

Chapter 4

PRONOUNS

4.1 Personal Pronouns

Malay and Indonesian have one set of personal pronouns which may serve as the subject, the direct object, or the indirect object in the sentence, and show possession in the noun phrase. Personal pronouns serving as the subject of a sentence are words like "I", "we", "you", "he", "she" and "they". The pronoun system is complicated, however, by factors such as formal and informal usage, inclusive and exclusive reference, and alternative pronoun forms for some of the uses mentioned.

4.1.1 Formal and Informal Personal Pronouns

Informal pronouns are those pronouns which are used among people who know each other well or share a similar social status. This might include brothers and sisters, classmates or colleagues. There is a delicate social balance involved in the use of informal pronouns and it is advisable for the language learner to avoid them. It is doubtful if any native speaker will use these pronouns with an outsider, and use of these pronouns by an outsider will probably be interpreted as either an insult or a sign of ignorance. It is possible that after long association these pronouns may be used by an outsider with particular friends, but this will no doubt happen only after a period of trial and eventual agreement on the appropriate pronouns to use.

Pronouns which are formal may be used at any time, by any speaker, with any listener in any situation. These pronouns are neutral and polite. The only time offence might be taken at the use of these pronouns is if a speaker and his or her listener have come to use informal pronouns as part of their relationship. A sudden change back to the formal set of pronouns by one of the speakers will be interpreted no doubt as a sign of change in the status of the relationship.

4.1.2 First Person Pronouns

(i) First Person Singular - I

The pronoun *aku* is informal and must only be used in the contexts described in Section 4.1.1. *Saya* is formal and may be used at any time and with any listener.

There are some speakers, however, who may choose to refer to themselves by a title, such as *makcik* [aunt] or *pakcik* [uncle] in Malaysia, or *ibu* [mother] or *bapak* [father] in Indonesia, or by their own personal name