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This is a contribution from *The 'Noun Phrase' across Languages. An emergent unit in interaction.*

Edited by Tsuyoshi Ono and Sandra A. Thompson.

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The pragmatics of ‘light nouns’ in Besemah

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Perhaps the most widely discussed aspect of the NP in western Austronesian languages is the relative clause, which is described in terms of its syntactic relation to the noun it modifies. It is expressed by a ‘relativizer’ and a so-called ‘gap’ in the modifying clause that is co-referential with the head noun. One western Austronesian language that appears to be quite different in this regard is Besemah, a little-described Malayic language of southwest Sumatra. This is because constructions analogous to relative clauses in Besemah are best described as Noun Modifying Constructions (NMC) following studies of similar phenomena in other languages, most notably Japanese. Like Japanese, Besemah NMCs most often occur with a so-called ‘light’ head noun, which has a general, abstract meaning, such as ‘thing’, ‘situation’, etc. This paper shows that NMCs headed by a closed class of light nouns serve a number interactional functions, including formulating reference to discourse entities that are recognizable to participants, elaborating upon discourse entities in increments, jointly working out the identity of a referent in other-initiations of repair, and constructing story beginnings with unattached light nouns among others. I argue that the semantically-bleached nature of light nouns and the ‘loose’ (pragmatically-determined) relationship between the light head noun and modifying elements allow speakers to construct NMCs that fit local contexts and serve various interactional purposes.

1. Introduction

A growing body of research around NPs and NP modification has shown how so-called relative clause constructions in many languages are much more disparate than numerous linguistic descriptions have suggested (see e.g., Laury & Helasvuo 2015; Fox & Thompson 2007; Matsumoto, Comrie & Sells 2017a). This has primarily grown out of two lines of research that concern noun modification more generally. The first comes out of functional and typological studies that have shown that languages vary as to how they distinguish (or do not distinguish)

different types of noun-modifying clauses, such as relative clauses and sentential complements among many others (Comrie 1998; Matsumoto, Comrie & Sells 2017a). This series of inquiry began with a study of Japanese (Matsumoto 1997), which shows that the different interpretations that arise between the noun and its modifying clause must be accounted for pragmatically and *not* syntactically. Thus, for languages like Japanese, there is not a dedicated syntactic structure for relative clause constructions. Rather, such analyses propose that there is a single generalized structure that has come to be known as a Generalized Noun-Modifying Clause Construction. This research has shown that the interpretations that arise between the noun and its modifying clause in this single generalized construction are resolved pragmatically. This is contrasted with other languages like Turkish (Kornfilt & Vinokurova 2017) that have dedicated structures for relative clauses and other types of noun-modifying clauses.

The second line of research comes from several studies that have looked at relative clause constructions and other types of noun modification in talk-in-interaction (Englebretson 2008; Fox & Thompson 1990a,b, 2007; Laury & Helasvuo 2015). These studies have shown how certain properties of noun modification – including apparent relative clause constructions – emerge in the course of everyday interactions. Fox & Thompson (2007), for example, show that ‘the English relative clause construction’ in everyday conversations is in fact better viewed as a family of constructions that are much more diverse than traditional (syntactic) descriptions have proposed. Through their analysis, Fox & Thompson point out that a number of factors are at play in understanding the differences between relative clause constructions, including the presence or absence of a relativizer, the semantic emptiness of the head noun in the main clause and the complexity of the relative clause, among other factors. Englebretson (2008), in a study of colloquial Indonesian talk-in-interaction, also shows that what has been analyzed as *the* relative clause construction in different varieties of Malay-Indonesian, is actually a family of constructions in colloquial Indonesian, which he refers to as *yang* constructions. Englebretson provides evidence that these constructions differ according to the presence or absence of the head noun and the clause-type in which they appear (see Section 2 for further discussion). Finally, two studies of noun modification in Japanese talk-in-interaction, Ono & Thompson (2009) and Takara (2012), have emphasized the pervasive use of ‘generic nouns’ or ‘light nouns’, such as *koto*, *mono*, *no* ‘thing, stuff, matter’, in the deployment of attributive adjectives and modifying clauses, respectively. Ono & Thompson (2009) found that 75% of the attributive adjectives in their corpus occurred with light nouns, and Takara (2012) found that over 70% of the modifying clauses occurred with light nouns.

The aim of this paper is to bring together these two lines of inquiry in order to describe how speakers employ so-called ‘light nouns’ and noun-modifying

constructions (NMC) in everyday conversations in Besemah, a little-described Malayic language of southwest Sumatra (McDonnell 2016). In a companion piece to this article (McDonnell in prep), I argue that while NMCs in Besemah share a number of syntactic properties with apparent relative clause constructions in other Austronesian languages of western Indonesia, they are actually quite different. First, there is no relativizer in these constructions; unlike standard and colloquial varieties of Indonesian, there is no element that must appear between the head noun and its modifying clause, and the only element that could be considered the relativizer – in headless relative clauses – is in fact a 'light noun'. Furthermore, relative clauses are believed to be syntactically restricted, but Besemah NMCs do not show these same syntactic restrictions. Instead, they have a simple structure: noun + mod-ifying clause, and the interpretation of the relationship between the head noun and modifying clause is resolved pragmatically. This characterization of NMCs is also true when the head noun is a semantically-bleached 'light noun'.

In this paper, I argue that despite significant differences between Besemah NMCs and relative clauses in other western Indonesian languages, there is considerable overlap in the discourse functions of Besemah NMCs with a light noun head and those described as headless relative clauses or *yang* constructions in colloquial Indonesian (Englebreton 2008; Ewing & Cumming 1998). In addition to these discourse functions, there are a number of interactional functions of NMCs headed by light nouns in Besemah that speakers utilize, including formulating reference to discourse entities that are recognizable to the participants, elaborating upon discourse entities in an increment, jointly working out the identity of a referent in other-initiations of repair, singling out discourse entities with a contrastive function in equational constructions, constructing story beginnings with unattached light nouns among others. This paper shows that the semantically-bleached nature of light nouns and the 'loose' (pragmatically-determined) relationship between the light head noun and modifying elements allow speakers to construct NMCs with a light noun to fit local contexts and serve various interactional purposes.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly presents the background on the internal structure of Besemah NMCs and the nature of light nouns. Section 3 presents the Besemah data used in this paper. Section 4 is the meat of this paper and presents the functions of light nouns and NMCs in Besemah talk-in-interaction. The description of these light NMCs is broken up into four subsections based on their functions and/or their distribution: light nouns as referring expressions (Section 4.1), unattached light nouns (Section 4.2), light nouns in equational constructions (Section 4.3), and lexicalizations and fixed expressions with light nouns (Section 4.4). This section illustrates the wide range of functions of light NMCs. Section 5 concludes this study with a discussion of the diversity of functions that light nouns serve in Besemah interaction.

2. Light nouns and noun-modifying constructions in Besemah

The internal structure of NPs in the Austronesian languages of western Indonesia is generally treated without much controversy (Ewing 2005; Sneddon 1996); they are considered head-initial with modifiers following the noun, and only the quantifier or numeral may precede the NP. Relative clauses, on the other hand, have been the locus of much debate from various theoretical perspectives (Cole & Hermon 2005; Englebretson 2008; Ewing 1991; Ewing & Cumming 1998; Shibatani 2008; Tjung 2006). In the majority of the Austronesian languages of western Indonesia, relative clause constructions are commonly said to have the following three properties (see Ewing & Cumming 1998):

- i. the relative clause follows the noun it is modifying and is introduced by a relativizer (e.g., *yang* REL in Standard Indonesian) and commonly terminated with a demonstrative determiner,
- ii. the position out of which the head noun is 'extracted' within the relative clause (i.e., the so-called 'gap') is restricted to the 'subject' position (i.e., only the unrealized subject argument in the relative clause co-refers with the head noun), and
- iii. the relative clause optionally occurs without the head noun (i.e., a headless relative clause).

