

In many languages (e.g., Indonesian, Turkish), descriptions of static spatial relations include a general term marking the utterance as spatial. However, the meanings of these terms have received relatively little attention. Further, their ranges of usage markedly differ from those of English prepositions. Thus, glosses (e.g., “*at, in*”, Macdonald, 1976) – which are a function of the scene and the sentence as a whole (Ameka, 1995) – fail to capture their meaning.

In this paper, I examine the meaning of one general spatial term, Indonesian *di*, appealing to both semantics and pragmatics to capture its meaning. I then present two empirical tests of the proposed meaning.

Although *di* occurs alone in situations where English uses *at, in, or on* (1), it also appears in combination with locational nouns in situations where the English glosses are unacceptable (2).

- (1) Cangkir itu di meja.
Cup that LOC table
The cup is on the table.
- (2) Cangkir itu di bawah meja.
Cup that LOC bottom table
The cup is under the table.

To account for both classes of use, I propose one basic element of meaning appropriate to all uses (3) and two pragmatically licensed elements of meaning (4), which are often cancelled when *di* appears with a locational noun.

- (3) *di* = location in the region of interaction (Miller & Johnson-Laird, 1976) of Ground (cf. Ameka’s (1995) basic meaning for the Ewe preposition *le*)
- (4) (a) Figure in contact with Ground.
(b) Figure-Ground relation is canonical.

The pragmatically licensed elements (4) make a clear prediction about when *di* may felicitously appear alone and when the addition of a locational noun is preferred. The default assumption when *di* appears alone is that the criteria in (4) are met; a locational noun emphasizes the specifics of the relation and highlights deviations from this assumption.

To test this analysis, native Indonesian speakers assessed uses of *di* that violate each of the elements. Violations of (3) were rarely accepted (9%); violations of (4) were more acceptable (55% for (4a); 73% for (4b)), $F(2,32) = 6.09, p < .01$. This supports the hypothesis that (3) is part of the semantics of *di*, while the elements in (4) are pragmatically licensed.

As a further test, native Indonesian speakers rated the acceptability of sentences without locational nouns (such as Example 1) as descriptions of pictures that each violate one of the proposed elements of meaning (along with a smaller set that violate none). Exactly half of each of the pictures depicting violations showed the Ground supporting the Figure against gravity. As with the sentence acceptability data, acceptability was highest when pictures violated no elements of meaning (mean = 5.12 on a scale from 1 to 7) and lowest when pictures violated element (3) (mean = 1.37), with intermediate acceptability for pictures violating elements (4a) (mean = 3.25) and (4b) (mean = 2.82), $F(3,59) = 26.65, p < .0001$. Further, acceptability was higher when support was depicted (mean = 3.74) than not (mean = 2.46), $t(29) = 5.23, p < .0001$.