

**PRONOMINAL USAGE IN JAMBI MALAY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper discusses the pronominal usage in Jambi Malay. The pronouns are described in term of their socio-semantics. The use of pronouns in Jambi Malay correlates to the interlocutors' social attitudes and the ages of the speaker and the addressee. Thus, age plays an important role in deciding between pronoun forms. Pronouns in Jambi Malay neither show gender nor social status.*

**Keywords:** *pronominal usage, Jambi Malay*

**INTRODUCTION**

Jambi Malay is a variant of the Malay language spoken in the Jambi province of Sumatera, Indonesia. Jambi Malay as a whole is not in immediate danger of extinction. Conservative varieties of the language are being rapidly replaced by an urban koine, which is spreading from JambiCity. As a result of the koineization process, many of the distinctive features of Jambi Malay have disappeared in JambiCity. As this process spreads to the hinterland, traditional Jambi Malay will eventually cease to exist. Many young generations tend not to use the traditional Jambi Malay. The reasons are the low prestige of the language and difficulties in understanding the language as well. Many words are strange for them and also some parts of the grammar of the Jambi Malay are not the same as in Indonesian.

One part of the traditional Jambi Malay that is different from Indonesian is the use of the personal pronouns. An example is the use of the first personal pronoun. In Jambi Malay, there are more pronouns that can be used to refer to 1<sup>st</sup> person singular. They are 'aku', 'sayo', 'kami', 'kulo', 'awaq, and 'awaqko. In Indonesian, there are basically only two pronouns for the first personsingular, namely, 'saya' and 'aku'.

The pronominal usage in Jambi Malay is somewhat complex. The use of personal pronouns and their meanings change in accordance with the environment and communicative situation. That is why the use of pronouns by rural speakers is different from their use by urban speakers.

In this paper, I will describe the pronominal usage in Jambi Malay. I choose this topic since many people still do not know about the socio-semantics of pronominal usage of Jambi Malay. This paper is organized in four sections. After the introduction, the relationship between pronouns and their social context is discussed briefly. Next, an overview of the pronouns in Jambi Malay is given. The last section contains concluding remarks.

## **PRONOUN IN SOCIAL CONTEXT**

Traditionally, pronouns have often been described as the substitutes for nouns. They are said to have a purely syntactic function in the sentence (Jain, 1999). However, logical semantics then rejected the traditional view on pronouns and has established the relevance of a detailed study on them. It is as what has been stated by Hintikka and Carlson (1971). They state that the function of pronouns is not only syntactical, that is, to act as a deputy for another noun phrase, but also semantical, that is to recover a reference to the individual that the pronominalizing noun phrase stands for.

Pronouns have a great social relevance. They are linguistic reflections of human relationships. In social interaction, the selection of an appropriate pronoun is very important because the pronouns symbolize a man's social position in relation to the people around him. An inappropriate selection may create unpleasantness between the speaker and the addressee. According to Gantham (2008) pronominal usage indicates differences or dominance, intimacy or distance, equality or differential in status of the addresser and the addressee. We are bound to select or use the right pronoun after knowing who the addressee is, his or her position or status in the society, age, education, etc.

In languages in which the social meaning of pronouns is essential, speakers cannot even refer to themselves without taking into account how they fit into society. I myself often tend to use Indonesian pronouns when I am speaking to an old Jambinese person in a formal situation. Even though that person likes to talk using traditional Jambi Malay, I prefer using Indonesian pronoun to refer to myself i.e. 'saya' instead of 'kulo'. I do this because I just want to avoid making mistakes since I am not used to handle properly the Jambinese pronouns that need to use when speaking to old people. Making mistakes in using the pronouns will be considered impolite.