More recently, studies have called one or more of these points into question. For example, Shibatani (2008) has proposed that purported relative clauses in Sasak and Sumbawan, two closely related western Indonesian languages, are in fact best analyzed as clausal nominalizations juxtaposed to an appositional head noun, and, as mentioned above, Englebretson (2008) demonstrates that the label 'relative clause' in colloquial Indonesian does not adequately capture the full range of forms and functions of constructions that involve the putative relativizer *yang*. He instead refers to this family of constructions as *yang* constructions for two reasons. First, he finds that only a portion of *yang* constructions are 'canonical' headed relative clause constructions (less than 20% of his corpus); the vast majority of cases in his corpus of conversation do not have a head noun. Second, it is common that what *yang* introduces is not always a clause, but can be a phrase, an adjective, or even a demonstrative. Englebretson further suggests that these constructions have fuzzy boundaries and fall on a continuum that ranges from headed relative clause (e.g., head noun + *yang* + clause) to referring expression (i.e., *yang* + modifier).

Building upon studies of Japanese NMCs (Comrie 1998; Matsumoto 1997), I argue in McDonnell (in prep) that clausal modification of nouns in Besemah is actually more divergent. I show that in Besemah NMCs (i) there is no relativizer, (ii) there are not the same syntactic restrictions as is typical for relative clause constructions, and (iii) the same basic structure results in a number of different

interpretations between the noun and the modifying clause, other than a relative clause interpretation. That is, NMCs in Besemah have a simple structure: NOUN + MODIFYING CLAUSE, and the interpretation of the relationship between the head noun and modifying clause is resolved pragmatically, and not syntactically, which results in a number of different interpretations.

Since the focus of this paper is on how speakers employ ‘light nouns’ in NMCs in talk-in-interaction, I only briefly touch upon some of the arguments in McDonnell (in prep), but cannot review all of them here. The aim of this section, then, is to introduce the basic structure of NMCs in Besemah and show the different pragmatic interpretations that arise between the head noun and its modifying clause. Thus, the examples in this section show less context than examples in Section 4, which focuses on the interactional functions of NMCs headed by light nouns.

The fact that NMCs in Besemah do not have a relativizer coupled with the fact this same structure NOUN + MODIFYING CLAUSE results in a number of different interpretations is exemplified in (1)–(3). In (1), the head noun *jeme* ‘people’ (in bold italics) is the sole argument of the existential verb in the main clause, and it is directly modified by the clause *berayak ke sini* ‘came here’ (underlined) with an unrealized S argument.

(1) (“Cocoa planting”)¹

- 1 ARIPIN: saghian kalangan belakang,
day market back
‘on a Saturday (lit. a market day) in the past,’
- 2 ⇒ ade ***jeme*** be-rayak ke sini,
exist people MID-come to here
‘there were ***people*** who came here (to buy seedlings),’
(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:14:05–00:14:08)

Because Besemah NMCs lack a relativizer and do not have any special marking or special word order, it is often difficult to determine whether an apparent NMC is clausal or a noun followed by a modifying clause. However, the example of the NMC above is in an existential construction, which takes an NP argument, and in this case, it is introducing a referent *jeme* ‘people’ that is directly modified.

Further support for this position is exemplified in (2). In this question-response sequence, the head noun in line 2 is *jeme* ‘people’, which is followed by a modifying clause comprising a passive verb *diantati* ‘bring’ and agent by phrase *li betine tadi* ‘by the woman earlier’. While on the surface this may look clausal, the nature of the question in line 1 makes a referential response relevant (i.e., people), and not propositional (i.e., people were healed by the woman earlier).

1. Appendix B lists the glossing conventions that are used in this paper.

(2) (“Catching up with cousins”)

- 1 MUNAYA: tape=nye ghadu?
 what=3 heal
 ‘who (lit. what) was healed?’
 (0.3)
- 2 SARKANI: adak *jeme* *di-antat-i* *li* *betine tadi*.
 EXCL people PV-bring-LOC.APPL by woman earlier
 ‘ah the *people* who were brought (food) by women earlier.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-002, 00:15:29-00:15:31)

A hallmark of NMCs in languages like Japanese is the ability for a single structure to result in numerous interpretations between the head noun and the modifying clause (Matsumoto, Comrie & Sells 2017b). In the examples above the interpretation is the same as relative clause constructions; the unrealized argument is coreferential with the head noun. However, in (3) and (4) below, the head noun and the modifying clauses have different interpretations. In (3), the interpretation between the head *cerite* ‘story’ and the modifying clause *kamu rapat situ* ‘you meet there’ is one where the modifying clause specifies the content of the story. Thus, in the free translation, I use the preposition ‘about’ in parentheses between the head noun and the modifying clause.

(3) (“Catching up with cousins”)

- MUNAYA: jiku tuape *cerite kamu rapat situ* jiku.
 QUOT.1SG what story 2PL meeting there QUOT.1SG
 ‘I said, what is the *story* (about) you meeting there, I said.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-002, 00:29:06-00:29:08)

In (4), the interpretation of the relationship between the head noun *engkas* ‘remainder, scraps’ and the modifying clause *jeme mbasuh piring tu* ‘people washing dishes’ is one where the scraps result from the event specified in the modifying clause. The discussion in Matsumoto, Comrie & Sells (2017b: 5ff) provides similar examples in Japanese with further explanation.²

(4) (“Durian fruit season”)

- MUNAYA: galak die n-jimat-i *engkas jeme m-basuh piring tu*,
 want 3 AV-eat.scraps-LOC.APPL remainder people AV-wash dish that
 ‘they (i.e., the snakes) want to eat the *scraps* (from) people washing the dishes,’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-002, 00:23:43-00:23:46)

The NMCs illustrated so far have involved independent and (relatively) contentful nouns. However, NMCs most commonly occur with a closed set of dependent, semantically bleached nouns, which I refer to here as ‘light nouns’. These light nouns

2. The different interpretations of NMCs in Besemah are also discussed in detail in McDonnell (in prep).

can often be translated as ‘the one’ or ‘the thing’ and have the following forms: *ende/ne* and *endik/nik*. Each of these light nouns comes in two forms, a disyllabic form with a syllabic nasal voiced stop sequence in *ende* [ɲdi] and *endik* [ɲdiʔ], respectively, and a monosyllabic form *ne* [ni] and *nik* [niʔ], respectively. These disyllabic-monosyllabic pairs are quite clearly phonological variants of each other. It is also arguably the case that *ende/ne* and *endik/nik* are also phonological variants of each other; these forms appear to be syntactically, semantically, and functionally the same.³ Thus, in discussing general properties of these light nouns, I simply refer to the light noun *NIK* in italicized small caps as the form *nik* is the most frequent in the corpus. This should be understood to cover all forms. In specific examples, I may also cite the exact form that is employed by the speaker. Note also that throughout this paper all of these forms are glossed as N.LI, which signifies ‘light noun’.

The reason that *NIK* is treated as a noun here is because its distribution is the same as other nouns. That is, *NIK* as the head noun of an NP is typically head initial; only numerals and quantifiers precede it. Furthermore, *NIK* may be modified by a single demonstrative, possessed by another noun, or modified by a clause. The only difference between *NIK* and other nouns is that *NIK* does not occur on its own, while other nouns are able to do so. The examples in (5)–(7) demonstrate these parallels between light nouns and (independent) nouns. The examples in (a) show the independent noun and the examples in (b) show the parallel light nouns.

(5) Noun + modifier with heavy and light nouns

- a. DEWI: ng-asuh *kupik* *besak* *bungk*,
 AV-babysit baby big fat
 ‘(he) babysat a *big fat baby*,’
 (“Durian fruit season”, oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:58:34-00:58:35)
- b. JAMISAH: *nik* *kecik-kecik* *tu* di-lebung=(ny)e,
 N.LI RDP-small DEM.DIST PV-ripen=3
 ‘they ripened *the small ones* (i.e., the durian fruit),’
 (“Durian fruit season”, oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:49:53-00:49:55)

(6) Noun + demonstrative determiner with heavy and light nouns

- a. SARKANI: die ng-umung-ka *ubat* *itu* kan,
 3 AV-talk-CAUS medicine DEM.DIST right
 ‘He talked about *that medicine*, right,’
 (“Catching up with cousins”, oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-002, 00:11:27-00:11:28)
- b. HENDI: anye *nik* *itu* lambat eh?
 but N.LI DEM.DIST slow FP
 ‘but *that one* (i.e., the motorcycle) is slow, right?’
 (“Bachelors”, oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:42:06-00:42:08)

3. They only seem to differ in their sociolinguistic distribution, namely younger speakers (<40 years old) represented in the corpus prefer *endik/nik* N.LI and older speakers (>40 years old) prefer *ende/ne* N.LI.

