

LEARNING TO READ

COLLOQUIAL INDONESIAN

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Introduction

This module is for students who know formal standard Indonesian fairly well but do not yet know colloquial Indonesian. It aims to equip them with a good enough reading knowledge to enjoy a range of colloquial texts.

It focuses solely on Jakartan Indonesian: the most prominent and widely understood variety of colloquial Indonesian.

Although this module only teaches you to *read* colloquial Indonesian, that gives you access to a huge new world of print media, including countless thousands of blogs, Facebook pages, on-line discussion forums, and also, increasingly, popular literature.

Being able to read colloquial Indonesian is also a great step towards learning the spoken form. While written colloquial texts are naturally somewhat different from spoken ones, they also share a great many features. And all the colloquial features taught in this module (except spelling) are features of spoken colloquial Indonesian as well.

1. Basic features: Presentation

This first section will introduce you to some bare essentials. It shows you:

- some common colloquial words
- colloquial shortenings of some words you know already
- colloquial changes to the sound of many words, and with it to their spelling
- colloquial dropping of prefixes on some verbs

Read the sentences 1-19. Use the guide to colloquial items below each sentence to work out what all the words mean.

All colloquial features are marked in **bold**.

At the end of the section is a summary of all the colloquial features introduced.

1. **Cewek itu lagi duduk bareng temen.**

That girl was sitting with a friend.

Colloquial items:

cewek = young woman

lagi = indicates action-in-progress

bareng = together, together with

temen (“t’M’N”) = *teman* with sound change *a* → *e*: friend

[Formal: Perempuan itu sedang duduk bersama teman.]

2. Bokap bilang Tuti memang nggak boleh main di luar.

Dad said Tuti really isn't allowed to play outdoors.

Colloquial items:

bokap = father

bilang = to say

emang: = short for *memang*: indeed, certainly

enggak (“ngGA”) = no, not. [Also *nggak*, *gak*, or *ga*.]

main = *bermain* with dropped prefix: to play

(Formal: Ayah berkata Tuti memang tidak boleh bermain di luar.)

3. Rumahnya gede banget.

His house is really big.

Colloquial items

gede (“g’DE”) = big

b banget (“BAng’t”) = very, extremely

(Formal: Rumahnya besar sekali.)

4. Dia sering ngomong kayak gitu. Nggak minta dengan sopan, nggak bilang makasih.

She often talks like that. Doesn't ask for things politely, doesn't say thanks.

Colloquial items

ngomong = to talk.

kayak = similar, like.

gitu = short for *begitu*: like that, thus

nggak (“ngGA”) = no, not. [Also *enggak*, *gak*, *ga*.]

bilang = to say

makasih = short for *terima kasih*: thanks

- *kayak gitu* it is the normal colloquial way to say ‘like that’ (rather than *kayak itu*).

(Formal: Dia sering berbicara seperti itu. Tidak minta dengan sopan, tidak mengatakan terima kasih.)

5. Dia kasih gue duit.

He gave me money.

Colloquial items:

kasih = to give

gue (“gué”) = me, I. [Also *gua*].

duit = money

(Formal: Dia memberi saya uang.)

6. **Cuma lu aja yang pinter** berenang.

You're the only one who's good at swimming.

Colloquial items:

cuma = only [Also *cuman*]

lu = you. (Also *lo, elu, or elo.*)

aja = *saja* with dropped 's': only, just.

pinter = clever, good at. [Also *pintar*]

(Formal: Hanya kamu saja yang pandai berenang.)

7. **Gue bawa buku biar nggak** bosen.

I brought a book so that I wouldn't be bored.

Colloquial items:

gue ("gué") = I, me. [Also *gua*]

bawa = *membawa* with dropped prefix: to bring

biar = so that, in order that

nggak = no, not. [Also *enggak, gak, ga*]

bosen ("BOs'n") = *bosan* with sound change *a* → *e*: bored.

(Formal: Saya membawa buku supaya tidak bosan.)

8. **Kalo** makan rendang **mending pake** tangan **aja**.

If you eat beef rendang it's better to just use your hands.

Colloquial items:

kalo = *kalau* with sound change *au* → *o*: if, when.

mending = better;

pake ("paké") = *pakai* (i.e. 'memakai' with dropped prefix) + sound change *ai* → *é*: to use

aja = *saja* with dropped 's': just, only

(Formal: Kalau makan rendang lebih baik memakai tangan saja.)

9. **Gimana** bikin lirik **buat** lagu?

How do you make lyrics for a song?

