DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION OF PRONOUN ‘AWAQ’ IN SEBRANG DIALECT OF JAMBI MALAY

Hustarna 1
Lukman 2

Abstract


Kata kunci : perbedaan, interpretasi, dialek

Introduction

Jambi Malay is a variant of the Malay language and one of the Austronesian languages spoken in Jambi province of Indonesia. This language is being used in most parts of Jambi province except in Kerinci regency. Jambi Malay has many dialects such as Sebrang dialect, Jambi city dialect, Batanghari dialect, etc.

Sebrang dialect, a dialect used by speakers along Batanghari river, is a bit different from Jambi city dialect which is widely used by Jambi people in Jambi city. This is one of the reasons why many Jambi people often find difficulties to understand Sebrang dialect since there are many words and idiom expressions which are rarely heard and used by them.

Nowadays, there are less and less Jambi Malay speakers especially for Sebrang dialect. The young generation in Jambi tends to use Jambi city dialect. There is an assumption that if they speak Jambi Malay with Sebrang dialect, people will think that they are not following the trend. Besides, many speakers of Jambi Malay with Sebrang dialect get married with outsiders who do not speak the same language and they use different dialects of Jambi Malay to communicate with each other. This fact worries Indonesian linguists because sooner or later Jambi Malay will no longer exist. This is the reason why we are interested in basing this paper topic on Sebrang dialect of Jambi Malay.

In this article we will discuss the variations of the use of pronouns in Sebrang dialect of Jambi Malay, especially the local pronouns used in direct speech. In Sebrang dialect of Jambi Malay, there are several pronouns that can be used to refer to 1st person singular. They are ‘aku’, ‘sayo’, ‘kami’, ‘kulo’, and ‘awaq’. From the five pronouns, ‘awaq’ can be used not only for 1st person singular but also for 2nd person. The use of ‘awaq’ then can create a conflict in the interpretation. The hearer may misinterpret ‘awaq’ whether it refers to the 1st person or the 2nd person. To avoid the misinterpretation a speaker can use another variation of ‘awaq’ but then it can also create a conflict since the other variations are restricted to certain context, i.e. social context.

Since ‘awaq’ can refer to the 1st and the 2nd person, it can create ambiguity. So, in this article, we are going to explain in what situation ‘awaq’ can be used as the optimal form to get either a 1st person interpretation or a 2nd person interpretation. The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we discuss problems in interpreting the use of ‘awaq’ in Sebrang dialect of Jambi Malay. Section 3 then presents the analysis of ‘awaq’ in OT syntax.

Interpreting the ambiguous pronoun ‘awaq’

As already mentioned in the previous section, the pronoun ‘awaq’ in direct speech may refer to either 1st person or 2nd person. The multiple functions of ‘awaq’ can thus create a conflict in the interpretation. See the examples below:

Awaq yang banyaq makan tadi.
PRO CONJ a.lot eat PAST
‘It’s I/you who ate much’

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 she/he who ate much or it is the speaker who already ate much. If the situation is not clear, the conflict in the interpretation might create a conflict between the speaker and the hearer, because the hearer misunderstands the idea of the expression and might feel insulted. The same is the case for the
As a result, it can make her
story (OT) is a linguistic
ected to certain
ation. Giving
marked since
nce they
eker is giving information to the hearer
ed in all contexts or
aluated on the basis of constraints.
problem is not to use ‘awaq’ but instead use one
of the unambiguous counterparts, i.e. ‘aku’ for
person singular and ‘awaqtu’ for 2
person singular.

Examples:

Aku yang banyaq makan tadi.  
1
Sg CONJ a.lot eat PAST  
‘It’s I who ate much’

Ana Naq magi awaqtu baju.  
Ana want N-give 2
Sg garment  
‘Ana wants to give you a dress’

When uttering sentence 3, the hearer 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
that 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, ‘aku’ and ‘awaqtu’
will not create ambiguity. However, both ‘aku’
and ‘awaqtu’ cannot be used in all contexts or
situations. ‘Aku’ cannot be used when we speak
with an older person. If we do so, we will be
considered impolite or rude. Being rude can
make the people around us feel offended,
unwelcome, uncomfortable, or even hurt. Both
‘aku’ and ‘awaqtu’ are commonly used when
speaking to a person who is the same age as the
speaker or younger than the speaker. So, in this
sense, ‘aku’ and ‘awaqtu’ are more marked than
‘awaq’. ‘Awaq’ is considered unmarked since
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
person singular, 2
person, and even the 3
person singular.

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. In English, 1
and 2
pronouns do not need an antecedent since they
always refer to the speaker or the addressee.
However, in Jambi Malay, the use of pronouns
for 1
and 2
pronouns cannot always refer to
the first or the second pronoun. ‘Awaq’ as an
unmarked pronoun in Jambi Malay 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 should give more information about
who s/he refers to.

