

# **A Semantic and Cultural Analysis of the Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian Discourse Particles**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Indonesia is a diglossic speech community, where two significantly different “high” and “low” varieties co-exist. The high variety (Bahasa Indonesia/BI) is the official language of government, education, and formal occasions, while the low variety is the non-standard languages commonly spoken in informal ordinary speech. The colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (CJI) is the most prominent non-standard language, predominant in casual speech and associated with urban youth in the capital city, Jakarta, used by most Generations X and Y in informal communication, novels, TV shows, films, and web-based social networks.*

*This article discusses the semantic and cultural analysis of two colloquial Jakartan discourse particles (DPs), i.e. dong and sih. The method used for semantic analysis was the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), a linguistic theory and a practical, meaning-based approach to linguistic analysis, developed by Anna Wierzbicka. The corpus data was taken from 5 novels, namely Hotel Prodeo (Prison, 2010), Doa Ibu (Mother’s Prayer, 2009), Dadaisme (Dadaism, 2004), Marmut Merah Jambu (Pink Guinea Pig, 2010), and Shitlicious (2010).*

*It was concluded that DPs mark the difference between H and L varieties and are the salient features in the colloquial speech. However, the usage and meaning of these particles are not considered important in the development of language in Indonesia. Their meanings are hard to pin down because the meaning relies highly on the mood, the intonation and the tone of voice when uttering them. The pragmatic and paralinguistic aspects of the particles are not easily translatable into other languages. The semantic analysis using NSM was attempted to arrive at the semantic core meaning of discourse particles dong and sih so that they are accessible across languages.*

**Keywords:** discourse particles, colloquial Jakartan Indonesia, diglossia, Natural Semantic Metalanguage, semantic explication, high variety, low variety

## 1. Introduction

“*Bahasa menunjukkan bangsa*”, said the old Indonesian adage. It means that language shows what the people and culture of one nation look like. To understand a culture, language may serve as a starting point. In respect to people, culture and language, some linguists such as Tilden (1985) and Sneddon (2006:3) described Indonesia as diglossic, the term used by Charles Ferguson to describe a situation where two significantly different “high” and “low” varieties co-exist. The high variety (*Bahasa Indonesia*/BI) is the official language of government, education, and formal occasions, while the low variety is the non-standard languages commonly spoken in informal ordinary speech. The low variety includes local dialects (Javanese, Sundanese, Betawi, etc), *bahasa gaul* “social language”, *bahasa ABG* “teen language” or the colloquial Jakartan. The colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (CJI), a term coined by Sneddon, is the most prominent non-standard language, predominant in casual speech and associated with urban youth in the capital city, Jakarta. This colloquial language contains special registers used by most Generations X and Y in informal communication, novels, TV shows, films, and web-based social networks. Tilden (1985: 49) added that the relationship between high variety (BI) and low variety (referred to as Jakartan Dialect/JD) is more accurately described as a diglossic continuum, in which the users tend to constantly switch and mix one code with the other in their speech. She compared the lexicons of the two varieties and the striking difference is the use of discourse particles in JD/CJI and the absence of them in BI. For the convenience of this essay, the low variety being the focus of this essay will be referred to as Sneddon’s CJI.

In agreement with Tilden, Purwo (in Kushartanti, 2006:2) listed the CJI’s distinctive characteristics such as the use of discourse particles, the variant self-referent pronouns “I”, the deletion of prefixes *ber-* and *me-* that mark the high variety, and so on. Sneddon (2006:118) listed and discussed at length the characteristics of CJI and highlighted that

discourse particles such as *dong*, *deh*, *sih*, *nih*, *kan*, *kek*, *kok*, etc are ubiquitous in the speech of Gen X and Y. Generations X and Y refer to the highly-educated, technology-literate, and fiercely-independent people born between 1965 and 1977, and after 1977 respectively. In short, these discourse particles are the signature characteristics of CJI spoken language of these generations.

This essay seeks to examine two CJI discourse particles (hereinafter referred to as DPs) *dong* and *sih* which can be found in the following examples:

(1) A: Kamu kemana aja *sih*?

*You where just dp?*

“Where have you been?”

B: Jangan marah *dong*. Aku cuma ke rumah teman.

*Don't angry dp. I only to house friend.*

“Please don’t be angry. I was only from a friend’s house”.

The context- and culture-dependent nature of these DPs poses challenges for translators and language learners regarding their appropriate meaning and usage. Uttered in different contexts, *dong* and *sih* may have different meanings. Due to their high frequency of use, DPs are inevitable in daily speech and hard to ignore. Thus, proper linguistic understanding of their meaning, contexts and usage is called for.

For this purpose, this essay will discuss in depth 1) the CJI discourse particles and their treatment in dictionaries, 2) the methodology of the research, 3) Semantic Analysis using NSM, and 4) the cultural interpretation of *dong* and *sih*. The experts’ theories and opinions will be cited to strengthen the urgency to explicate the meaning of the particles.

