

THE SUNDANESE PARTICLES TEH, MAH, AND TEA

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1. Introduction

Sundanese is a Western Austronesian language spoken by more than 25 million people in the Indonesian province of West Java, where it is the principal mode of communication in everyday life. It is taught in primary school, and there are several Sundanese newspapers and magazines as well as a literary tradition, even some radio and television broadcasts. Still, Sundanese is steadily losing ground to the national language. This process is evident, for example, in the fact that current Sundanese publications deal only sparsely with topics transcending strictly local interests. Such matters are the domain of Indonesian, which consequently also feeds a steady stream of loanwords referring to properties of the modern world into Sundanese.

As a subject of linguistic investigation, Sundanese has long been neglected as linguists' interests focussed on Indonesian and the much larger Javanese, both of which are closely related and share many basic typological properties with Sundanese, for instance with regard to morphology and basic word order. Modern linguistic work was pioneered in a series of articles by Robins (1953a, 1953b, 1957, 1959, 1965, 1968). Hardjadibrata (1985) is a tagmemic grammar, while linguistic work published in Indonesia tends to concentrate on morphology. Djajasudarma Idat (1986) is an outstanding study of inchoative particles in Sundanese.

The particles teh, mah, and tea have not been discussed explicitly in the literature. Hardjadibrata (1985: 33) distinguishes them as a group from other types of particles, characterizing them as markers of "emphasis" and as "phrase markers", but he provides no discussion or examples. The present paper intends to show that these three particles form a unified functional system for marking the information structure

of a text, even though they have different structural characteristics. mah is shown to be a focus marker introducing new or contrastive information, teh a marker of known, topical information, and tea a marker indicating that a previously mentioned participant is being reintroduced into the discourse. Structurally, mah and teh adjoin to the right of any maximal constituent while tea behaves like a special kind of determiner. The existence of this functional system in Sundanese constitutes a major typological contrast with the closely related Bahasa Indonesia.

The data for this study come from various types of texts, including the novel Paeh di Popotongan, the weeklies Giwankara and Mangle, the school text series Piwulang Basa and a collection of children's stories entitled Warna-Warna Kaulinan. Additional data were provided by Sundanese language consultants.¹

2. Functional considerations

The distribution of the three particles cannot be uniquely established on the level of individual sentences. All three occur interchangeably in many of the same syntactic environments, as shown in 1a-c, where each follows the same noun phrase; use of the particles also seems to be grammatically "optional" in the sense that a sentence will still be well formed without either mah, teh, or tea, cf. sentence 1d:²

- (1) a. Lanceukna mah digawe di kantor.
 older:brother-3 work in office
 'His older brother works in an office.'
- b. Lanceukna teh digawe di kantor.
 older:brother-3 work in office
 'His older brother works in an office.'
- c. Lanceukna tea digawe di kantor.
 older:brother-3 work in office
 'His older brother works in an office.'

- d. Lanceukna [---] digawe di kantor.
 older:brother-3 work in office
 'His older brother works in an office.'

As soon as the analytical domain is extended beyond the sentence, the distinctive functions of the particles begin to emerge. In question - answer sequences, for example, teh is associated with the constituent which sets the domain for the question whereas mah marks the constituent which provides the requested new information in the answer, as shown in examples 2 and 3. It is not possible to use mah in place of teh, or vice versa, in any of these cases.

- (2) Q: Eusina buku eta teh naha kataji?
 content-POSS book that Q interesting
 'Is (the content of) that book interesting?'

A: Komo bae kataji mah.
 above:all interesting
 'Very interesting.'

- (3) Q: Anu indit ka pasar teh saha?
 REL go to market who
 'Who is (the one) going to the market?'

A: Nu indit ka pasar Dadas mah.
 REL go to market Dadas
 'The one who went to the market is Dadas.'

In other words, the function of teh is to identify the setting (to use the term of Mathesius 1939, cited in Bossong 1989:28) which the question refers to, i.e., that information which the speaker assumes to be known or shared by the hearer. mah marks the core new information provided in the answer. teh therefore functions as a prototypical topic marker and mah as a prototypical focus marker.

