

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN BAHASA INDONESIA AND THE PRESENTATION OF THE WORDS: *NIA*, AND *IA*.*

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A. *The problems of personal pronouns in Indonesia*

ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAS ATTRACTED OUR attention and which needs a general solution is the problem of the use of personal pronouns. If we look closely at the Indonesian personal pronouns as a heritage of Malay, we will see that the existing personal pronouns cannot meet the demands of the present Indonesian society. In other words, the Indonesian personal pronouns still need to be perfected to fulfill their function as a tool of communication. It is not surprising therefore that since the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, a problem has arisen in the use of the personal pronouns:

I. *The first personal pronoun singular*

Before the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, besides the word *saya* (English: I), there existed the words *hamba* and *aku*, as the first personal pronoun singular. The word *hamba*, which is comparatively more refined and polite than *saya*, was used when the people of lower social standing were addressing those of higher social status, especially in correspondence. On the other hand, the word *aku* was used when the people of higher social standing were addressing those of lower social standing, e.g. a manager talking to his messenger. In the present democratic world the word *hamba* which is feudalistic, is not used anymore. The word *saya*, the original meaning (from *sahaya*, slave) almost forgotten by the people, acquires a stronger position and predominates over the word *aku*, which is used in a limited circle where it has only a literary value. The usage of the neutral word *saya*, (neutral in the sense that it does not discriminate between refined and unrefined connotations) can be compared with *I* in English or *ik* in Dutch. The problem in the use of the first personal pronoun singular is that the word *kami* (English: we) also often appears as the first personal pronoun singular with the intention of making *saya* more refined. In my opinion, this supplement of the first personal pronoun singular is not practical, because in this way *kami* obtains a double function: 1. as the first personal pronoun singular

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2. as the first personal pronoun plural (excluding the person spoken to) often causing ambiguity.

The word *saya* is neutral enough to be used by and for anybody. Sometimes the word *kami* is used reflexively by prominent citizens, which is useless in my opinion. In this relation Dr. Slametmuljana¹ explains, that this symptom arises due to the influence of the Campa language. In the Campa language the word *kami* (which has some connection with the Indonesian *kami*) still means *aku* which is only to be used for kings.

II. *The Second personal pronoun singular*

The second personal pronoun singular, a heritage from Malay, are *kamu* and *engkau*. These two words cannot be used in polite circles; their usage is limited to intimate conversation. Originally *kamu*, was for the plural, but in refined language it was often used for the singular. As a substitute for *engkau* Dr. Slametmuljana² also put forward, that *kamu* really means "all of you," but it sometimes used as *engkau*. In the present usage of Indonesian, it is clear that *kamu* has the same value as *engkau*. These two words are interchangeable. For the plural *engkau sekalian* (*sekalian* = all) and *kamu sekalian* are used. In order to fill a need, some nouns expressing family ties are used for the second personal pronoun singular, such as *bapak* and *saudara* (actually *bapak* means father and *saudara* means brother or sister.) The word *bapak* used as a second personal pronoun singular is directed to a man in a higher position without taking into consideration whether the respected one is older or younger than the speaker. (For a woman the word *ibu* is used.) Besides that, it can be directed to an old man, although he may have a comparatively lower social standing than the speaker. The word *saudara* used as a second personal pronoun singular can be directed to a man or sometimes to a woman, (for a woman the form *saudari* is used) who is of comparatively the same rank or position, or about the same age as the speaker. However even with the supplement of these new personal pronouns, we still cannot meet the demands of usage. Often people become confused, (particularly foreign visitors), whether to address a certain person as *saudara* or *bapak*. This happens when the position or age of the person is not known. In such situations, people who know Dutch, use the word *U* i.e. the second personal pronoun singular (polite). In English, if *you* is used, it is neutral enough in the sense that it can be applied to anybody without considering their rank, position, or age. In this matter, we must acknowledge that the use of the second personal pronoun singular in

¹ Slametmuljana, "Tanah asal kata gantidiri Indonesia," *Laporan Kongres Ilmu Pengetahuan Nasional Pertama*. Takarta: Madjelis Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, 1950, p. 36.

² Slametmuljana, *Kaidah Bahasa Indonesia II* (Takarta: Penerbit Tambatan, 1957), p. 54.

Indonesian is not yet perfect. So a new term was formed, i.e. *anda*, which was presented by Sabirin.³ This word was taken from "Kamus Moderen Indonesia" (Modern Indonesian Dictionary) and means "the respected" or "honored" or "your highness" with the annotation that the original meaning must be forgotten, like the word *saya* whose original meaning is slave. Although the word *anda* has been present in our society for years, its use is still limited to the written language, as in newspapers, magazines, announcements, or publications in business circles or offices. It is not yet commonly used orally. Whether the word *anda* will be used orally will depend on the society itself, provided, that the users realize the function of that word. I disagree with that certain group who still assumes that the introduction of the word *anda* will only cause difficulties in the use of Indonesian. In Malay that word does not exist either. They forget that language is never still but keeps on changing and developing, be it slowly or quickly depending on the users. If the element has no definite function in communication it may displace another element which has already existed and practical enough for the language society.

In the magazine "Bahasa dan Budaya," J. U. Nasution⁴ has expressed his opinion: "The possibility of the word *anda* for correspondence and in formal associations especially for persons of the same age, exists. But if the word is to be used for older and respected people, especially in intimate circles, perhaps there will not be any possibility for using that word. However, I can reach the conclusion, which is based on assumption, that the final judgement lays with the high court, which is the society itself."

In the same magazine Umar Junus⁵ among others wrote: "Do we need a personal pronoun, which has the same field usage as the personal pronoun *you* in English? I think this is not necessary, because this does not conform to the sociological background of the Indonesian society, who uses the language. Even Dutch, German and French do not follow this English language system. Dutch for instance has *ij* and *U*, German *du* and *Sie* and French *tu* and *vous*. Our society distinguishes the difference in age. Must this distinction according to age something to be criticized? I do not think so. Other words which already exist are enough and can be used in a wide circle."

Those are the opinions regarding the problems of the use of the word *anda*. Of course it cannot be denied that our society distinguishes be-

³ Sabirin, "Anda kata baru dalam bahasa Indonesia," *Bahasa dan Budaya*, Vol. 5, No. 5. Takarta: Takultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia, 1957, pp. 43-46.

⁴ J.U. Nasution, "Anda," *Bahasa dan Budaya*, Vol. 6, No. 5. Takarta: Takultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia, 1958, p. 31.

⁵ Umar Junus, "Anda dan persoalan kataganti orang kedua dalam bahasa Indonesia," *Bahasa dan Budya*, Vol. 6, No. 5. Takarta: Takultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia, 1958, pp. 32-34.

tween differences in age and that our society is still tied to firm family ties, which simply means that it has its own particular social structure. But that doesn't mean that we don't need a second personal pronoun singular, which has a neutral usage; it doesn't mean either that with the introduction of the word *anda*, those words which are already in use, must be eliminated.

Because of the gap, which is felt by language users in certain situations and circles, the word *anda* was presented. Perhaps many among us are not aware that sometimes we are forced to leave out the second personal pronoun singular if it causes ambiguity. In meetings, conferences or negotiations, where members don't usually know each other's age, the second personal pronoun singular is quite confusing. Does not that fact form a *gap* which we must fill at once? I have stated above that the introduction of *anda* has no intention of eliminating the words which are commonly used for the second personal pronoun singular. In certain circles and situations where family relation is distinct as for instance in school, the use of the words *saudara*, *bapak*, *ibu* cannot be avoided. Words which show family ties still retain their functions. The word *anda* completes the second personal pronoun singular forms which already exist and which are felt to have shortcomings in their usage. There are two ways to meet these shortcomings:

1. Accept the word *anda* as the second personal pronoun singular with a neutral connotation. It already exists in written form.
2. If the word *anda* is considered unfit, then a new term must be sought or created. To find another term agreeable to the ear and feeling of its users is not easy, especially for a personal pronoun.

Next, arises the question: "Do we need to have a second personal pronoun singular which identifies gender as in the case in Arabic?" In Arabic, *anta* is used for the masculine gender and *anti* for the feminine gender; while *antum* is the plural form for masculine gender and *antunna* for the female gender. We don't see any actual necessity, for this because we are facing the person spoken to. In Indonesian, to give a plural meaning to the second personal pronoun the word *sekalian* (English: all) is used, e.g. *engkau sekalian* and *kamu sekalian* (for *saudara*, *ibu* and *bapak* the forms *saudara-saudara*, *ibu-ibu* and *bapak-bapak* are used). In student circles the form *kalian* is often heard to pluralize *engkau* or *kamu*. The problem is to find the plural form for the second personal pronoun which can be used in refined society. In some dialects we can also find the singular and plural forms of the second personal pronoun. In Sundanese (West-Java) we find the words *maneh* (English: you) and

maraneh (English: you all.) In *Menado-Malay*⁶ (North-Sulawesi) the words *ngana* (you) and *ngoni* (you all) are used. So, if the word *anda* is accepted as the second personal pronoun singular, then for the plural form the word *aranda* could be presented, instead of the form *anda sekalian*. If it does not suit the ear, another form can be sought, or we could just take the form: *anda sekalian*. How would you address foreigners? If you are not yet intimately acquainted with them, then the use of words like: *saudara*, *ibu* and *bapak* will sound very strange. Words like *tuan* (Mr.), *nona* (Miss) and *njonja* (Mrs.) are used as the second pronoun singular. What interests us in this matter is that the words *nona* and *njonja* which are used respectively for an unmarried and a married woman, are practically not used among Indonesians themselves because they are too stiff and strange.

