

Chapter 10

NEGATIVES AND TAG QUESTIONS

Discussed in this chapter is the difference between the two main negatives, *bukan* and *tidak*, their use as tag questions, and a comparison with the negative command *jangan* [don't]. Also included is a short discussion of *ya* [yes] used as a tag question, and the Indonesian particle *kok*.

10.1 *Bukan* and *Tidak*

(i) The short forms

Bukan has a short form, *kan*, which is only used as a tag question (see Section 10.2). *Tidak* in Malaysia is commonly shortened in conversation to *tak*. *Tak* is less common in Indonesian conversation, although it is used in newspaper articles and novels, places where it would rarely be found in Malaysia.

In Indonesia the common short forms of *tidak* are *ndak* and *nggak*. Of these *nggak* is generally considered more informal and is more widespread. *Ndak* is more common in Javanese influenced Indonesian. The following utterances exemplify the short forms of *tidak*.

1. *Tak* usah kita pergi. *Tak* ada tempat duduk lagi ^M.
It doesn't pay for us to go. There are no more places to sit.
2. *Saya tadi pagi* **nggak** bisa ke sekolah. *Saya sakit* ^I.
I couldn't go to school earlier this morning. I was sick.
3. *Kalau* **ndak** salah, *harganya 50.000 rupiah* ^I.
If (I'm) not mistaken, it costs 50,000 rupiah.

10.1 *Bukan* and *Tidak*

(ii) The basic differences

The basic difference between *bukan* and *tidak* as negatives is that *bukan* negates a noun or noun phrase, and *tidak* negates verbs and adjectives. *Bukan*, however, also has a somewhat wider usage which complicates matters. This is discussed in the section which follows.

Bukan may negate either of the two noun phrases in the following utterances, that is *Encik Ali* ^M/*Pak Ali* ^I or *Australia* ^M/*Australi* ^I.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4. <i>Encik Alikah yang belajar di Australia?</i> - Bukan , <i>Encik Ahmad</i> .
Is it Mr. Ali who is studying in Australia? - No , it's Mr. Ahmad. | 4. <i>Pak Alikah yang belajar di Australi?</i> - Bukan , <i>Pak Amad</i> .
Is it Mr. Ali who is studying in Australia? - No , it's Mr. Amad. |
|--|---|