**PRONOMINAL USAGE IN JAMBI MALAY**

In Jambi Malay, there are eleven pronouns that are commonly used in the society. They are ‘aku’, ‘sayo’, kulo, ‘kami’, ‘awaq’, ‘awaqko’, ‘kito’, ‘kau’, ‘kamu’, ‘awaqtu’, and ‘dioq’. Pronouns ‘aku’, ‘sayo’, kulo, ‘kami’, ‘awaq’, and ‘awaqko’ refer to the first person singular. Pronoun ‘kau’, ‘kamu’, ‘awaq’, and ‘awaqtu’ refer to second person. For third person, they use ‘dioq’ and ‘awaq’. All these pronouns are used for both males and females. Thus, there is no gender distinction.

Table 1  
Jambi Malay Pronouns

1 <sup>st</sup> person		2 <sup>nd</sup> person		3 <sup>rd</sup> person	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Kulo	Kami	Kau	Kamu	dioq	-
Sayo	Kito	Kamu		Awaq	
Aku	Awaq	Awaqtu			
Awaq		Awaq			
Awaqko					
Kami					

Even though there are six pronouns that can refer to the first person singular, their usage is different. Pronoun ‘aku’ is commonly used between speakers who have the same age such as between peers. It can be used also by an older person to a younger one, for example between an older brother to his younger brother or sister, a father to his sons or daughters, or a mother to her sons/daughters. It is considered rude when a young person says ‘aku’ to refer to himself/herself when speaking to older people. Being rude can make the people around her/him feel offended, unwelcome, taken for granted, uncomfortable, or even hurt. Even though older people may use ‘aku’ when speaking to younger people, the use of this pronoun will be better if only used between friends. For

relatives or family, using third person address forms to refer to the person who is being spoken about are considered more favorable. The use of the pronoun 'aku' shows lack of intimacy. For example, instead of saying 'payU kawani aku ka pasar' (please accompany *me* to market) it is favorable to hear 'payU kawani maq ka pasar' (please accompany *mother* to market). The speaker is using here an address form defined by the role relationship between the speaker and the addressee. A husband who wants to show his love to his wife will say an address form used by his wife to refer to him. So, instead of saying 'aku', he will say 'abang' i.e. an address form for an older brother or a husband. For example, to convey the meaning 'I bought this cake', he will use 'tadi abang bli kue ko' and not 'tadi aku bli kue ko'.

'Aku' is usually used in informal situations. Thus, even though an older person may use this pronoun when speaking to younger persons, it cannot be used on all occasions. At school, for example, it is considered inappropriate if a teacher says 'aku' to his/her students. Also, in health centers, a doctor should use another pronoun to refer to himself/herself or using another address form such as 'Pak dokter/ Bu dokter' to his/her patients. This is the case since it is a part of our culture to teach politeness to young generations.

'Sayo' and 'kulo' are almost the same. They are commonly used by younger speakers when speaking to older persons. However, 'kulo' is more honorific. This pronoun is derived from Javanese long time ago. When one talks about oneself, one has to be humble. But when one speaks with someone else who needs to be respected, the honorific pronoun is used. Unlike Javanese whose status is defined by age, social positions and other factors, in Jambi Malay it is only defined by age. Besides, this pronoun is more restricted than 'sayo'. Only in some villages do people use it, such as in Tanjung Raden, Pasir Panjang, and Tanjung Pasir, while 'sayo' is widely used in almost all villages and Jambi city. It is used in informal and formal situations, and used when speaking to people who are the same age as the speaker, younger and older than the speaker. A teacher may use it when speaking to his/her students. A doctor also may use it to his/her patients.

Another pronoun that can be used to refer to the first person singular is 'kami'. Basically 'kami' is used to refer to the first person plural in Indonesian.

'Kami' is not an original Jambi Malay pronoun. It is used as a result of the koineization process. This pronoun is commonly used by young generations in Jambi city. The use of this pronoun sometimes creates confusion to the addressee since it also may refer to the first person plural. As I observed, when hearing this pronoun, the addressees often asked the speakers whom 'kami' refers to. They often ask 'kau samo siapa? (You and who else?)'. Thus, in communication, it is considered not optimal to use this pronoun unless the hearer already knows the habit of the speaker when using a pronoun or the context. Unlike 'aku', 'kami' is considered more polite when used to speak to older people.

