Stress Patterns in Kupangese

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This paper advances the research on non-standard Indonesian dialects by proposing predictable stress patterns for Kupangese. We argue for: 1)phrasal penultimate stress; and 2)high boundary tone (H) at the end of a subject NP. Since stress patterns are realized as pitch or amplitude, and stress placement is determined by phrase boundaries, examination of these patterns offers insight into acoustic realizations of phonological patterns based on phrase structure. Thus, we explore the phonetics, phonology, and syntax of a language whose stress patterns are as yet unexamined.

Stress in Kupangese is unique from Standard Indonesian (SI) in the following ways: 1)there is no secondary stress (c.f. Cohn, 1989); 2)there is evidence of highly limited contrastive word stress (e.g. minimal pairs: barát 'heavy' vs. bárat 'western'). Disagreement remains over word stress in SI, though many argue against it. Some claim stress on the penultimate syllable unless it contains a schwa, in which case stress is on the final (Alieva, Arakin, Cohn, 1989, Ogloblin & Sirk, 1991). Tadmor (1999, 2000) argues that stress placement may vary by region. Gil argues that no word stress exists in Riau Indonesian, and that phonetic prominence results from intonational prominence (Gil, 2006). Our paper also argues against widespread word stress in Kupangese.

We have recorded the speech of our Kupangese informant and analyzed it with Praat (2009), which allows us to examine pitch and amplitude contours offline to achieve more detailed stress pattern analyses. We found two forms of evidence for the existence of Kupangese stress patterns: 1)Pitch and amplitude, which we take to be the relevant acoustic correlates, are predictable; 2)The informant rejects forms that do not subscribe to predictable patterns. The following ordered application rules explain the data: 1)Penultimate stress, realized by penultimate high pitch and high amplitude, is assigned phrasally; 2)An intonation boundary tone characterized by H assigns high pitch (not amplitude) to subject NP final syllable. These two processes result in an interaction effect in the subject NP: 1)On the ultimate syllable, pitch is raised (by boundary tone) while amplitude remains the same; 2)The penultimate syllable retains higher amplitude (by phrasal stress), though pitch is now lower than final syllable. See the following example:

(1) [itu anjing]$_{NP}$ [suka itu nona]$_{VP}$
that dog like that girl
'That dog likes that girl.'

In the subject NP, highest amplitude is on penultimate syllable 'an' (via phrasal stress assignment) while highest pitch is on the final syllable 'jing'.

Incorporating application of widespread word stress would make inaccurate predictions for the data and would require an unnecessarily complete stress assignment system. Likewise, application of stress only at the level of IP/CP would not account for all of the patterns in the data. Thus, our analysis supports previous claims that stress is not assigned at the word level in Malay dialects, and offers further evidence for theories assigning stress at the phrase level. Our preliminary explorations into this aspect indicate that pitch is the more salient correlate. We plan to expand our data set to a wider variety of sentence types to further support these claims.

To our knowledge, the current work offers the first examination of stress patterns in Kupangese. Understanding these patterns critically advances our knowledge of this largely understudied dialect. Because of the multi-faceted nature of stress patterns, the data collected offers wide-reaching insight into Malaysian phonetics, phonology, and syntax.