## **2. Discourse Particles in Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (CJI)**

Discourse particles are quintessential elements of colloquial Jakartan Indonesian non-standard variety. Sneddon (2006:108) argues that since CJI is used in face-to-face communication which involves a highly-personal interaction between participants who shared much of the same background without having to state them explicitly, DPs play an important role as a link of solidarity. The formal high-standard Indonesian (BI) does not tolerate the usage of these particles, because language users and learners are expected to speak or write ‘good and correct’ Indonesian. Consequently, the low variety that contains DPs is deemed “bad and incorrect” language. Since the relationship between the low variety and high variety is complementary depending on the field, mode and tenor, it is only natural that people switch back and forth from low to high variety in their speech. Predictably, the use of the discourse particles *dong* and *sih* is common in low variety and absent in high variety.

The characteristics of CJI are described in depth by Sneddon (2010:117). First, most conversations in CJI are spontaneous, so that ellipsis, omission, repetition, and incomplete sentences are common. The form of CJI is somewhat the corrupted form of high-standard BI. Unlike the BI form that is generally found in writing, CJI is used mostly for spontaneous face-to-face communication and it is assumed that interlocutors share the same background knowledge. Though the frequency of use of particles *dong* and *sih* is high in CJI, they are context-bound and contain pragmatic aspects of communication between the interlocutors. As a matter of fact, Wierzbicka (2003:341) states that particles, being highly-frequent in ordinary speech, are very often “highly idiosyncratic”, and their meaning is crucial to the interaction mediated by speech, as they express the “speaker’s attitude towards the addressee or towards the situation spoken about, his assumptions, intentions, and emotions”. Failure to master the meaning of its particles will result in the learners’ communicative competence

being drastically impaired”. (2003:341). Thus, understanding of DPs reflects the communicative proficiency of language speakers.

Second, all DPs are short, usually of one syllable (Sneddon, 117), for example: *sih, dong, deh, kok, kan, loh, mah, nah, nih, tuh, yah, gih, and yuk*. As short as they may seem, particles are able to convey a range of complex illocutionary acts that are expressed in one-syllable words. Goddard (2010:164) asserts that particles are affiliated with speech act verbs in that they express the personal intention, attitudes, assumptions, and feelings of the speaker.” For example,

(2) *Pergi keluar, yuk!*

Go out, dp!

“Let us go out, shall we?”.

The DP *yuk* conveys a directive act by inviting the interlocutor to do something, i.e. *pergi keluar*. *Yuk* also expresses the understanding that the speaker wants to let the addressee decide for himself, by being persuasive rather than coercive. This is done by choosing the DP *yuk* instead of DP *gih*. Wierzbicka (2003:341) added that particles can “express complex pragmatic meanings at minimal cost and play a critical role in co-determining the range of behavioural styles that a given language makes available to its speakers”. It is clear that DPs in CJI are pragmatically expressive and context-bound as they reflect the culture of the speech community that uses them for a range of communicative purposes.

Third, Sneddon maintains that “none of them forms part of the grammar of the structures to which they are attached; they lie outside the information structure, offering comment on it”. Although some can be inserted in the proposition, most CJI discourse particles are sentence final that function to give comment, seek verification and collaboration from the interlocutors pertaining to the information given previously. For example:

(3) *Jangan marah dong!*

Don't angry, dp!

"Don't be angry, please?"

When uttered softly and gently, *dong* is used to coax someone not to be angry.

However, when uttered loudly with a rising intonation, *dong* may convey the speaker's defensive attitude to justify his action at which the interlocutor is being angry. *Dong* as a discourse particle "cannot constitute utterances by themselves, but is fully integrated into the syntax of utterances" (Ameka, 1992a:108). *Dong* cannot stand on its own as a sentence or phrase. It has to be attached to a proposition in order to function. In addition, *dong* expresses the "speaker's attitudes toward a proposition" (Goddard, 2010:166) whether he has a gentle attitude or is offended by the fact given in the proposition. *Dong*, *sih* and other DPs in CJI are classified as "illocutionary function particles" (Goddard, 2010: 167) which include questioning and exclamatory particles. This illocutionary functions contain "postures" and "turns" of the mind (Locke 1690, 2:99) in Wierzbicka (2003:342). In short, they are abbreviation for the whole sentences.

Fourth, the meaning of DPs is "frequently elusive (Sneddon, 2010:108), with subtle shades of meaning often notoriously difficult to pin down, let alone translate". The discourse particles may have several meanings depending on the context, intonation and tone of voice. However, the difference is sometimes subtle and far from being clear-cut because various pragmatic aspects come into play. It is often extremely difficult to provide an English equivalent which catches the illocutionary force or nuance of meaning in a particular context. Wierzbicka (2003:341) asserts that discourse particles are 'untranslatable' in the sense that no exact equivalents can be found in other languages". Unlike the standard Indonesian which is "intertranslatable" (Sneddon: 108), DPs being the essential elements of CJI discourse are "remarkably complex". As much as Hymes (1974a), as quoted in Wierzbicka (2003:341), agrees that anything is translatable given time and trouble, he maintains that "it is not the case

that one can ‘say anything in any language’ if conditions of acceptability and cost are admitted.” For example, a simple statement containing DP *kok* can convey a complex illocutionary force and cultural values.