Colloquial items:

gimana = short for *bagaimana*: how

bikin = to make

buat = for

(Formal: Bagaimana membuat lirik untuk lagu?)

10. **Susah banget cari tempat kayak gini.**

It's really hard to find a place like this.

Colloquial items:

susah = hard, difficult

b banget (“BAng’t”) = very, extremely

cari = *mencari* with dropped prefix: to seek, find

kayak = seperti; similar to

gini = short for *begini*: like this

- *kayak gini* is the normal colloquial way to say ‘like this’ (rather than *kayak ini*).

(Formal: Sukar sekali mencari tempat seperti ini.)

11. **Gue en nyokap berangkat bareng naik mobil.**

I and Mum left together by car.

Colloquial items:

gue (“gué”) = I, me [Also gua]

en (“én”) = and

nyokap = mother

bareng = together

(Formal: Saya dan ibu berangkat bersama naik mobil.)

12. **Cowok itu pengen ngomong sama lo.**

That guy wants to talk to you.

Colloquial items:

cowok = young man, guy.

pengen (“péngén”) = to want, wish. (Also *pingin*.)

ngomong = to talk

sama = multi-purpose preposition. Here it means ‘to’

lo = you [Also *elo*, or *elu*, or *lu*]

(Formal: Lelaki itu ingin berbicara dengan kamu.)

13. **Gua mo minum kopi tapi udah abis.**

I wanted to drink coffee but it was all gone.

Colloquial items:

gua = I, me. [Also gué]
mo = *mau* with sound change *au* → *o*: want
tapi = short for *tetapi*: but.
udah = *sudah* with dropped ‘h’: already
abis = *habis* with dropped ‘h’: all gone

14. **Elu bakal kerja di mana?**

Where are you going to work?

Colloquial items:

elu (“*elu*”) = you [Also *lu*, *elo*, or *lo*]
bakal = will, going to
kerja = *bekerja* with dropped prefix: to work

(Formal: Kamu akan bekerja di mana?)

15. **Dia gak dateng. Mungkin lagi sibuk kali ya?**

He didn’t come. Maybe he’s busy, hm?

Colloquial items:

gak = no, not. [Also *enggak*, *nggak*, or *ga*]
dateng (“*DA*’ng”) = *datang* with sound change *a* → *e*: to come
lagi = a marker of action-in-progress
kali = short for *barangkali*: maybe, perhaps. [Also *ngkali*]

(Formal: Dia tidak datang. Mungkin sedang sibuk barangkali, ya?)

16. **Pas beli komputer ni gue tanya garansinya berapa lama.**

When I bought this computer I asked how long the guarantee was.

Colloquial items:

pas = ‘when’, referring to an event or state in the past
beli = *membeli* with dropped prefix: to buy
ni = short for *ini*: this. (Also *nih*.)
gue (“*gué*”) = I, me. [Also *gua*]
tanya = *bertanya* with dropped prefix: to ask

(Formal: Ketika membeli komputer ini saya bertanya garansinya berapa lama.)

17. **Lu enggak usah bilang makasih sama tuh cowok.**

You don’t need to say thanks to that guy.

Colloquial items:

lu = you [Also *elu*, *lo*, *elo*]

enggak (“ngGA”) = no, not [Also nggak, gak, ga]
 bilang = to say
 makasih = short for *terima kasih*: thanks
 sama = multi-purpose preposition. Here it means ‘to’
 tuh = short for *itu*: that. [Also *tu*]
 tuh cowok = *cowok itu*, with reversed order of *tuh* and noun

(Formal: Kamu tidak usah mengucapkan terima kasih kepada lelaki itu.)

18. Pintu **gak** **kekunci** **biar** **entar** **gampang** masuk.

The door was not locked so that later it would be easy to get in.

Colloquial items:

gak (“ngGA”) = no, not [Also *enggak*, *nggak*, *ga*]
 kekunci = *terkunci* with ‘ke-’ prefix to replace ‘ter-’: locked.
 biar = so that, in order that
 entar [“nTAR”] = later, later on
 gampang = easy

(Formal: Pintu tidak terkunci supaya nanti mudah masuk.)

19. **Kita** **liat** **tu** **mobil** di luar **ruma**.

We saw that car outside our house.

Colloquial items:

kita = ‘we’: used both including *and* excluding the hearer
 lihat = lihat (i.e. *melihat* with dropped prefix) + dropped ‘h’: to see.
 tu = short for *itu*: that.
 tu mobil = *mobil itu*, with reversed order of *tuh* and noun
 ruma = *rumah* with dropped ‘h’: house

Summary of colloquial features introduced above.