The function of the focus marker mah includes that of contrastive focus, which in some other languages like Korean

or Japanese is usurped by the topic marker. Sentences 4 and 5 illustrate the contrastive use of mah:

- (4) Galah Bandung mah nu maenna cukup ku tiluan,
REL play-DEF enough by 3-NOM

sedengkeun galah biasa mah paling saeutikna
while normal most little

oge kudu aya dalapan urangna.
also must exist eight person

‘As for the Bandung variety of galang, the ones who play are enough as a group of three [i.e., it requires only three players], while for the normal galang there must at least be eight persons.’

- (5) Nu penting mah, hayang boga anak.
REL important want have child

‘The important thing is, I want to have children.’

The particles have the same functions in simple declarative sentences:

- (6) Silaing mah, Ya ditugaskeun jadi mata-mata
you Ya PASS-duty-TRAN become spy

teh belegug pisan.
stupid very

‘As for you, Ya, being made a spy is very stupid.’

In sentence 6, the speaker is just turning to Ya, contrastively singling him out from a group of his friends and thus addressing him with a mah phrase. The fact that Ya had worked as a spy had become evident in the course of the children’s war game and was thus known to all; consequently, it is expressed as a nominalized verb phrase marked with teh. In sentence 7, a previously mentioned person surprisingly turns out to be Sundanese despite his outward appearance:

- (7) Saenya-enyana mah anjeunna teh urang Sunda.
truthfully he person Sundanese
'Actually, he was a Sundanese.'

Since the person referred to is known to the speaker and the hearer, he is identified by a pronoun and the particle teh. The fact that this person is Sundanese, however, is contrary to all expectation. This counterexpectedness is marked with mah.

A referent counts as "known" depending on whether the speaker can assume it to be present in the addressee's consciousness at the moment of speaking (Chafe 1976:30). This presence may be based on linguistic or on extralinguistic factors. It is not necessary that the referent was explicitly mentioned in the text if identifiability is given from the context of situation:

- (8) Ieu buku Piwulang Basa teh husus kanggo
this book Study Language special for

ngadeudeul pangajaran basa Sunda di
assist teaching/NOM language Sundanese in

SD.

primary school (Sekolah Dasar)

'This book Language Study is specially for assisting the teaching of the Sundanese language in primary school.'

Example 8 is the opening sentence to the foreword of the book in question. As such, there is no previous linguistic context for this statement; yet, the very first phrase in it is marked with teh. The givenness of this phrase is unproblematic only from the extralinguistic context since any reader of the passage will be holding the book in hand.

Conversely, a referent does not become "new" by virtue of being referred to in different words. In sentence 7, it is therefore irrelevant that the teh marked constituent had not previously been referred to with the pronoun anjeunna 'he'. What counts is the fact the referent of the noun phrase anjeunna

teh had been previously established as given. Significantly, a constituent which is marked with teh may well include additional new information about its referent, which is otherwise "known." Typically, such additional information takes the form of a non-restrictive relative clause:

- (9) Si Boyek anu geus eleh teh ayeuna mah
 PN Boyek REL already lost now

ngajak peperangan dina cai.

urge war in water

'Boyek, who had already lost, now urged war in the water.'

Notice that even though the noun phrase Si Boyek anu geus eleh teh includes new information about its referent, namely that he already lost, the referent itself was known information. teh marking therefore applies.

The centrality of the topic and focus functions accounts for the high text frequency of teh and mah, particularly in passages where a number of participants are involved. Still, there are many sentences without either teh or mah. Jackson (1984:96) observed the same fact in Toba Batak and concluded that focus particles have a more specialized pragmatic function than just marking unshared information since, presumably, all sentences will contain some shared information to ensure continuity and some new information to develop the topic further. Focus particles, Jackson claims, consequently function to "relate the new or unshared information to the previous text in a fairly specific way." (Emphasis hers) Jackson's observation straightforwardly generalizes to the Sundanese particles mah and teh. As a result, a narrative text which sequentially follows the actions of a single protagonist may not contain any teh or mah at all. However, when a text involves various, potentially confusing participants or topic shifts, the particles may occur in nearly every sentence.

