Typographical Input Enhancement for Learning Indonesian Transitivity

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This paper is proposing a different approach to teach Indonesian transitivizers –i and –kan. This approach utilizes typographical input enhancement to get learners' attention to the target forms and to increase their understanding of the directionality meaning carried by the target forms. These transitivity constructions are notoriously difficult and confusing for Indonesian learners. Despite explicit rule explanations and extensive exposure to the target constructions, many Indonesian learners still have problem acquiring them.

This approach is motivated by Joanne White's study on drawing the English learners' attention to the linguistic features of English possessive determiners (1998). She utilizes typographical enhancement, proposed by Sharwood Smith (1981, 1991) to help the students understand the English 3ʳᵈ person marking subsystem and its applications. In the readings she uses in her experiments, the targeted linguistic features such as his or her is typographically enhanced with bolding and italics to make the students attend those targeted linguistic features and their messages.

The Indonesian transitivity with its unique linguistic features and directionality meaning is a perfect candidate for typographical enhancement model. The use of bolding in the suffix –i and –kan and the use of arrows to indicate the directionality of the subject or object in the constructions would hopefully increase perceptual salience of the target forms and promote acquisition.

The Indonesian suffixes -i and –kan are quite a challenge to teach as well as to learn. Indonesian learners face a lot of difficulties in understanding them. Firstly, they have to deal with the notion of transitivity that –i and –kan carry

(namely their occurrence causes the verbs to take another argument and often times two arguments for –kan).

For example:

1. Ali menyanyi.   'Ali sings'. (Intransitive)
   Ali meN-sing

2. Ali menyanyikan lagu itu. 'Ali sings the song.' (Transitive)
   Ali meN-sing-kan song that

3. Ali membukakan bapak pintu. 'Ali opens his father the
   Ali meN-open-kan father door   door.' (Ditransitive)

4. Ali datang.   'Ali comes.' (Intransitive)
   Ali come

5. Ali mendatangi bapak.   'Ali comes to his father.'
   Ali meN-come-i father   (Transitive)

     Secondly, each of these morphemes semantically carries several different meanings that we can see as follows:

1. The case of –kan (Dikken1995)

–kan_1 = applicative suffix in double object constructions
E.g. Ali membukakan bapak pintu. 'Ali opens his father
     Ali meN-open-kan father door   the door.'

–kan_2 = that appears in prepositional dative constructions
E.g. Ali membukakan pintu untuk bapak. 'Ali opens the door
     Ali meN-open-kan door for   bapak   for father.'

–kan_3 = causative suffix in causative constructions
E.g. Ibu   menidurkan   Ali   'Mother puts Ali to bed.'
     Mother meN-sleep-kan Ali

–kan_4 = particle in a heterogeneous set of constructions.

E.g. Ali membicarakan rencananya.   'Ali talks about his
Ali meN-talk-kan plan-his   plan.'

2. The case of –i (Wolff 1984)

a. location (do at, in, on)
    E.g. diam 'quiet/inhabit'   diami 'stay at'
        datang 'come'   datangi 'come to'

b. bring something into the state of
    E.g. penuh 'full'   penuhi 'to fill up'
        terang 'bright'   terangi 'to light'

c. + nouns means 'to provide with noun'
    E.g. air   'water'   airi 'to water'
        bekal 'provisions'   bekali 'to provide
                                someone with provisions'

c. + roots that refer to status or the like, -i means "over'
    E.g. kuasa 'power'   kuasai 'to control / have
                            power over'
        raja   'king'   rajai 'to reign over'

d. action affects a recipient (feelings)
    E.g. suka   'like'   sukai 'to like something'
        marah 'angry'   marahi 'to scold'

e. simply forms transitive (the roots don't occur without –i or
    it is intransitive)
    E.g. punya 'have'   punyai 'to have'
        layan 'serve' (not used unaffixed)   layani 'to serve'

      Finally there is no clear cut of what kinds of roots take
–i or –kan when they co-occur with active verb prefix meN-
(as well as passive verb prefix di-). The categories of roots,
whether they are verbal, nominal, adjectival, in this case are
quite arbitrary. However, the roots will fall into one of the
following subsets (Dardjowijoyo 1983):

1. meN-Root
   E.g. ejek 'mock'   → mengejek

2. meN-Root-i
   E.g. cinta 'love'   → mencintai

3. meN-Root-kan
   E.g. ragu 'doubt'   → meragukan

4. meN-Root, meN-Root-i
   E.g. tunggu 'wait'   → menunggu, menunggui

5. meN-Root, meN-Root-kan
   E.g. bawa 'bring'   → membawa, membawakan

6. meN-Root-i, meN-root-kan
   E.g. tidur 'sleep'   → meniduri, menidurkan

7. meN-Root, meN-Root-i, meN-root-kan
   E.g. tulis 'write'   → menulis, menulisi, menuliskan

Therefore, in order to put –i and –kan into use, Indonesian learners have to be aware of the ambiguity of those morphemes, their meanings and those subsets. These metalinguistic aspects need to be taught explicitly with rules describing the patterns. Explicit information explains how language works and serves as knowledge with which learners can use to monitor their output. De Keyser (1995) argues that explicit information is effective only with rules describing simple patterns. If the patterns are complex, overgeneralization will occur. Overgeneralization of complex patterns such as -i and –kan can be avoided with sufficient input. The question is what kind of input is effective to help learners understand –i and –kan and retain them in their long-term memories so they can avoid the following mistakes (marked by *??*):