(7) Noun + possessor with heavy and light nouns

- a. DEWI: bange nian,
 stupid real
bapang kabah ni jiku,
 father 2SG DEM.PROX QUOT.1SG
 ‘your dad is really stupid I thought,’
 (“Durian fruit season”, oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:56:12-00:56:14)
- b. DAMSI: ne kami tu nak di-penuh-i=lah nga coklat,
 N.LI 1PL.EXCL DEM.DIST want PV-fill-LOC.APPL=PRT with cocoa
 ‘the one (that is) ours (i.e., coffee field) should be filled with cocoa,’
 (“Planting cocoa”, oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:14:59-00:15:01)

In (5), both the light noun and the independent noun are head initial and followed by modifiers. In (6), both are followed by the demonstrative determiner, and in (7) they are both followed by adnominal possessors.⁴

As is the case with independent nouns in NMCs, *NIK* is also modified by clauses. Like the examples in (1)–(4) above, the NMCs with *NIK* have relative clause interpretations, as in (8), alongside various other interpretations, as in (9).

(8) (“Planting cocoa”)

- 1 ARIPIN: gi ade due ijat mak ini aghi,
 PERS exist two seed.CLS now DEM.PROX day
 ‘there are still two nowadays,’
- 2 ne belum masak,
 N.LI NPERS ripe
 ‘the ones (i.e., the durian fruit) that are not yet ripe,’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:13:53-00:13:55)

It is also possible that other interpretations apply to NMCs with a light noun head. In the example in (9) below, the light noun followed by the modifying clause *die galak beantukan tulah* ‘he likes to bump (into others)’. Within this modifying clause, the argument of the intransitive verb *beantukan* ‘bump’ is present, and the light noun is not coreferential with this argument. Rather, the *NIK* refers to the manner (i.e., ‘the way’) in which the event described in the modifying clause occurred. Further examples of other interpretations are found in example (19) in Section 4.2.

(9) (“Bachelors”)

- RAFLES: nik die galak be-antuk-an tu=lah,
 N.LI 3 want RECIP-hit-RECIP DEM.DIST=PRT
 ‘(the way) he likes to bump (into others),’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:25:49-00:25:50)

4. See McDonnell (in prep) for further discussion of why *NIK* is not a relativizer or some type of clausal nominalizer.

In summary, the internal structure of Besemah NMCs is quite different than previous descriptions of relative clauses in the languages of western Indonesia. While the internal structure is quite different, this paper shows that many of the discourse functions are similar to those described by both Ewing & Cumming (1998) and Englebretson (2008). The remainder of this paper focuses on how speakers employ the light noun *NIK* in everyday conversations.

3. Data

The Besemah data in this paper come from four face-to-face everyday conversations between native speakers of Besemah, which are described in Table 1 below. These conversations are drawn from the documentation of Besemah, which is currently archived at the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC).⁵ For an overview of this documentation, see McDonnell (2016).

These conversations were audio recorded and transcribed by me with the help of several native speaking language consultants. They were transcribed following a limited set of the conventions from Du Bois et al. (1993).⁶ There is a robust sample of 453 occurrences of the light noun *NIK* across the four conversations. This paper reports on the diversity of functions of NMCs headed by *NIK* in this dataset.

Table 1. Conversations in this study

Title	Description	Identifier
“Bachelors”	A conversation among six bachelors who are all close friends: Hendi (male, 30 years old), Hairil (male, 33 years old), Raffles (male, 33 years old), Piter (male, 23 years old), Dian (male, 18 years old), and Buwoh (male, 24 years old). Hendi recorded the event at Buwoh’s house. The topics vary, but include: the race that they attended early in the day, the party they went to the night before, and other stories from the recent past.	BJM01–004

(continued)

5. <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/BJM01>

6. Appendix A lists the transcription conventions that are used in this paper.

Table 1. Conversations in this study (*continued*)

Title	Description	Identifier
“Farmers’ cooperative”	A conversation among three friends and neighbors: Emi (female, 36 years old), Kudar (female, 37 years old), and Ina (female, 45 years old). Emi talks about how she is upset that the farmers cooperative asked her to step down from her post. Halfway through the conversation Ina comes into the conversation and asks what the story is. The conversation takes place at Emi’s house.	BJM01–008
“Planting cocoa”	A conversation among three friends Damsi (male, 54 years old), Burhimin (male, 55 years old), and Aripin (male, 50 years old). All men are in some way related by marriage. They discuss issues related to farming cocoa, vanilla, and coffee. The recording takes place at Aripin’s house.	BJM01–010
“Durian fruit season”	A conversation among three women: Jamisah (female, 43 years old), Rili (female, 19 years old), and Dewi (female, 32 years old). Dewi and Jamisah live in the village of Karang Tanding, but Rili, who was born in Karang Tanding is visiting from a village that is about 10km away. They discuss various issues concerning farming, buying durian at the market, and weddings. The recording takes place at Jamisah’s house.	BJM01–011

4. Noun-modifying constructions in Besemah interaction

Various types of NMCs headed by the light noun *NIK* express a number of different functions and are utilized in local contexts by speakers for various interactional purposes, including negotiating the identity of a referent, making reference to discourse entities, initiating repair, doing self-repair, and expressing contrast in equational constructions. This section lays out the diversity of functions of *NIK* found in the corpus, focusing on examples where speakers employ *NIK* for interactional purposes.

For the purposes of this discussion, the uses of *NIK* are grouped into four broad grammatical categories: *NIK* in referring expressions (Section 4.1), unattached light nouns in NMCs (Section 4.2), *NIK* in equational constructions (Section 4.3), and *NIK* in fixed expressions and lexicalizations (Section 4.4). These four groupings generally follow other analyses of noun modification, such as Englebretson (2008) and Takara (2012), but there are other criteria by which these constructions could be grouped. For example, they could be grouped by the modifier that the NMC takes (e.g., a clause, verb, adverb, demonstrative, etc.) or how the NMC is employed in interaction as an argument of the predicate or in some other position.

These four groupings, however, provide a useful way to present the diversity of functions of *NIK* in talk-in-interaction.

4.1 Referring expressions

NMCs introduced by the light noun *NIK* that make reference to discourse entities in the course of an interaction are called referring expressions following Englebretson (2008). These referring expressions occur as either arguments of a predicate or in some type of ‘extraposition’ to the clause. They allow speakers to formulate reference to discourse entities that are recognizable to participants (see Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018: 471ff).

In many cases, these referring expressions make reference to discourse entities by restricting the reference of a more general antecedent noun, much like a relative clause. However, unlike a relative clause, the antecedent is very rarely adjacent to the NMC headed by *NIK*. For example, in (10), the apparent antecedent *degghian* ‘durian (fruit)’ is the current topic of discussion and was introduced a minute earlier in the conversation by Burhimin with a full NP (Fox 1987).

(10) (“Planting cocoa”)

ARIPIN: ku=kinak-i *endik di* (1.1) *Lubuk Sawung*.
 1SG=PV.see-LOC.APPL N.LI LOC L. S.
 ‘I saw *the ones in (the village of) Lubuk Sawung*.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:05:47-00:05:51)

The NMC *endik di Lubuk Sawung* ‘the ones in Lubuk Sawung’ in this example, then, is designed for participants to recognize the referent as being restricted to durian fruit in a specific village, *Lubuk Sawung*. In this way, the light noun *NIK* is employed by speakers as a way to formulate (more) specific reference that is recognizable to participants.

