A student-centered multimedia exploration of code choice in Indonesia

Black, Paul; Goebel, Zane Matthew

A Student-centred Multimedia Exploration
of Code Choice in Indonesia*

by Paul Black
Faculty of Science, Information Technology and Education
Northern Territory University
Darwin NT 0909 Australia
email: pblack@darwin.ntu.edu.au

and Zane Goebel
Humanities and Social Sciences
La Trobe University
PO Box 821
Wodonga Vic 3689 Australia
email: zgoebel@aw.latrobe.edu.au

Abstract

This paper presents a proposal for a multimedia approach to supporting the learning of how social and cultural meanings are conveyed through making appropriate choices in both colloquial varieties of Indonesian and Indonesian regional languages. Segments of Indonesian television programs can be selected as quasi-authentic materials to illustrate regional uses of Indonesian and local languages in a wide range of common situations. The materials would be designed to enable learners to access and interact with the material in a number of ways, ranging from simply viewing them with or without written transcriptions and sociocultural explanations, to such tasks as selecting the appropriate response at pauses in the playing of these video clips. The material would thus lend itself to learner-managed study, while also being substantial enough to provide a regular component of beginning, intermediate and advanced courses in Indonesian.

1. Introduction

Hey, gang, how ya doin'? Hey, look: I got somethin' to tell ya today. For starters, this ain't the way to start a talk at an international conference, hey.

Part of communicative competence in a language is being able to use registers appropriately, i.e. to choose the right sort of language to suit the situation. We're expected to talk in a relatively formal and academic register at a this conference, for example, but if we tried to talk this way to our friends, they'd probably find us distant and boring. To be competent in Japanese one needs to master even more striking differences in speech levels and how they are used, including such intricacies as how taxi drivers and fish mongers tend to be less polite to their customers than bank clerks and car salesmen (Mizutani & Mizutani 1987: 6-7).

The situation is even more complicated in such multilingual countries as Indonesia, where many varieties of language are used in everyday interaction (see e.g. Kartomihardjo 1981, Wolff & Poedjosoedarmo 1982, Anderson 1983, Zurbachen 1984, Sneddon 1990). There is a national language, of course — Bahasa Indonesia, or simply Indonesian — and of course it is widely taught and widely used. However, standard Bahasa Indonesia is not really all one needs to communicate with people in Indonesia. For example, recent research by Goebel (in preparation) has found that Indonesians rarely use standard Indonesian for ordinary social interaction. For some purposes they use non-standard, or colloquial, Indonesian, but to develop close relations with people from a particular area it is also important to try to use the local regional language as far as possible. After showing you an example of how this works we'll then go on to suggest how a computerised multimedia program might be developed to help bolster the sociolinguistic competence of Indonesian learners in this area.

2. Code Choice in Indonesia

Most Indonesians are familiar with how regional languages play a significant role in everyday communication in Indonesia; it's part of their communicative competence. This doesn't necessarily mean they are fluent in many regional languages themselves, but certainly they can appreciate the significance of their use. You can see this by watching Indonesian television programs, for example, since these often involve the use of regional languages along with standard and non-standard Indonesian.

As a specific example, let's consider an episode from the Indonesian television program *None,* roughly 'Missy'. This program is set in Bandung, in West Java, where the regional language is Sundanese. At the beginning of one episode, *Cipoa* or 'Con Artist', a woman seeking a house to lease responds to an advertisement in the paper and arrives at the house in a taxi. When she tries to pay the driver she pretends to have only a very large denomination note, and the taxi driver can't make change for it. Accordingly she goes to the front door of the house, and she has the following exchange with the young woman who answers the door, who she thinks is a maid but who in fact has just inherited the house from her grandmother:

visitor: Ada orangnya *nggak sih* di situ? Heh! Is anyone there or not? Heh!

owner:	Ya.	Yeah.
visitor:	Ada orangnya *nggak* di situ?	Is anyone there or not?
owner:	Ada.	Yes there is.
visitor:	Panggil, eh. Ada uang kecil *nggak?*	Call [the house owner] eh. Have you got any change?
owner:	Ha? Ada kamar kecil? Ada *tu* di dalam, masuk *aja.*	What? Is there a bathroom? Yeah there is one inside, come inside.

This exchange is entirely in Indonesian, although not entirely in standard Indonesian: the words in italics are non-standard or colloquial expressions. This is an appropriate choice of language considering that these two women have just met. After the visitor has gone inside, however, the owner notices the taxi driver and realises that he is an old friend of the family, and he also recognises her. They call out to each other, and with great excitement they have an exchange that includes quite a lot of Sundanese, as shown in bold face below:

driver:	**Neng** Dewi?	Miss Dewi?
owner:	**Mang**? Heh! **Mang**?	Uncle? Huh! Uncle?
driver:	**Neng** Dewi. **Neng**!	Miss Dewi. Miss!
owner:	**Mang? Mang! Mang**...	Uncle? Uncle! Uncle...
driver:	Ini **teh Neng** Dewi **téa**?	You're Miss Dewi aren't you?
owner:	Ya **Mang.**	Yes Uncle.
driver:	**Euluh euluh euluh mani** sudah besar begini ah;	Gee gee gee wow you're already grown up;
	masih **inget ka Mang** coba, he.	do [you] still remember Uncle, try [and remember].
owner:	Ya masih **atuh** ini **teh Mang Mang kéheula kéheula kéheula kéheula, Mang,**... **Mang** Ucup	Yeah of course you [are] Uncle, Uncle, hang on, hang on, hang on, hang on, Uncle,... Uncle Ucup.
driver:	**Wah ketut damang Neng?**	Yeah how are you Miss?
owner:	**Saé Mang.**	Very well, Uncle.

Notice the way Sundanese is being used here: aside from the address forms *neng* and *mang*, translated as 'Miss' and 'Uncle' respectively, there are some interjections — the 'gee gee gee wow' part and *kéheula* 'hang on' — and an ordinary greeting. It doesn't really matter if the television audience fully understands the Sundanese — and indeed, the dialogue shifts back into Indonesian, with only the occasional Sundanese expression, as they need to understand it. What is important here is that the audience can appreciate how this shift into the local language signals familiarity. This is also obvious from

the action in this scene, with the owner of the house running down the steps almost as if to embrace the taxi driver (she doesn't, of course), but it would be incongruous for them to be using standard Indonesian as she did this. It would be like effusively greeting a long lost friend with something as stuffy as, 'How very pleasant to renew our acquaintance!'

3. A Multimedia Approach to Code Choice

As important as sensitivity to code choice is to Indonesian learners, there are currently few resources for teaching it. For this purpose audio-visual materials are especially valuable, since neither print nor the individual teacher can hope to provide adequate examples of the range of interactions learners might be exposed to. Even so, few of the audio-visual materials available for Indonesian provide a good idea of how Indonesian is actually spoken in conjunction with regional languages; see Goebel and Black (in preparation) for a survey.

As you saw earlier, however, Indonesian television is a ready source of examples of such interactions, and in fact, Goebel (1996) has already drawn on such television programs for the teaching of Indonesian sociolinguistics. Of course, Indonesian soap operas and situational comedies may not be fully authentic representations of how Indonesians interact: they are acted out especially for the benefit of Indonesian speakers in the television audience. Even so they go some ways towards approximating authentic texts that, in the words of Kramsch (1993: 178),

> ...require participants to respond with behaviors that are socially appropriate to the setting, the status of the interlocutors, the purpose, key, genre, and instrumentalities of the exchange, and the norms of interaction agreed upon by native speakers.

At the same time they are, of course, authentic representations of what Indonesians see on television; they are thus authentic materials in the sense of discourse 'created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced' (Little & Singleton 1988: 21) or in the sense of 'any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching' (Nunan 1989: 54). Furthermore, the fact that they are meant to be intelligible to Indonesian speakers certainly makes them more accessible to Indonesian learners than if they depended more heavily on a knowledge of regional languages.

Such television programs could be put to use in various ways; for example, they could be shown and discussed in a classroom, or they could be kept in a video library for self study. However, their value can be greatly enhanced by using information technology to allow them to be accessed and manipulated in a variety of ways. This freedom in how the materials can be accessed is especially important if we agree with Lian and Lian (1997) that it's really up to learners to make sense of the materials, and thus control must be in their hands. We thus envisage creating a multimedia database that follows principles explicated by Hoven (1997, section 1.3.1):

the learner using the package is allocated the major share of control, with the software package taking on more of the role of resource provider. In this context, the software provides the framework for this allocation of control by structuring and presenting the available language learning resources in a manner that is easy for the learner to navigate, while at the same time providing the information necessary for the learner to make informed decisions about her or his learning path.

An example of commercial software that tends to embody these principles, if with only limited multimedia capabilities, is *LanguageNow!*, which includes a database engine that can be used to access language lesson material in a variety of languages as well as in a variety of ways (see Black 2000: sect. 2). In addition to many choices provided by the menus and buttons — perhaps too many choices to be easy to navigate at first — it also provides extensive guidance screens that learners can call up if they want advice on different ways to approach the materials. For practical reasons such extensive guidance screens are probably best in the learner's first language. To promote language learning, however, we would want menu choices to be in Indonesian, with an option that holding the cursor over the text for a couple of seconds would produce the English translation.