Compared to either mah or teh, the particle tea has a much lower text frequency. It occurs with the highest text frequency in texts which contain frequent crossreferring to prior

participants, but it is not unusual for several paragraphs to go by without any occurrence of tea in all of the text types analyzed for this study, and in fact many texts do not contain any tea at all. This low text frequency of tea indicates a much more specialized function than either mah or teh, one which is called for rarely enough that many texts do not require it, but which, at the same time, is salient enough to warrant the existence of a specialized grammatical particle. We therefore need to address the question whether tea indeed belongs in a single paradigm with mah and teh at all.

Chafe (1976:32) points out that givenness is exceedingly transitory. As a result, a referent can be marked as known with teh for only a very limited period of time. While such a constituent may still be recoverable to the hearer based on its prior givenness, the speaker cannot assume it to be given any more. At the same time, though, the referent is not entirely new and does consequently not warrant mah marking either. Sundanese provides the speaker with the option of using tea marking for exactly such referents. The function of tea, thus, precisely mirrors Halliday's notion of recoverability which, according to Chafe (ibid.) characterizes the "grey area" between givenness and newness and is the source of frequent speaker errors in languages like English which do not mark it distinctively. tea, therefore, fills the functional gap between teh and mah. It reintroduces a previously given participant into the discourse, forming a specialized functional paradigm with mah and teh. Sentences (10) and (11) illustrate how tea is used:

(10) Nu opatan tea kudu bareng pindah tempat
REL four-NOM must together move place

cicingna.

quietly

'The four of them must go to the next place together quietly.'

In sentence 10, the group of four children had been mentioned in the beginning of the preceding paragraph, but a discussion of

the activities of various children intervened before the group was mentioned again two sentences into the second paragraph. While the givenness of the group as a referent has lapsed due to the intervening discussion, it does have prior mention, which renders it recoverable; hence its marking with tea.

(11) Barang direret ku Praja, eta anu ngomong
when PASS-glance by Praja that REL talk

kitu teh nya eta awewe anu keur
like:that well that woman REL PROG

neangan jelema ngaran Marsaip tea.

search person named Marsaip

‘When Praja glanced (sideways), the one who had talked that way was the woman who had been searching for the man called Marsaip.’

Sentence 11 is quite interesting because the reference of tea in it is technically ambiguous. tea could mark the noun phrase jelema ngaran Marsaip ‘the man called Marsaip’ immediately to its left, or it could mark the complete underlined phrase awewe anu keur neangan jelema ngaran Marsaip ‘the woman who was looking for the man called Marsaip’. In fact, in this particular text both referents had previous mention. The fact that sentence 11 is not ambiguous in its context demonstrates the efficiency of the tea marking: The woman was mentioned within the preceding two sentences and was, in fact, the one who produced the direct speech of the immediately preceding sentence. She is consequently undoubtedly given as a referent and should not be accessible to tea marking. This is exactly what happens in sentence 11 since tea refers unambiguously to the man.

3. Structural considerations

This section investigates the structural characteristics of teh, mah, and tea. I show that the particles mah and teh form a

structural paradigm with the same syntactic distribution, while the particle tea shares some syntactic characteristics of determiners. mah and teh both adjoin to the right of any maximal constituent while tea is restricted to noun phrases, occupying the NP-final determiner position.

Based on sentences like 12, an attractive analysis could be to analyze the particles mah, teh, and tea as determiners:

- (12) Lanceukna eta digawe di kantor.
 older:brother-3 that work in office
 'That older brother of his works in an office.'