In another example from the same conversation in (11), Damsi, Burhimin, and Aripin are discussing cocoa plants, seeds, and the like.

(11) (“Planting cocoa”)

BURHIMIN: ng-ambik *ende Saidi di sini*.
 AV-take N.LI S. LOC here
 ‘(I) took *the ones* (i.e., cocoa pods) *that belong to Saidi here*.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:28:43-00:28:45)

In this example, the NMC *ende Saidi di sini* ‘the ones that belong to Saidi here’ refers to Saidi’s cocoa pods, in particular. The reference to cocoa pods more specifically was made with a full NP about a minute prior to this turn at talk, and the intervening talk has discussed the different sizes and shapes of the cocoa pods. Again, *ende Saidi di sini* ‘the ones that belong to Saidi here’ is designed for

the addressees to recognize the referent as Saidi's cocoa pods here. Note that *NIK*, like other nouns in Besemah, followed by another noun or pronoun is typically understood to be possessed by this noun or pronoun (McDonnell 2016: 61ff).

In other cases, the antecedent is a nominal referent mentioned within the same turn, as in (12).

(12) ("Durian fruit season")

- 1 DEWI: bujang=(ny)e,
bachelor=3
'their bachelors (i.e., bachelors from the village of Merpayang),'
- 2 ⇒ dik bedie ne @alap.
NEG NEG.EXIST N.LI good
'there aren't good ones.'

(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:33:02-00:33:04)

In this example, Dewi, Jamisah, and Rili are currently discussing different villages and how best to travel to them. In the just prior talk, Dewi is discussing one village in particular, *Merpayang*. The antecedent of this NMC is the NP *bujang=(ny)e* 'their bachelor(s)' in line 1, and the NMC in line 2 *ne alap* 'the good ones' restricts the reference of this NP antecedent. The examples thus far show a pattern of referring expression NMCs wherein the antecedent is often introduced into the discourse without any modifiers and speakers utilize referring expression NMCs to refer to some modified discourse entity, which is a restricted reference of the antecedent. There are, however, also referring expressions that cannot be said to be simply restricting the referent of an antecedent.

(13) ("Planting cocoa")

- DAMSI: ne kami tu nak di-penuh-i=lah nga coklat.
N.LI 1PL.EXCL DEM.DIST want PASS-fill-LOC.APPL=PRT with cocoa
'ours (i.e., our field) should be filled with cocoa.'

(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:14:59-00:15:01)

In the example in (13), the NMC *ne kami tu* 'ours/the one that belongs to us' refers to Damsi's family field. However, there is no mention of a field, although the three participants in this conversation are talking about planting cocoa, more generally. How, then, do the addressees recognize this referring expression? The reference of this NMC is designed to be recognizable to participants because of the clause it appears in; the predicate *di-penuh-i* 'to be filled' has a passive prefix and a locative applicative suffix that specifies that the single S argument of the passive is a location. This allows the NMC to be recognizable to the addressees as a field, rather than something else related to planting cocoa.

Thus far, the NMCs that function as referring expressions have occurred as arguments of a predicate in a clause. In a number of cases, NMCs can also occur

outside of the clause. For example, NMCs can be used in topicalization constructions, which are introduced by *ame* TOP, as in (14). For details on a very similar topicalization construction in colloquial Indonesian, see Ewing (2005: 241ff).

(14) (“Durian fruit season”)

- 1 JAMISAH: ⇒ anye *ame* *ne: ujik* *galak n-(t)agih ni,*
 but TOP N.LI motorcycle.taxi want AV-bill DEM.PROX
 ‘but as for motorcycle taxis that like to ask (for the fare),’
 (0.7)
- 2 dide *galak* aku *naik-i=nye.*
 NEG want 1SG AV.go.up-LOC.APPL=3
 ‘I don’t want to get on them.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:23:46-00:23:48)

In this example, the three participants are discussing the best way to travel home from the field or rice paddy, and Jamisah in the just prior talk suggests taking a motorcycle taxi as her preferred method. Then, in line 1, Jamisah makes reference to motorcycle taxi drivers that like to ask for the fare, which is in contrast to motorcycle taxis who politely wait for the fare. The NMC thus appears to be part of a topicalization, and it is referenced anaphorically in line 2 with the third person pronominal enclitic *=nye*. Unlike the previous examples, the apparent antecedent *ujik* ‘motorcycle taxi’ is actually part of the NMC. While it is not exactly clear why she designed the NMC in this way for this context, it does show that these constructions are quite different than relative clauses.⁷

Referring expressions are also used in increments (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002; Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007), and the excerpt in (15) is a case where there is not immediate uptake and/or trouble with the response of the addressee(s) that led to an elaboration by Dewi with two NMCs in lines 5 and 6.

(15) (“Durian fruit season”)

- 1 DEWI: *adak* aku *tadi,*
 EXCL 1SG earlier
 ‘I earlier,’
 (0.3)

7. One possible explanation for the presence of the apparent antecedent *ujik* ‘motorcycle taxi’ in this example is that Jamisah is ensuring that Dewi and Rili can identify the reference of the NMC introduced by *ne* N.LI. This raises the question, *why does Jamisah use the light noun at all?* It is certainly possible for her to simply use *ujik* ‘motorcycle taxi’ followed by the modifying clause *galak nagih ni* ‘like to ask (for the fare)’, as we saw in Section 2. The answer to this question may be that Jamisah is constructing the NMC on the fly, thus processing her turn on-line. Evidence for this analysis is found in the elongation of the light noun *ne* N.LI in line 1, which is immediately followed by the modifying clause that contains the head noun *ujik* ‘motorcycle taxi’.

- 2 m-beli limi-
 AV-buy HES
 'bought fi-'
- 3 ai lime ijat enam ribu.
 EXCL five seed six thousand
 'ah five pieces (for) six thousand (rupiah).'
- (0.3)
- 4 RILI: mhm.
 mhm
 'mhm.'
- 5 DEWI: ⇒ .. *NIK* besar due ikuk,
 N.LI big two tail.CLS
 'two big ones.'
- 6 ⇒ *NIK* enggak lentuat ni tige ikuk.
 N.LI size knee DEM.PROX three tail.CLS
 'three knee-sized ones.'
- (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:06:55-00:07:03)

Immediately before this excerpt, Rili has given an anecdote about how her husband bought four pieces of durian fruit for ten thousand rupiah. When Dewi says that she got an even better deal than Rili's husband, five pieces of durian fruit for six thousand rupiah in line 3, she has come to a place of possible completion with a syntactically complete clause and a low falling 'final' intonation contour. However, there is no immediate uptake, and when there is uptake, Rili only acknowledges Dewi's turn with *mhm* in line 4. Dewi then adds the incremental NMCs in lines 5 and 6 that elaborate on the sizes of the durian she bought, seeking appropriate appreciation from her recipients for the deal she got. It is worth noting that this use of *NIK* in these NMCs to make elaborations in increments is similar to what Clift (2007) has proposed for non-restrictive relative clauses with 'which' in English (see Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018: 472ff).

Thus far, it has been shown that serving as referring expressions is a common function of NMCs introduced by the light noun *NIK*. They are often utilized by speakers to design recognizable referents that restrict an antecedent that is typically the topic under discussion, though this is not always the case, and they are even found outside of the clause as increments or in topicalization constructions.

One function of these referring expressions that Englebreton (2008) notes in his discussion of *yang* constructions in colloquial Indonesian is the negotiation of the identifiability of referents. This is indeed a common function of Besemah light nouns and is found primarily in other-initiations of repair (Kendrick 2015; Schegloff 2000), and more specifically when there is a problem of reference. The light noun *NIK* is employed by speakers as means to both resolve and initiate problems of reference. In many cases, speakers design their repair initiators as

requests for more information with *NIK* introducing an NMC with a question word, like *mane* ‘which’ or *sape* ‘who’. This repair initiating *NIK* often occasions a *NIK* response.