The basic pronoun for the first person singular in Jambi Malay is 'awaq'. The use of 'awaq' is unique because it can be used to refer to the first singular and plural persons, second person singular and even third person singular. Therefore, the use of 'awaq' then may create a conflict in its interpretation. See the examples below:

1. Awaq yang banyaq makan tadi.  
PRO CONJ a.lot eat  
'It's I/you who ate much'
2. Ana Naq magi awaq baju.  
Ana want N-give PRO garment  
'Ana wants to give me/you a dress'

In the first example the addressee might think of two possible meanings of 'awaq'. She/he might think that it is s/he who ate much or it is the speaker who already ate much. When the situation is not clear, the conflict in the interpretation might even create a conflict between the speaker and the addressee, because the hearer misunderstands the idea of the expression and might feel insulted. The same is the case for the second example. When hearing the second sentence, the addressee might think that Ana will give her a dress. As a result, it can make her happy. On the other hand, she might interpret that it is the speaker that will get a dress from Ana. Then, it is likely that she will feel unhappy. So, before uttering those sentences, a speaker should be aware of the situation. Giving a context is one of the ways to overcome the misunderstandings. Another way to solve the problem is not to use 'awaq' but, instead, to use one of the

unambiguous alternatives, i.e. 'awaqko' for 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and 'awaqtu' for 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular.

Examples:

1. Awaqko yang banyaq makan tadi.  
1<sup>st</sup> Sg CONJ a.lot eat PAST  
'It's I who ate much'.
2. Ana Naq magi awaqtu baju.  
Ana want N-give 2<sup>nd</sup> Sg garment  
'Ana wants to give you a dress'.

When uttering sentence 3, the addressee knows that the one who ate much was not her/him. It is clear that the speaker does not criticize the addressee for having eaten much. So, the addressee might not feel guilty when hearing the sentence. In sentence 4, it is also clear that the speaker is giving information to the hearer that someone, that is Ana, will give the hearer a dress.

From those two examples we can say that the use of both pronouns, 'awaqko' and 'awaqtu', will not create ambiguity. Thus, we can say that 'awaqko' and 'awaqtu' are more marked than 'awaq'. According to Nilsson (1982: 250) an unmarked pronoun cannot function as the communicative starting point of a sentence. This point must instead be sought in the surrounding context and consists of the antecedent of the pronoun. So, both the speaker and the hearer already know who is referred to. Unmarked here means that the use of the pronoun is not restricted to certain persons. It can be used to all ages and may refer to whoever i.e. the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, 2<sup>nd</sup> person, and even the 3<sup>rd</sup> personsingular. However, in Jambi Malay, the use of pronoun 'awaq' is still common to be used as the starting point in a communication even though sometimes it creates a conflict indeed. To overcome the misinterpretation, a context is needed or the speaker ought to give more information about who s/he refers to. One thing that makes that 'awaq' is commonly used by many people is because this pronoun can be used in speaking to all ages.

In reported speech, 'awaq' can be used to refer to the third personsingular. Usually in this situation, the use of 'awaq' will not create misinterpretation

because both the speaker and the hearer already know the person they are talking about. To sum up, the use of 'awaq' creates ambiguity when it is used to refer to the first or the second person.

For first plural persons, Jambi Malay people use 'kami' and 'kito'. 'Kami' is used to refer to the speaker without including the hearer, while, 'kito' is used to refer to both the speaker and the hearer. All can be used both in formal and informal situations, to younger persons and older persons.