(4) *Gitu            aja       kok       repot!*

Like that    just   dp   troublesome!

“If that is the case, why do you make a fuss over it?”

The famous expression was said by Gus Dur, the former president of Indonesia, in response to the public’s badgering over his controversial decisions that would actually improve the conditions in the long run. The expression has been widely used ever since to respond to the interlocutor’s complicated approach to simple matters. The DP *kok* carries the idea of surprise, denial and being righteous at the same time. It is impossible to translate this expression to any languages which do not have similar contexts and expect the same nuance of meaning. *Kok* reflects the agricultural Javanese mindset of *nrimo* “submissive” to God’s will without conditions, questions, or doubts.

Fifth, intonation and tone of voice often contribute greatly to the meaning of particles and these are difficult to convey in writing. As exemplified in sentence (3), different intonation and tone of voice convey different illocutionary force. Rising intonation may convey the speaker’s feeling of annoyance or anger, while falling intonation accompanied with a gentle tone of voice may express the speaker’s intention to persuade or apologize. This context-dependent nature of DPs is not easy to be described and translated in other languages, especially because paralinguistic aspects contribute to different illocutionary force.

Goddard (2010:164) describes three ways in which particles are normally described. The first approach is simply comparing the elusive meaning or function of the particle with that of a similar particle in another language, such as English. *Dong* corresponds to English

“Oh...!”, “Please”, and “Come on”, while *sih* corresponds to English “then”, “you know”, and “as for ...” (Sneddon, 2006). As previously discussed, the meaning of the Indonesian DPs, i.e. *dong* and *sih*, is highly dependent on contexts. In translating their meaning or finding the corresponding particles in other languages, one must look at the contexts of utterances in which the DPs normally occur. Another problem is that capturing the nuance of meaning of Indonesian DPs into Anglo DPs will distort the meaning intended by the speakers.

The second approach is by assigning a technical label to DPs. Sneddon (2006:118) uses the term “emphatic particles” for *dong* and “softener” or “smoother” for *sih*. Schmitt (1976) in Lasut (2007:82) defines DPs as “emphatic and softening particles”, while Sudaryanto (1981) labels DPs as “affective words”, and Kridalaksana (1999:11) quoted in Prasetya (2008:40) categorises DPs as “phatic markers”. In addition, Wierzbicka (2003:342) classifies particles as “illocutionary forces”. However, labels do not help us clarify the meaning of particles. This approach “is not a reliable guide of usage” (Travis, 2006). With all different technical terms suggested to label the particles, language users face challenges in distinguishing one particle from the other.

The third approach (Goddard, 2010) is providing a list of examples and commentary on the various uses. Instead of making it explicit, this approach leaves it to the readers’ linguistic intuition to predict the different uses of particles. Since discourse particles are characteristics of face-to-face communication and shared knowledge and context between participants is important, the intonation and tone of voice are crucial to the understanding of their meaning. Simply labelling and giving sample utterance are not effective to capture the illocutionary force of DPs, which are context-dependent and highly ethnocentric. Thus, a context- and culture-independent tool is needed to explicate the meanings of these particles.

## **2.1 Treatment of *Dong* and *sih* in Dictionaries**



The negative stigma attached to CJI and other low varieties is shown in the treatment of CJI lexicons. Only recently did the Standard Indonesian Dictionary list some discourse particles in its entries (KBBI, 2005). A decade ago, a discussion of CJI discourse particles in an Indonesian language classroom was unheard of. Topics on Colloquial Indonesian are rarely discussed in scientific journals. Only a few writers, such as Sneddon (2003, 2006), Prasetya, et al (2008), Djenar (2007), Kushartanti (2006), and Tilden (1985) discuss the elements of CJI, such as discourse particles.

Most loan words in BI are taken from foreign terms, Javanese, Sundanese and other local dialects, but the number of CJI lexicons being adopted into standard Indonesian is very small (Latifah, 142). Originally, the idea of CJI reflects the egalitarian view of language use as idealized by the founding fathers for the future Indonesia. Unfriendly treatment of these low varieties in dictionaries and grammar will impede the movement towards an egalitarian nation.

Expectedly, the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI) defined the particle “dong” as:

**dong** : (discourse particle-dp) *colloquial* the word used after another word or sentence to euphemise and soften the speaker’s intention.  
*Kalau bukan kamu, siapa dong yang harus membiayai adikmu?*  
If not you, who *dp* that must finance brother your?  
“If it’s not you, who **then** must pay for your brother’s study?”

