-pray ghost-ASSOC descend  
'If you pray, the ghosts will come down.'

☞ (0) Mo pulang, takut pada.  
[Pipit 4:04]
want go.home afraid PL  
'They'll go home, they're scared.'
Type D Overgeneralizations


(-1) **C(er)itanya udah... udah malem.**

story-ASSOC PFCT PFCT night

'Suppose it's already, already night.'

☞

(0) **Eh, kacanya pada aja ditutup!**

EXCL glass-ASSOC PL just PAT-close

'Hey, let's just close all the windows.'

---

Alternative constituency would suggest analysis as Type C overgeneralization:

- **Adult Grammar**
  - $S^0/S^0$
    - $S^0/S^0$
      - pada
    - $S^0/S^0$
      - aja

- **Child Grammar**
  - $S^0$
    - $S^0$
      - pada
    - $S^0$
      - aja

$\leftrightarrow$

*Ungrammatical combination*

---

Wrong order
Conclusions

As predicted, $S^0$ is acquired before $S^0/S^0$ in Jakarta Indonesian.

Further support is thereby obtained for the universal theory of syntactic categories, and for the specific analysis of Jakarta Indonesian as possessing just two syntactic categories, $S^0$ and $S^0/S^0$.

Further empirical questions:

- At what stage of language acquisition is the category $S^0/S^0$ acquired?
- At what stages and in what order are individual words assigned to the category $S^0/S^0$?

Further theoretical question:

On the basis of what evidence does the child assign individual words to the category $S^0/S^0$?

A possible answer:

- If the child observes that in certain contexts an otherwise preferred construction is repeatedly avoided, s/he may accordingly infer that, in the contexts in question, this construction is disallowed.
- In the case at hand, the Jakarta Indonesian child observes that in certain contexts members of $S$ occur by themselves as complete utterances; however, when, in similar contexts, a certain expression occurs over again and again in construction with another expression, s/he may conclude that the expression in question belongs to the closed syntactic category $S^0/S^0$.

... which raises yet another theoretical question:

Is the child predisposed by an innate universal grammar to assign words with certain meanings (eg. more abstract ones) to certain syntactic categories (eg. more complex ones)?
References


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