<i>Words</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>formal equivalent</i>
bakal	marker of future time	akan
banget	very	sekali
bareng	together	bersama
biar	so that, in order that	supaya
bikin	to make	membuat
bilang	say	berkata
bokap	father	ayah
buat	for	untuk
cewek	young woman	perempuan muda

cowok	guy	lelaki
cuma (<i>or</i> cuman)	only	hanya
duit	money	uang
en	and	dan
entar	later, going to	nanti
gampang	easy	mudah
gede	big	besar
gue (<i>or</i> gua)	I	saya
kasih	give	beri
kayak	like, similar	seperti
kita	we (<i>exclusive</i>)	kami
lagi	marker of action-in-progress	sedang
lu (<i>or</i> elu, lo, elo)	you	kamu
mending(an)	better	lebih baik
nggak (<i>or</i> enggak, gak)	no, not	tidak
ngomong	talk	berbicara
nyokap	mother	ibu
pas	when (in past)	ketika
pintar/pinter	clever, good at	pandai
pengen (<i>or</i> pingin)	want, wish	ingin
sama	multi-purpose preposition	pada, dengan, oleh, etc
susah	difficult	sukar

- *gue* (*or* *gua*) is the most common word used among young Jakartans to say “I/me” in relaxed situations (although some prefer e.g. *aku*).
- *elu* (*or* *elo*, *lu*, *lo*) is the most common word they used to address each other in relaxed situations (although some prefer e.g. *kamu*).

<i>Shortened words</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>full form</i>
tapi	but	tetapi
emang	indeed, certainly	memang
gimana	how	bagaimana
gini	like this	begini
gitu	like that	begitu
kali	maybe, perhaps	barangkali
makasih	thanks	terima kasih
ni	this	ini
tu	that	itu

Sound changes (with changes to the spelling too)

- “a” in the last syllable of many words is replaced by unstressed “e”, i.e. by the schwa sound (e.g. *temen* = “tM’N” instead of *teman*)
- “ai” diphthong is replaced by “é” in many words (e.g. *pake* “paké” instead of *pakai*)
- “au” diphthong is replaced by “o” in many words (e.g. *kalo* instead of *kalau*)
- “s” sound is dropped at the start of certain words (e.g. *aja* for *saja*; *uda* for *sudah*)

- “h” sound in some words is dropped at the start of the word or start of a syllable (e.g. *abis* for *habis*; *liat* for *lihat*)
- “h” sound is dropped at the end of some words (e.g. *lebi* for *lebih*)

Note: certain words often take *more than one* of those sound changes. Then they can look very unlike their formal counterpart, e.g. *uda* for *sudah*; *item* for *hitam*; *ijo* for *hijau*

Grammar changes

- “ber-” prefix can be dropped from many verbs (e.g. *bicara* for *berbicara*)
- “meN-” prefix can be dropped from any transitive verb, or at least any reasonably common one (e.g. *bawa* for *membawa*)
- “ke-” replaces “ter-“ prefix in many verbs; mostly ones where “ter-” expresses accidental meaning (e.g. *kebawa* for *terbawa*)
- “ini/ nih” and “itu/ tuh” can come *before* the head word. (e.g. *nih orang* instead of *orang nih*)

2. Practice Exercise

These sentences 1-15 below give reading practice in all the colloquial features introduced in Section 1 earlier.

An Answer Key is provided at the end of the section.

1. (*explaining why didn't have the money to go out last weekend*)
Pas gue minta duit sama bokap dia cuma ketawa aja.
2. (*Envyng a witty friend*)
Gue pengen jadi kayak temen gue tuh yang pinter ngomong.
3. (*Talking about the high price of basic goods*)
Mending kalo harga beras diturunkan biar gak bikin susah rakyat.
4. (*Wondering if could start own business*)
Kalo mau usaha sendiri harus modal duit gede ato gimana?
 - *modal* = capital [Not colloquial]
5. (*saying not too impressed with the film being watched*)
Gue uda sering liat film yang kayak gini.