In this definition, *dong* is labelled as colloquial; it is used as a comment particle to soften the utterance. From the example, language learners can infer that the meaning of *dong* is the same as “then” in English.

**sih** : (discourse particle-dp) *colloquial* the word used to add or to emphasise a question, stating uncertainty and doubts; “I wonder”  
*Siapa sih yang mengambilnya?*  
Who *dp* that take -it?  
“I wonder who took it?”

Similarly, DP *sih* is labelled as a colloquial discourse particle used to emphasise a question. The definition is limited to the usage of the particles. From these examples, language learners and users are expected to infer the meaning by themselves. The Comprehensive Indonesian English Dictionary (Stevens, 2004) defined *dong* and *sih* as:

**dong<sub>1</sub> (J) 1** what I'm saying is true even though your words or actions seem to deny it. *Kalau memang punya hutang, harus dibayar—!* If you have debts, they have to be paid! **2** indicates a strong command. *Minta ke Sékjén —!* Ask the secretary general!

**sih (J) 1** (in questions, k.o. indirect question) I wonder ... *Dia kenapa --?* What's the matter with him? *Berapa — ini?* How much is this? How much would this be (if I were interested in buying it)? *Siapa — yang betah di tempat seperti ini?* Just tell me, who would feel at home in a place like this? **2** (after the subject) as for. *Itu —, salah dirinya sendiri!* It's his own fault! *Saya — tidak percaya apa yang dikatakannya.* I, for one, don't believe what he said. **3** (at the end of a clause) because. *Habis, jauh —.* Well, because it's far. *Kamu yang nakal —!* You're the one who did wrong! **4** *X — X* it may be true that ... (but). *Dapat — dapat, cuma kagak semua!* (It's) true I've gotten s.t., but not all! *Bagus — bagus, tapi mahal!* Yes, it's nice, but it's expensive! *Jelék — jelék tapi saya punya.* She may be ugly but she's mine.

The definition acknowledges the polysemy contained in *sih*. English translation and examples tell the readers of the distinct uses of *sih*. By comparison, the Bilingual Dictionary of Indonesian-English (Echols, 1992) defines *dong* and *sih* in the following entries.

**dong<sub>1</sub> (Coll.) 1.** Particle asserting that interlocutor should already know or do what o. is asserting. *Kamu turut pergi? Ya —!* You going along? Of course! *Sama siapa? Sama dia —.* *Sama siapa lagi?* Who with? With him, of course. Who else? *Jangan begitu —!* Don't do it that way, dummy! *Kasi sedikit —!* Give me a bit (you know you should)

**sih (Coll.) 1** particle used to soften questions. *Berapa — ini?* How much is this, by the way? *Ada apa —?* Hmm, what's wrong? **2** particle used to mark a topic. *Capek — tidak. Tapi mari kita duduk dulu sebentar.* I am not tired, but let us sit down for a minute. *Murah — murah, tapi barangnya bagaimana?* It may be cheap, but of what quality is it? *Saya — nggak nyangka begini jadinya.* Well I did not expect it to turn out like this. **3.** You know! Particle to emphasise a reason given. *Jangan dimakan itu! Pedes —.* Do not eat that! It is too spicy.

The definition provided by these dictionaries is not adequate to capture the meaning of *dong* and *sih*. As it can be seen, these dictionaries merely list the usage of these particles without specifying in what contexts they are used. Language learners and users are left to infer the meaning from the few examples given. The meaning of the particles relies heavily on preceding contexts and each context shapes a different meaning. In addition, the pragmatic aspects of the particles are not addressed in the entry. Other important aspects in shaping the

subtleties of DPs meaning are intonation and tone of voice. These elements are not explored in the definition.

### **3. Methodology**

The previous section highlighted some of the characteristics of CJI discourse particles in the current literature and the potential problems of translation surrounding them. To explain the meanings of *dong* and *sih*, a semantic analysis method called Natural Semantic Metalanguage is used to avoid obscurity, inaccuracy, ambiguity and ethnocentrism.

#### **3.1. Natural Semantic Metalanguage**

The Natural semantic metalanguage (NSM) is a linguistic theory and a practical, meaning-based approach to linguistic analysis, originally conceived by [Andrzej Bogusławski](#) and developed by [Anna Wierzbicka](#) and colleagues for the past 40 years. This theory proposes that there is a core human language translatable across languages without being ethnocentric. The natural language which consists of a finite set of words, called semantic primes, exists in all languages of the world and cannot be broken down any further. This language is used, as opposed to fancy symbols, diagrams, or abbreviations, to analyse the meanings of words through a process called reductive paraphrase, founded in the principles of maximum clarity and universality by breaking down complex concepts into much simpler ones. The ideal semantic analysis using a reductive paraphrase approach is called explication, which shows the full meaning of the expressions being analysed in semantically simpler terms that are readily translatable across languages (Goddard, 2010:66).