The structure of sentence 12 seems to mirror precisely that of sentences 1a-c, with the determiner eta apparently taking the place of the particle. In fact, determiners like eta, itu, and ieu share many commonalities with the particles under discussion here. The determiners can occur noun phrase finally and could also be termed markers of "emphasis" because of the strong deictic reading they induce. Hardjadibrata, Robins, and Djajasudarma Idat all gloss the particles teh and tea as 'that' when they occur in their example sentences, the same gloss they use for the determiners eta and itu.

Beyond these similarities, however, the determiners exhibit quite different syntactic properties. In particular, a determiner in Sundanese can be either the initial or the final element in a noun phrase, but the particles are invariably phrase final:

- (13) a. Kitu deui iraha-irahana ieu serat
 like:that again when this letter
 dipidamel.
 PASS-CAUS-work
 'It was that way again when this letter was composed.'

The noun phrase ieu serat 'this letter' could also have been constructed as serat ieu with a final determiner; but if any one of the particles is to occur with this NP, it must be strictly phrase final, even following an otherwise NP-final determiner.

Consequently, both ieu serat teh and serat ieu teh are possible, as are ieu serat mah and serat ieu mah. Any attempt to construct a non-final particle immediately renders the phrase ungrammatical, e.g., *teh serat ieu and *serat teh ieu. The utterance ieu teh serat is grammatical, but only with the reading 'This is a letter', i.e., with a parse which interprets ieu teh as the initial noun phrase in a copular sentence.³

However, the grammaticality of phrases like ieu serat teh and serat ieu mah reveals an interesting syntactic difference between teh and mah on the one hand and tea on the other. These phrases demonstrate that teh and mah can co-occur with a determiner in the same noun phrase although two determiners never co-occur with the same head noun (cf. *serat ieu eta). tea behaves more like a determiner in this respect, witness the ungrammaticality of *serat ieu tea and *ieu serat tea. Conversely, tea differs from the determiners insofar as it must be placed at the right edge of a noun phrase, like the particles teh and mah. Therefore, serat tea is possible but *tea serat is not. The parallel between tea and the determiners also accounts for the fact that it is the only one of the particles that occasionally co-occurs with another particle. Such two particle combinations invariably take the form tea mah, as in sentence 14:⁴

- (14) Moal boa nu rek mayar hutang tea mah.
 definitely REL want pay debt
 'Definitely (someone) who wants to pay that debt.'

The cooccurrence patterns between particles and determiners can be summarized as in the following table:

<u>Pre-N:</u>	<u>N DET PART:</u>	<u>N PART PART:</u>
DET N	*N DET DET	
* <u>tea</u> N	*N DET <u>tea</u>	N tea mah
* <u>teh</u> N	N (DET) <u>teh</u>	*(all others)
* <u>mah</u> N	N (DET) <u>mah</u>	

There is a more far-reaching structural difference between mah and teh, on the one hand, and tea and the determiners on the other: The particle tea appears only with noun phrases, and, by definition, so do the determiners; mah and teh, however, freely adjoin to other phrases as well. Sentences 15a-c illustrate this fact for prepositional phrases and sentences 16a-c for other phrase types:

- (15) a. Upami keur usum panen mah sok ka
 for:example PROG season rice often to

Karawang.

Karawang

‘For example, during the rice harvest season he often went to Karawang.’

- b. Ih, Si Bapa mah ka calon minantu teh
 EXCL PN father to aspiring son-in-law

mani disamikeun sareng jajamu.

until PASS-same-TRAN with jamu (herb medicine)

‘How could you compare your future son-in-law with jamu, father.’

- c. Di laut mah sagala babatuan kumplit nya.
 in ocean all stones complete TAG
 ‘In the ocean, there are all kinds of stones, aren’t there?’

- (16) a. Anu dalapan welas unit teh kandel teuing
 REL eight teen unit thick too

upami disabukukeun mah.

so:that PASS-one-book-TRAN

‘The eighteen chapters were too thick to be made into one book.’

- b. Harita teh basa salakina balik usaha
 right:then when husband-3 return business
 'Right then when her husband returned from work'
- c. Wah eleh mah, eleh we.
 EXCL wrong wrong just
 'Hey, (that's) wrong, just wrong.'