6. (to friend Fitri who is worried she is not popular):
Gue pikir lu bakal gampang dapet pacar, Tri.
7. (talking about how many guests there were at a party)
Pas kita dateng uda rame banget.
8. (passing on a piece of gossip about Edo)
Susi bilang liat Edo bareng cewek cantik di Blok M tadi sore.”
9. (saying why feel a bit guilty after getting back from trip away)
Gue lupa beli oleh-oleh buat pacar gue.
- *oleh-oleh* = a small gift brought back after a trip. [Not colloquial]
10. (telling own plans for that evening)
Ntar malam gua pergi belanja bareng nyokap.
11. (talking about book currently reading)
 Baru kali ini **gue baca historical romance, tapi emang bagus nih buku.**
- *baru kali ini* = this is the first time [Not colloquial]
12. (telling a friend why she should have a chat with Rini)
 Dia bisa **kasih lo** nasihat **kali ya.**
13. (talking about how his reading tastes have changed)
Gue dulu ga gitu suka komik buat cowok.
14. (talking about an unexpected event they witnessed)
Pas lagi jalan pulang kita liat kecelakaan di jalan.
15. (talking about a quarrel with sister)
 Dia **emang lagi** marah **sama** aku waktu itu.

Answer Key to Sentences 1-15 above

1. When I asked dad for money he just laughed.
 - *minta duit sama bokap* = literally: “asked-for money to dad”
2. I want to be like that friend of mine who’s a good talker.
 - *pinter ngomong* = literally: “clever at talking”

3. It would be better if the price of rice was lowered, so as not to make things difficult for the common people.
 - *biar gak bikin susah* = literally: “so-that not make difficult”
4. If you want to have your own business, do you need to have a large amount of financial capital, or what?
 - *Kalo mau usaha sendiri*= literally: “If want own business”
5. I’ve already often seen films like that.
6. I think you’ll easily get a boy/girlfriend, Tri.
7. When we got there it was already really crowded.
8. Susi says she saw Edo with a pretty girl in Blok M this afternoon.
9. I forgot to buy *oleh-oleh* for my boy/girlfriend.
10. Tonight I’m going shopping with mum.
 - *bareng nyokap* = literally: “together-with mum”
11. This is the first time I’ve read a historical romance, but it really is good, this book.
12. She can give you advice perhaps, right?
13. I didn’t used to like comics for guys much.
 - *ga gitu suka* = literally: “not so like”
14. When we were walking home we saw an accident in the street.
15. She really was angry at me then.

3. Colloquial prefixes on transitive verbs: Presentation

One basic feature has been deliberately omitted until now, as it merits separate treatment: sound changes for forming verbs.

You already know the set of sound changes to form transitive verbs in formal Indonesian, e.g. *tulis* → *menulis*. Colloquial Indonesian has its own set of sound changes, e.g. *tulis* → *nulis*.

Here is a table which displays this system of sound changes.

Colloquial prefixes on transitive verbs

INITIAL LETTER OF BASE	FORMAL VERB	COLLOQUIAL VERB
<u>a</u> mbil [vowel]	mengambil	ng ambil,
<u>b</u> antu	membantu	nge bantu, mb antu
<u>c</u> uci	mencuci	ny uci
<u>d</u> engar	mendengar	nged engar, nd engar
<u>g</u> anggu	mengganggu	ng eganggu, ngg anggu
<u>h</u> abis	menghabiskan	ng abisin [drops the <i>h</i>]
<u>p</u> otong	memotong	m otong
<u>t</u> unggu	menunggu	n unggu
<u>k</u> irim	mengirim	ng irim
<u>m</u> arah	memarahi	m arahin

<u>n</u> ikmat	men <u>i</u> ikmati	nik <u>mat</u> in
<u>n</u> yanyi	men <u>y</u> yanyi	ny <u>any</u> i
<u>s</u> ewa	men <u>y</u> ewa	ny <u>ew</u> a
<u>j</u> awab	men <u>j</u> awab	n gejawab, n jawab
<u>r</u> usak	me <u>r</u> usak	n gerusak, n grusak
<u>l</u> arang	me <u>l</u> arang	n gelarang, n glarang
<u>w</u> arna	me <u>w</u> arnakan	n gewarnain
<u>y</u> akin	me <u>y</u> akinkan	n geyakinin

-IN SUFFIX

You might have noticed a strange suffix on a few words in the table above, namely, “-in”. This “-in” suffix replaces the formal suffixes *-i* and *-kan*. So e.g.:

- *ngabisIN* instead of formal *menghabisI*
- *ngewarnaIN* instead of formal *mewarnaKAN*

Indonesians irregularly add this “-in” suffix sometimes even when the formal verb would not have “-i” or “-kan”. So e.g. they sometimes write or say *ngebantuIN*, instead of *ngebantu*, despite the fact that in formal Indonesian we just say plain *membantu*.

4. Practice exercise

These sentences 1-22 below give reading practice in all the colloquial features introduced so far.

An Answer Key is at the end of the section.

