

## FOCUS-MARKING PARTICLES IN MANADO MALAY: AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

Ruben Stoel

Focus in Manado Malay can be marked by a sentence accent, a syntactic structure, a discourse particle, or a combination of these. This article investigates whether the discourse particles *no*, *sto*, *to*, *kata* and *kwa?* mark focus. A discourse particle marks focus if it is associated with the focus in every possible syntactic construction. An experiment is reported in which the subjects were asked to select the best sentence out of two in a given context. The two sentences were identical except for the position of the discourse particle: in one sentence it followed the focus, in the other the nonfocus. It was found that there is a strong preference for *no* to be associated with the focus in all three syntactic constructions used in the experiment, but not for the other particles. Therefore *no* is the only discourse particle that marks focus.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The *focus* is the part of the sentence that expresses new information. This is illustrated by the question-answer pair in (1). The question in (1a) introduces the topic of the discussion, i.e. Lisa. The answer in (1b) then gives new information about Lisa. The focus in (1b) is thus *went to the bathroom*.

- (1) a. *Do you know where Lisa is?*  
b. *Lisa went to the bathroom.*

The sentence in (1b) is an example of *simple focus*. Dreyer (1996) uses this term for sentences in which the focus is indicated solely by a pitch accent. The focus of the sentence in (1b) is undefined if it had been presented without context. For example, the same sentence (except for the position of the pitch accent) could have been used as an answer to the question *Who went to the bathroom?*, and the focus would then be *Lisa*.

The sentence in (2b), on the other hand, is not an example of simple focus. In this sentence the focus is necessarily *Judy*. The focus of (2b) can be predicted even without a context, since the function of the cleft construction is to focus on the particular individual for whom the predication holds.

- (2) a. *I am afraid we can't leave yet, since Lisa is still in the bathroom.*  
b. *It is Judy who is in the bathroom.*

Kiss (1998) makes a distinction between two types of focus. Every sentence has an *information focus*, which merely presents non-presupposed information. Thus the information focus in (1b) is *went to the bathroom*. The second type of focus is *identificational focus*, which expresses exhaustive identification. An example is *Judy* in (2b), which is both an information focus, since it presents new information, and an identificational focus, since Judy is identified as the exhaustive subset of the people that could be present in the bathroom.

## 2 FOCUS IN MANADO MALAY

The most common sentence type in Manado Malay is the subject-predicate construction. Sentences of this type express information focus. Focus is marked only by a pitch accent, and thus they are simple focus sentences. The focus of the sentence in (3) can be either the predicate or the subject.

- (3) *Mimi da mandi.*  
 Mimi ASP bathe  
 'Mimi is bathing.'<sup>1</sup>

The sentence in (1) has predicate focus if it is an answer to the question *Mimi da ba-apa?*, 'What is Mimi doing?'. This is marked by a pitch accent on *mandi*. The subject *Mimi* is a nonfocus, since it is already activated in the mind of the hearer and could have been replaced by a pronoun. The sentence in (3) can also be an answer to the question *Sapa da mandi?*, 'Who is bathing?'. In that case it is the subject that is the focus, which is marked by a pitch accent on *Mimi*, and the predicate is a nonfocus.

Predicate-subject sentences also express information focus, but they are not simple-focus sentences. A predicate-subject sentence in Manado Malay necessarily has predicate focus, and the final subject must be a nonfocus. Thus the sentence in (4) cannot be an answer to the question *Sapa da mandi?*, 'Who is bathing?', since *Mimi* must be a nonfocus.

- (4) *Da mandi Mimi.*  
 ASP bathe Mimi  
 'Mimi is bathing.'

Identificational focus is expressed in Manado Malay by the *yaŋ* construction. The constituent preceding *yaŋ* is the focus, and the constituent beginning with *yaŋ* is a nonfocus. Thus the focus in the sentence in (5) is *Mimi*. This sentence presupposes that someone is bathing, and it is asserted that this person is Mimi.

- (5) *Mimi yaŋ mandi.*  
 Mimi REL bathe  
 'It is Mimi who is bathing.'