In sentence 16a, mah adjoins to an adverbial clause and in 16c to an adjective. In 16b, teh is used with an adverb. Although it is certainly the case that the particles most frequently modify noun phrases, constructions of this type occur quite frequently. tea, however, appears to be strictly limited to noun phrases. This constraint can be attributed to the hypothesized function of tea, i.e., to reintroduce previously mentioned participants into the discourse. Such entities will, almost by necessity, be coded in the form of a noun phrase. In sentences where tea does occur with a prepositional phrase, it can readily be interpreted as adjoining to the PP-internal noun phrase, as in 17:

- (17) Ucingna nangtung dina titik potong di tengah
 cat-DEF stand inside point cut in middle

kalang tea.

circle

'The cat stands at the intersection in the middle of the (previously mentioned) circle.'

Structurally, tea could adjoin either to the noun phrase kalang tea or to the whole prepositional phrase di tengah kalang tea here; but the context of this sentence makes it clear that the former adjunction is the correct one since it was in fact the circle, the kalang, that had been mentioned before. Since all of the doubtful adjunctions of tea in my data are of this kind, the most reasonable analysis is that tea adjoins only to noun phrases. Of course, it is an empirical question yet to be resolved whether there are any unequivocal examples of tea adjoining to other kinds of phrase.

4. Concluding remarks

This paper has shown that mah, teh, and tea form a functional paradigm of marking information structure. teh marks a constituent as known, mah as new, and tea as recoverable. Structurally, mah and teh can adjoin to the right of any maximal constituent and, therefore, unproblematically co-occur with a determiner in noun phrases. tea, however, occupies the NP-final determiner position and can, consequently, not co-occur with a determiner since each noun phrase has at most one determiner. tea differs from the determiners in that it can not appear in the NP-initial determiner position.

When we compare this Sundanese system with Indonesian, it becomes immediately evident that there is no comparable system in the national language. Only tea has a close formal equivalent in Indonesian tersebut 'the mentioned'; unlike tea, however, tersebut can cooccur with a determiner, as illustrated in sentence 18:

(18) Indonesian:

Rumah tersebut (itu) baru dibongkar.

house mentioned (that) just PASS-demolish

'The mentioned house was just demolished.'

The existence of this system in Sundanese, therefore, constitutes an important typological contrast between the closely related languages. Similar typological contrasts exist at all levels of analysis. To name a phonological difference, final stop consonants are obligatorily devoiced in Indonesian, but not in Sundanese. Although the distinction between languages and dialects in Western Austronesian languages is often a matter of debate, such typological contrasts are fundamental enough to prohibit the classification of Sundanese as a variety of Malay, which Indonesian is.

NOTES

1. Sundanese orthography follows Standard Indonesian conventions, i.e. c = /č/, j = /j̃/, sy = /š/, ny = /ñ/, ng = /ŋ/. eu represents the unrounded mid-high back vowel /ɤ/, which does not occur in Indonesian. I am indebted to Professor Djajasudarma Idat for introducing me to her work on Sundanese and to my language consultants, Mr. Dadan Suparman and Mr. Saeful Bahri, without whom this project would not have been possible. My research in Indonesia was supported by a General Faculty Grant from the California State University, Fullerton Foundation.

2. In the example sentences, the relevant phrase(s) discussed in the text are underlined. The following abbreviations are used:

- 3 = Third Person marker
- CAUS = Causative
- DEF = Definite
- DET = Determiner
- EXCL = Exclamation
- NOM = Nominalizer
- PASS = Passive
- PN = Personal Name marker
- POSS = Possessive
- PROG = Progressive
- REL = Relative marker
- TRAN = Transitive

3. Of course, so is Ieu mah serat, with the same English gloss 'This is a letter'. There is no overt copula corresponding to English 'be' in Sundanese.

4. At present, the function of the tea mah combination is still unclear to me.

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