Varieties of Indonesian Negation in Indonesian Children's Speech

Bernadette Kushartanti
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

Nazarudin
Leiden University Center for Linguistics

R. Niken Pramanik
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

kushartanti.hum@ui.ac.id

Introduction

Negation is an important concept that has to be learned by children, even in the first years of their life. There are several categories of meaning in negation. In child language studies, there are three main semantic categories of negation. The order of the types indicates the stage of language acquisition: a) REJECTION/REFUSAL; b) DISAPPEARANCE / NONEXISTENCE /UNFULFILLED EXPECTATION; c) DENIAL (Pea, 1980).

In Indonesian, there are four standard negative particles: *tidak* that negates actions and states; *belum* expressing undone or unifinished certain activities or states; *bukan* negating objects or things; and *jangan* for imperatives. There are also nonstandard Indonesian negative particles, used generally in informal situations, namely *nggak* that has the equivalent meaning to *tidak* and *belom/blom* that equals to *belum.* To produce negative constructions, Indonesian speakers only have to put certain negative markers preceding certain words, for example *jangan* 'do not' + *bergerak* 'move', or *tidak* 'not' + *sakit* 'sick'. This is why the production of negation is acquired earlier by Indonesian-speaking children, compared with their Indo-European-speaking counterparts. When they reach the age of two, children already use the four Indonesian negative particles: *nggak* 'no, not', *belum* 'not yet', *jangan* 'don't', and *bukan* 'not' (see Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Raja, 2006).

In this study, we examine the use of Indonesian negation by Indonesian young children in Jakarta who acquire at least two Indonesian varieties: the standard Bahasa Indonesia (BI) which is used mainly in formal situations, and its nonstandard counterpart, Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian (CJI) which is used mainly in informal situations. The focus in this study is on the use of *tidak* (formal variety) and its colloquial counterpart, *nggak.* Both *tidak* and *nggak* are categorized as adverbs (Kridalaksana, 2014). In Indonesian languages, which are mainly SVO languages, both precede the verb functioning as predicate (for BI, see Sudaryono, 1993; and for CJI, see Sneddon, 2006).

The question to be addressed in this paper is: to what extent do Jakarta Indonesian children use these negation markers in the appropriate context? This study has two aims: to explain the varieties of Indonesian negation by the children, and the extent children use the verbal negation markers. First we examine whether children use these negative markers in social contexts—formal and informal situations. Further, we examine how children use these negative markers and their various collocates with other words—especially verbs and adjectives.

Methodology

The main data of this research is children's utterances, obtained from interviews. The participants are preschoolers (aged 4 to 5 years old; N= 89), who come from middle-class families in Depok and Tangerang. To analyze the occurence of *tidak, nggak,* and their variants, we use *AntConc* software. *AntConc* is a freeware analysis toolkit for word concordance and text analysis (Anthony, 2019). In the next step, we classified the negation found in high frequency occurrences. Further, we investigated the collocations of negations to examine how they are used in sentences. Then, we examine the collocation of the negative markers.

Results

The result shows that the negation used by children are deliberately more frequent for the informal variant, compared to its formal counterpart. The informal variant has 160 hits and the formal variant has around 63 hits, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of negative markers in formal and informal situations

	Formal (freq.)	Non-formal (freq.)
ga	44	4
tidak	9	26
nggak	6	88
gak	1	95
enggak	3	16
engga	11	2

Table 1 shows that there are six different variants of negation in both situations. One of the interesting aspects from the data is that both situations indicate low occurences of formal variant *tidak*. In the data, negation *tidak* appears 9 times in formal situations, while in the non-formal situation it is more frequent, 26 times. We also investigate the N-grams for each negation that we found in the data. N-gram is a contiguous sequence of n items from a given sample of text and its typically collected from a corpus.

In the following tables (Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4), we present the N-grams of *ga, engga, tidak* in formal situation.

Table 2: N-grams *ga* in Formal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	33	ga tau
2	2	ga ada
3	2	ga mau
4	1	ga inget
5	1	ga laku
6	1	ga main
7	1	ga masuk

8	1	ga sekolah
9	1	ga suka
10	1	ga tulis

Table 3: N-grams *engga* in Formal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	6	engga ø
2	1	engga ada
3	1	engga karna
4	1	engga matahari
5	1	engga nangis
6	1	engga rumah

Table 4: N-grams *tidak* in Formal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	7	tidak ø
2	1	tidak tahu

After we configure the N-gram corpus description for formal situations, we also describe the N-grams tables for informal situations. From the data, we found out that in informal situations, children use negation more often than in formal situations. Below are the tables of N-gram occurences, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8 present N-grams *gak, nggak, tidak,* and *enggak* respectively.