How would it be, if we could create similar new words like that, which could be used among the Indonesians themselves? It is often necessary to use such words, like: *Miss* and *Mrs.* in English or “*Juffrouw*” and “*Merrouw*” in Dutch.

III. *The third personal pronoun singular*

In the Indonesian language only *ia* or *dia* is found for the third personal pronoun singular, whether for the masculine or the feminine gender. There is no special term to differentiate between the sexes, as we see in English *he* and *she* and in Dutch *hy* and *zy*. The question is, whether the word *ia* or *dia* has fulfilled its function in the present use of Indonesian. In daily use or in certain situations, the word *ia* or *dia* needs some distinction as to gender.

To clarify this problem I'll give some simple examples:

1. A bertanya kepada B: “Saudara mempunyai berapa orang anak?”
 (A asked B: “How many children do you have?”)
 B menjawab: “Hanya seorang. *Dia* or *la* bekerja di Rumah-Sakit Umum.”
 (B answered: “Only one. He (She) works at the Public Hospital)

For A who seemed to be interested, it is not clear whether *dia* is a boy or a girl.

If A knows Dutch, then he'll ask further: “Is't een *hy* or een *zy*? (Is it a *he* or a *she*?)”

2. Seorang pesuruh berkata kepada Kepala Bagian: “Pak, diluar ada tamu *la* (*Dia*) sudah lama menunggu untuk menemui bapak.” (A messenger said to the Head of the Department: “Sir, there is a visitor outside.

⁶ H.M. Taulu, “Bahasa Melayu-Menado,” *Medan Bahasa*, Vol. 7, No. 5. Takarta, 1957, p. 36.

He (She) has been waiting for a long time to see you").

If the head of the Department knows for instance that it is a woman, possibly he would not have the heart to let his visitor wait such a long time.

The two examples above prove, that the Indonesian language needs specialized terms to differentiate the masculine from the feminine gender as Indo-European languages do. It must not be assumed that we devote ourselves to foreign languages or take it for granted that they should be forced into the Indonesian language. We ought to adopt this principle: if there is a foreign element which can be practical for Indonesian, we ought to fill in any existing gap and not stick solely to the Malay heritage. On the other hand, foreign languages must act the same towards the Indonesian language. In this way all the world languages can act reciprocally: to fill each other's gaps for perfection and practicality with the aim of making their language easy to study and practical to use in society. As for the third personal pronoun singular:

1. For the third personal pronoun singular feminine the word *nia* could be used. Why do I suggest this particular word for the third personal pronoun singular? In Sundanese and Indonesian, some words beginning with the nasal sound *n* show feminine gender: *nona* (Miss) *nenek* (grandmother), *nini* (grandmother: used in Sundanese), *neng* (nickname of Sundanese girl). Examples of its use are given below:
 - a. Saya ingin mengundang *nia* untuk makan-malam
(I'll like to invite her for dinner)
 - b. Ini bukan buku saya, melainkan buku *nia*
(This is not my book, but her book)
2. For the third personal pronoun singular masculine the word *dia* is used. This word has been taken from the existing vocabulary, only the usage is now restricted specifically to the masculine form of the third personal pronoun singular. Examples of its use are given as follows:
 - a. Teman saya bernama Rukasah
Dia bersedia membantu kita siang-malam
(My friend is called Rukasah. He is prepared to help us night and day)

Based on the use of the word *dia*, we know, that Rukasah is a man. Sometimes a person's name can confuse someone, whether it indicates a man or a woman. By possessing a third pronoun singular which distinguishes the gender the confusion disappears.

- b. Paman saya hanya mempunyai seorang anak. Sekarang *dia* telah menjadi mahasiswa.

(My uncle has only one child. Now he is already a student.)

A question now arises: "How shall we express ourselves, if the gender is difficult to determine or if it is still ambiguous? Do we need a specialized personal pronoun for that too? For the sake of language economy, we can fill the gap with a word, which is already present in Indonesian.

3. For the third personal pronoun neuter where gender is ambiguous or difficult to determine we use: *ia*

Examples are as follows:

- a. Pemilihan Umum tidak dapat dilakukan tahun ini la memerlukan 2 tahun lagi. (The General election cannot be held this year. It will take 2 years more).
- b. Anjing saya sebenarnya tjukup besar untuk menjaga rumah, tetapi *ia* jarang menggonggong.
(My dog is really big enough to guard the house, but it seldom barks.)

