

Javanese discourse particles: interlocutor perspective is in the syntax, *kok*!

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1. Background

- Discourse particles in Javanese conversation as spoken on Java, including mixed Javanese-Indonesian utterances, are ubiquitous [NB: Indonesian in examples is marked in *italics*].
- Our focus: the syntax of the oft-described particle *kok*; has not yet been *formally* analysed

1.1 Distribution within the clause

- *Kok* may occur utterance-initially, -medially or -finally (see 1-3) (Errington 1998; Arps et al. 2000; Wedhawati et al. 2006; Widhyasmaramurti 2008)

[NB: glosses added by J.Vander Klok for all these references, except Widhyasmaramurti 2008]

- (1) **Kok** isa-isa-né ng-lako-ni urip be-bareng-an karo wong kasar
PRT RED-can-DEF AV-happen-APPL live RED-together-NMLZ with people coarse
“Why/how is it possible to live together with rude people.”
[Ind: “Mengherankan (ia) dapat hidup dengan orang yang kasar.”] Wedhawati et al. 2006:407
- (2) Iki **kok** larang!
DEM PRT expensive
“Why, this is expensive!” Errington 1998: 40
- (3) Dhèwèké ora turu, **kok**.
3 NEG sleep PRT
“He/She is actually not asleep”.
[Ind: ‘Ia (sebenarnya) tidak tidur.’] Wedhawati et al. 2006: 406

1.2 Distribution across clause types

1.2.1. Declarative: see also (1)-(3)

- (4) **Kok** lucu, bocah wani karo wong tuwa-né.
PRT cute child brave with person old-DEF
‘It’s funny/cute how brave the child is with their parents.’
[Ind. ‘Lucu sekali anak berani pada orang tuanya.’] Wedhawati et al. 2006: 407
- (5) Kucing-e ora ng-gondhol ikan neng mulut-e **kok**
Cat-DEF NEG ACT-carry.by.mouth fish at mouth-POSS PRT
‘The cat did not carry a fish in its mouth!’ (and you are supposed to know that!)
Widhyasmaramurti 2008: 58

1.2.2. Imperative:

- (6) Context: An elderly woman Islamic leader (Ustadzah) is preaching at a women’s religious gathering. She says: My intention is to do it. My intention is adhang. I hope for my family to be strong in worship... (Javanese: Nggeh niku niate di toto. Aku niat adhang. Mugo-mugo kanggo keluargaku iso kuat ibadah.)
Ojok **kok** jek wareg
NEG.IMP PRT still full
‘Don’t be satisfied (how could you think of being otherwise!)’ Paciran (East Java) dialect

Some speakers of Javanese, e.g. in Central Java (Surakarta dialect) only allow final *kok* in imperatives (elicited); others again disallow *kok* in imperatives altogether:

- (7) (***Kok**) antem-en aku (***kok**) yen pancen kowe wani (%**kok**)!
 PRT punch-IMP 1SG PRT if certainly 2 brave PRT
 “Hit me if you dare (I’m so angry with you!)” Surakarta dialect, Norwanto, p.c.

1.2.3. Interrogative

- (8) **Kok** mulih?
 PRT AV.go.home
 ‘Why go home?’ [Ind. ‘Kenapa pulang?’] Wedhawati et al. 2006: 405

- (9) Q: **Kok** Slamet bojo-ne loro? A: Wong sugih [**k**ok!
 PRT Slamet spouse-DEF two person rich PRT
 Dutch: ‘Hoezo heeft Slamet twee vrouwen?’ ‘Hij is rijk (lett.: een rijkwaard) hoor!’
 ‘Why does Slamet have two wives?’ ‘He’s rich (you know)!’ Arps et al. 2000:137

Note that *kok* is not straightforwardly a question particle; final *kok* does not induce question meanings, and *kok* can co-occur with wh-phrases:

- (10) Malang Javanese
 Opo’-o arèk megel-no iku **kok** yo órép? Opo’-o **kok** gak matèk aé?
 what-SBJV child AV.annoy-CAUS DEM PRT also live what-SBJV PRT NEG AV.die just
 Opo’-o **kok** gak ilang aé? Opo’-o **kok** gak mampós aé?
 what-SBJV PRT NEG disappear just what-SBJV PRT NEG croak just
 Opo’-o **kok** gak bongko aé?
 what-SBJV PRT NEG croak.SL just
 “Why does such an irritating kid live at all? Why doesn’t he just die? Why doesn’t he just vanish? Why doesn’t he just croak? Why doesn’t he just snuff it?” Krauße 2017: 68-69

1.2.4. Fragment utterances:

- (11) **kok** loro?!
 PRT two
 “Only two?!” Adapted from Errington 1998: 101

- (12) “Bapakku si Menado itu maunya aku jadi orang Jawa saja, ikut Ibu.”
 “**Kok**?”
 “**Kok** apa? Memangnya kami hidup di mana?”
 [My father, Menado, wants me to just be Javanese, to follow my mother.]
 [**Kok** = why?]
 [**Kok** what? Where do we live?] Sapardi Djoko Damono, “Hujan Bulan Juni”, 2015: 34

1.3. Homophony with second-person clitic pronoun

Kok is homophonous with second-person clitic pronoun in some dialects

- Little evidence to build a diachronic case, but others have speculated about a relationship: “The origin of *kok*- is most probably the Old Javanese (OJ) unbound pronoun *ko* “you (SG)” with the same glottal paragoge as *tak* from OJ (*ki*)*ta*.”

Krauße 2017: 36, see also Nurhayani 2014: 126

Differentiation from clitic pronoun *kok* (cooccurrence)

- The clitic pronoun *kok* occurs as a proclitic to the verb stem in Patient Voice (or Object Voice) and refers to a 2nd person singular agent (Robson 2002; Wedhawati et al 2006)

(13) a. Actor Voice

Kowe ng-gawa klambi-ne ibu menyang penjahit
2.SG ACT-take clothes-POSS mother to tailor
'You take mother's clothes to a tailor.'

b. Patient Voice

Klambi-ne ibu **kok**=gawa menyang penjahit
clothes-POSS mother 2.SG=take to tailor
'Mother's clothes were taken to a tailor by you.'

Widhyasmaramurti 2008: 34

- Proclitic *kok* can co-occur with particle *kok* (in any position; Widhyasmaramurti 2008)

(14) (**Kok**) ibu-mu (**kok**) **kok**=ter-ake mulih maneh (**kok**)

PRT mother-2POSS PRT 2SG=take.s.o.to-BEN go.home again PRT

'(Why did) you return your mother to the home again?!' Widhyasmaramurti 2008: 55-56

1.4. Semantic contribution of *kok*

Contradiction and softening?

- Wedhawati et al. (2006: 405) refer to *kok* as a 'softening' particle that marks the informal variety of the language.
- They also say, "*Secara mendasar 'kok' menyatakan arti kontradiktif. Arti kontradiktif dapat terjadi pada 'kok' sebagai pembentuk gatra utama maupun gatra pelengkap.*" [In a way, *kok* basically expresses contradiction. This contradictory meaning can occur when *kok* marks the main *gatra* (semantic unit)¹ as well as when it forms the complementary/supplementary *gatra*] (Wedhawati et al 2006: 407)

Others suggest that *kok* contributes to the speaker's perspective to the utterance in two different ways depending on its position in the clause.

• Initial and medial *kok*

- "express[es] surprise toward an unexpected circumstance" (Widhyasmaramurti 2008: 55; see also Arps et al. 2001), "arti ketidakpercayaan atau keheranan" [meaning of astonishment or disbelief] (Wedhawati et al 2006: 407; initial *kok* only).
 - In this case initial *kok* forms part of the 'anticipatory' or 'predecessor' *gatra* (Wedhawati et al 2006: 407).
- It otherwise marks the main focal *gatra* of the utterance (Wedhawati 2006: 406).

• Final *kok*

- "emphasizes a speaker's [...] concern that [a state of affair's] truth or relevance be recognized by the addressee" (Errington 1998: 102) or "remind[s] the hearer of [something] they should know" (SEALang Library).

¹ A 'gatra' is a unit of melody in Gamelan music (the smallest unit of a gamelan composition). It can also mean a 'sense-unit' in poetry or a clause (SEALang Library).

- Final *kok* forms a ‘supplementary’ gatra, often on its own, which follows the focal gatra (Wedhawati et al 2006: 406)

1.5. Some other syntactico-semantic restrictions

Root clauses only:

(15) Kowe ngucap kok=pangan pitik **kok**

You AV.say 2SG=eat chicken DM

“You really said chicken (#really) was eaten by you!”

Norwanto, p.c.

Seemingly final only in answers to questions

(16) EN: Lha **kok** isá *mempengaruhi seluruh badan?*

S: Ha isá no, lha *kontraksi kok*.

EN: *Kontraksi?*

S: *Kontraksi dinding rahim kok*.

EN: So how can it affect the entire body?

S: Huh, it can, well, contractions, **y'know**.

EN: Contractions?

S: Contractions in the wall of the uterus,

y'know

Errington 1998: 110

2. Proposal

Observations:

- A root-only discourse-linked element is likely to have some relationship to the left-periphery, particularly when it also frequently appears in that position
- *Kok* interacts with information structure (e.g., it is final only in responses to questions)
- Fundamentally the same interpretation in initial-/medial-positions; same core meaning in final-position just with decentering of speaker perspective

Assumptions:

- Despite its adverb-like meaning, we assume that *kok* is a head, hence referring to it as a particle (PRT)
 - Pronoun > particle well attested diachronically, pronoun > adverb not typically attested
 - *Kok* does not show adverb-like morphological behaviour
 - No reduplication (**kok-kok*, **kok-ok*)
 - Incompatible with derivational suffix *-e* (**kok-e*)
- Basic meaning of *kok* is to mark that the speaker recognises a contradiction between a previous assumption and some new information that has become apparent, either in the discourse or in the broader context.

Proposal:

- Unified analysis
 - There is just one *kok* merged in one high-left peripheral position
 - Different linear positions derived by movement of propositional material into high information structural positions above *kok*
 - Precedents in the literature (from Indo-European): analyses of discourse particles (Haegeman 2014, Heim 2019), vocatives (Hill 2013), interrogative slifting (Haddican et al 2014)

2.1. Background

2.1.1. Syntax of Speech Acts

As proposed for Indo-European, Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan:

(17) [SpeechAct Phrase [PerspectiveP [CP [TP ...]]] Woods (2016, 2021), also Dayal (2023)

SpeechAct Phrase = Discourse-linked material including calls on the addressee

PerspectiveP = Speaker intent, modifiers of clause type

CP = clause-typing

Kok positioned in **PerspectiveP**

- Below SpeechAct Phrase, as preceded by other discourse particles e.g. Indonesian *lha* and Javanese *lho*
 - Where *lha/lho* comment on previous/future utterances in the discourse, looking outside the utterance, *kok* comments on the propositional content of the utterance

(18) **Lha kok** isá *mempengaruhi seluruh badan?*

“So how can it affect the entire body?”

Errington 1998: 11

(19) *Seharusnya kan gitu. Cuman ini orang yang dimintain tolong itu ló kok pergi.*

Well, it should be like that. But it’s just that the person I asked for help just went away.

Krauße 2017: 4

- Above CP given:
 - Compatibility with a range of clause-types
 - Position relative to initial wh-phrases

(20) Context: Lolly is reading on live Instagram a question by one account holder, that asks when will they marry. Then Lolly asked her boyfriend again next to her:

Kok kapan nikah sih? Astagfirullah

PRT when marry PRT Oh.my.God

‘When are [we] going to get married?! Astagfirullah!’

News article, 09.12.2022²

2.1.2. Javanese high left-periphery

(21) [TopP [FocP [CP [MoodP [TP ...]]]]

Vander Klok 2023

(22) Evidence for high focus position from auxiliary position in polar question answers

Evidence for high topic position from location of argument above high auxiliary

Q: *Wong Indonesia kudu nggowo paspor reng bandara toh?*

person Indonesia ROOT.NEC AV.bring passport to airport FOC

‘Do Indonesians have to bring their passport to the airport?’

A: [TopP *Wong Indonesia* [FocP **kudu** [MoodP **ketok-e** [TP *nggowo paspor*]]]].

person Indonesia ROOT.NEC DIR.EVID-E AV.bring passport

‘Indonesians must, it seems, bring their passport.’

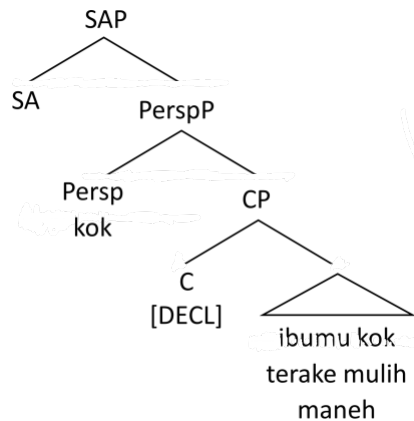
Vander Klok 2023

² <https://hot.detik.com/celeb/d-6451773/jawaban-sean-mikael-ditanya-kapan-nikahi-anak-nikita-mirzani>

2.2. Analyses of *kok* by position

2.2.1 Initial *kok*

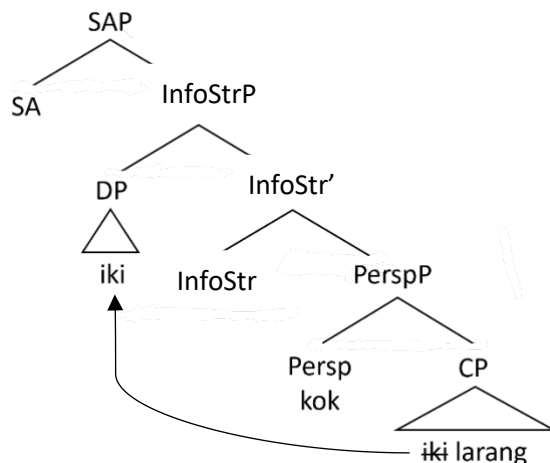
- (23) [SAP [PerspP [kok] [CP ibumu kok=ter-ake mulih maneh]]]
 PRT mother-2POSS 2SG=take.s.o.to-BEN go.home again
 “(Why did) you return your mother to the home again?!” Widhyasmaramurti 2008: 55



- *Kok* is merged in the head of PerspP
- In the absence of any information-structural movement, the rest of the proposition follows *kok*
- Effect on meaning: *kok* introduces a perception of contradiction *from the speaker's point of view*
 - Particles and other discourse-oriented material (e.g. vocatives) that can occur in multiple positions tend to, when initial, foreground speaker intention/speaker perspective with respect to the content of the utterance, or draw particular attention to the content of the utterance (e.g. Haegeman 2014 on West Flemish, Hill 2013 on vocatives)

2.3. Medial *kok*

- (24) [SAP [InfoStrP iki [PerspP [kok] [CP ~~iki~~ larang]]]]
 DEM PRT expensive
 “Why, this is expensive!”

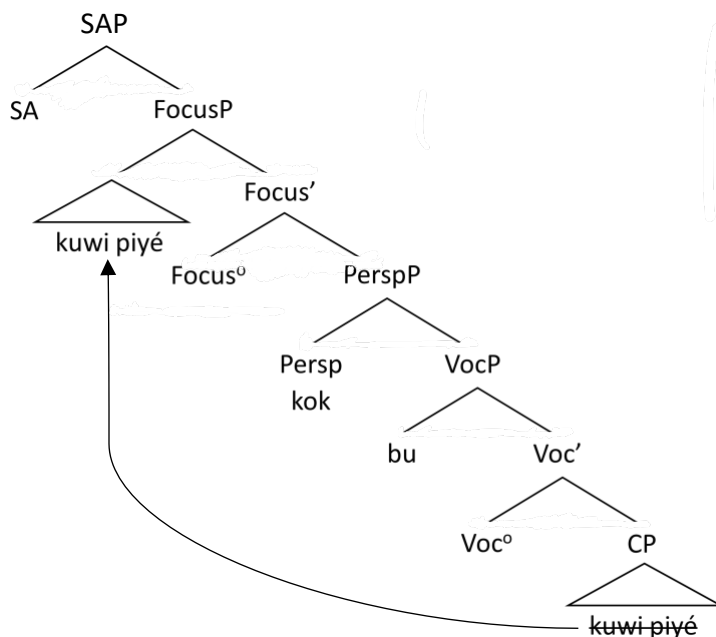


- The subject, here *iki*, is promoted for information structural purposes and moves to SpecInfoStrP
- The rest of the proposition remains low in CP
- Prosodic support to follow in section 3
- Effect on meaning: *kok* also speaker-oriented (i.e. speaker feels a contradiction between the proposition and their previous assumptions)

2.4. Final *kok*

(25) [_{SAP} [_{FocusP} kuwi piyé [_{PerspP} [_{kok}] [_{VocP} Bu [_{CP} kuwi piyé]]]]]
 DEM how PRT Mrs
 'How is that, Bu?'

Errington 1998: 110



- *Kok* is merged in the head of PerspP
- The entire proposition in CP raises via focus movement to SpecFocP
- Prediction: In answers to questions, the CP must be focused and raise above *kok*; only final *kok* can occur in answers to questions
 - Empirical data: as stated above, we do not have any examples of initial-/medial-*kok* in responses to questions; moreover, the majority of final *kok* examples are found in responses to questions
- Effect on meaning: final *kok* orients to the speaker's perception of the addressee perspective, i.e. that they may perceive a contradiction between the proposition and a previous assumption
 - Final particles/vocatives have a 'bonding' meaning or look to "manipulate the addressee's consent" (Hill 2013: 11 on vocatives)
 - In wh-slifing (e.g. *Who is coming, do you think?*) the 'host' clause becomes defocused and the epistemic commitment expressed by the 'host' predicate (here *think*) is bleached; extra material e.g. predicate modifiers are generally degraded in acceptability (Haddican et al 2014 on English wh-slifing)

3. Support: Prosodic contours in Javanese

Wedhawati et al (2006) claim that *kok* always occurs at the left edge of an intonational phrase (IP). They demonstrate this for initial and final *kok* (they do not discuss clause-medial *kok*; 2006: 406-407, glosses and English translation added):

(26) [**Kok** ora teka-teka_{IP}] [ya_{IP}].
 PRT NEG RED-come PRT.yes
 'Why haven't you come yet, huh?'

(27) [Aku ora lunga_{IP}] [**kok**_{IP}].
 1 NEG go PRT
 'I didn't go.'

- Distributional variation of *kok* seems to correlate with prosodic variation:
 - Initial *kok* introduces a rise-fall contour with fall at the right edge of an IP (28)
 - Final *kok* is deaccented (29)

(28) ↑**Kok** LUCU↓ [bocah wani karo wong.tuwa-né_{Deaccented}]
 PRT cute child brave with parent-DEF
 'It's funny/cute how brave a child is to their parents.'

(29) ↑Dhèwèké ora turu↓ [**kok**_{Deaccented}]
 3 NEG sleep PRT
 'He actually didn't sleep.'

Recordings analysed through Praat by us suggest (very tentatively) a different picture:

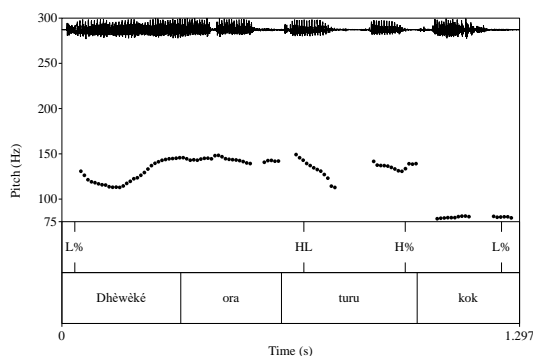


Figure 1: Deaccented final *kok*

Recording of example from Wedhawati et al (2006) by Norwanto (Surakarta speaker, Central Java)

