

Informal Colloquial Indonesian Particles

(Buku telinga ya – Indonesian Stage 6 Beginners – NSW Dept. of Ed.)

In informal colloquial Indonesian, there are a number of particles that express mood or attitude. Some of those particles have been used in *Buka telinga ya* and are explained below. The meaning of a particle can vary according to the context in which it is used.

deh

Deh is used when the speaker is urging the listener to believe a statement and stresses that what the speaker says is in fact so. English equivalents could be ‘you know’ or ‘you see’, depending on the context.

Harganya mahal deh! It’s expensive you know.

It can mean ‘now’ or ‘why don’t you/we just...’

Kita nonton saja deh. Let’s just watch the movie.

Ayo deh, di restoran aja makannya. Come on now! Let’s just have our meal in a restaurant.

Kita pergi sekarang aja deh. Let’s just go now.

At the end of a sentence when saying goodbye it can mean ‘then’.

Sampai ketemu lagi, deh. Until we meet again then.

It can also be used in a command in place of the more formal ~lah.

Besok aja deh! Leave it till tomorrow then!

Ambil aja deh! Take it then!

Sometimes the speaker is agreeing to something without total commitment.

Nggak mau, terlalu mahal. Rp30.000 aja deh! No, it’s too expensive. Just Rp30.000

Boleh deh. OK, I’ll go along with that (although I’m not exactly thrilled about it.)

dong

Dong indicates that the person addressed should already be aware of what the speaker is asserting. It can emphasise that the person addressed should know what to do. It can be translated as ‘of course’.

Iya, dong, tentu aja. Yes, of course, certainly.

The particle *dong* sometimes occurs with imperatives, when the speaker has some reason to believe that the addressee is reluctant to do as she/he is asked, or needs encouragement to cooperate.

Mother to child:

Tutup pintu kamarmu, dong. Close the door of your room, please.

Between friends:

Ceritakan dong! Tell me about it!

Masuk, dong! Come in, please! or Do come in.

Minum kopinya dong! Do drink the coffee.

kan

If it occurs in a statement it can be a reminder to the addressee that she/he should already know or be aware of what the speaker is saying. It means 'you know', 'you know that' or 'after all', depending on the context.

Nah, artinya kita tetangga, kan. It means we're neighbours, you know.

Kan aku masih tinggal di sini. I am still here, you know.

Dia kan udah lama kerja di sana. After all she has been working there a long time.

Kan dia udah lama kerja di sana. She has been working there a long time, you know.

If it occurs in a question it often functions as a question tag, inviting the person addressed to agree with the speaker. In such cases it may be considered an abbreviation of *bukan*. It is like a rhetorical question.

Kamu nggak marah, kan? You are not angry, are you?

Dia yang salah, kan? She is the one who is wrong, isn't she?

Kalian mengerti, kan? You understand, don't you?

lho

If used at the beginning of a sentence *lho* expresses surprise.

Lho pak! Kok buru-buru amat sih? Hey dad, how come you are in such a hurry?

In the middle or at the end of a sentence it usually is an emphasis marker.

Sorri lho! I'm really sorry!

Aku juga mau ikut lho! I want to come along too, you know!

sih

Depending on the context, it may suggest a matter-of-fact tone and 'you know' may serve as an English equivalent.

Jangan beli buku itu di sini. Mahal sih. Don't buy the book here! It's expensive, you know.

Tapi pesta teman-temanku juga penting sih. But my friends' parties are also important you know.

Sih can mark the topic of the sentence.

Aku sih, mau aja. As far as I'm concerned, I'm for that.

It can also suggest a sense of surprise or puzzlement. It means 'What on earth?' or 'Why on earth?' depending on the context.

Ada apa, sih? What is going on? or What is wrong with you?

Tahu aja, sih? How come you always know what is going on?

It may convey a tone of sarcasm, depending on the context.

Siapa sih dia? Berani ngomong gitu? Who does she think she is, daring to speak like that?

It can convey frustration or annoyance.

Maunya apa sih? What is it you want?

It may occur in an introductory clause followed by another presenting a contrastive idea.

Murah sih murah, tapi barangnya gimana? Cheap, sure it's cheap, but what about the quality?

It may indicate reluctance or a distance between the speaker and the person addressed.

Kalau saya sih.... As for me

Some examples have been adapted from Yohanni Johns, *Bahasa Indonesia Book 3 Langkah Baru A S Wilson*, 1996.