1. (*talking admiringly about a palace*).
Gua ga pernah ngeliat bangunan **segede en** **seindah itu**.
2. (*explaining what has happened to her mobile phone*)
HP-nya nggak ada. Ada **temen** yang **minjem cuma buat liat-liat** tapi **kebawa** pulang.
3. (*Susi’s father gave her younger sister a present, but not her. As a result:*)
Susi cemburu dan **ngerasa bokapnya lebi** sayang **ama** adiknya.
4. (*complaining to a person who makes a lot of noise coming into the house*)
Kenapa sih kalo nutup pintu **ngga** bisa pelan-pelan?

- *pelan-pelan* = slowly, softly [Not colloquial]
 - ignore the *sih* for now: particles like this are explained shortly
5. (*explaining why wasn't able to go to a concert on the day he wanted*).
Gue langsung ke *site* yang **ngejual** tiket murah **tapi** ternyata tiket **buat** tanggal itu **uda abis** semua.
6. **Gue lagi ngebaca** satu *textbook* yang **gue dapet** dari **perpus** kampus.
7. Dia **ngebantu gw pas gw ngerjain** skripsi **gw**.
- *skripsi* = dissertation [Not colloquial]
8. (*asking someone about their free time*)
Gimana cara **lo ngisi** waktu di saat **ga ada** **kerjaan**?
9. **Kayaknya gampang aja** **ngurus** SIM sekarang, **gak kayak** dulu harus **make calo**.
- *SIM* = driving licence (*surat izin mengemudi*). [Slightly colloquial]
 - *calo* is a tout, a go-between, an intermediary [Not colloquial]
10. (*talking about help she gets from her family at home*)
Nyokap gue nawarin nyuci piring **kalo gue** banyak PR.
11. (*discussing a romantic dilemma she is in*)
Tapi gue tetep sayang **ama tuh cowok en gak** mau putus.
12. **Gua udah lama pengen nyoba bikin** pavlova **tapi nggak** punya resep bagus untuk **bikin** sendiri.
13. (*talking about a job she once had*)
Pas tinggal di **Australi** gue **kerja** di stadion olahraga. **Kerjanya** **gue cuman** **periksa** tiket **aja** dan juga **ngebantuin** **bersihin**.
- *Australi/ Ustrali* are colloquial forms for Australia
14. Main drum **ni** siapa **bilang susah**? **Gampang kok**.
- ignore the *kok* for now: particles like this are explained shortly
15. **Gue gak bakal** minta **duit** lagi ke **ortu**, **kan** udah dewasa.
- *ortu*: “orang tua” [colloquial]
 - *kan* means roughly “as you know”. Particles like this are explained shortly.]

16. (talking about the love life of a girl she knows)

Si Lisa **kan** akhirnya putus **ama cowok tu**. **Emang mending gitu kali**, ya.

• *kan* means roughly “as you know”. Particles like this are explained shortly.

17. **Kita bikin** promosi lewat *website* **aja**, **biar gak usah ngabisin duit buat bikin** selebaran segala.

• *selebaran* = leaflets

18. **Lo** pernah **gak sih nulis** surat cinta **buat cewek?**

• ignore the *sih* for now: particles like this are explained shortly.

19. (to acquaintance in street, who's sitting on his motorbike)

Mo ke kampus? Bisa ikut **nggak?** (“Bisa”.) Ya, **makasih**.

20. Dia **nggak** banyak **ngomong** apalagi **kalo bareng** orang yang **gak dekat**.

21. Ibunya Fivi **ngasih** dia boneka beruang yang **gede banget**.

22. (salesperson in market)

Ada yang **lebi** murah **tapi** **nggak kayak gini**.

Answer Key to Sentences 1-22 above

1. I've never seen a building as big and as beautiful as that.
2. I don't have my mobile phone. A friend borrowed it just to have a look but s/he accidentally took it home.
 - *HP-nya* *nggak ada* = literally: “The mobile phone is not present”.
 - *kebawa*: = colloquial for ‘*terbawa*’: to be accidentally taken
3. Susi was jealous and felt that her dad was more fond of her younger sibling.
4. Why when you close the door can't you do it softly?
5. I went directly to the site which sells cheap tickets, but it turned out the tickets for that date had all gone already.
6. I'm reading a textbook which I got from the campus library.
7. S/he helped me when I was writing my dissertation.
 - *ngerjain* = literally: “doing dissertation.”
8. What's your way of filling in the time, when you don't have any work?
 - *gimana cara?* = literally: ‘How is the way?’.
 - *ga ada kerjaan*= literally: “there isn't work”
9. It seems as though it's easy to arrange your driving licence now – not like in the past when you had to use a tout.
 - *ngurus*: to arrange or manage sth (i.e. formal *mengurus*)
10. My mum offers to wash the dishes if I've got a lot of homework.