To refer to the second person, besides 'awaq', Jambi Malay also has the pronouns 'kau', 'kamu', and 'awaqtu'. Because 'awaq' has been explained above, I will turn to the other pronouns. The pronoun 'kau' is used to refer to the second person singular. This pronoun has the same function as 'aku'. It is used only when we speak to people who have the same age as us. We can not use it when speaking to older people because, when we do this, we are considered impolite. Usually, this pronoun is used in an informal situation. Like 'aku', 'kau' also shows lack of intimacy, especially between spouses. Instead of using 'kau', 'kamu' is considered more polite. However, a father might use this to his sons or daughters, an older sister also can use 'kau' to her younger sisters. In those cases, it does not really indicate intimacy.

As we saw in the previous paragraph, 'kau' and 'kamu' seem to be the same. They are used to refer to the second person singular. However, 'kau' is only for second person singular and 'kamu' refers to both second person singular and second person plural. 'Awaqtu' is the same as 'kau'. Commonly, it is used when speaking to someone who has the same age as the speaker or is younger than the speaker. It is also used in informal situations. In formal situations, usually 'kamu' is used. However, it is only used when the audience or the hearer is younger or the subordinate to the speaker. In general, people usually just use address forms such as '*bapaq-bapaq*' (gentlemen), '*uwaq-uwaq*' (uncles and aunties), etc when speaking in formal situations or when speaking to older people in informal situations.

For the third person, Jambi Malay people use 'diao' and 'awaq'. Since 'awaq' has been elaborated before, I will focus this paragraph on describing the usage of 'diao'. 'Diao' can be used for the third person singular. It can refer to a

male or a female. So, there is no distinction in gender. In this case, it is the same as the other pronouns. Besides, even though the person being spoken about, i.e. the referent, is not in the speaking area, usually 'dioq' is used to refer to someone who has the same age as the speaker or is younger than the speaker. To refer to someone who is older or the one respected, commonly an address form is used. For example when speaking about our mother we use 'maq (mother)' instead of 'dioq' or when speaking about a teacher we respect we use 'guru kami' (our teacher) or 'ibuq guru tu' (the teacher). Usually 'dioq' is used when there is more than one repetition. Here are the examples in sentences.

1. tadi maq nyUrU ka pasar, kato maq jangan bli  
ikan  
PAST mother N-ask. for to market word mother NEG buy  
fish yang daq sgar  
REL NEG fresh  
'mother asked me to go to market, she asked me not to buy unfresh fish'.
2. guru kami tu balq, kato guru tu dioq sayang samo  
teacher PRO DET kind word teacher DET PRO love with  
kami  
PRO  
'our teacher is kind, she says she loves us'.

Jambi Malay does not have any pronouns to refer to the third plural person. Usually, a noun phrase is used. If in Indonesian, we have 'mereka' (they/them), in Jambi Malay, we just use noun phrases like 'orang-orang tu (those people)', 'budaq-budaq tu' (those children), 'btino-btinoe' (those females), etc. This system is used both in informal and formal situations.

## CONCLUSION

Unlike the use of pronouns in Javanese that correlates with the interlocutors' social attitudes and status, the use of pronouns in Jambi Malay correlates to the interlocutors' social attitudes and the ages of the speaker and the addressee. Thus, age plays an important role in deciding between pronoun forms. Pronouns in Jambi Malay neither show gender nor social status. Emotions



changing the mood or mental condition of the speaker and ultimately affect the choice of pronouns are anger, insult, protest, facetiousness, etc. These emotions that depend upon what Fredrich (1966:248) calls "social sensitivity", lead to a corresponding change in the form of address which, besides being temporary, can be felt as deviant and inappropriate.

The pronouns do not correlate to status since there is no social rank in Jambi Malay society. The selection of pronouns in Jambi Malay is guided by politeness and by the formality of the communicative situation. The confusion in interpreting a certain pronoun used by a speaker might be overcome by asking more information to the speaker or the speaker ought to set up a less ambiguous context for the hearer. By doing this, misinterpretation that can create a conflict between the speaker and the hearer can be avoided. Finally, Jambi Malay people cannot refer to themselves without taking account how they fit into their society.

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