Sentences with *yaŋ* do not express simple focus, since the focus in such a sentence is already determined by the syntactic construction.

## 3 DISCOURSE PARTICLES AND FOCUS

An overview of the discourse particles in Manado Malay is given in Stoel (2000). Discourse particles are words that do not contribute to the propositional content of a sentence. The discourse particles in Manado Malay can be defined as follows: 1. they can occur only as the last word of a constituent (a noun phrase or predicate phrase) or after a clause-initial conjunction; 2. they cannot occur in isolation; 3. they are syntactically optional; and 4. they cannot bear a pitch accent (although they may bear an edge tone, which does not mark focus but signals the end of a prosodic phrase).

There are about twenty discourse particles in Manado Malay. Stoel (2000) claims that three of them, namely *no*, *sto* and *to*, must follow the focus of a clause. Here the term *focus-marking particle* will be used for a discourse particles that is necessarily associated with the focus of a sentence. This term must be

---

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations used in the glosses: ASP, aspect; PAR, particle; PL, plural; POS, possessive; REL, relativizer; SG, singular.

### *Focus-Marking Particles In Manado Malay:*

distinguished from the term *focus particle*, which is often used in the literature to refer to words such as *only*, *even*, *also* and *too* (e.g. König 1991). But these words do not necessarily mark focus. Consider the following example from Vallduví (1992:143):

(6) *John and Mary know the Amazon quite well, but only John's been to the cities in Brazil.*

The most natural focus in the second clause of (6) is the predicate, since it is the predicate that expresses new information about the (given) topic *John*. Since *John* is not a focus, it is thus possible for *only* to be associated with a nonfocus. It may be true that *only* is a focus particle (whatever that may be), but it is not a focus-marking particle.

## 4 THE EXPERIMENT

An experiment was conducted to verify the claim in Stoel (2000) that the three discourse particles *no*, *sto*, and *to* are focus markers. The meaning of these particles is roughly as follows (see Stoel 2000 for a more extensive discussion). *No* is used to make a categorical assertion, while *sto* indicates that the statement made by the speaker is only a conjecture. *To* indicates that the clause express background information, which is necessary for understanding a following clause. It also signals that the information might already been known by the speaker.

Two other discourse particles were included in the experiment as well. *Kata* indicates that the speaker is reporting what someone else has said, and *kwa?* is used to express a contrast. These particles are not assumed to be focus markers, but were included in the experiment for comparison.

The subjects who participated in the experiment received a written questionnaire with 75 questions. Each question consisted of a context sentence followed by two target sentences. The function of the context sentence was to impose a focus reading on the target sentence. Both target sentences were a continuation of the context sentence. The subjects were asked to select the best sentence in the given context. The two target sentences were identical, except for the position of the discourse particle.

Each particle was tested in three different syntactic constructions, including subject-predicate sentences, predicate-subject sentences, and *yaŋ* sentences. There were five questions for every combination of a discourse particle and a syntactic construction. One of these questions will be given below for each of the fifteen types.

### ***Subject-predicate sentences***

Subject-predicate sentences are sentences in which the subject precedes the predicate. For each of the five discourse particle there were five subject-predicate sentences, and one of them is given in (7) to (11) below (glosses are given only for the target sentence). Every context sentence was followed by two target sentences. The discourse particle followed the subject in one of the target sentences and the predicate (including any arguments or adjuncts) in the other one. In (7), for example, *no* followed either the subject *kita* or the predicate *bajalaŋ trus*. All subject-predicate sentences in the experiment had predicate focus. Thus the focus in the target sentence in (7) is *bajalaŋ trus*, and *kita* is not a focus, since its referent has already been introduced in the context sentence. The subjects are expected to prefer the sentence in which *no* follows the predicate, since *no* is assumed to be a focus-marking particle.

Notice that in some target sentences the subject is preceded by a word that links the target sentence to the context sentence. This is typically a conjunction, such as *jadi* 'so, therefore', as in the example in (7) below, or *lantaran* 'because', as in (10) and (11).