11. But I'm still fond of that guy and I don't want to break up.
12. I've wanted to make pavlova for a long time but I didn't have a good recipe to make it myself.
13. When I was in Australia I worked at a sports stadium. My work was just checking tickets and also helping to clean up.
14. Playing drums: who says it's hard? It's easy!
• *main drum ni*"= literally: "this playing drums"
15. I'm not going to ask for money from my parents any more. I'm already an adult,
16. Lisa's finally broken up with that guy. It really is better like that maybe.
17. We did all the promotion just through a website, so that we wouldn't need to spend money on making leaflets and everything.
• *buat bikin selebaran* = literally: "for making leaflets"
18. Have you ever written a love letter to a girl?
• *gak* = literally: "(or) not"
19. Are you going to campus? Can I come with you? ("Yes"). Yep, thanks.
• *nggak* = literally: "(or) not"
20. He (or she) doesn't talk much, especially if he's with people he's not close to.
• *yang gak dekat* = literally: "who are not close"
21. Fivi's mother gave her a really large toy bear.
22. There are cheaper ones, but not like this.

5. Emotive particles: Presentation

These particles are scattered through colloquial Jakartan speech and writing. They don't carry concrete meaning, but rather express the speaker's feelings about what is being said. Their effect is subtle and often hard to pin down.

Particularly common ones are: *kan, nih, tuh, lho, kok, deh, sih, dong*.

They are illustrated in the section below.

Note that their effect is captured only approximately by the English translations.

*** KAN**

- kan (1)

On the end of questions, *kan?* is just short for *bukan*, i.e. a question tag like "right?", "isn't it?", "can't I?", etc.

- Tita emang cantik kan?

Tita really is pretty, isn't she?

- Mau nanya. Boleh, kan?

I want to ask something. I can, right?

- **kan (2)**

- *kan* on statements suggests the hearer already knows whatever it is you're telling them.

- Nggak mau jalan. **Kan** jauh.

I didn't want to walk there. It's a long way (as you know)

- Tapi **gue kan** ga kaya elo Nur. Gua nih jadi gugup kalo deketin cowok.

But I'm not like you Nur (as you know). I get nervous when I approach guys.

* **NIH**

nih isn't always used to mean "this". Sometimes it is just added to emphasise what the person is saying.

- Abis wisuda aku ga bisa ke mana-mana **nih** ...

After I graduated I wasn't able to go off traveling anywhere, *nih* ...

- Ini **nih** yang bikin turis gak mau balik ke Indonesia lagi.

It's this, *nih*, that makes tourists not want to come back to Indonesia.

* **TUH**

Similarly, *tuh* isn't always used to mean "that". Sometimes it is just added to emphasise what the person is saying.

- Banyak **tuh** temen-temen gue yg pake jilbab.

There are lots, *tuh*, of my friends who wear a Moslem headscarf.

- Bukan sekali itu **tuh** gue keilangan dompet.

It's not just that one time, *tuh*, that I lost my wallet.

* **LHO**

- **lho (1)**

Lho at the start of sentences expresses surprise.

- **Lho**, udah pagi.

Gosh, it's morning already.

- **Lho**, siapa bilang *marketing* itu nggak penting?
Hey, who says marketing isn't important?

- lho (2)

Lho at the end of statements is a kind of emphatic reminder (or warning) that what you're saying is true

- Kita juga capek **lho**.

We're tired as well, you know.

- Bintang film tuh ga harus cantik **lho**.

Film stars don't necessarily have to be pretty, you know.

- (*talking about a type of diet pill*)

- Aku juga pake! Bagus **lho**.

I use them too! They're good, believe me.

*SIH

- sih (1)

sih on questions is very common. It tends to make the asker sound not really keen to get an answer. This softens many questions, by making them sound less abrupt.

(*idle social questions to an acquaintance*):

- Umurnya berapa **sih**?

How old are you anyway?

- Tinggalnya di mana **sih**?

So where do you live then?

- sih (2)

This same quality of *sih*, i.e. that it makes the asker sound as if they don't really care so much about the answer, can at other times make a question sound irritable or sarcastic.

- Nih cewek maunya apa **sih**?

What does this girl want, for godsake?

(*to someone acting arrogant*)

- Siapa **sih** lo?

Who do you think you are?

