A cognitive grammar account of *kita*'s pronominal usage in Malay talk shows

In Standard Malay Grammar, the first-person plural pronoun *kita* 'we' is considered to be an inclusive marker distinct from its direct counterpart *kami* 'we'. This study focuses on the usage of *kita* 'we' in Malay talk shows and offers analysis drawing upon the notion of subjectification, the central theme of Langacker's *Cognitive Grammar* (1985; 1990; 2008).

This study is based on a corpus consisting of 11 talk shows broadcast on TV in Malaysia during the years 2006, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. The duration of the corpus is 3 hours and 41 minutes and it contains 21,146 words. Roughly one quarter (25.3%, 162 cases) of the tokens (641 cases) accept the singular interpretation of *kita*, as illustrated in the example below.

> Host (RA, female)
> *Okay* [6] **kita** (09:02) *bagi* *Puan* *Ziela* *tanya*.
> Okay we let Madam personal.name ask
> [Okay, [6] **I** (*kita*) will let Madam Ziela (host) ask (a further question).]
> (Talk Show 19, *Primadona*, "Single Fathers")

The female host, whose name is abbreviated as RA, has been talking and now hands over to another host, whose name is Ziela, using *kita*. Considering the physical environment, RA could have used *saya* 'I' since she is the only person in charge of this action, and indeed *kita* here can be substituted by *saya*. The question is why the speaker has chosen the first-person plural pronoun in lieu of the singular pronoun.
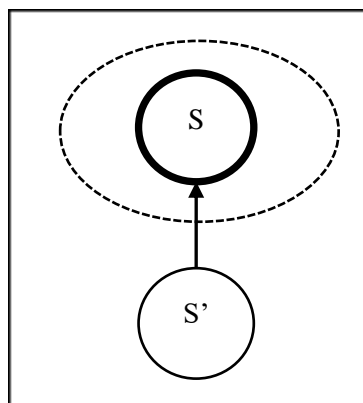
The claim is that the speaker simulates another world (S') which enables her to observe and impose certain perspectives on herself (S). In this case, the perspective is one of involving participants. As one of the hosts, RA is aware of her shared responsibility with Ziela to organise and control a communicative event in the studio. Rather than *saya*, which refers only to the speaker, *kita* is more effective in conveying covert intersubjective meaning, that is, *participant involvement*. This makes sense since talk shows, unlike casual conversations, represent specific forms of social interaction between participants, and hosts are expected to organise and control communication in the studio.

This presentation begins with an illustration of the basic mechanism of subjectification within Langacker's *Cognitive Grammar* and presents examples taken from the corpus to demonstrate the extent to which the process of subjectification is integral to Malay talk shows. Subjectification, conceived generally as a mental process of reducing an aura of physicality, is a common cognitive property attested in various aspects of language use cross-linguistically. In conclusion, assigning *kita* a singular interpretation is an indispensable addition to the canonical uses of *kita* and *saya* in Malay. This tripartite pronominal design makes Malay spoken communication more effective and meaningful, and we ought, therefore, to subsume singular *kita* into a cognitive-semantic category that is clearly emergent in Malay spoken discourse.