### Focus-Marking Particles In Manado Malay:

- (12) *Ujaŋ kras, koŋ ʔada payuŋ.*  
'Heavy rain, and we didn't have an umbrella.'  
*Jadi basa (no) toraŋ (no).*  
so wet 1.PL  
'So we got wet.'
- (13) *Ance deŋ Mince so ʔja bakubawa.*  
'Ance and Mince are not going out together anymore.'  
*So ʔ batonaʔ(sto) doŋ dua (sto).*  
ASP not engaged 3.PL two  
'They are probably no longer engaged.'
- (14) *Tadi malam ta da lia pa ana bajala deŋ cewʔ di Bulevart.*  
'Last night I saw you walking with a girl at the Boulevard.'  
*So kaweŋ (to) ʔana (to),*  
ASP married 2.SG  
'You are married,'  
*masa masi mo cari ceweʔle.*  
'how could you still be looking for a girl!'
- (15) *Dia dapa lia masi muda.*  
'He still looks young.'  
*Mar so kaweŋ (kata) dia (kata).*  
but ASP married 3.SG  
'But they say he is already married.'
- (16) *Dapa lia rupa so tua dia itu kaŋ?*  
'He looks already old, doesn't he?'  
*Səbənara ʔa satu umur deŋ kita (kwaʔ) dia (kwaʔ).*  
actually one age with 1.SG 3.SG  
'Actually he is the same age as me.'

### Yaŋ sentences

The third syntactic construction concerned sentences with *yaŋ*. The focus in these sentences is always the constituent preceding *yaŋ*, and the context sentence merely reinforced this focus reading. The discourse particle followed the focus in one of the target sentences, and the final constituent in the other one. Examples for each of the particles are given in (17) to (21).

- (17) *Dia səriŋ bajalaŋ deŋ Nina, mar dia ʔcinta pa dia.*  
'He is often going out with Nina, but he doesn't love her.'  
*ʔana(no) yaŋ pa depe hati (no).*  
2SG REL at 3SG.PO liver  
'You are the one he is longing for.'
- (18) *Dia bilaŋ ada oraŋ saki, mar nintau sapa.*  
'He said somebody was ill, but he didn't know who.'  
*Rudi (sto) yaŋ da saki (sto).*  
Rudi REL ASP ill  
'It is probably Rudi who is ill.'

- (19) *Cuma kita yaŋ tau samua tu anak kos.*  
 ‘I am the only one who knows all the boarders.’  
*Kita (to) yaŋ ja dataŋ di sana (to),*  
 1.sg REL ASP come in there  
 ‘It is me who comes there often,’  
*kalu doraŋ xanda?*  
 ‘whereas they don’t.’
- (20) *Dia bilaŋ Novi deŋ Anto xa?dataŋ.*  
 ‘He said Novi and Anto didn’t come.’  
*Jadi cuma doŋ dua (kata) yaŋ pigi (kata).*  
 so only 3.PL two REL go  
 ‘So only the two of them were going, he said.’
- (21) *Kalu pi blanja, dia cuma suka yaŋ mahal-mahal.*  
 ‘Whenever she goes shopping she only likes to buy expensive things.’  
*Soalxa depe laki (kwa?) yaŋ ja bayar (kwa?).*  
 matter 3.SG.POS husband REL ASP pay  
 ‘The fact is, it is her husband who is paying.’

### Presentation

The questions were presented in a random order in the questionnaire. Every context sentence was followed by the two target sentences, and the subjects were asked to select the one they thought was correct. There was no time limit. Incomplete questionnaires were not accepted.

### Subjects

Forty subjects participated in the experiment. They were students at the Sam Ratulangi University in Manado. Twenty hailed from the Minahasa, twelve from Manado, and eight from other parts of North Sulawesi. All were native speakers of Manado Malay.

## 5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For each question the number of focus and nonfocus responses was counted. A focus response means that the subject selected the target sentence in which the discourse particle followed the focus, and a nonfocus response means that the other target sentence was selected. The sum of the focus and nonfocus responses is always 40, since there were 40 subjects and no missing answers. There were five questions for each type (i.e. a combination of a discourse particle and a syntactic structure), and so for each type the number of focus responses can range from 0 to 200. This number was divided by 2 to obtain a percentage and then rounded to the nearest even integer. The results appear in table 1.

