

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)

Si 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.