The rigorous semantic experimentation done by Wierzbicka, Goddard and colleagues has produced a set of 64 semantic primes (Goddard, 2010). These primes can and must be embodied in expressions (words, bound morphemes or fixed phrases) from ordinary, natural language. The framework of the NSM has been applied to describe discourse particles across

languages, such as in Goddard (1994) on Malay *lah*, Travis (2005) on Colombian Spanish *bueno*, Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2003) on Singapore English *lah*, Wierzbicka (2003) on Polish articles *już* and *jeszcze*, Wong (2005) on Singlish *one*, and Waters (2009) on French *quoi* and *ben*.

### 3.2. Data

To carry out this research, instances of speech taken from 5 popular contemporary novels were listed and manually-compiled to be used as corpus data for the analysis. The 5 novels and the distribution of DP *dong* and *sih* are illustrated in the following table.

#	Novels	<i>Sih</i>	<i>Dong</i>
1	<i>Hotel Prodeo</i> (Prison, 2010)	11	6
2	<i>Doa Ibu</i> (Mother's Prayer, 2009)	22	7
3	<i>Dadaisme</i> (Dadaism, 2004)	5	3
4	<i>Marmut Merah Jambu</i> (Pink Guinea Pig, 2010)	14	4
5	<i>Shitlicious</i> (2010)	25	12
	TOTAL	<b>77</b>	<b>32</b>

The data set consists of 77 instances of *sih*, and 32 samples of *dong*. In daily informal speech, DPs are widely used along with other CJI lexicons, such as *gue* “I/me”, *lu* “you”, *nyokap* “mom”, *ntar* “later”, *nggak* “not”, etc. The additional data is also taken from Kompas.com, web-based daily newspapers.

### 3.3. Limitation

The corpus data provide a huge amount of instances of lexicons typically used in CJI speech. Tilden (1985:48) and Sneddon (2006) list the characteristics of CJI lexicons based on word class, for example noun, verb, adjective, pronouns, and particles. However, this research paper will limit itself to only looking at two particles *dong* and *sih* and their

polysemy. Only relevant examples in the corpus data are will be used to support arguments or to exemplify a point.

#### **4. Semantic Analysis of *Dong* and *Sih***

Prasetya et al (2008:40) assert that emphatic categories such as discourse particles *dong*, *sih*, and many others are commonly used in dialogues of popular novels. These discourse particles are the type of illocutionary particles which function as comments in the form of questions or exclamatory remarks to the previous questions. Both *dong* and *sih* are usually placed in the end of a proposition and sometimes inserted inside a proposition. They both can be used in declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences. The different functions and positions determine the polysemy of each DP. The difference between the polysemous meaning of each DP is often so subtle and context-bound. As described previously, intonation and tone of voice play an important role in shaping the meaning of *dong* and *sih*.

##### **4.1. *Dong***

##### **4.1.1. Defining *Dong***

It is important to note that the word *dong* is polysemous. Sneddon (2006:118) outlines the positions and functions of *dong*. *Dong* occurs in the end of a sentence, a word or a phrase, and sometimes in the middle of a proposition (Sneddon, 2006: 118). *Dong* occurs in statements to give strong emphasis, with a suggestion that the listener should already know that what is said is the case. The following examples illustrate the position and function of particle *dong*. In the glossing, *dp* stands for discourse particle.

The speaker was asking his friend (Ken) to go to the hospital, but Ken refused. After the speaker argued why he should go there, Ken agreed to go. The speaker was relieved that Ken agrees.

- (5) “Nah gitu ***dong***. Ini alamat rumah sakitnya,” ia menyerahkan secarik kertas pada Ken.  
 dp like that dp. This address hospital-NYA,” 3PsSg *MEN*-give-*KAN* piece paper to Ken.  
 “That’s good. This is the hospital address,” he said, handing Ken a piece of paper”  
 (*Doa Ibu*, p.82)

In this sentence, *dong* is said with a rising intonation, suggesting relief that the interlocutor agrees that it is the case. This rising intonation also suggests an attitude “I’m right and you are wrong, you should know it. So listen to what I will say”. Another example of the usage of *dong* or its variant *donk* may clarify the point. When asked which were more important, best friends or girlfriends, the speaker gave a strong emphasis that best friends were more important than girlfriends.

- (6) Dengan gaya diplomatis ***gw*** pun jawab, “ya sahabat ***donk***.. soalnya yang namanya pacar  
 With style diplomatic I particle answer, “yes friend dp because that name-NYA lover  
 “Diplomatically I replied, “Best friends, of course... because girlfriends  
*kan Cuma buat pelengkap kehidupan masa muda kita aja.*  
 dp only for complement life time young our only.  
 are only the complement of youth.”  
 (*Shitlicious*, p. 53)

In the previous example, *dong~donk* can mean “Of course something is the case, not the other” and uttered in a rising intonation to suggest a strong emphasis that one case is more important than the other. In the following example, Alitt barely had enough money and had to choose between buying gas for his motorcycle or other necessities. He realised that if he spent all his money on gas, he wouldn’t have enough money for anything else.