(16) (“Durian fruit season”)

- 1 RILI: kate mang Gituk,
 QUOT uncle G.
 ‘Uncle Gituk said,’
- 2 deggian seghekah banyak benagh,
 durian broken.branch many true
 ‘there were a lot of durian from broken branches,’
- 3 deggian bantal tu kate=nye.
 durian pillow DEM.DIST QUOT=3
 ‘those “pillow durian”, he said.’
- 4 DEWI: ⇒ *nik* si[ape titu]?
 NIK who DEM.DIST
 ‘those are *the ones* that are whose?’
- 5 RILI: [kami lan]jui,
 1PL.EXCL [PV]pick
 ‘we picked (them).’
- 6 *nik* jeme dusun tu wah.
 NIK people village DEM.DIST EXCL
 ‘*the ones* (i.e., durian) that are the people’s in the village.’
- 7 DEWI: oh.
 PRT
 ‘oh.’

(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:05:48.063-00:05:54.361)

In the extract in (16), Rili mentions durian fruit for the first time in this conversation. In line 2, she states that there is a lot of durian fruit from a broken branch, and it is of the *bantal* ‘pillow’ type in line 3. In Dewi’s turn in line 4, she initiates repair explicitly using *nik siape?* ‘whose?’ with a high rising appeal contour locating the trouble source as the referent. (Remember that while Rili is from the same village as the other participants Jamisah and Dewi, she now lives in a different village.) This use of a light noun repair initiator by Dewi occasions a self-repair candidate response by Rili that also employs the light noun *NIK* in line 6. It is noteworthy that when *NIK* is used to initiate repair, it is also used in the self-repair candidate response. That is, *NIK* in the repair initiation occasions *NIK* in the self-repair. Finally, in line 7, Dewi closes the repair sequence with the particle *oh* PRT that, just as in English, registers an epistemic change of state (Heritage 1984).

Another example of the light-noun *NIK* in other-initiations of repair is found in (17).

(17) (“Bachelors”)

- 1 RAFLES: adak- di situ due ikuk eh.
 EXCL LOC there two tail.CLS right
 ‘ah there were two (parties), right.’
- (0.3)
- 2 HAIRIL: di mane?
 LOC which
 ‘where?’
- 3 RAFLES:⇒ ne badah kite kedian tu.
 NIK place 1PL.INCL last.night DEM.DIST
 ‘the one place we (went to) last night.’
- (0.4)
- 4 HAIRIL: Batu Ampar.
 B. A.
 ‘Batu Ampar(=village name).’
- 5 HENDI: au=lah Batu Ampar tu,
 yes=PRT B. A. DEM.DIST
 ‘yes Batu Ampar,’
- (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:11:21.076-00:11:26.589)

In the just prior talk, Rafles is discussing the parties that he and the participants went to the night before. In line 2, Hairil initiates repair with the question *di mane* ‘where?’, which locates the trouble source as the reference of *di situ* ‘there’ in line 1. In line 3, Rafles self-repairs by offering a candidate response with an NMC introduced by the light noun probably because he cannot access the name of the village, and the light noun here allows Rafles to design a recognizable referent without having access to the name of the village. In response to the light noun NMC, Hairil offers a candidate response with the village name *Batu Ampar* in line 4, and Hendi follows this with a sequence closing third *aulah* ‘yes’ in line 5. In this example, *NIK* is used to construct a candidate response without being occasioned by *NIK* in the other-initiation. It is noteworthy that a solely structural analysis of the NMC headed by a light noun does not account for the use of *NIK* here, since the noun *badah* ‘place’ is a grammatically sufficient response. The previous two examples demonstrate how light nouns are utilized in other-initiations of repair to negotiate the identity of referents.

We have seen that, as referring expressions, the light noun *NIK* serves a number of functions that overlap with both NPs and relative clause constructions, including establishing reference to a discourse entity and performing other-initiations of repair.

4.2 Unattached light nouns in NMCs

There are some NMCs with *NIK* that occur on their own, are not fitted to any syntactic construction, and do not appear to be functioning as referring expressions for the purposes of establishing or tracking discourse entities. I refer to these as unattached light nouns in NMCs following earlier work by Ono & Thompson (1994) (see also Helasvuo 2001). I present two examples of these unattached light nouns in NMCs in (18) and (19), which are found in two stories in a sequence (Ryave 1978). The second story told by Rafles in (19) is occasioned by Hairil’s story in (18). Both stories revolve around incidents where they were hit in the face with a ball.

(18) (“Bachelors”)

- 1 HAIRIL: luk aku nga Antun dulu,
like 1SG with A. before
‘like me and Antun back then,’
- 2 ⇒ *nik lucu* eh?
N.LI funny FP
‘(it was) a funny thing, right?’
- (0.9)
- 3 cungkil=(ny)e nga Antun
scoop=3 with A.
‘(the ball) was scooped up by Antun.’
- (0.3)
- 4 be-dapuk nga [idung],
MID-hit with nose
‘(it) hit (my) nose,’
- 5 RAFLES: [@@@][₂@@@]
- 6 HAIRIL: [₂la @ny-(s)embap @saje].
PFV AV-swell only
‘(it) continued to swell.’
(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:26:17-00:26:24)

In the excerpt in (18), the story begins in line 1 with a reference to the people involved in the story (Goodwin 1984; Mandelbaum 2013; Sacks 1986) and is introduced by the particle *luk*, which is best translated as ‘like’. The NMC in line 2 *nik lucu eh?* ‘(it was) a funny thing, right?’ is a part of this story beginning, and Hairil designs this particular NMC to let recipients know how they should receive this story (see Mandelbaum 2013: 498ff). That is, recipients should hear this as a humorous story, and Rafles does so by responding with laughter in line 5.

In the example in (19), there are three NMCs that function to make a recognizable story beginning. This excerpt comes shortly after the previous example.

Raffles begins to tell another short, humorous story that follows from Hairil's story about a time when he was hit in the face with a soccer ball. (Note that lines 2 and 3 are the completion of Hairil's story in (18).)

(19) ("Bachelors")

- 1 RAFLES: @aku @nik @ki[te @main-]
1SG N.LI 1PL.INCL play
'I, (*the time*) we played-'
- 2 HAIRIL: [te-abang-abang] ##.
NVOL-RDP-red
'(my face) was red.'
- 3 te-jil[₂pak tengah-tengah].
NVOL-hit RDP-middle
'(it) was hit in the middle (of it).'
- 4 RAFLES: ⇒ [₂nik kite @main @di:] .. [₃@Sumur],
N.LI 1PL.INCL play LOC S.
'(*the time*) we were playing in Sumur,'
- 5 HAIRIL: [₃@@][₄@@@@]@
- 6 RAFLES: ⇒ [₄@nik @aku @kene @cemis @mate.]
N.LI 1SG hit spike eye
'(*the time*) I got hit with a spike in the eyes.'
(0.5)
- 7 bulah be-laghi anguk situ eh?
ball MID-run direction there FP
'the ball went in that direction, right?'
- 8 .. same-same gedang datang gha=itu,
RDP-same strong come person=DEM.DIST
'(we were running at) the same speed, then that person,'
- 9 tendang=(ny)e anguk ke belakang.
PV.kick=3 direction to back
'he kicked (the ball) behind him.'
- 10 ###
- 11 entum kene mate.
boom hit eye
'boom (it) hit (me) in the eyes.'
(0.3)
- 12 nyelah die tuk al-
right INT PRT TRUN
'that's right-'
- 13 la abang ng-anak-ka daghah tu.
PFV red AV-child-CAUS blood DEM.DIST
'(my eye) was red, (with) blood appearing (i.e., rising to the surface).'

14 n-cengi: [:s @aku @main]
 AV-squint 1SG play
 ‘(I) was squinting (while) I played.’