Optimality Theory Analysis

Optimality Theory (OT) is a linguistic
type whose properties are independent of
phonology, syntax, or other empirical domains
(McCarthy, 2002: 193). In Optimality Theory
possible outputs are generated from a given
input. Then these possible outputs (candidates)
are evaluated on the basis of constraints.
Constraints in OT are potentially conflicting,
soft (i.e. violable) and ordered in a hierarchy
according to strength. If two constraints are in
conflict, it is more important to satisfy the
stronger constraint than it is to satisfy the
weaker constraint. The candidate that performs
best in this competition is the optimal candidate.
This is the output for the given input. All other
candidates must be rejected. Because the
constraints are potentially conflicting, it is
possible that the optimal candidate also violates
one or more of the constraints. Therefore,
constraints in OT must be violable: a constraint
violation is not always fatal. It only renders a
candidate suboptimal if its competitors do not
violate this constraint and behave similarly with
respect to stronger constraints. For the present
purposes, an important property of OT is that it
can model both language production and
language comprehension. In language
production, the input is a meaning and the
output is a form, called OT Syntax. Conversely,
in language comprehension the input is a form
and the output is a meaning, called OT
Semantics (Blutner et al, 2006). To get an
optimal candidate for each variation of the
pronoun ‘awaq’ in Sebrang dialect of Jambi
Malay, OT syntax will be used. The constraints
used are:

1
SINGULAR: AKU (use ‘aku’ to refer to 1
person singular)  
2
SINGULAR: AWAQTU (choose ‘awaqtu’
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because the input meaning is the first person singular. On the other hand, in the second tableau we do not use constraint 1\textsuperscript{st} SINGULAR: AKU since the input meaning is the second person singular. This set of the constraints then will evaluate the possible forms of a given input meaning. The evaluation of the constraints is illustrated in the following tableaus:

1. Tableau for getting ‘aku’ as the optimal form

   The speaker and the hearer are the same age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input: ‘Ana wants to give me a dress’</th>
<th>BE POLITE</th>
<th>*AMBIGUITY</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} SINGULAR: AKU</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana Naq magiawaq baju</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Naq magiawaqtu baju</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Ana Naq magi aku baju</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In tableau 1, the order of the four constraints shows that constraint BE POLITE, *AMBIGUITY, and 1\textsuperscript{st} SINGULAR: AKU are equally ranked. But, they are higher than constraint 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ. So, the constraint ranking is as follows:

BE POLITE= *AMBIGUITY= 1\textsuperscript{st} SINGULAR: AKU >> 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ

In the tableau 1 there are three candidate outputs for a given input meaning. The first candidate form violates constraint 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ.

2. Tableau for getting ‘awaqtu’ as the optimal form

   The speaker and the hearer are the same age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input: ‘Ana wants to give you a dress’</th>
<th>BE POLITE</th>
<th>*AMBIGUITY</th>
<th>2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana Naq magiawaq baju</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Naq magiawaqtu baju</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Ana Naq magi aku baju</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In tableau 2, we still have three candidate outputs for the given input meaning. Since we have a different input meaning, we have a different optimal output. The first candidate violates two constraints, i.e. *AMBIGUITY and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ. The second candidate violates one constraint, i.e. 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ and the last candidate, candidate 3, violates two constraints, i.e. 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ and 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} SINGULAR: AWAQ.
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The violation made by candidate one is fatal because it violates the highest constraint. Candidate three makes two violations and one of them is fatal. Candidate two makes one violation. However, the violation is not fatal since it only violates the lowest constraint. From those three candidates, candidate two satisfies the constraints best. Therefore, this form becomes the optimal output.

From the two tableaus we see that there is no violation for constraint BE POLITE. There is no violation for this constraint since the speaker and the hearer are the same age.

3. Tableau for getting ‘awaq’ as the optimal form

The speaker is younger than the hearer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input: ‘Ana wants to give me a dress’</th>
<th>BE POLITE</th>
<th>*AMBIGUITY</th>
<th>1st SINGULAR: AKU</th>
<th>1st and 2nd SINGULAR: AWAQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>→ Ana Naq magi awaq baju</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Naq magi awaqtu baju</td>
<td>*!</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Naq magi aku baju</td>
<td>*!</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In tableau 3, the rank of the constraints is different from the previous two tableaus. In social life, politeness appears as fundamental (Coulmas, 2005: 84). It means that a speaker should be aware about the situation and the one s/he is going to speak with. Since the speaker is speaking with an older person, we have to put BE POLITE as the highest constraint. *AMBIGUITY is at the second rank, 1st SINGULAR: AKU is the third rank, and 1st and 2nd SINGULAR: AWAQ is the fourth or the lowest. So, the constraint ranking is as follows:

BE POLITE >> *AMBIGUITY >> 1st SINGULAR: AKU >> 1st and 2nd SINGULAR: AWAQ

In tableau 3, the three candidates make violations. The first candidate violates constraint *AMBIGUITY and 1st SINGULAR: AKU. The second candidate violates three constraints, i.e. BE POLITE, 1st SINGULAR: AKU and 1st and 2nd SINGULAR: AWAQ. Since it violates the highest constraint, it is impossible for it to be the optimal output. The last candidate also makes a fatal violation. It violates constraint BE POLITE since the pronoun used in that form is specific i.e. it cannot be used to all ages. Because candidates 2 and 3 make a fatal violation, the first candidate is the optimal output.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, we can be concluded that pronouns ‘aku’ and ‘awaqtu’ will not create conflict in the interpretation between the speaker and the hearer since these pronouns precisely refer to the first person (aku) and the second person (awaqtu) and used when speaking to a hearer who is the same age as the speaker. It is found that ‘awaq’ can create an ambiguity in the interpretation because this pronoun can refer to either the 1st or the 2nd person. This may even result in a conflict between the speaker and the hearer. However, the pronoun ‘awaq’ is very useful if a speaker is going to speak with an older person. This pronoun can be used by any people from different ages or status since it is considered to be a polite pronoun, the feature is more general.

In this article, we have shown that the use of person markers indeed may create conflict in expressing an appropriate utterance/sentence to an addressee. And, OT Syntax apparently can be used to see how different expressions/sentences are produced using a set of violable constraints.

Reference


http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Jambi-Malay