A binomial test showed that the values in all the cells are significant beyond the 1% level, except for three discourse particles in the subject-predicate category: *sto* ( $p = 0.437$ ), *to* ( $p = 0.358$ ), and *kata* ( $p = 0.040$ ).

Focus-Marking Particles In Manado Malay:

DISCOURSE PARTICLE	FOCUS RESPONSES (%)		
	subject - predicate	predicate - subject	<i>yaŋ</i>
<i>No</i>	82	84	82
<i>Sto</i>	47*	92	84
<i>To</i>	46*	72	73
<i>Kata</i>	42*	84	70
<i>kwaʔ</i>	17	88	82

Table 1. Percentage of focus responses for each combination of a discourse particle and a syntactic construction (rounded to the nearest even integer).

\*not significant at the 1% level

If the number of focus responses approaches 100% then the particle will be associated with the focus. If it approaches 0% then it will be associated with the nonfocus. A score of about 50% indicates that the particle is associated with neither the focus nor the nonfocus. A discourse particle is a focus marker if it is associated with the focus in all three syntactic constructions, and a nonfocus marker if it is associated with the nonfocus in all three constructions.

The only particle that is associated with the focus in all three syntactic constructions is *no*. The three scores are quite high at over 80%. It can therefore safely be concluded that *no* is a focus-marking particle.

The scores for the particles *sto*, *to* and *kata* are far less consistent. In subject-predicate sentences there is no significant preference for either the focus or the nonfocus position. These particles can therefore neither be focus-marking particles nor nonfocus-marking particles. In predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences, however, these particles appear to be associated with the focus, although the scores are not as high as for *no*. A possible explanation for this divergence will be given below.

*Kwaʔ* is the only particle that is associated with the nonfocus in one of the syntactic constructions, as the score for subject-predicate sentences is significantly lower than 50%. But *kwaʔ* is not a nonfocus-marking particle, since it is associated with the focus in both predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences. According to Stoel (2000), *kwaʔ* can only occur at the end of the first prosodic phrase of an utterance. This is in accordance with the results of the current experiment. The end of the first prosodic phrase is more likely to correspond to a nonfinal position than a final position, since most utterances consist of several prosodic phrases. Thus if *kwaʔ* indeed marks the end of the first prosodic phrase, then it is likely to occur in a nonfinal position. The nonfinal position in subject-predicate sentences happens to be a nonfocus, while it is a focus in case of predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences. Table 2 shows that the preference for a nonfinal position is larger than 80% for all three syntactic constructions. *Kwaʔ* is thus a particle that occurs in a nonfinal position, and its position is not dependent on the focus structure of the sentence.

DISCOURSE PARTICLE	NONFINAL POSITION (%)		
	subject - predicate	predicate - subject	<i>yaŋ</i>
<i>kwaʔ</i>	83	88	82

Table 2. Preference for a nonfinal position of *kwaʔ*.

*Sto*, *to*, and *kata* also preferably occur in a nonfinal position in predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences. But unlike *kwaʔ* they do not always occur in this position, since their position in subject-predicate sentences is unpredictable. A possible explanation is the following. The position of any discourse particle may be determined by two constraints: 1. the particle must come after the focus; and 2. the particle must come at the end of the first prosodic phrase. In case of *no*, the first constraint is more important than the second one, whereas in case of *kwaʔ*, the second one is more important. In case of *sto*, *to*, and *kata*, both constraints are equally important, and either of them may determine the position of the particle. In subject-predicate sentences, the first constraint implies a final position, and the second constraint a nonfinal one. Since both are equally acceptable, the choice for one of them is random. In predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences, on the other hand, both constraints force the particle to occur in a nonfinal position, and consequently there is a strong preference for this position.