- **sih** (3)

Sih coming after the subject, i.e. after the thing being talked about, has the effect of “As for X”

- Gua **sih** suka banget ama ini filem.
As for me, I really like this film.
- Menurut gue, orang bule **sih** baik-baik aja.
In my opinion, as for whiteys, they're fine.

- **sih** (4)

sih at the end of clauses is common, but its effect in that position can be very hard to pinpoint. It often helps create a matter of fact, explanatory tone.

- Gue ditawarkan *laptop* ama suami tapi gue menolak. Emang nggak perlu **sih**.
I was offered a laptop computer by my husband but I refused. The thing is I really don't need one.
- Abis ujian aku ga bisa ke mana-mana nih. Ga ada duit **sih**.
After my exams I wasn't able to travel anywhere. I didn't have any money, you see.

* **DEH**

deh often emphasises that something is true.

- Aduh, malu **deh**.
Gosh, I was embarrassed, I'm telling you.
- Kalo gak murah gua ga mau **deh**.
If it isn't cheap then I don't want it, I really don't.

* **KOK**

- **kok** (1)

kok at the start of a clause suggests you are surprised and is similar to “Why..? or “How come..?”

- **Kok** mahal banget Mas.
How come it's so expensive, *Mas*.?

- [to friend who has just got back from a holiday]
- **Kok** nggak ada foto?
What, no photos?

- kok (2)

kok at the end of statements adds emphasis. It usually suggests too that you are challenging or contradicting what was said before.

- **Siapa bilang susah? Gampang aja kok sebenarnya.**
Who says it's hard?? It's a cinch.

A: "Baru kenal, kok nanya pacar"?

B: "Cuma pingin tahu aja **kok**."

- A: "We've only just met and you're asking if I've got a boyfriend"?
- B: "Hey, I just wanted to know".

* DONG

dong on a command or a statement adds emphasis. It conveys a sense that you're setting the person straight: that the person should already know what to do, or know what you're telling them.

- **Uang pas dong.**
Hey, c'mon, (give me) the exact change.
- **Mereka nggak bisa disalahkan dong.**
- They can't be blamed, you know!

* COMBINATIONS

Lho, kok gitu sih?

Gosh, how can that be, I wonder?

Emotive particles are very often used in combination. Often you can roughly identify what each particle means in the sentence (as in this example above). But in many other cases you can't really say what each one means – you can just see that the combination makes the sentence sound smooth and natural.

6. Practice Exercise

This section gives you practice understanding the function of an emotive particle within a sentence.

The particle is marked in **bold**.

An Answer Key is at the end of the section.

- (giving someone a piece of food to taste)*
Gimana? Bagus **kan**?
- (finding a store closed unexpectedly)*
Udah jam sembilan, **kok** masih tutup ya?
- (chatting with a new acquaintance)*
+ “Gue ambil jurusan desain grafis.”
- “Oh, gitu. Masih berapa lama lagi **sih** kuliah lu?”

• *jurusan*: a stream of study
- (to a guest at your house)*
Lho, udah mau pulang?
- (starting to explain a problem)*
Begini **nih** masalahnya. Kemarin gue lupa ...
- + “Jadi lu nggak mau jadi kaya?”
- “Mau **dong**. Siapa **sih** yang nggak mau dapet duit banyak?”
- (talking about a mutual acquaintance, Fitri)*
Kayaknya udah lama **deh** gak liat si Fitri.
- (talking about troubled relationship with girlfriend)*
Kalo dia bilang mau putus gue gak bakal heran. Cewek-cewek emang gitu **sih**.
- (looking at a photo of a group of people)*
Yang paling kiri namanya Sofi **kan**?
- (waiter in café to a tourist)*
Kok sendiri? Mana temennya?

11. (*thinking of getting rid of old computer*)
Kalo dijual kayaknya nggak ada **tuh** yang mau beli.
12. Kalo disuruh milih **sih**, aku milih kerja di restoran aja.
13. Musik jazz tuh emang bisa bikin bosan tapi ini beda **lho!**
14. (*when proved to be correct*)
Gue **kan** udah bilang gue nggak bohong.
15. (*social small talk question to an acquaintance*)
Umurnya 22 **kan**? Kapan **sih** ulang tahunnya?
16. (*commenting on a film you saw*)
Lucu banget **deh** filmnya.
17. (to friends who are dawdling about leaving)
Ayo cepat **dong**. Gue mau pulang **nih!**
18. (to a friend who's failed their end-of-year exams)
+ "Udah bilang ama keluarga belum?"
- "Udah **kok!**"
19. (*during quarrel with romantic partner*)
Sejak kapan **sih** lo mikirin perasaan gue? Lo cuma mikirin lo sendiri aja!"
20. Itu urusan gue. Nggak usah ikut campur **lho**.
- *ikut campur* = interfere [Not colloquial]
21. (*discussing a male actor*)
Orang bilang dia ganteng tapi menurut gue dia biasa-biasa aja **tuh**.
22. (casually taking leave of a friend)
Udah ya, gue mau mandi dulu **nih**.
- "udah" is a common leave-taking gambit (roughly: 'that's it,' 'finished')