15 [((LAUGHTER))]
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:26:36-00:26:55)

The NMCs in lines 1, 4, and 5 in this case constitute a recognizable story beginning. Raffles in line 1 breaks off from the NMC he is producing and performs a self repair of the NMC in line 4. It is noteworthy that he is laughing through the NMCs in lines 1 and 4, which serves the same function as the NMC in the previous example; it signals to recipients that this story should be heard as humorous. The NMC in line 4 specifies the setting of the story, a recurrent feature for story beginnings (Dingemanse, Rossi & Floyd 2017), and the NMC in line 6 specifies the main action of the event. One way to interpret this NMC is that it signals to the recipients what will constitute a completion to the story, which we see in Raffles’ laughter through his IU in line 14 and indiscriminate laughter from (many or all of) the participants in line 15, allowing free turn-taking to resume.

In this subsection we have seen two instances of unattached NMCs introduced by *NIK* that are not fitted syntactically to a clause and do not clearly serve as referring expressions that establish or track discourse entities. We have also seen how speakers employ light nouns in NMCs to launch a storytelling.

4.3 Light nouns in equational constructions

Light nouns in NMCs also occur in equational constructions and serve as a resource for speakers to single out discourse entities with a contrastive function. The notional bases of the contrastive function here closely follows Maruyama (2003), who characterizes contrast as “components in the discourse whose semantic information is construed as having ...[a] parallel relationship with each other” (250–251).⁸ The structure of these constructions is simply the juxtaposition of an NMC headed by *NIK* with a pronoun or an NP. Similar structures in varieties of Indonesian and other languages have been referred to as cleft constructions (Englebretson 2008; Ewing 2005; Ewing & Cumming 1998; Payne 1997) largely because they are analyzed as equational (copula) clauses. It is noteworthy, however, that the structure of cleft constructions in these languages is quite different than cleft constructions that have been described for European languages that involve some sort of clausal complexity (see Lambrecht 2001: 467; Weinert & Miller 1996).

8. In Maruyama’s (2003) proposal, she specifies contrast in terms of “components in the discourse whose semantic information is construed as having an *opposite* or parallel relationship” (emphasis mine; 250–251). However, I do not find any cases in the Besemah data where there is an opposite relationship.

I would argue that these constructions in Besemah are simply equational clauses that juxtapose an NMC with an NP or pronoun, but, like the authors cited above in their descriptions of Indonesian varieties, I continue to refer to these constructions as cleft constructions.

The excerpt in (20) demonstrates the contrastive function of these cleft constructions.

(20) (“Durian fruit season”)

- 1 JAMISAH: → jiku kamu rarik-an ini bik eh?
 QUOT.1SG 2SG line-NMZR DEM.DIST auntie FP
 ‘I said, you are (on) this row auntie, right?’
- 2 m-(p)utigh.
 AV-pick
 ‘to pick (coffee).’
- 3 ⇒ aku [*nik baris sini*],
 1SG N.LI line here
 ‘I am *the one who is* (on) *this line here*,’
- 4 DEWI: [e’e].
 uhuh
 ‘uhuh.’
- 5 JAMISAH: au:.
 yes
 ‘yeah.’

(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:20:42-00:20:46)

Jamisah is telling a humorous story about picking coffee with a friend, Rus, who is apparently not following directions very well. In line 1, Jamisah is relaying the instructions that she gave to Rus on how to pick coffee from one row of plants. This ensures that they pick the coffee in a systematic manner without missing any plants. In line 3, Jamisah uses the NMC *nik baris sini* ‘the one whose line is here’ juxtaposed with *aku* 1SG to contrast Rus’ row in which she is assigned to pick coffee in line 1. The humorous part of this story is that Rus would always end up picking coffee in Jamisah’s row, and Jamisah would remind her to go back to her own row. In this example and others like it, there is a clear pattern where the NMC in an equational clause (marked here by the double arrow) follows an earlier clause with which it contrasts (marked here by the single arrow). This earlier clause creates a backdrop that allows the cleft construction to contrast two discourse entities in a parallel relationship.

The same pattern of an NMC in an equational clause following an earlier clause with which it contrasts is found in the excerpt in (21).

(21) (“Farmer’s cooperative”)

- 1 EMI: → gha=ini dik kum[pu:l],
 person=DEM.PROX NEG gather
 ‘this person (i.e., Kudar) didn’t meet (with the farmer’s cooperative),’
- 2 KUDAR: [##].
- 3 EMI: [₂dide pantau=(ny)e].
 NEG PV.call=3
 ‘(Kudar) wasn’t invited by her (i.e., Erda’s mom).’
- 4 KUDAR: → [₂dik kelah aku kump]ul aku,
 NEG ever 1SG gather.together 1SG
 ‘I haven’t ever met (with the farmer’s cooperative).’
- 5 INA .. gha=ini baik lagi-
 person=DEM.PROX just merely
 ‘this person (i.e., Kudar) is just merely-’
- 6 .. kate=nye ngape,
 say=3 why
 ‘she said, why,’
- 7 dame=ku dik @bedie @[@@]
 name=1SG NEG NEG.EXIST
 ‘is my name not there.’
- 8 [e][₂’e].
 uhuh
 ‘uhuh.’
- 9 KUDAR: ⇒ [₂Ta]mi *nik naik*-[₃i=nye].
 T. N.LI go.up-LOC.APPL=3
 ‘Tami is *the one who went up there*.’
- 10 INA: [₃au::].
 yes
 ‘yeah.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-008, 00:19:22-00:19:30)

Emi and Kudar are explaining to Ina how Kudar did *not* meet with the farmer’s cooperative (lines 1–2), and was not even invited (line 3). Emi goes on to explain that Kudar’s name was not even on the list (lines 6–7). Kudar then supports Emi’s point by stating that *Tami*, Kudar’s neighbor, was the one who went to the meeting for the farmer’s cooperative in line 9. (As most Besemah houses are on stilts, the predicate *naik* ‘go.up’ with the applicative suffix can also be translated as ‘invited in/up’.) This NMC in an equational clause contrasts Tami, who was the one who went to the meeting, in line 9 against the backdrop of Kudar, who was not invited, in lines 1 and 3.

The parallel relationship between the earlier clause, which provides a backdrop, and the later cleft construction, which serves the contrastive function, can also be explained in terms of information flow. In the two examples above, the

NMC contains presupposed information and the NP or pronoun with which it is juxtaposed is commonly the assertion, as in (21), or the relationship between the juxtaposed NP or pronoun and the NMC represents the assertion, as in (20). For this reason, Englebretson (2008) analyzes the function of these constructions in colloquial Indonesian as one of information management. The NMC – the *yang* construction for him – relates presupposed information to the juxtaposed pronoun or NP (see Englebretson 2008: 13ff). From the examples in Besemah above, however, the most salient function is one of parallel contrast. That is, in order to achieve these parallel contrasts, speakers utilize presupposed information in the NMC that was mentioned in the initial contrasting clause and juxtapose it with a different pronoun or (typically new) NP.

There are a limited number of examples where speakers employ the contrastive function of the cleft construction for another purpose. In the excerpt in (22), Hendi in the just prior talk had expressed his frustration with a friend, Yuspah (also referred to as Pah), with whom he and the other participants in the conversation play soccer regularly. Hendi has proceeded to tell a short story from earlier that day about how Yuspah kept stepping on his feet, which he concludes in line 2 (and adds an increment in line 4).

(22) (“Bachelors”)

- 1 HENDI: jiku Pah jangan ng-ijak-ka isan di belakang,
QUOT.1SG P. neg.imp AV-step-CAUS/APPL from LOC back
'I said, Pah don t step on (my feet) from the back,'
- 2 kele ku- aku m-balas jiku. (H)
later HES 1SG AV-return QUOT.1SG
'later I ll do the same (to you), I said.'
- 3 DIAN: => aku *nik* *dik* [*tahan*],
1SG N.LI NEG enduring
'I am *the one* who is not able to endure (it),'
- 4 HENDI: [te-tawe] [₂die].
NVOL-laugh 3
'he laughed.'
- 5 [₂die galak] ng-anu-ka pingging @tu=lah @@@
3 want AV-whatchamacallit-CAUS butt DEM.DIST=PRT
'he likes to whatchamacallit (i.e., push others out of the way) with his butt.'
- 6 RAFLES:> aku *nik* ridat,
1SG N.LI angry
'I am *the one* who is angry.'
- 7 nik die galak be-antuk-an tu=lah,
N.LI 3 want RECIP-hit-RECIP DEM.DIST=PRT
'the way he likes to bump into others,'
- 8 HENDI: [@@@]

9 RAFLES: ⇒ [aku *nik ridat nian*].
 1SG N.LI angry real
 ‘I am *the one who is really angry*.’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:25:42-00:25:50)

In line 3, Dian employs the NMC *nik dik tahan* ‘the impatient one’ juxtaposed with the first person pronoun *aku* in an equational construction. He then adds the reason for his impatience in line 5, namely Yuspah using his butt to push others out of the way. Unlike the examples of the parallel contrastive function above, there is not a recognizable prior parallel clause with which this NMC can contrast. Rather, the cleft construction in line 3 is running in parallel to Hendi’s framing of the story, that is, Hendi’s frustration towards Yuspah, which is inferable in lines 1 and 2 and made explicit at the story beginning, shown in (23). This story beginning frames the story by stating not only the main actor Yuspah, but also Hendi’s attitude towards the event to display that speakers know how to receive the story.

(23) (“Bachelors”)

HENDI: Yuspah bambah-an=lah.
 Y. not.think-NMZR=PRT
 ‘Yuspah is the idiot (i.e., the one who doesn’t think).’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-004, 00:25:35-00:25:36)

In this context, the contrastive function in Dian’s cleft construction in line 3 in (22) could be seen as parallel to lines 1 and 2, or even parallel to the entire story. In either case, the contrastive function affords Dian a way to single himself out for the purpose of self-selection and holding the turn for another IU. From an information flow perspective, the presupposition in Dian’s NMC in line 3 is inferable from Hendi’s framing of the story in (23), and Dian uses this presupposed information to make himself relevant as next speaker. In line 6, building off of Dian’s cleft construction, Rafles employs a cleft construction that is parallel to Dian’s in line 3, but is a kind of ‘one-upping’ from ‘the impatient one’ to ‘the angry one’. Again, the parallel contrastive function of the NMC here affords Rafles a way to self-select and hold the turn.

Finally, in a small number of cases, the NMC in an equational clause does not appear to function as a cleft construction, as in (24) below.

(24) (“Bachelors”)

JAMISAH: mubil tu *niknye* nian?
 car DEM.DIST N.LI.3 real
 ‘that car is really hers?’
 (oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:29:14-00:29:16)

In this construction the NMC is a lexicalized form *niknye* ‘hers/the one that belongs to her’ (see Section 4.4). In the just prior talk, Rili and Jamisah are discussing Idut, who recently came back to the village. Jamisah then asks the question in (24)

without any previous discussion of cars or Idut's possessions. From the formulation of Jamisah's question and Rili's response to it, it is clear that Rili is aware of the situation with Idut's car. However, unlike the examples above, it is not fitting to translate this clause as 'the car is one that belongs to her?', as we might expect in a cleft construction.

How, then, can we explain the difference between (20)–(23) and (24)? One answer might be that the predicated element differs in these examples: in cleft constructions (20)–(23) the predicated element is the NP or pronoun and in the equational construction in (24) the predicated element is the NMC headed by *NIK*. In fact, in his short description of colloquial Indonesian, Ewing (2005) proposes this structure. The presupposed element – the headless relative clause for him but the NMC headed by *NIK* here – is the argument and the NP or pronoun is the predicate. Thus, cleft constructions are predicate initial with the NMC argument following the predicate. While this analysis explains the difference between cleft constructions and non-cleft equational constructions involving NMCs, it should be noted that it is notoriously difficult to pick out the predicate in predicate nominal constructions, especially when word order is flexible and there is no copula (Payne 1997: 114ff).

In summary, NMCs that appear in equational clauses with a juxtaposed NP or pronoun, serve a contrastive function in Besemah conversation, which is also related to information management where the NMC contains presupposed information. The contrastive function of these clauses is also utilized by speakers in turn-taking, namely for purposes of self-selection. The nature of the relationship between the NMC headed by *NIK* and NP or pronoun in terms of predication remains an open question.

4.4 Light nouns in lexicalizations and fixed expressions

There are a few lexicalized forms and a small number of apparent fixed expressions with *NIK*. The lexicalized forms *niknye* 'theirs/his/hers' as in (25) and *ningkuk/nekuk/endekuk* 'mine' as in (26) all involve a form of the light noun *NIK* followed by a pronominal clitic =*ku* 1SG or =*nye* 3 and often translate to English possessive pronouns. I consider these forms lexicalized for morpho-phonological reasons. The form *niknye* [niʔnə] 'theirs/his/hers' is quite clearly the combination of *NIK* followed by the third person enclitic =*nye*. However, when the enclitic =*nye* occurs after a word ending in a consonant, the palatal nasal is lost and only the vowel occurs (e.g., *palak* [palaʔ] 'head' – *palake* [palaʔʔə] 'his head'). The forms *nekuk* [nəkoʔ], *endekuk* [ɛdəkoʔ], and *ningkuk* [niŋkoʔ] 'mine' are quite transparent forms of *NIK* plus the first person pronominal enclitic =*ku*. There is an additional, unexpected glottal stop after =*ku* and, in one form, an excrescent velar nasal. This

glottal stop provides evidence that this is in fact a lexicalized form; it does not occur with any other forms of =*ku*.

(25) (“Planting cocoa”)

- 1 DAMSI: ⇒ *niknye* tu,
N.LI.3SG DEM.DIST
‘his (i.e., his cocoa plants),’
- 2 la [ng-ulang agi]:.
PFV AV-repeat again
‘is already (doing it) again.’
- 3 ARIPIN: [ng-ulang n-(t)anam eh]?
Av-repeat Av-plant FP
‘(he) planted (them) again, right?’
- 4 DAMSI: .. la m-bunge agi mak ini.
PFV AV-flower again now DEM.PROX
‘(his) are already flowering again now.’
(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-010, 00:24:35-00:24:38)

(26) (“Farmer’s cooperative”)

- 1 KUDAR: tuape ka di-catat,
what fut PV-write
‘what will be written,’
- 2 diade.
nothing
‘(it’s) nothing.’
- 3 ⇒ amu *endekuk* lum bedie isi=nye,
TOP N.LI.1SG npers NEG.EXIST content=3
‘as for mine (i.e., my notebook), there isn’t any content,’
- 4 tulis-an=anye.
write-NMZR=3
‘(any) writing.’
(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-008, 00:00:39-00:00:43)

There are also a small number of apparent fixed expressions that occur in the corpus. The first apparent fixed expression involves the phrase *NIK* + *penting* ‘important’, which could be translated as ‘the important thing (is)...’ in (27).

(27) (“Durian fruit season”)

- 1 RILI: ibarat=(ny)e did[e ng-utang-]
example=3 NEG AV-borrow
‘for example, don’t borrow (money)-’
- 2 JAMISAH: ⇒ [nik *penting*] [2tu],
N.LI important DEM.DIST
‘what’s important,’

- 3 RILI: [2a][3u].
yes
'yes.'
- 4 DEWI: [3a][4u].
yes
'yeah.'
- 5 JAMISAH: [3ade] [4duit mas]uk.
exist money enter
'there is money coming in.'
- 6 a[5me kite dik] bedie.
TOP 1PL.INCL NEG exist
'if we don't have any.'
- 7 RILI: [5nyelah].
right
'right.'

(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:03:44-00:03:50)

In this example, Rili is finishing talking about how her husband is always working and she and her kids stay by themselves in the village. She ends by stating that everything is okay because they have enough money, and for example, they do not need to borrow money, which is where line 1 begins. Jamisah remarks in line 2 that the important thing is that there is money coming in, to which Rili agrees in lines 7. In this case, Jamisah offers a candidate summary of Rili's assessment of the situation (i.e., that her husband is gone a lot, but what's important is that they have money) and brings this topic to a close, which is supported by the fact that Dewi transitions to a new topic after Rili agrees with Jamisah's assessment in line 7. Jamisah, then, appears to use the fixed expression *nik penting tu* 'the important thing' to signal that what follows will be a summarizing statement.⁹

It is noteworthy that the word *penting* 'important' always occurs in these types of constructions with *NIK* in the corpus.¹⁰ It may be the case that this is actually a calque from Indonesian *yang penting* 'the important thing (is), what's important (is)' because while *penting* 'important' occurs in various constructions in Indonesian, it is only attested in NMCs in the Besemah corpus.