## 6 VARIATION AMONG SUBJECTS

The results presented in the previous section did not take into account any possible variation among subjects. For example, although the position of *sto* is free in subject-predicate sentences, it may be possible that its position is more or less fixed for some of the subjects. Remember that for each of the fifteen types the number of focus responses could range from 0 to 5 per subject. Table 3 presents for each type the number of subjects for which the number of focus responses was 0 or 1, 2 or 3, and 4 or 5, respectively.

It will be assumed that a score of 4 or 5 indicates that for this particular subject the particle is associated with the focus, while a score of 0 or 1 focus responses indicates that the particle is associated with the nonfocus. If the number of focus responses is 2 or 3 then the particle is associated with neither the focus nor the nonfocus.

The total of each row in Table 3 is 40, since there were 40 subjects. Pearson's chi-square test showed that all observed frequencies differ significantly from the expected frequencies at the 1% level (the expected frequencies are 7.5, 25, and 7.5, equal to  $40 \cdot X$ , in which  $X$  is a binomial random variable with parameters  $n = 5$  and  $p = 0.5$ , for  $X = 0$  or 1,  $X = 2$  or 3, and  $X = 4$  or 5, respectively).

Table 3 shows that about three-quarters of the subjects take *no* to be a focus-marking particle, while about one-quarter of the subjects is uncertain. The conclusion of the previous section that *no* is a focus-marking particle is thus justified. As for *sto*, *to*, and *kata*, their scores for subject-predicate sentences are distributed more uniformly among the three intervals than would have been expected if the choice was fully random (remember that the expected scores were 7.5, 25, and 7.5). There is thus some individual variation concerning the position of these particles in subject-predicate sentences. Note also that in predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences there is little variation in case of *sto*, somewhat more in case of *kata*, and most in case of *to*. About half of the subjects are uncertain about the position of *kata* in these sentences. Finally, the scores for *kwaʔ* are relatively consistent among the subjects.



Focus-Marking Particles In Manado Malay:

DISCOURSE PARTICLE / SYNTACTIC CONSTRUCTION	NUMBER OF FOCUS RESPONSES		
	0-1	2-3	4-5
<i>no</i> / subject-predicate	1	10	29
<i>no</i> / predicate-subject	1	6	33
<i>no</i> / <i>yaŋ</i>	1	9	30
<i>sto</i> / subject-predicate	14	16	10
<i>sto</i> / predicate-subject	0	4	36
<i>sto</i> / <i>yaŋ</i>	0	7	33
<i>to</i> / subject-predicate	17	12	11
<i>to</i> / predicate-subject	1	18	21
<i>to</i> / <i>yaŋ</i>	1	16	23
<i>kata</i> / subject-predicate	16	15	9
<i>kata</i> / predicate-subject	1	7	32
<i>kata</i> / <i>yaŋ</i>	3	15	22
<i>kwa?</i> / subject-predicate	34	5	1
<i>kwa?</i> / predicate-subject	0	7	33
<i>kwa?</i> / <i>yaŋ</i>	2	10	28

Table 3. Frequencies of focus responses for each type.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Thanks to the experimental approach followed here, the claim in Stoel (2000) that *sto* and *to* are focus-marking particles could be refuted. *No* is the only focus-marking particle of the five discourse particles investigated. *Kwa?* preferably occurs in a nonfinal position. It is thus similar to the well-known second-position clitics in many other languages. The position of *sto*, *to*, and *kata* is less fixed in subject-predicate sentences, but there is some variation among subjects about what the correct position should be. In predicate-subject and *yaŋ* sentences, these particles typically follow the focus, which is equivalent to saying that they occur in a nonfinal position.

## REFERENCES

- Dreyer, Matthew S. (1996) 'Focus, pragmatic presupposition, and activated propositions'. *Journal of Pragmatics* 26:475-523.
- Kiss, Katalin É. (1998) 'Identificational Focus versus Information Focus'. *Language* 74:245-273.
- König, Ekkehard (1991) *The meaning of focus particles*. London: Routledge.
- Stoel (2000), 'Discourse particles in Manado Malay'. In: Helen de Hoop and Ton van der Wouden (eds.), *Linguistics in the Netherlands 2000*:185-198. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Vallduví, Enric (1992) *The informational component*. New York: Garland.