23. (talking about pop songs)

Tahu **nggak** lagu tuh? Musiknya bagus, liriknya **sih** konyol menurut gue.

• *konyol* = silly, foolish, dumb [Not colloquial]

24. (discussing computer problem you're having)

+ "File-nya bisa langsung **didownload**."

- "Nggak bisa **kok**. Uda dicoba."

25. (comparing traits of ethnic groups)

Biasanya **kan** orang Jawa tuh lebih halus.

26. Pas gue balik ke ruma udah sepi banget. Mereka uda pergi **sih**.

Answer Key to Sentences 1-26 above

Note: With each answer a note is provided on the likely effect of the particle.

1. What's it like? Good, isn't it?

• *kan* here = a question tag like "isn't it?"

2. It's already 9 o'clock - how come it's still closed?

• *kok* here suggests surprise: similar to "Why..?" or "How come..?"

3. "I'm taking graphic design." "Oh, right. And how much longer is your course then?"

• *sih* probably makes this question sound less abrupt

4. Gosh, are you leaving already?

• *lho* expresses surprise here.

5. The problem's like this, *nih*. Yesterday I forgot ..."

• *nih* here adds emphasis

6. "So you don't want to be rich?" "Of course I do. Who wouldn't want to get a lot of money?"

• *dong* here adds emphasis, and suggests the hearer should know this already.

7. It seems like ages *deh* that I haven't seen Fitri.

• *deh* here emphasizes that it's true

8. If she says she wants to end the relationship I won't be surprised. That's what women are like, you know.

• *sih* at the end of clauses like this often helps create a matter of fact, explanatory tone

9. The one on the far left – her name's Sofi, isn't it?

• *kan* here = a question tag, like "isn't it?"

10. How come you're by yourself? Where are your friends?

• *kok* here suggests surprise: similar to "Why..?" or "How come..?"

11. If I put it up for sale it seems there's no-one *tuh* who would want to buy it.

• *tuh* here adds emphasis

12. As for what I'd do if I had to choose: I'd choose working in a restaurant.

• *sih* here has the effect of "As for ..."

13. It's true that jazz music can be boring, but this is different *lho!*
lho here = an emphatic reminder that what you're saying is true
14. I told you *kan* I wasn't lying.
 - *kan* here suggests 'as you know', i.e. that the hearer already knows this.
15. You're 22, aren't you? And when's your birthday then?
 - *kan* here = a question tag like "isn't it"?
 - *sih* in this question probably makes it sound less abrupt
16. It was really funny *deh* that film.
 - *deh* here emphasizes that it is true
17. C'mon, hurry up! I want to get home *nih!*
 - *dong* here adds emphasis and suggests they should already know what you're telling them
 - *nih* adds emphasis
18. "Have you told your family yet?" "Yeah, of course I have."
 • *kok* here adds emphasis, and suggests the speaker is challenging the earlier implication that s/he might not have told the family.
19. And since when do you think about my feelings? You're just thinking of yourself.
 - *sih* here makes it sound as though the asker is not really interested in getting an answer – which given the context probably makes it sound harsher.
20. That's my own business. There's no need to interfere *lho*.
 - *lho* here is a kind of emphatic warning that what the speaker is saying is true
21. People say he's good looking but I reckon he's just ordinary *tuh*.
 - *tuh* here adds emphasis
22. Okay, then, I'm off to have a wash *nih*.
 - *nih* here adds emphasis
23. Do you know that song, or not? The music's good – (but) as for the lyrics, they're silly in my opinion.
 - *sih* here has the effect of "as for ..."
24. "You can download the file directly". "No you can't. I've tried."
 • *kok* here adds emphasis, and suggests that the speaker is challenging or contradicting the earlier idea
25. Normally *kan* Javanese are more refined.
 - *kan* here suggests 'as you know', i.e. that the hearer already knows this.
26. When I got back home it was already really quiet. They'd already gone, *sih*.
 - *sih* at the end of clauses like this often helps create a matter of fact, explanatory tone