9. Englebretson (2008) considers such examples in colloquial Indonesian to be a type of cleft construction that provide[s] epistemic framing for an utterance (16). While the example in (27) above demonstrates how such an example *NIK* + *penting* could provide epistemic framing, it is unclear how such an example fits with other examples of cleft constructions. The translation into English may lead to such an analysis, but it is noteworthy that what follows *ne penting tu* 'the important thing' is a clause and not an NP as is typical in cleft-like constructions (see Section 4.3). It is just as likely that this is some sort of unattached NMC.

10. It occurs once with *ye*, which is similar to *NIK*, but it is far less frequent. In the corpus in this study, it occurs only 6 times. In this instance *ye* + *penting* 'important' and *nik* + *penting* 'important' are translation equivalents. See McDonnell (in prep) for a more complete description of *ye*.

The second fixed expression involves cases where *NIK* occurs with the particle *ka* and takes the meaning ‘for’, as in Example (28).

(28) (“Durian fruit season”)

- 1 DEWI: [nga] -
HES
- 2 JAMISAH: [ng-am]bik ma[₂mang-an kab]ah,
AV-take uncle-NMZR 2SG
‘your uncle took (the snails),’
- 3 RILI: [₂###]
- 4 JAMISAH: ⇒.. *ka endik itik*.
PRT N.LI duck
‘for the ducks.’
(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-011, 00:09:37-00:09:39)

The word *ka* could be related to the future marker *ka*, or it could be an older, frozen form of the allative preposition *ke* ‘to’. In any case, if *ka* occurs before *NIK* the meaning is strictly ‘for’.

In other cases, *NIK* does not occur with *ka* but nonetheless takes the meaning ‘for’, as in the example in (29). It may be in this case that the meaning ‘for’ arises from context, and it is certainly possible given the description of NMCs in Section 2 that the meaning ‘for’ is pragmatic and not lexical.

(29) (“Farmer’s cooperative”)

- 1 KUDAR: baju sutik enjuk=(ny)e.
shirt one give=3
‘they gave (us) one shirt,’
(0.9)
- 2 be-buku sutik,
MID-book one
‘one book,’
- 3 pinah sutik,
pen one
‘one pen,’
- 4 diade:.
nothing
‘it’s nothing.’
(1.2)
- 5 EMI: *ne n-catat?*
N.LI AV-write
‘for taking notes?’

6 KUDAR: =>..ne nc- n-catat.
 N.LI HES AV-write
 'for taking notes.'

(oai:paradisec.org.au:BJM01-008, 00:00:32-00:00:39)

This section has shown that *NIK* also occurs in lexicalizations and several fixed expressions. It is quite possible that there are other fixed expressions. For example, it is quite common for *NIK* to occur with question words *mane* 'which' and *sape* 'who', as in the excerpt in Example (16), commonly used for negotiating the identify of a referent.

5. Conclusion

This paper has been concerned with how NMCs introduced by the light noun *NIK* serve a number of interactional functions in Besemah talk-in-interaction. I have shown several cases where speakers exploit the semantically empty nature of the light noun *NIK* and the pragmatic flexibility between the head light noun and its modifier to fit these constructions to local contexts for various interactional purposes.

In this paper, we have seen that NMCs headed by the light noun *NIK* vary along several dimensions. For example, NMCs show different degrees of fixedness. In some cases, NMCs with the light noun *NIK* are lexicalized, taking purposive or possessive meanings, or are fixed expressions (Section 4.4), while, in other cases, NMCs headed by *NIK* contain clauses or phrases and appear to be constructed on the fly to fit local contexts. Additionally, NMCs vary in how speakers use them for different interactional purposes. I have shown how NMCs are used as referring expressions to make reference to discourse entities, negotiate the identity of a referent, initiate repair, and do self-repair (Section 4.1), as unattached light nouns to construct story beginnings (Section 4.2), and in equational constructions to express contrast (Section 4.3).

Some of the interactional functions that I have outlined in this paper for NMCs introduced by the light noun *NIK* are (perhaps unsurprisingly) also attributed to NPs in other studies of talk-in-interaction (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002; Helasvuo 2001). For instance, I show how these NMCs are used to form increments as either a referring expression where there is not immediate uptake (e.g., (15) in Section 4.1) or an unattached NMC to provide an assessment (e.g., (18) in Section 4.2).

At the same time, NMCs headed by *NIK* also function similarly to relative clause constructions, especially those that have been described in colloquial Indonesian (Englebretson 2008; Ewing & Cumming 1998). First, I showed in

Section 4.1 how NMCs headed by the light noun *NIK* are used to restrict the reference of an already introduced antecedent NP, and to do elaborations in similar ways to the way English speakers use (non-restrictive) relative clauses (Clift 2007). Second, I showed in Section 4.3 how the subset of NMCs that are headed by *NIK* and occur in equational clauses are used in a special cleft construction to single out a referent for the purpose of contrast. This use of NMCs in Besemah is similar to those described for several varieties of Indonesian (Englebretson 2008; Ewing & Cumming 1998) and may be connected to information management where the NMC headed by *NIK* represents presupposed information.

In this paper, I have argued that while there are significant differences between NMCs in Besemah and purported relative clause constructions in other languages of western Indonesia (including *yang* constructions in colloquial Indonesian), the discourse functions that have been described for varieties of Indonesian (Englebretson 2008; Ewing 1991; Ewing & Cumming 1998) show considerable overlap with the functions of Besemah NMCs outlined here. I have shown that, beyond these discourse functions, NMCs headed by light nouns serve a number of interactional functions in Besemah talk-in-interaction.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants from the village of Karang Tanding who took part in the Besemah conversations, and especially to Sarkani and Hendi who helped transcribe and annotate these conversations. I am grateful to Asfan Fikri Sanaf and Kencana Dewi for kindly allowing me stay at their home in Karang Tanding, and the Language Institute at Sriwiaya University and the Center for Culture and Language Studies at Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia for sponsoring this research. It was funded by a Fulbright scholarship and Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad scholarship. I am grateful to the Ministry of Research and Technology in Indonesia for allowing me to conduct this research on Besemah. Finally, I would also like to thank Sandy Thompson and Anna Vatanen for very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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A. Transcription conventions

Transcription conventions generally follow Du Bois et al. (1993) with some minor exceptions. Each line represents an intonation unit. Brackets represent the beginning '[' and end ']' of overlapping speech; the left bracket has been subscripted with corresponding numbers for ease of reading. End marks on each intonation unit represent different contours: a period '.' is a final contour, a comma ',' is a continuing contour, and question mark '?' is an appeal contour. A dash '-' represents truncated word, and an em dash '—' represents a truncated intonation unit. A colon ':' represents lengthening. (H) represents an in-breath. @ represents a pulse of laughter, unless it is attached to a word in which case it represents laughter through the word. # represents unintelligible speech. Two periods represent a short pause (less than 180 ms), and numbers in parentheses '(1.0)' represent longer pauses in seconds.

B. Glossing conventions

Glossing conventions are presented in Table 2. These conventions generally following the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

Table 2. Glossing conventions

Gloss	Description
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
APPL	applicative
AV	agentive voice
CAUS	causative
DEM	demonstrative
DIST	distal
EXCL	exclamative
FP	final particle
INT	intensifier
LOC	locative

Table 2. Glossing conventions (*continued*)

Gloss	Description
MID	middle voice
N.LI	light noun
NMZR	nominalizer
NPERS	negative persistive
NVOL	non-volitional
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PROX	proximal
PRT	particle
PV	patientive voice
RECIP	reciprocal
SG	singular
TRUN	truncation
TOP	topicalization