- (7) Trus kalo semua tak beliin bensin, berarti gw gag bakal punya duit buat ngurusin hal2  
 Then if all I buy-IN gasoline, mean I not will have money for taking-care-IN  
 things  
 “If I spent all the money to buy gas, I wouldn’t have enough money to do other things”.  
*laen donk?!*  
 other dp  
 (*Shitlicious*, p. 70)

*Dong* is used as a comment of the previous statement hypothesizing that something will be the case if he does something (i.e. spending his money on gas). Once again, rising intonation and loud tone of voice show strong emphasis.

*Dong* may also occur in imperatives, making them more emphatic (Sneddon, 2006:118). There is a suggestion that the listener should know this is what to do or believe. Although *dong* usually follows a statement or command, it is also sometimes inserted within the proposition. However, it never occurs in the beginning of a sentence or on its own. The following example shows emphatic command for the interlocutor to do something.

- (8) “Edgar, makanya kamu disunat dong”  
Edgar, then-NYA you DI-circumcise dp  
“Edgar, I think it’s time for you to be circumcised”.  
(*Marmut Merah Jambu*, p. 42)

The idea of being circumcised for a ten-year old boy is quite scary and adults should talk in an emphatic manner when discussing this issue. The sentence “*Edgar, makanya kamu disunat dong*” responds to Edgar’s complaint that his friends at school called him a wimp. His brother requested him emphatically suggesting that this would be the case, unless Edgar was circumcised. It is highly likely that the interlocutor will do it when the request is uttered in emphatically using *dong*, said in a falling intonation and gentle tone of voice. Similarly, in the following example, *dong* softens the command, making the interlocutor reluctant to refuse.

- (9) “Edgar, ambil Abang minum dong!”  
Edgar, get -IN Brother drink dp.  
“Edgar, please give me a drink”  
(*Marmut Merah Jambu*, p.131)

However, the main difference between *dong* as a strong emphasis and emphatic command lies in the pronunciation and tone of voice. For example, sentence (9) can have two different interpretations based on how it is said in terms of intonation and tone of voice.

When it is said with a rising intonation and an impatient tone of voice, it can suggest strong command to fetch a drink, as in “Get me a drink!” But when it is said in a softer tone of voice and a falling intonation, it may suggest a more emphatic request to get a drink, as in “Would you mind getting me a drink, please?” In addition, like the Malay discourse particle – lah in Goddard (2010:183), when said in declarative, *dong* gives a strengthening effect, and when said in imperative, it gives a softening effect.

#### 4.1.2. Discussion and Explication

From the discussion above, it is clear that *dong* has polysemous meanings, albeit their subtle nuances. The difference is determined by the mood (declarative, imperative or interrogative), the intonation (falling or rising), and tone of voice (soft or loud). The first meaning of *dong* is explicated:

(10) “*Cenderung homoseksual, gimana dong?*”

Tendency homosexual, how dp?

“I have a tendency to be homosexual, what should I do now?”

(*Kompas.com*, 16 June 2008)

*dong*:

- (a) something happened
- (b) I feel something bad about it
- (c) I want to say something more because of it
- (d) because I want to know more
- (e) [I say: \_\_\_\_\_]

Components (a) and (b) show that *dong* is a comment on the previous statement, which has made the speaker feel bad, i.e. afraid, confused. (c) indicates that *dong* expresses the speaker’s confusion and interest to find the answer. Translated into Standard Indonesian, the sentence *gimana dong?* will be *Apa yang harus saya lakukan?* “What should I do?” However, the addition of the DP *dong* describes the speaker’s feelings of exasperation more vividly. Component (d) translates the speaker’s illocutionary act when uttering this question,



i.e. wanting to know more. Written in square brackets, (e) contains the speaker's main utterance before the particle *dong*.

*Dong* in declarative sentence, uttered with a rising intonation and loud voice can signal the speaker's strong emphasis that something is true, as shown in the following example:

(11) "Oh iya dong. Saya petinju profesional, mendapat bayaran untuk mengalahkan lawan".

Oh yes dp I boxer professional MEN-get pay to MEN-defeat-KAN opponent

"Yes, of course. I am a professional boxer. I get paid to defeat my opponents".