Table 5: N-grams *gak* in Informal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	23	gak tau
2	10	gak bisa
3	11	gak ø
4	7	gak ada
5	5	gak sekolah
6	4	gak enak
7	4	gak joget
8	3	gak nangis
9	3	gak pernah
10	3	gak sakit
11	2	gak ### itu
12	2	gak cukup
13	2	gak di
14	2	gak... sam
15	1	gak berebutan
16	1	gak bilang
17	1	gak boleh

18	1	gak ikut
19	1	gak main
20	1	gak makan
21	1	gak mau
22	1	gak pa
23	1	gak pada
24	1	gak parah
25	1	gak pulang
26	1	gak sembuh
27	1	gak tahu
28	1	gak ulang

Table 6: N-grams *nggak* in Informal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	55	nggak ø
2	5	nggak tau
3	3	nggak bisa
4	3	nggak enak
5	2	nggak ada
6	2	nggak segini
7	2	nggak, udah
8	1	nggak cerita
9	1	nggak disuntik
10	1	nggak gak
11	1	nggak masuk
12	1	nggak nangis
13	1	nggak nggak
14	1	nggak pernah
15	1	nggak sekolah
16	2	nggak, gak
17	1	nggak, tapi
18	1	nggak. aku
19	1	nggak. minum
20	1	nggak... ayu
21	1	nggak
22	1	nggak... dia
23	1	nggak... tapi

Table 7: N-grams *tidak* in Informal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	4	tidak mau
2	3	tidak bawel
3	3	tidak bisa
4	2	tidak boleh

5	2	tidak cerewet
6	2	tidak suka
7	1	tidak baris
8	1	tidak cuci
9	1	tidak fokus
10	1	tidak kebagian
11	1	tidak malu
12	1	tidak masuk
13	1	tidak pendiam
14	1	tidak salah
15	1	tidak sekolah
16	1	tidak terlalu

Table 8: N-grams *enggak* in Informal Situation

Rank	Frequency	Cluster
1	14	enggak
2	1	enggak ke
3	1	enggak tapi

From the data, we also find that children used these negative markers to express denial and rejection/refusal. Children also showed that they can use the negative markers grammatically.

Discussion

From the result, children have their own strategy in producing negation. In accordance to what Dimroth (2010) mentioned in her article, words for negation are typically one of the first words that children learn. She also argued that children's early negation gestures and words do not yet cover the entire array of negative meanings available in adult language (Dimroth 2010, 42). For Indonesian children, this is not the case. The children in our study use negative markers to convey denial and rejection/refusal categories. The negations are also mainly used to answer *yes/no* questions. From this research, we find that the formal negation *tidak* is rarely used in denial and rejection/refusal categories, while the informal negation *nggak* is more frequent in these two categories. We also find that the use of informal forms of negation tend to have more variety than their formal counterparts.

The negative marker *tidak* occurred more frequently in informal situations. It is quite ironic, because *tidak* is basically part of the formal negation, but it doesn't appear that much in formal situations. As Sneddon (2006) mentions, the occurrence of *tidak* tends to mark formality.

In this study, *tidak* and *enggak* are used to mostly answer *yes/no* question, while the other negtion words are used to negate subsequent words. From the data, we can also see that *tidak*, known as the standard form of negation in Indonesian, has low frequency in our data. Meanwhile, the highest occurences of Indonesian negation among children are the informal variants *gak* and *nggak*.

It is shown that children use the standard *tidak* in both formal and informal stuations. The findings show that children have not fully acquired the social rules of negation *tidak*.

However, they can place negative markers correctly, as found in the analysis of clusters. In other words, these children already acquire the grammatical rules of negation in Indonesian.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to explain the varieties of Indonesian negation by Indonesian-speaking children and the extent the children use negation markers. We found that children already use *tidak* and *nggak*, which are formal and informal negative markers. They also use the variants of *nggak,* such as *enggak, engga,* and *gak.* In both formal and informal situations, the negative markers are used, but the most frequent occurence is *gak.* Children used these negation markers to express denial and rejections. We can also conclude that children can use negative markers grammatically. Yet, they still need to learn the use of these negative markers in appropriate situations.

References

Dardjowidjojo, S. (2000). *Echa: Kisah Pemerolehan Bahasa Anak Indonesia.* Jakarta: Grasindo.

Dimroth, C. (2010). The acquisition of negation. In L. R. Horn (ed.) *The Expression of Negation.* Berlin/New York: de Gruyter Mouton, 39-71.

Kridalaksana, H. (2014). *Introduction to Word Formation and Word Classes in Indonesian.* Jakarta: Penerbit Obor.

Pea, R. (1980). The development of negation in early child language. In D. Olson (ed.), *The Social Foundation of Language and Thought.* New York: Norton, 156-186.

Raja, P. (2006). The development of negative construction in the language of an Indonesian child. *Kata* Vol.8 (1), June 2006: 17-34.

Sneddon, J.N. (2006). *Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian.* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

Sudaryono. (1993). *Negasi dalam Bahasa Indonesia: Suatu Tinjauan Sintaktik dan Semantik.* Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa