# The *kalau* framing construction in Indonesian Comics

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This paper examines *kalau* constructions in Indonesian in order to show how features of the colloquial language are used in print with the aim of creating a sense of involvement and thus appealing to youth audiences. *Kalau* 'if' can mark a range of structures including clauses, adverbials and nominal elements, all of which function to frame a concomitant portion of discourse. *Kalau* structures using non-clausal material, particularly nouns, are shown to be ubiquitous in colloquial conversation but are virtually non-existent in the more formal written texts. These results are compared with the use of *kalau* constructions in contemporary youth-oriented comics. It is found that conversational *kalau* constructions also occur in the comics data, but with less frequency than in conversation. Different types of *kalau* framing constructions are deployed by users based on different discourse, interactional and cognitive needs and this in turn helps to explain their different distributions across text-types. The use conversational *kalau* constructions in print media is an example of the ongoing 'colloquialisation' of Indonesian.

## 1. Introduction

One of the more dynamic drivers of language change in contemporary Indonesia is popular youth language, sometimes referred to as *bahasa gaul* 'the language of sociability' (Smith-Hefner 2007). Innovative features of youth language can spread quickly throughout Indonesian society via the pervasive presence of popular media, which cuts across geographic, social and discourse spaces and which in turn forms a crucial part of how young people construct identities for themselves within contemporary Indonesian society (Manns 2011). Although primarily conceived as a colloquial spoken register, Indonesian youth language is having profound effects on written modalities as well. This is particularly apparent in genres produced by and for youth, which form an important part of the twenty-first century Indonesian media and linguistic landscape (Djenar 2008). As key resources for creating intersubjectivity, features from conversational language make their way into print media with the aim of (re)creating a sense of involvement in order to appeal to youth audiences.

In this paper I examine one specific example of this process: a framing structure that can be characterised as a conditional or topicalisation construction. This structure is marked by *kalau*, often glossed 'if' but more appropriately characterised as a framing particle as it marks a range of structures including clauses, adverbials and nominal elements which always function to frame a concomitant portion of discourse. In Section 2 of this paper I discuss the way informal features of colloquial Indonesian are making their way into print texts. I then explore the use of *kalau* structures in casual conversation in Section 3, characterising them in terms of frequency, distribution and discourse functions. Certain aspects of this structure are highly characteristic of the conversational mode and this is highlighted through comparison with an example of standard written language. In Section 4, these results for *kalau* usage in conversation and standard-language print media are compared with the use of these framing constructions in one print genre aimed at youth audiences – contemporary slice-of-life

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comics – in order to see whether this particular element of colloquial grammar is utilised by writers as one means of representing an informal, youthful style. It will be shown that *kalau* constructions that use clauses for framing and which can be read as having conditional meanings are common in colloquial conversation as well as in both the more formal and more colloquial written genres. The *kalau* framing structures using non-clausal material, particularly nouns, are ubiquitous in colloquial conversation but are virtually non-existent in the more formal written texts, suggesting that they are indeed a marker of informal language. Investigation of slice-of-life comics shows that these informal *kalau* constructions do occur there, but are less frequent than in conversation. The concluding discussion in Section 5 suggests that different types of framing constructions are deployed by users based on different discourse, interactional and cognitive needs and this in turn explains their different distributions across text-types.

## 2. Colloquial Indonesian and youthful text-types

Gumperz (1982) and Chafe (1985) introduced the notion of involvement as a way to characterise different modes of interaction. This has been further developed by Tannen (2007) who describes involvement as "an internal, even emotional connection individuals feel which binds them to other people as well as to places, things, activities, ideas, memories, and words" (2007: 27). Tannen (1985) also points out that involvement helps us differentiate modes of discourse. Conversation tends to exhibit elements that promote high relative interpersonal involvement while expository written prose tends to exhibit elements that promote more detachment or low interpersonal involvement. Crucially, she also goes on to explain that this difference is not strictly a case of orality versus literacy, but rather all forms of discourse contain a greater or lesser relative focus on involvement. What we see in printed genres aimed at Indonesian youth is a continual shifting between high-involvement and more detached styles. One conventional way to do this – not just in Indonesian, but with various genres across many languages – is to differentiate narrative sections of discourse from representations of speech, where narration is often presented in a more detached style and speech is represented in a more high-involvement style (Fludernik 1993; Hodson and Broadhead 2013).

Djenar (2012) has shown that authors of Indonesian teen-lit not only make use of the narration-dialogue contrast, but also use a number of other techniques that are aimed at engaging the reader through the use of linguistic elements associated with colloquial Indonesian or specific *gaul* interactional style in a process she describes as 'the interfering narrator'. These techniques include free indirect discourse, increasing levels of involvement and shifting empathy. Djenar and Ewing (2015) show that similar techniques are also used by the authors of comics aimed at Indonesian youth and that these techniques give rise to enhanced interactional involvement. In all cases, informal features of morphology, lexicon and orthography play an important role in indicating informality and with it, high involvement.

Several lexical, morpho-syntactic and stylistic features differentiate standard Indonesian and colloquial Indonesian (Ewing 2005; Sneddon 2006; Sneddon et al. 2010). The following example illustrates how a comics author can capitalise on these differences. This is particularly evident because of the differentiation between the informal language used in dialogue and the formal language used in the narration. In comics the division

between narration and dialogue is also given visual expression, with language spoken by characters conventionally enclosed in speech bubbles that emanate from the image, while narration is regularly positioned at the periphery of an image. The comic panel in Figure 1, with the language glossed and translated in (1), illustrates this division. It is from a book of comics about different types of ghosts and spirits found across Indonesia (Yudis, Borky and Pak Waw 2010). Of interest to the present discussion is the clear contrast between informal language features appearing in the speech bubbles vis-à-vis the standard language of the narrative sequence.

**Figure 1 Informal and formal language across dialogue and narration** (Yudis, Borky and Pak Waw 2010)[1]

(1)  The Twisted Roots – Java[2]

Boy 1:  *Perasaan   dari   tadi   kita   **muter-muter**   ditempat*
NOM-feel   from   earlier   1P   N-turn-REDUP   in-place

*yang   sama   deh...?!*
REL   same   PART

'It feels like we've been circling around in the same place, you know...?!'

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[1] Comic images reproduced with permission of Simon Chandra and Cendana Art Media.
[2] See appendix for glossing and transcription conventions.

Boy 2:          *Masak,    sih!*
                excl       part

                *Raja    mall   kayak   you   bisa   tersesat?*
                king     mall   like    2s    can    TER-lost

                'I don't believe it! How can a king of the mall like you get lost?

Narrator:       *Tidak    ada      yang   tahu   persis   bentuk   dan*
                NEG       EXIST    REL    know   exact    form     and

                *wujudnya.          Biasanya,   jika   di   hutan   merasa*
                appearance-DEF      usually,    if     in   forest  MEN-feel

                *jalannya     berputar-putar    di tempat    yang   sama,*
                way-DEF       BER-turn-REDUP    in place     REL    same

                *diyakini      telah    melewati     akar    mimang.*
                DI-certain-I   PERF     MEN-pass-I   root    twisted

                'No one knows exactly what its form or appearance is. Usually in the
                forest if one feels that one's way is circling around in the same place,
                one can be sure that one has passed (haunted) twisted roots.'

One clear contrast stands out as a kind of minimal pair, marked by bold in the example.
The word meaning 'to circle around' appears as *muter-muter* when one of the characters
is speaking. This same concept appears as *berputar-putar* when it is repeated in the
narration. At least three features distinguish these two forms: orthography (informal
final syllable <e> (representing schwa) when the standard language uses <a>);
morphology (the nasal prefix *N-* realised as *m-* instead of the standard *meN-*, which
would be realised as *mem-*); and morpho-syntactic norms (use of the nasal prefix on this
intransitive, iterative form when the standard calls for the prefix *ber-*). Several other
morpho-syntactic features, underlined in the text, distinguish the two language varieties
in this example. In the informal language these include: non-standard word boundaries
(*ditempat*, preposition and noun written as one word, compare *di tempat* in narration);
extensive use of discourse particles and exclamations (*sih, deh, masak*); informal
vocabulary (*kayak* 'like' instead of standard *seperti*); familiar or non-standard pronouns
(*you* borrowed from English). Of course it is not simply these morpho-syntactic features
that give the boys' utterances an informal feeling. Crucially this also derives from the
overall tone, which includes a kind of bantering repartee and reference to hanging out in
malls (the youthful Indonesian *gaul* style is aspirationally consumerist). Additional
indicators of formal language in the narration include: vocabulary (standard *tidak* 'NEG'
rather than one of several informal negators; formal *jika* 'if' instead of neutral *kalau* or
informal *kalo*; formal *telah* 'PERF' instead of neutral *sudah* or informal *udah*),
morphology (*meN-* mentioned above; the standard applicative suffix *-i* instead of
informal *-in*); spelling (separation of preposition from noun mentioned above); complex
syntax (final sentence includes conditional and complement clauses). Again, it is also
the overall tone in conjunction with these grammatical features which contributes to a
sense of formality. The generic, almost scientific formulation of the narrative caption
highlights the dispassionate separation of narrator from object of narration. And finally

it is, of course, this ironic juxtaposition of such an 'undrammatised' narratorial voice with boys lost in the forest and afraid of ghosts that contributes to the successful humour of the comic.

This example illustrates the differences between colloquial and formal Indonesian and also one way in which authors of comics can effectively manipulate these differences. But the boundary between these two registers of Indonesian is often much more porous than illustrated here. Djenar and Ewing (2015) show that authors of comics, like authors of teen literature, often play with the placement of more formal and informal styles of language to create an engaging effect which produces a sense of alignment between authors, characters and readers. The linguistic points that illustrate these differences in (1) include lexical and morphological elements. We will now investigate one grammatical construction – the *kalau* construction – to see to what extent it is also used in the service of creating a sense of informality in Indonesian comics.

## 3.  Conditionals and topics as framing devices in Indonesian

Conditional constructions consist of two parts and set up a sequence characterised as 'If P, then Q'. This is illustrated in Example (2).

(2)    Asmita:    *kalau   misalnya        [diinves]   bagi     dua*[=],
              IF       example-DEF    DI-invest   divide   two
              'If we split the investment by two,'

       Amru:                              [*he-em*]
                                     uh-huh
                                     'Uh-huh'

       Wida:                                                    [*he-em*].
                                                            uh-huh
                                                            'Uh-huh'

       Asmita:    *gitu*.
              like.that

              *Nanti   raknya         malah,*
              later    bookcase-DEF   in.fact

              ..   [*setengah-setengah   gitu        <@   raknya          @>*].
                   half-REDUP            like.that         bookcase-DEF

              'like that. (Then) the bookcase would also be split in half'' (Plush Toys 68-72)[3]

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[3] Conversational excerpts are identified by transcript name and line number(s) at the end of the free translation.

In this example the first portion of the construction is marked by the particle *kalau*, often translated 'if' as it is here: 'If we split the investment by two'. In the literature on conditionals, this segment is usually referred to as the if-clause, the protasis or the antecedent conditional clause. For Indonesian, I will simply call it the *kalau* frame, for reasons that should become clear below. The second portion of the construction usually does not have any morphological marking in colloquial Indonesian, although formal Indonesian could use *maka*, equivalent to English *then* in this context, '(then) the bookcase would also be split in half'. In the literature this segment is usually called the then-clause, apodosis or the consequent main clause. I will refer to this segment as the assertion and I will refer to the entire Indonesian construction consisting of a *kalau* frame and an assertion as a *kalau* construction.

Example (2) above illustrates a predictive hypothetical conditional. The use of *misalnya* 'for example' highlights the hypothetical nature of this *kalau* frame. The purely hypothetical nature of this example is further confirmed in the ensuing conversation, which is about an entrepreneurial project these friends are planning. Asmita uses the absurdity of a bookcase being owned by two different people in the project – what would they do with it when the project is finished, split it in half? – to support her suggestion that it would be better for one person in the group to buy the bookcase, rather than sharing the cost among members of the group. This sort of prediction based on a hypothetical mental space has been seen as the primary function of conditional constructions (Dancygier 1998). A characteristic of such constructions is that they display what is called conditional perfection (Geis & Zwicky 1971) or a biconditional interpretation (Dancygier & Sweetser 2005). This is the situation in which a conditional construction invites the inference that the negative is also true. That is, the statement in Example (2) that 'if we split the investment by two, then the bookcase would also be split in half' invites the inference that 'If we don't split the investment by two, then the bookcase would not also be split in half'. Indeed it is this negative, or complementary reading that describes the state of affairs Asmita is suggesting.

Conditional constructions often do other work beyond hypothetical prediction. Dancygier and Sweetser (2005) look at the many non-predictive uses of conditionals in English and show that in addition to setting up what they call a content filled mental space (the typical hypothetical prediction), non-predictive conditionals can establish mental spaces around epistemicity and speech acts. An additional type of non-predictive conditional that is not prevalent in English, but which is common in Indonesian, is one where the content of the *kalau* frame sets up a situation in which the following assertion is seen to hold, but in which hypothetical predication does not play a role. This is illustrated in (3).

(3)  Wida:     *Nanti   aku   tunjukin   deh      kalau   pulang   salonnya*
               later    1S    show-IN    PART     IF      go.home  salon-DEF

          *di   mana.*
          at   where

          'I'll show you where the salon is when we go home.' (Plush Toys 2068)

Here the *kalau* frame, *kalau pulang* 'IF go home' – which incidentally is embedded within the larger assertion rather than following it – does not set up a hypothetical situation, that is, they are pretty sure to go home at some point. Additionally, there is no biconditional interpretation. The inference that 'If we don't go home, I won't show you where the salon is' is not invited by this statement, precisely because there is a strong expectation that they will go home at some point. This represents a situation in which factuality of the situation presented in the *kalau* frame is not in question; rather it is simply taken as the context in which the assertion holds. That such *kalau* constructions work differently from English can be seen in the free translation of *kalau* as 'when' in this situation. Several other languages of Asia also use conditional constructions in this way (Akatsuka 1985). For Japanese, Jacobsen (1992) suggests that rather than thinking of conditionals in terms of hypotheticality, it makes more sense to think of them in terms of contingency, "a relationship between two events whereby one event (expressed in the consequent, or main, clause) is contingent on the prior realization of another (expressed in the antecedent, or conditional, clause) and treating the question of whether the antecedent event is actually realized or not as an independent meaning feature" (Jacobsen 1992: 138). This is also a sensible way of treating Indonesian conditional constructions.

The notion of contingency is consistent with the presupposing nature of predictive conditional constructions, but at the same time expands into a broader range of functions. Because *kalau* frames can mark presupposition and contingency in ways not bound by hypotheticality or bidirectional interpretations, they can mark a wide range of contexts, including not only events expressed in clauses, but also locations, time frames or purposes as illustrated in the following.

(4)  Amru:     *Kalau   sambil   di   basement        ngerokok.*
                IF       while    in   basement.ENG    N-smoke
                'In the basement, (we) smoke.' (Plush Toys 1527)

(5)  Amru:     *.. kalau   Sabtu     ini    aku   .. survei   sayang.*
                   IF       Saturday  this   1s       survey   sweetheart
                'On Saturday (I'll) run a survey, sweetheart.' (Plush Toys 251)

(6)  Susi:     *Kalau    untuk    masak,*
                IF        for      cook

                *di   tempat    saya.*
                at   place      1s

                'As for cooking, (it can be) at my place.' (Tourist Attractions:1286-1287)

The *kalau* frames in (4)-(6) do not establish situations as represented in clauses, but they do set up temporal, locative or purposive contexts upon which the following assertion is contingent. These structures thus provide a frame of reference for understanding the assertion in the same way both hypothetical and non-hypothetical conditional clauses do.

An additional construction type that sets up a contextualising frame of references is the *kalau* frame with a noun phrase, which can also be understood as a type of topic construction. This is illustrated in (7).

(7)  Hally:     *kalau   air     putih   mah    tiap    hari*
                IF       water   white   PART   every   day

                *juga  di  ..  ruma=h   Teh.*
                also   at      house    older.sister

                'As for plain water I have it everyday at home *Teh*. (Chicken Foot
                Soup 204)

Here understanding the assertion about what Hally drinks at home every day is
contingent on being aware of the referent presented by the NP in the *kalau* frame, plain
water. It is often the case that the referent of the *kalau* frame also serves as an argument
of a clause in the assertion, as in (7) above and (8) below.

(8)  Asmita:    *Kalau   styrofoam   kan,*
                IF       Styrofoam   PART

                *melele=h.*
                melt

                'Styrofoam you know, (it) melts.' (Cream Soup 13-14)

However, it need not be the case that the topic presented in the *kalau* frame has a
grammatical role in the clause presented in the assertion. The topic in the *kalau* frame
can present a context which allows for the contingent understanding of the assertion,
without having a grammatical role within that assertion. This is seen in (9). Here the
ellipted subject of the predicate 'didn't reach two million' is not Yoni herself but the
tuition fees. This assertion is understood to apply in a context related to Yoni, the topic
presented in the *kalau* frame. This relationship is understood pragmatically by the
interlocutors as being about Yoni's cohort at university and the fees that apply to them.

(9)  Nadia:     *Kalau   Yoni,*
                if       Yoni

                *nggak   nyampai   dua   juta.*
                NEG      N-reach   two   million

                *..  Terus   kalau   angkatan   Kak       Fadli,*
                     then    IF      cohort     sibling   Fadli

                'As for Yoni, (tuition fees for her cohort) didn't reach two million
                [rupiah]. Then as for Fadli's cohort, ...' (Hypocrites: 238-239)

*Kalau* frames with topic NPs can serve a number of functions in conversational
interaction. One function is to establish a contrast between different referents. While
contrasts of this sort might be done with contrastive stress in a language like English,
the *kalau* frame is commonly used in colloquial Indonesian. This is illustrated in (9)
above. After mentioning the fees that were charged to Yoni's cohort, speaker N goes on
to contrast this with Fadli's cohort. This contrast is achieved by introducing both Yoni's

cohort and Fadli's cohort with *kalau* frames. (Note that as the conversation took a different turn at that point, Nadia did not have a chance to actually say what these fees were.) Another function of topic-NP *kalau* frames in conversation is to provide a mechanism for establishing a referent, independent of presenting some assertion related to that referent. This is illustrated in (10).

(10)    Amru:        *Kita    nego        gitu.*
                     we       negotiate   like.that

        .. *Kan     gini       kalau    sistemnya       Keramat    Djati    kan,*
           PART     like.this  IF       system-DEF      Keramat    Djati    PART

        *ada      bagasi     kanan    dan    kiri.*
        EXIST     baggage    right    and    left

        'We have to negotiate. You know, as for the system at Keramat Djati you know, there's a baggage section on the right and on the left.' (Plush Toys: 680-682)

These friends have been discussing how to send goods by rail to Yogyakarta from Bandung. The company Keramat Djati had been mentioned earlier in the discussion. Here Amru is not simply restating a previously given referent. Rather he is establishing the specific topic of the *system* for checking in baggage at Keramat Djati. This then is a new referent, although one that would be considered identifiable due to its link to the already established referent, Keramat Djati. Establishing this referent takes a certain amount of cognitive effort, evidenced by the need to use a full noun phrase and not simply a demonstrative or ellipsis as would have been likely for a cognitively more accessible referent. Chafe's (1996) 'one new idea' hypothesis suggests that speakers present language in spurts or chunks corresponding to intonation units, and that there is a cognitive constraint on how much information can be packed into one such intonational chunk – namely, no more than one new idea per intonation unit. It is therefore cognitively and interactionally expedient (both from the point of view of speaker production and hearer understanding) to undertake the complex introduction of a referent separate from a clause asserting something about that referent. In Indonesian, the *kalau* frame is a very useful way to do this because it provides a mechanism to separate the presentation of a referent in the *kalau* frame from an assertion made about that referent, while still allowing the contextualised linking of the two afforded by the *kalau* construction.

Indonesian topic constructions with *kalau* are also theoretically interesting for their contribution to the ongoing debate about the relationship between conditional constructions and topic constructions. Haiman (1978) first presented the idea that it is useful to see conditionals as a type of topic. For him both construction types establish a sense of common ground which is accepted as given by speaker and hearer. He also points out, following Chafe, that conditionals share an important trait of topics – that they set up "a spatial, temporal, or individual framework … which limits the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain" (Chafe 1976: 650). Discussion of the relationship between conditionals and topics has continued (see for example, Haiman 1986; Akatsuka 1989; Ford and Thompson 1989; Caron 2006; Ebert, Endriss and Hinterwimmer 2008). Often the question has been presented in terms of

whether conditional clauses should be treated as topics. For example, Jacobsen (1992) presents the case of Japanese, which has well established topic constructions without the use of conditionals and in which conditional constructions can also be used as 'paraphrases' of topic constructions. He argues however that Japanese conditional constructions themselves should not be viewed as topics, despite similarities, because, among other things, they can contain new information, which is antithetical to the notion of topic in Japanese. Working with the data for Indonesian, there seems to be a clear connection between conditionals and topics, in that they are marked by the same particle and all involve establishing a mental space as a context for the assertion. However, asking whether conditionals are topics, or conversely whether topics are conditionals, seems to be primarily a definitional or theory-internal dispute. I am more interested in understanding the actual dynamics of authentic language use. This means adopting an approach to understanding grammar that follows Hopper and Thompson (1984), Dryer (1997) and Croft (2001). This is illustrated by Englebretson's (2008) analysis of Indonesian *yang* constructions in which he points out that "grammatical structures need to be analyzed on a case-by-case, language-specific and construction-specific basis" (2008: 3). Within such an approach it is more productive to ask about the nature of the *kalau* frame in Indonesian in order to understand the shared qualities of its various manifestations. As shown above, the quality these various forms share is that they provide a contextualising frame for interrupting the associated assertion. The insight by earlier researchers that conditionals and topics share such functionality helps us understand why the same particle, *kalau*, is used to mark both in Indonesian, without the need for us to claim that topics and conditionals are or are not the same thing. It is because of this shared framing function that I use the terms '*kalau* frame' and '*kalau* construction' as overarching labels for the various structures ranging from hypothetical conditions to contrastive topics.

Returning to the role of *kalau* constructions in Indonesian, a text count was conducted of *kalau* constructions in a corpus of conversational Indonesian, comprising some 60,000 words. The results are given in Table 1. This is divided according to the grammatical form of the content in the *kalau* frame. *Kalau* frames with clauses would generally represent 'traditional' conditional clause structures, including predictive hypothetical conditionals as well as non-hypothetical contextualising clauses as discussed above. *Kalau* frames with noun phrases represent topic constructions, while those labelled 'other' contain temporal markers, prepositional phrases and other framing material that is neither a clause nor a noun phrase. We see from the results that *kalau* frames with clauses are the most frequent of the three types, coming in at 48%, but that topic-NP *kalau* frames are also extremely common in conversational discourse, coming in a close second at 40%, with the other non-clausal forms comprising 12%. It is also worth noting that the 'traditional' conditional constructions do not form a majority – contextualising an assertion with a *kalau* frame containing non-clausal material, whether an NP or other form, is more frequent in conversation.

| *Kalau* frame type | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Clause | 146 | 48% |
| NP | 123 | 40% |
| Other | 35 | 12% |
| TOTAL | 304 | 100% |

**Table 1. Distribution of *kalau* constructions by frame type in conversation**

In order to better understand the place of these different *kalau* frame types in conversational interaction, a similar text count was done on a very different text type: news magazines employing formal, standard Indonesian. Data were taken from several issues of *Tempo* and *Detik* and results are presented in Table 2. In this printed material using standard Indonesian, conditional clause *kalau* constructions are by far the most common, accounting for 92% of all *kalau* constructions. The other non-clausal *kalau* frames are extremely infrequent in this text type, with the topic-NP *kalau* frames in particular accounting for only 3% of all *kalau* constructions.

| *Kalau* frame type | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Clause | 139 | 92% |
| NP | 4 | 3% |
| Other | 8 | 5% |
| TOTAL | 151 | 100% |

**Table 2. Distribution of *kalau* constructions by frame type in news magazines**

These findings dramatically illustrate the place of *kalau* frames with topic NPs: they are very common in spoken colloquial Indonesian, while virtually non-existent in written standard Indonesian. As such, topic-NP *kalau* frames are one grammatical construction that stands out as highly indicative of informality. In the remainder of this article we will further investigate the effect of mode and genre on the use of different types of *kalau* frame constructions in order to learn something more about both this construction type and also about genre in Indonesian.

## 4.   Youth comics and *kalau* constructions

This section investigates the role of *kalau* constructions in one youth-oriented genre – contemporary Indonesian slice-of-life comics. The comics text type first appeared in Indonesia in the 1930s with the eponymously titled *Put On* newspaper comic strip, humorously depicting the daily travails of a Chinese Indonesian man. The language used in *Put On* was the 'low Malay' of the time, functionally equivalent to and a precursor of today's colloquial Indonesian. The ensuing decades of the twentieth century saw periods of waxing and waning interest in comics. In addition to translations of North American and European comics, the 1970s and 1980s are particularly noted for the popularity of *wayang* (shadow puppet story) and *silat* (marital arts) comics, which were typically written in very stylised, literary varieties of standard Indonesia. At the close of the twentieth century, translations of Japanese manga comics become increasingly popular with young Indonesian readers. This in turn has sparked a recent flowering of local comics produced by younger authors and concerned with local Indonesian themes (Ahmad et al. 2005; Tirtaatmadja et al. 2012). These days a particularly popular genre of comics is the slice-of-life comic, which takes a humorous look at youth lifestyles or contemporary Indonesian society more generally. While translated comics such as manga cover a wide range of genres, contemporary comics currently being produced by and for Indonesians are almost entirely of this slice-of-life type. From a genre-and-language point of view, these are particularly interesting because of the way their authors creatively interweave standard and colloquial varieties

of Indonesian (Djenar and Ewing 2015). The question posed here is whether the use of *kalau* constructions in slice-of-life comics tends to mirror that found in other print media, such as the news magazine data discussed above or does it tend to mirror that found in conversation, due to the informal nature of this particular comics genre. First the following examples illustrate that the full range of *kalau* construction types discussed above does in fact also occur in comics. These include the use of *kalau* to mark conditional clauses, as illustrated by the comic in Figure 2, translated as Example (11). Note that in this comic, as in many that follow, *kalau* is given the colloquial spelling *kalo*, which reflects a common pronunciation variant in many varieties of informal Indonesian.



**Figure 2. A conditional clause with *kalau/kalo*** (Bijak 2011)

(11)    "Better slow than on time"

|     |            |                                                                      |
| --- | ---------- | -------------------------------------------------------------------- |
| a.  |            | [sound of train engine] Surabaya! Train departing!                   |
| b.  | Father:    | Son...                                                               |
|     | Son:       | Father...                                                            |
| c.  | Conductor: | ?                                                                    |
| d.  | Conductor: | It's ok kid!! You don't need to be sad. You know, **if you miss your father**, you can text or call him!! |
| e.  | Son:       | The problem is: I'M the one who was supposed to be going to Surabaya!! |

Non-clausal *kalau* frames are also common in the comics data. These include both topic-NP *kalau* frames as seen in Figure 3, Example (12) and also other non-clause framing material, such as temporal phrases, illustrated in Figure 4, Example (13).



**Figure 3. Topic noun phrase *kalau*/*kalo* frame** (Bijak 2011)

(12)   "Funeral entourage"

|   | | |
|---|---|---|
| a. | | [Sound of sirens] |
| b. | | [Sound of walkie-talkie] |
| c. | | [image of entourage followers] |
| d. | Policeman: | **As for a funeral entourage**, do you think you can ignore traffic regulations?? |
| e. | Corpse: | Can't you see I'm in a critical condition??? |
|   | Follower: | Uh... Brother Jon... the cemetery is waiting... |

**Figure 4. Temporal *kalau*/*kalo* frame** (Seven Artland Studio 2011)

(13)   "Dating: You're not attractive??? Take a look at yourself!"

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. | Woman 1: | Looking around, it's like everyone is in love?! But no one wants me?!! |
| b. |   | [Plain above → ] |
|   |   | [Plain below → ] |
|   | Woman 2: | You're joking!! You look like a guy. You're flat, don't dress up. You want to snare someone from what world?? |
| c. | Narrator: | With an open mind I listened to this input (or actually put down??) from my friend. |
|   |   | [Tissues] |
|   |   | [Breast enhancement → ] |
| d. | Woman 2: | !! |
|   | Policeman: | Sister!! Drag queens aren't allowed to 'sell' here **(if) in broad daylight**!!! |
|   | Narrator: | and regretted it…. |

A text count like that discussed above for the conversation and news magazine data was done with a database of contemporary slice-of-life comic books available in Indonesian bookstores, comprising eleven titles from a range of authors and publishers. Comics contain both narration and dialogue and the results are presented separately in Tables 3 (narration) and 4 (dialogue). Interestingly, the results for the narration component of comics in Table 3 are almost identical to those for the news magazine data seen in Table 2, suggesting comics authors follow a style closely resembling other standard Indonesian written styles for this segment of the comics. Narration, however, does not form the bulk of the language in comics. Almost 90% of the *kalau* expressions are from dialogue and when we compare the results for the dialogue sections of the comics data in Table 4 with those for conversations and news magazines in Tables 1 and 2 above, we see that comics dialogue falls between those two extremes. This is what might be expected in so far as comics – even in dialogue – represent planned printed texts, but ones which display a certain level of informality. Conditional clause *kalau* constructions

are still prominent in the comics data, as they are in the news magazines, but they are not as dominant. In magazines they account for 92% of the *kalau* constructions, compared to 70% in comics dialogue. Complementing this, all non-clause *kalau* frame types are more common in the comics than in the news magazines. The non-clause and non-NP ('other') frames have almost the same frequency in the comics (14%) as in conversation (12%). The topic-NP *kalau* frames in comics dialogue account for 16% of the *kalau* constructions – much greater than the 3% found in news magazine, but also much less than the 40% found in conversations.

| *Kalau* frame type | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Clause | 23 | 92% |
| NP | 1 | 4% |
| Other | 1 | 4% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100% |

**Table 3. Distribution of *kalau* constructions by frame type in comics narration**

| *Kalau* frame type | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Clause | 142 | 70% |
| NP | 33 | 16% |
| Other | 28 | 14% |
| TOTAL | 203 | 100% |

**Table 4. Distribution of *kalau* constructions by frame type in comics dialogue**

The use of topic-NP *kalau* frames in comics thus does contribute to the overall sense of conversational informality, adding a grammatical construction to the package of lexical and morphological features discussed in Section 2 that authors can use to produce relaxed involvement with readers. But why is the topic-NP *kalau* frame so much less frequent in comics dialogue, compared to conversations? One reason might have to do with differences in producing and processing language in face-to-face interaction as compared to producing and reading printed material. The kind of complex referent introducing mechanism illustrated in Example (10) might not play as important a role in written work as compared to spontaneous conversation. One reason for this is that the one-new-idea constraint on the production of spoken language does not apply in writing. At most there may be a stylistic preference for producing language that is not too complex in terms of the amount of information that is packed in to a given written sentence. But crucially there is not the kind of cognitive constraint that motivates speakers to use mechanisms like *kalau* constructions to establish a referent independently and prior to deploying that referent in an assertion. Operating in concert with this is the fact that authors can plan out the introduction of referents in a way that would minimise such cognitive demands and, in the case of comics in particular, may be able to use visual cues as well as verbal ones in establishing referents. Such factors may account for the less frequent occurrence of topic-NP *kalau* frames in comics compared to conversation. However, topic frames do occur in comics and a function they commonly have is that of setting up contrasting referents. As we see in Figure 4, Example (14) a series of contrasts using *kalau/kalo* can be structurally crucial to setting up the joke.
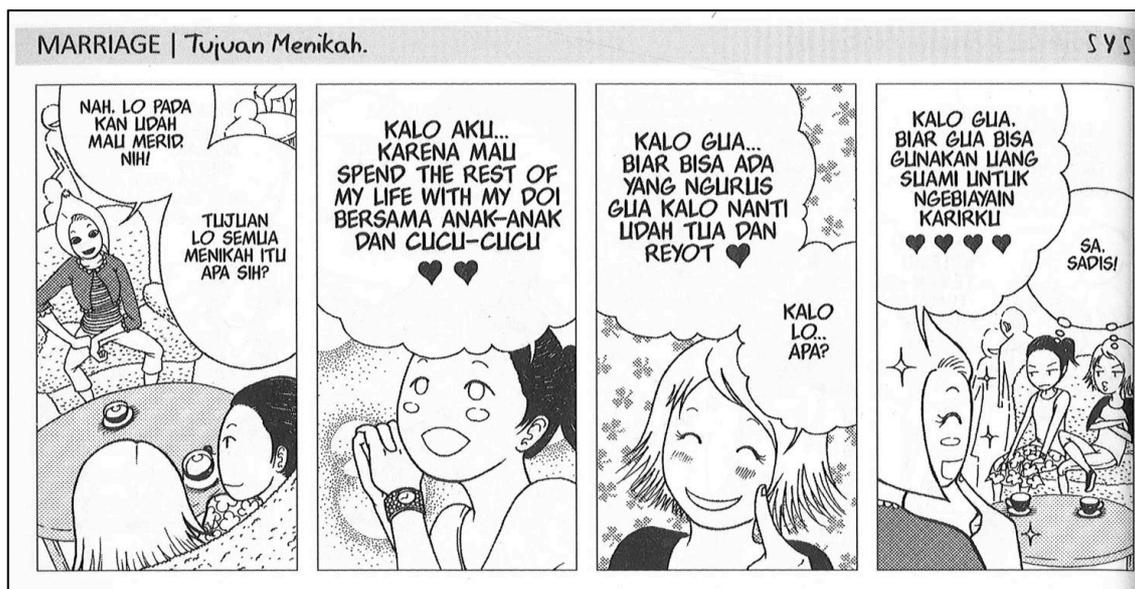
**Figure 5. Contrastive topics indicated by *kalau*/*kalo* frames** (Seven Artland Studio 2011)

(14)    "Marriage: The goal of getting married"

    a.    Woman 1:  So, you all want to get married! What do you all want from getting married?

    b.    Woman 2:  **As for me**… it's because I want to spend the rest of my life with my special man along with my children and grandchildren. ♥♥

    c.    Woman 3:  **As for me**… So there's someone who will take care of me when I'm old and decrepit. ♥
                      **As for you**… what is it?

    d.    Woman 1:  **As for me**…. So I can use my husband's money to finance my career. ♥♥♥♥
           2 & 3:  (thinking) Sadist!

The discussion and data from these slice-of-life comics show that comics authors do incorporate the informal topic-NP *kalau* frame as one among many indicators of informality in their work. Another index of informality, which we only briefly touched on, is the use of orthography. As we saw in many of the comics examples, the framing particle that is spelled *kalau* according to standard orthography is frequently spelled *kalo* in the informal context of comics, following the practice in other informal written text types such as SMS and social media. Some of the comics authors examined here tend to favour the standard spelling or the colloquial spelling. Interestingly, several of the authors tend to use both spellings interchangeably. This can be seen in the panel reproduced in Figure 6, Example (15). The comic illustrates one type of *ojeg* or motorcycle for hire, one who makes deliveries. In the previous panel the *ojeg* driver has delivered a package to a woman along with the message that the sender, Anton, apologies for cancelling their date last Saturday night and that he'll pick her up to go out in two days time. As the hapless *ojeg* driver heads off, the woman throws the contents of the package, a single durian fruit, at him while cursing Anton, as seen in (15). (We

incidentally saw a dumpling seller on the side of the previous panel, and he responds to the woman in the lower right-hand corner.)
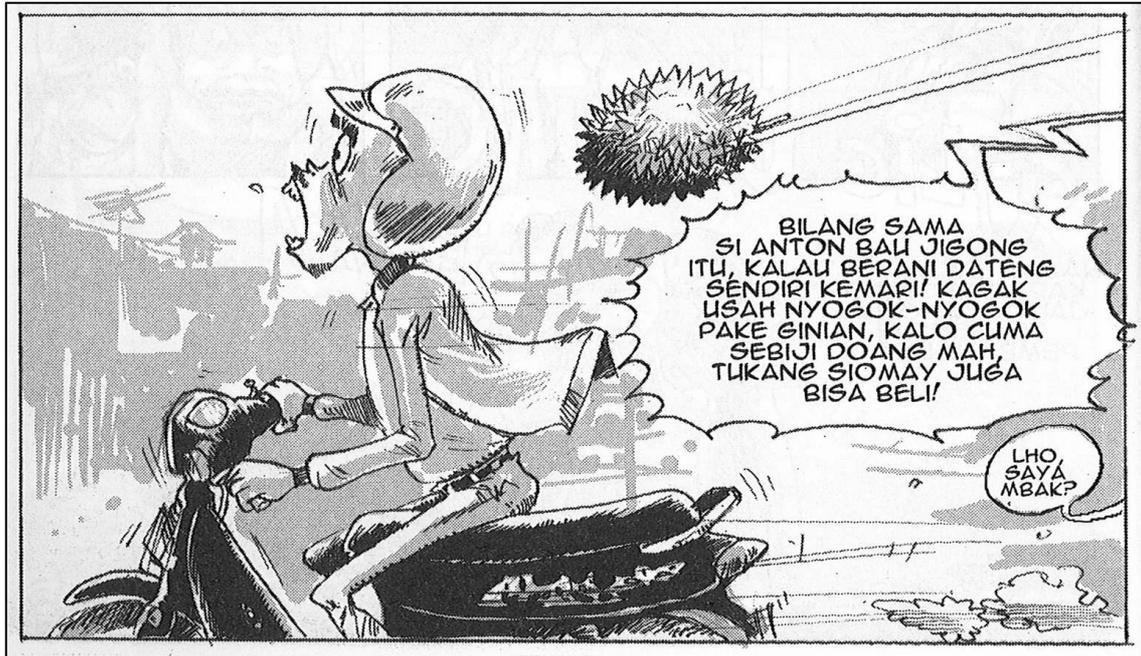


**Figure 6. Examples of *kalau* and *kalo* spelling in one comic** (Rahadian et al. 2011)

| (15) | Woman: (out of panel) | Tell that smelly-mouthed Anton, **if (*kalau*)** he has the balls, he should come here himself! He doesn't need to try bribing me with this crap. **As for (*kalo*)** just one durian fruit, even a dumpling seller could afford that! |
| | Dumpling seller: (out of panel) | Oh, is that me? |

|  | *jika/bila* | | *kalau* | | *kalo* | | **Total** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clause | 18 | 17% | 55 | 50% | 36 | 33% | 109 | 100% |
| NP | - | 0% | 7 | 35% | 13 | 65% | 20 | 100% |
| Other | 1 | 6% | 12 | 71% | 4 | 24% | 17 | 100% |

**Table 4. Frame maker for each frame type in 7 comics texts.**

Authors of seven comic books, out of the eleven investigated here, tended to use both the *kalau* and *kalo* spellings. A count was conducted among these, of which form was used for each of the framing types. These included the spellings *kalau* and *kalo*, along with the much more formal and less frequent conditional markers *jika* and *bila* which occasionally also occurred in the comics. Results are given in Table 4. An interesting trend is revealed. Those authors who frequently use both standard and colloquial spellings show a preference for the standard spelling *kalau* when used with conditional clauses, but a preference for colloquial *kalo* when used with topic-NP frames. There is also a preference for using *kalau* with other non-clause, no-NP frames, as well as never using the formal *jika* and *bila* with NP topics. While this does not mean that these authors are making an explicitly conscious choice about when to use each spelling, it

does suggest that authors have a clear feeling about which uses of the *kalau* frame are more formal and which are more colloquial. This in turns seems to be matched by a feeling for spelling conventions, yielding a preference in comics for use of colloquial spelling for colloquial function.


## 5.  Conclusion

This article has investigated text-type and genre effects in the use of one grammatical construction in Indonesian, the *kalau* frame, and its role as an index of informality. An examination of different types of *kalau* constructions shows that it functions as a framing device used to set up a context in which an accompanying assertion can be understood. Functions of this construction range from hypothetical predictions and non-hypothetical clausal contingency to non-clausal frames including locative and temporal frames as well noun phrase topics. A review of two text types – conversation and print news media – shows that while *kalau* conditional clauses are used in both, non-clausal constructions, particularly topic-NP *kalau* frames, are highly characteristic of colloquial conversational Indonesian, occurring in this informal spoken context in 40% of *kalau* constructions, while occurring at a rate of only 3% in the formal print data. This result alone suggests that topic-NP *kalau* frames are highly characteristic and may even be diagnostic of very informal, colloquial language use. The investigation was taken a step further by looking at the use of *kalau* constructions in contemporary slice-of-life comics, a youth-oriented genre that stands between formal print media and spontaneous colloquial conversation. It was found that *kalau* conditional clauses are common in all genres and text types investigated, including colloquial conversation and in written genres that incorporate colloquial features. It was further found that topic-NP *kalau* frames, which are ubiquitous in colloquial conversation, occur but are less frequent in written genres that incorporate colloquial features and are virtually non-existent in more formal writing that uses standard Indonesian grammatical norms.

These findings raise the question: as a syntactic device, how is the topic-NP *kalau* frame deployed in creating a sense of informality and thus involvement between authors and readers? First and foremost, it 'feels' informal and so authors with a keen ear for the colloquial language of their readership are able to harness this feeling in the service of creating more interactionally engaging work. In conversation, these constructions are useful for introducing complex, cognitively challenging referents, however this function does not seem to be so prevalent in informal print media, where the cognitive demands of information processing are different from those of face-to-face interaction. Another function of topic-NP *kalau* frames in conversation – setting up contrast between referents – seems particularly common in print media, where it can indeed be used as a literary device. By tracing the function and frequency of *kalau* constructions we see that they are one among many grammatical, morphological and lexical indexes of informality that are beginning to move across boundaries of mode, genre and formality in an ongoing process of what might be called the 'colloquialisation' of Indonesian. Historically there have long been tensions between less prestigious and more prestigious varieties of Malay/Indonesian. The colloquialisation processes discussed here represent one more example of this, showing that these tensions are still ongoing in contemporary Indonesian society, as *gaul* style makes ever greater inroads into domains where the standard was once privileged.

## Appendix

Transcription conventions

| | |
|---|---|
| Asmita: | speaker attribution |
| *line break* | separate line used for each complete or truncated intonation unit |
| . | final pitch contour |
| , | continuing pitch contour |
| ? | appeal pitch contour |
| .. | short pause |
| … | long pause |
| = | lengthening of preceding segment |
| [ ] | speaker overlap |
| <@ @> | laughing voice quality |
| - | truncated word |
| -- | truncated intonation unit |

Glossing conventions

| | |
|---|---|
| 1P | first person plural |
| 1S | first person singular |
| 2S | second person singular |
| BER | *ber-* middle verbal prefix |
| DEF | definite enclitic |
| DI | *di-* P-trigger verbal prefix |
| EXCL | exclamation |
| EXIST | existential |
| I | *-i* applicative |
| IF | framing particle |
| IN | *-in* colloquial applicative |
| MEN | *meN-* verbal prefix |
| N | nasal verbal prefix |
| NEG | negative |
| NOM | nominaliser |
| PART | discourse particle |
| PERF | perfective |
| REDUP | reduplication |
| REL | relative clause marker |
| TER | *ter-* non-volitional verbal prefix |

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