(*Hotel Prodeo*, p. 762)

The speaker gives a strong emphasis that what he says is true by emphasising the word *iya* "yes", followed by a proposition. The absence of the elliptical sentence "*Iya dong*" will make this sentence lose emphasis. This meaning is captured in the following explication:

- (a) someone said something a short time before
- (b) I think: "this can't be true"
- (c) I want this someone to know
- (d) because of this, I say something more
- (e) at the same time, I know this someone can know what I want to say about it  
if this someone thinks about it for a short time
- (f) [I say: \_\_\_\_\_]

Components (a) and (b) show the reason why an emphasis is called for, namely to state that something that has been said is not true. The response is said afterwards to let the addressee know that what she said is not true (c). Component (d) shows that *dong* is said as response particle stimulated by something untrue spoken by the addressee. (e) represents the illocutionary force intended by the speaker when uttering this word, i.e. to emphasise that something is the case. Lastly, (f) contains the speaker's main utterance before the particle *dong*.

The third meaning of *dong* is shown in the following sentence.

(12) Yang nggak tele-tele *dong*.

*That no circular dp.*

“Please, don’t beat about the bush”.

(*Hotel Prodeo*, p. 64)

The particle *dong* is used to soften the imperative *Yang nggak tele-tele dong* “Get to the point”. When used after imperative and uttered with a soft tone of voice, it indicates an intimate persuasion. Without the word *dong*, the sentence will sound terse, impatient and devoid of affection. The meaning is captured in the following explication:

- (a) someone did something a short time before
- (b) I feel something because of it
- (c) I want to say more about it
- (d) I want this someone to do something in the way I want when I say this
- (e) I want to say it well because I want this someone not to feel bad after I say this
- (f) [I say: \_\_\_\_\_]

Component (a) indicates that the sentence containing *dong* is a response statement after someone did something a short while before. It means that people do not normally say “Please, don’t beat about the bush” without any relevant stimulus, i.e. someone talking incessantly without getting to a point. Then, (b) shows that what someone did earlier causes the speaker to feel bad or disturbed. Next, (c) and (d) reflect the need to say something about it to persuade the interlocutor to “get to the point”. Then, (e) is essential in the meaning of *dong* because it is uttered in order to soften the imperative as not to make someone feel bad or offended because of it. Finally, component (f), written in square brackets, contains the speaker’s main utterance before the particle *dong*.

## **4.2. *Sih***

### **4.2.1. Discussion and Explication**

The key features of particle *sih* are that it functions more as filler inserted after a statement or in the proposition to give time to think before saying something else. *Sih* can be

uttered in interrogative and declarative sentences, but not in an imperative. Intonation and tone of voice still play an important part in shaping the illocutionary force of the utterance.

- (13) "Kenapa sih?", tanya gue.  
Why dp?, ask I  
"Why is it so?" I asked.  
(*Hotel Prodeo*, p. 277)

Sneddon (2006:126) adds that in questions, *sih* acts as a softener to make the questions less abrupt. A question using *sih* mainly shows mild interest over something that has been said rather than prying curiosity. The use of *sih* contributes to the smooth flow of the conversation. The meaning of *sih* can be explicated as follows:

- (a) I said this now after what happened a short time before
- (b) because I think: "It can't be like this"
- (c) I don't want people to think like this:
- (d) "this person wants to know more" because of it
- (e) [I say: \_\_\_\_ ]

Component (a) shows that *sih* is a response particle to something that has been said or that has happened. Component (b) represents the speaker's feeling of disbelief whether what is said is true or not. (c) and (d) show the need to hide the interest to know more. Questions using *sih* can be merely rhetorical questions expecting no answers from addressees. Lastly, component (e) represents the speaker's actual utterance, written between square brackets before the particle *sih*.

The second meaning of *sih* is found in a declarative sentence. The word *sih* is used to highlight the noun phrase preceding it, usually the subject of the sentence which is topicalised as the focus and the rest of the sentence comments on it. The examples are as follows:

- (14) *Dia sih orangnya ga mau rugi.*  
3rd-sing dp person-NYA no want lose.

“As for him, he is a type of man who does not want to lose anything”

(*Doa Ibu*, p.152)

(15) *Kita ambil suara terbanyak aja, kalau aku sih udah nyerah.*

We take vote the-most dp, if I dp already give-up.

“Let’s vote. As for me, I gave up”.

(*Doa Ibu*, p.32)

The meaning of particle *sih* is explicated below:

- (a) I said something about something or someone
- (b) I want to say something more about it after a short time
- (c) Because I think like this: “this thing is true”
- (d) I want people to know this
- (e) [I say: \_\_\_\_\_]

To capture the topic-comment element in the sentence using *sih*, component (a) indicates the presence of a topic (something or someone). This topic will be commented afterwards, as shown in (b), that something more will be said about the topic in a few moments. Component (c) represents the reason why the subject is topicalised, i.e. because it is true. That something is true about the subject so that it needs commenting is captured in (d). It is commented so that people know that something is true. Lastly, the words in the square brackets represent the real utterance before particle *sih* (c).

