

# Focus *in situ* in Indonesian?

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It is well known that focused constituents in Indonesian often occur in sentence-initial position. Two distinct constructions are available for this purpose, which I refer to as CLEFTING (subjects only) and FOCUS-FRONTING (for adjuncts, oblique arguments, and other non-term constituents).

In this paper I consider the extent to which narrow focus can be expressed by other, non-structural means. Specifically, I explore the hypothesis that narrow focus on *in situ* constituents is either impossible, or severely restricted as compared to languages like English and Dutch. This hypothesis first arose (as far as I know) from acoustic and psycholinguistic research by van Zanten & van Heuven (1998), Goedemans & van Zanten (2007) among others, who claim that Indonesian has no word-level stress, but only boundary tones at the boundaries of intonational phrases. This is claimed to have implications for focus-marking as well:

In unequivocal stress languages [like English and Dutch—PRK], the phrase-level accent phenomenon is tied to the word-level phenomenon of stress because an accent always aligns to the stressed syllable of the phrasal head... In languages like Indonesian, focus cannot be used to contrast between non-phrase final words... [Goedemans & van Zanten, 2007]

Whether or not this analysis of Indonesian word stress is correct, we can observe certain syntactic phenomena which seem to indicate that intonation alone is not sufficient to mark *in situ* constituents for contrastive focus. One class of examples comes from the distribution of the cleft construction. The semantic properties of Indonesian clefts seem in many ways quite similar to those of their English counterparts, e.g. in allowing the formation of “informative-presupposition” clefts (Prince 1978) and the status of the “exhaustive listing” inference (only an implicature rather than a presupposition or entailment; Horn, 1981). However, Indonesian clefts seem to be used over a greater range of functions. For example, clefting is obligatory for narrow-scope uses of the exclusives *saja* and *hanya* (e.g., *Hanya nasi yang saya makan kemarin.* vs. \**Kemarin saya makan hanya nasi.* ‘Yesterday I ate only rice.’) There are contexts where a cleft must be used in Indonesian to convey focus interpretations that would normally be indicated with intonation alone in languages like English, e.g. double-focus sentences (“Why are *you* apologizing to *me*? I should be apologizing to *you*!”).

In English and many other languages, clausal negation takes narrow scope over focused constituents. In Indonesian, the “special” negator *bukan* seems to be strongly preferred over the “standard” negator *tidak* when a narrow focus reading is intended. For example, it appears that only *bukan* can be used in META-LINGUISTIC negation (Horn 1985, 1989), which in English typically involves focal stress (e.g. *He doesn't own two houses, he owns seven.*). Sudaryono (1993) points out that *bukan* is acceptable in verbal and adjectival clauses only in certain specific, typically contrastive, contexts; but the acceptability of *tidak* in these clauses is not context-dependent. One hypothesis that we might consider is that the use of *bukan* in verbal clauses is always a marker of meta-linguistic negation, and that a narrow focus interpretation (for *in situ* constituents) is only possible with meta-linguistic negation, not with semantic/truth-conditional negation.