

A parallel corpus-approach to *sudah*

Bruno Olsson & David Moeljadi

In this talk we present a corpus-based approach to the function of the aspectual marker *sudah* in Indonesian. As the most frequently occurring of the Indonesian aspectual markers, *sudah* has drawn the attention of linguists working on Malay/Indonesian (e.g. Kaswanti Purwo 1984, 2011, Grangé 2010, Soh 2012) but also from an areal-typological perspective (Olsson 2013, Dahl and Wälchli 2013). Although typically described as a Perfect marker, attempts to equal *sudah* with European-style Perfects such as the English *have V-en* construction will face the problem that *sudah* is incompatible with many of the contexts in which Perfects are typically used (see e.g. Kaswanti Purwo 2011). For instance, the English Perfect is fine in (1) and (2) since the sentences involve past actions with present relevance, but speakers of Indonesian reject the use of *sudah* in these situations.

- (1) Aku (***sudah**) kehilangan dompet. Bisa-kah kamu membantu mencarika-nya?
1sg lose wallet can-Q 2sg help find-3
'I've lost my wallet. Can you help me look for it?'
- (2) (—How's the reading going?)
Buruk, aku baru (***sudah**) membaca tiga buku sejauh ini.
bad I only read three book so.far
'Bad, I've only read three books so far.'

The infelicity of *sudah* in such contexts is readily explainable by the semantic properties that *sudah* shares with *already* (Soh 2012, Olsson 2013). At the same time it is clear that the functional load of *sudah* in Indonesian is much larger than that of *already* in English: a simple frequency count gives 50 occurrences of *already* in an English translation of the New Testament, while *sudah* counts 1560 occurrences in an Indonesian translation.¹ While earlier studies by Kaswanti Purwo (e.g. 1984, Kaswanti Purwo 2011) and Grangé (2010) have made important contributions to the understanding of *sudah*, we believe that any attempt to find a single general meaning that explains the uses of *sudah* will be insufficient to account for its distribution in Indonesian. Instead, we opt for a bottom-up approach according to which determining the function of a grammatical category roughly means identifying the conditions that govern how speakers use the category. Such conditions can belong to the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic realms and typically show complex interactions, as exemplified by the clash between *sudah* and the adversative semantics of (1) or the quantifier *baru* in (2) above. Using a relatively small parallel corpus (ca. 100.000 words) consisting of Indonesian subtitles from English-language movies (and vice versa) paired with the original movie lines, we coded each occurrence of *sudah* according to parameters such as temporal reference, Aktionsart properties and speaker expectations. This procedure permits us to show how different factors act as cues to the use of *sudah*, and how these differ from the factors that govern the use of the English Perfect and *already*.

¹The numbers correspond to the World English Bible and the 1982 translation of the Indonesian Bible Society.

References

- Dahl, Östen and Bernhard Wälchli. 2013. “Disentangling the variability of the perfect gram type”. Presented at the Association for Linguistic Typology 10th Biennial Conference, Leipzig (Germany), August 2013.
- Grangé, Philippe. 2010. “Aspect and modality in Indonesian: the case of *sudah*, *telah*, *pernah*, *sempat*”. In: *Wacana* 12.2, pp. 243–268.
- Kaswanti Purwo, Bambang. 1984. *Deiksis dalam bahasa Indonesia*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.
- Kaswanti Purwo, Bambang. 2011. “*Sudah* in Contemporary Indonesian”. Presented at 16th International Symposium on Malay/Indonesian Linguistics, Malang (Indonesia), June 2011.
- Olsson, Bruno. 2013. “Iamitives: Perfects in Southeast Asia and beyond”. MA thesis. Stockholm University.
- Soh, Hooi Ling. 2012. “Towards a semantic analysis of the aspectual marker *dah* in Colloquial Malay”. Presented at the 16th International Symposium on Malay/Indonesian Linguistics, Kelaniya (Sri Lanka), June 2012.