## 5. Cultural Interpretation

*Sih* and *dong* are salient discourse particles in the low variety CJI, and are absent in H variety BI because the particles are more common in spontaneous speech. This is in line with Wardaugh (1992: 92) that in a diglossic society, it is common that the H variety, used more in print, has more prestige than the L variety and that the distinction is made quite clearly on what set of circumstances each variety can function. The H variety, BI, is associated with the language of educated people, particularly the established older generation of “builders’ and “baby boomers”. The “builders” are the people born between 1926 and 1945, and the “baby boomers” are those born between 1946 and 1964. These generations represent the people in

the government and bureaucracy. The L variety, CJI, is associated with the colloquial language of people in Jakarta and most big cities. The speakers of BI associate CJI speech with low class, uneducated people, while the speakers of CJI associate BI with corrupt government officials, rigid customs, and socially and financially established groups.

Along with social and political change, language also changes. Twenty years ago, the trend was towards the standard “good and correct” Indonesian, because people were required to learn standard Indonesian. During the oppressive regime, freedom of speech was very limited and the use of colloquial language in formal occasions was strongly discouraged. When the reform era which started in 1998 blew the wind of change, the freedom of expression began to emerge. Language and music were used as media of struggle against corrupt government, regulated speech, established upper class society. Songs, novels, TV series, TV shows use spoken colloquial Indonesian. The dynamic, short, and creative nature of CJI reflects the dynamics of its users, mostly generation X and Y. Through media, the promotion of CJI usage is effective and CJI gains prominence making the proponents of BI afraid that BI will be no longer preserved in the speech of young people.

This new trend towards CJI suggests the following interpretations:

1. There is a growing concern among young people over the hypocritical nature of the BI as reflected by the hypocrisy of the corrupted government who promoted its usage. Young people do not want to follow the step of their predecessors, so they use their own language to communicate. This reflects the growing suspicion and loss of trust among the young generations to the older generations.
2. The growing prominence of CJI suggests that the level of solidarity among people across social classes is increasing. In the past, language was used to determine social classes, reflected in Javanese address system, and different referent address of I and

You. In communicating among their peers, young people do not distinguish classes on the basis of language. For this purpose, CJI accommodates their needs and interests.

3. The colloquial Jakartan Indonesia is widely spoken among celebrities and public figures. Young people adopt their speech in order to be accepted socially and to be considered *gaul* “sociable”. To be *gaul* means to say, dress, and do certain things the way urban Jakartan youths say, dress and do. With the extensive use of Internet and cellular communication, the use of CJI discourse is more common and widespread.

## 6. Conclusion

The discussions on CJI show that DPs mark the difference between H and L varieties and are the salient features in the colloquial speech. The lexicons enrich the vocabulary inventory of the Indonesian language. However, the usage and meaning of these particles are not considered important in the development of language in Indonesia. Their meanings are hard to pin down because the meaning relies highly on the mood, the intonation and the tone of voice when uttering them. The pragmatic and paralinguistic aspects of the particles are not easily translatable into other languages. The semantic analysis using NSM was attempted to arrive at the semantic core meaning of discourse particles *dong* and *sih* so that they are accessible across languages. This semantic explication is far from being adequate and further analysis of the meaning of *dong* and *sih* is recommended.

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## **8. Glossary and Abbreviation**

**Aku~gue~gua~gw** : Variant pronoun to refer to "I"

**BER-** : One of the Indonesian prefixes to form an active verb. It is usually added to the base verb. For example BER+canda = bercanda (joke).

**BI** : Bahasa Indonesia (High Variety Indonesian)

**CJI** : Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian

**Di-** : a prefix attached to a base to form passive verb. For example: Di+ambil = diambil (taken)

**DP** : Discourse Particles

**Dia~ia** : variant pronouns of the third person singular.



**Gag~ga~nggak~tidak~tdk~enggak** : variant forms of “no”

**-in** : suffix in Colloquial Jakartan variety having the same function as suffix *-kan*.

**Kamu~lu~elu**: variant pronouns to refer to ‘you’

**Ke** : locative preposition indicating movement

**-kan** : A suffix of a transitive verb identifying the object as the patient of the action.

**MeN-** : A nasal prefix to form an active verb. The capital N represents the sound which changes depending on the first sound of the base. N can appear as one of the nasals **m, n, ny, ng** or as zero.

**-nya** : a bound possessive pronoun which means possessed by the third person singular nouns (his, her, its). **-nya** which does not occur as a free word but must be attached to another word, such as **-nya** ‘her/his/its’ in **bukunya** ‘her/his /its book’. **-nya** also occurs as a ligature before the possessive nouns, such as **anaknya paman saya** ‘my uncle’s son’; or in **yang anaknya** ‘whose son’.

**Saja~aja**: variant form of *saja* “just”

**Sudah~udah~dah** : variant form of “already”

Taken from *Indonesian Reference Grammar* by Sneddon, James Neil. (1996) Sydney: Allen and Unwin

*Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*

*Word Count*

*Essay* : 5,023 words

*Examples* : 2,177 words