Up to now if the noun is already said or known, it is usually repeated or used together with the word *itu*, e.g.:

Tahun yang lalu saya memelihara seekor kambing, tetapi tidak lama kemudian *kambing itu* dimakan harimau
(I reared a goat last year, but not long afterwards that goat was eaten by a tiger.)

If it has been said before or has shown its gender clearly, then it can further be expressed by *nya*, e.g.:

- a. Nia ingin sekali memperdalam pengetahuannya diluar-negeri
(She wants very much to deepen her study abroad).
- b. Cita² dia itu sudah lama terkandung dalam hatinya
(His ideals have been on his mind for a long time)
- c. Rumah itu masih baru; jendelanya belum dicat.
(That house is new; its windows have not been painted yet)

I want to stress here once more, the necessity to possess specialized terms for the third personal pronoun singular in the Indonesian language to differentiate the masculine from the feminine not because we want to copy a foreign language but only because of a practical necessity. In spite of gap which can be found in the use of the second and the third personal pronoun as *above*, the Indonesian language possesses a first personal pronoun plural which is clearer than that found, for example, in English and Dutch, i.e.:

1. *Kami*, which shows the first personal pronoun plural, which does not include the person spoken to, which can be called *exclusive plural* or *limited plural*.

2. *Kita*, which shows the first personal pronoun plural including the person spoken to, which can be called *inclusive plural* or *extensive plural*.

In English only *we* is known, in Dutch only *wij*, which can be interpreted as *kami* or *kita*, whenever the situation is already clear. If a teacher says, in Indonesian, to a class:

“Bulan depan kami akan pergi ke Bali” (Next month we are going to Bali), it is clear, that the person spoken to is not included, while if we say in English: “Next month we are going to Bali”, it is not clear, whether the person spoken to is included or not. Determining whether the person spoken to is included or not therefore depends on previous or further conversation, or if the situation is already clear. I think, with regards to this, those languages which do not yet possess these two kinds of first personal pronoun plural, can imitate without concern as to whether the language is of the same language family or of another language family.

B. *Summary/suggestion*

In conclusion I shall give a summary with suggestions as follows.

1. The word *saya* as a first personal pronoun singular is enough to fulfill its use without having the meaning “unrefined” and “refined.” Then the word *kami* (which really has the function of first personal pronoun extensive plural) as a first personal pronoun singular to make *saya* more refined, is not necessary, moreover it just creates *chaos* and ambiguity, because it is not clear, whether by *kami* is meant the first personal pronoun singular or the first personal pronoun plural.
2. Like the first personal pronoun singular, the second personal pronoun singular also needs a term connotating a neutral usage. The use of *engkau* and *kamu* is very limited, because they are rather “unrefined.” This is also true of the supplementary words originated from nouns which show family ties, as *saudara*, *ibu* and *bapak*, because they are directed towards a certain group only. Therefore the word *anda* (Sabirin’s encouragement) which already exists in written language, become the neutral form of the second personal pronoun singular, so that in the use of the oral form there will no longer be any cause for doubt. It would be even better if a plural form exists of course. This decision depends on the awareness of the language users themselves who must feel the lack they are experiencing in using the present second personal pronoun singular. It is worth noticing, that the inclusion of the word *anda* is not meant to eliminate other words which are used as the second personal pronoun singular because in certain cir-

cles, the use of words like: *saudara*, *bapak* and *ibu* as second personal pronoun singular cannot be avoided in the social structure of the Indonesian society. In other words, in certain circles and situations the words which express family ties still retain their function.

3. Based on the facts of everyday use, the third personal singular in Indonesian needs specific terms to differentiate gender:

Nia as the third personal pronoun singular feminine.

Dia as the third personal pronoun singular masculine.

Ia as the third personal pronoun neuter or for nouns, the gender of which is difficult to determine.

The inclusion of special forms which distinguish gender means that the Indonesian becomes more practical in its development as a modern language.

4. In comparison with the Indo-European languages, the position of the first personal pronoun plural in Indonesian is more advantageous, because it differentiates between the limited and extensive plural.
5. When aiming for the development of a language which is relatively practical, all languages in the world can distinguish themselves from each other.
6. In certain matters a grammar of a certain language can be changed or broken down on purpose, to bring about practicality.
7. The more practical or simple the structure or system of a language, the easier it can be studied and spread in the level of science and culture.
8. Developing the Indonesian language as a dynamic national language is no less important than other efforts in building the Indonesian nation.