- Main gatra on proposition
- *Kok* is deaccented

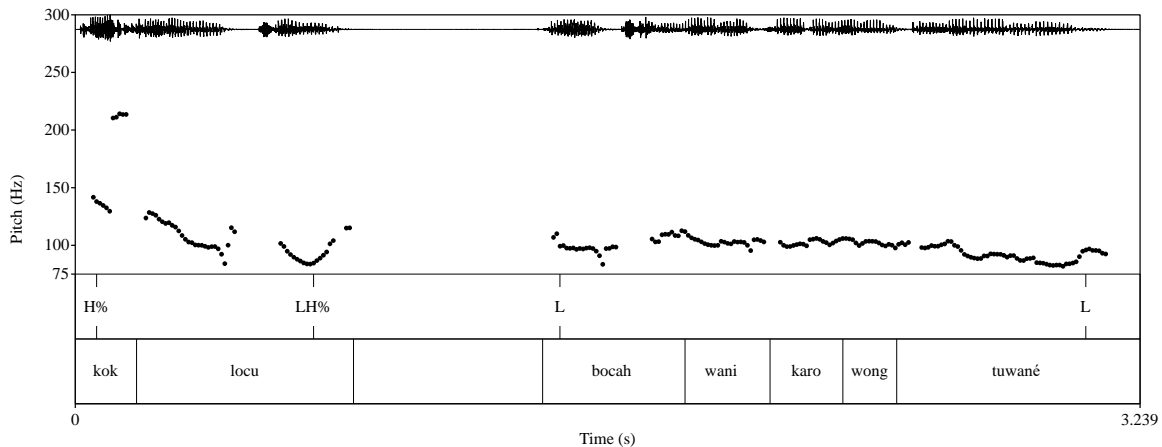


Figure 2: Initial *kok* with fall-rise and deaccented remnant (also recorded by Norwanto)

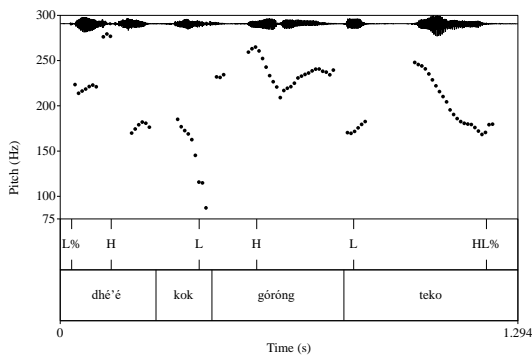


Figure 3: medial *kok* with falling contour

Recording from Krauße's corpus
(Surabayan speaker, East Java)

- *Kok* pronounced with falling contour
- Not clear that *kok* introduces a new intonational phrase here

Possible analysis:

- Final *kok* is deaccented because all material has been moved to the left periphery
- Initial *kok* introduces a contour that marks any fronted material as information-structurally prominent; in the absence of fronted material the entire proposition is marked
 - What type of information structural marking is yet to be determined
- Medial *kok* also marks fronted material as information structurally prominent, but potentially less likely that this is focus marking
- Intonational breaks confirm boundaries between moved phrase and remnant

4. Conclusion and broader implications

Main claim: evidence from Javanese for articulated, discourse-linked left-peripheral syntactic projections

- Supports analyses from Indo-European about the interaction of how speaker/hearer perspectives are expressed and clausal position (linearisation of clausal material relative to discourse-linked material)

Future work:

- Discourse particles so integral to communication in Javanese – they deserve more formal attention!

- Formal semantic denotation of *kok* to fully flesh out how its interpretation interacts with information-structural movement (or is it all in the pragmatics?)
- Better understanding of intonation patterns in Javanese needed to:
 - test/tease apart simple contradiction from contradiction+surprise meanings
 - understand how high focus and high topics are marked prosodically

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