As another matter of principle, it would of course be desirable for our database to include the whole of each television program, so that learners would have the option of viewing them as wholes as well as of accessing particular scenes within them; see Oller (1983) for how a good story line can enhance language learning. However, to expose learners to a variety of situational contexts, we would want to draw examples from a wide range of programs, and currently it may not be feasible for the database to include many hours of complete programs. In any case, simply to watch an entire program through in its normal sequence, at least, would not require the flexibility in access that a computerised database could provide.

As a final principle, we would want the material to be easily accessible to the largest audience possible, and thus we would want to rely on formats commonly used on the World Wide Web, which are accessible from most computer platforms. For convenience, of course, the materials could be made available on CD-ROM and/or DVD, whether or not through computer networks as well.

4. Program Design

We are thus thinking in terms of a database of video clips selected from Indonesian television programs to illustrate how Indonesian is used with regional languages in a variety of common situations. The opening menus could first allow the video clips to be accessed by speech function, type of social relationship, region within Indonesia, and/or level of difficulty. For example, the menu for speech functions could allow users such options as the

following, where the optional, pop-up English translation is shown in parentheses:

- Menyampaikan permintaan (Asking favours)
- Menyampaikan permintaan maaf (Apologising)
- Menyampaikan terima kasih (Expressing gratitude)
- Menyampaikan pujian (Flattering)
- Menyampaikan perasaan (Showing feelings)
- Penyapaan (Greeting)
- Penyelesaian percakapan (Ending a conversation)

Upon selecting a particular video clip the learner could be given such choices as the following (here we've suppressed the Indonesian in favour of the English):

1. view the video clip with or without written transcription
2. view the written transcription with or without English translation
3. read an explanation in Indonesian or in English
4. interact with the video clip
5. view a related video clip differing in (a) type of relationship, (b) region, or (c) level of difficulty.

The first three provide various ways for the learners to familiarise themselves with the video clip: they could start by viewing it, and if they should need help they can call up a transcription, translation, and/or an explanation of the social factors behind the choices of language in the clip. As for option 5, it enables learners compare one clip with others that differ in terms of the parameters indicated.

Option 4 can provide various ways of interacting with the videos. In order to cater for relative beginners these could include such basic options as having the video clip pause to allow learners to identify what they have just heard, e.g. by selecting the correct transcription, or perhaps by unscrambling a transcription that gives the correct forms in the wrong order. Such tasks help promote language acquisition because they call attention to details of language form (see e.g. Long 1991).

Such tasks as the above don't focus explicitly on questions of code choice, although by helping students master the language involved they should also help promote familiarity with the way language is being used. However, other tasks could be devised to bring out aspects of code choice more explicitly. In particular, the video could be paused while the learner is given a choice of what the next speaker is most likely to say. For example, to draw again on the first exchange we presented from the Indonesian program *None*, the video might pause after the visitor says *Ada orangnya nggak sih di situ?*

Heh! (i.e. Is anyone there or not? Heh!). The learner can then be asked which of the following the other woman is likely to use in reply:

a)   Enya.

b)   Ya.

c)   Sumuhun.

d)   Inggih.

Perhaps even before making a choice the learner could also request an explanation of how the responses differ; in the above case all the forms mean 'yes', but (a) is in low or familiar Sundanese, (b) is in Indonesian, (c) is in polite, respectful Sundanese, and (d) is in polite, respectful Javanese. The fourth choice is obviously wrong in the Sundanese context, but should the woman reply in Indonesian or Sundanese, and if the latter, at what level of politeness?

Although this task is presented in written form above, it could also be presented through a set of buttons that would play oral versions of the alternative responses. These would be spoken by a voice different from that actually used in the video clip — it wouldn't be feasible to seek out the original actors — but that has the advantage of exposing learners to alternative pronunciations of the same expressions. To ask learners to select among spoken alternatives not only reinforces their oral language listening abilities, but in addition it allows occasional alternatives that differ only in prosody, such as intonation contour and stress, which would not be obvious from written forms of the languages involved.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope we have convinced you of the importance of helping language learners become familiar with code choice, whether simply what register to use in what situation, as is typically sufficient for English, or even the significance of choosing among different languages, as is important in Indonesia. As for how to familiarise learners with such things, we advocate putting them in control of a multimedia database that can be accessed and used in a variety of ways, according to their needs. The use of such materials should help them become more independent learners as well as help them become more aware of appropriate ways to react to language use in a broad range of interactional contexts.

References

Anderson, E. E. 1983. The meaning of variation in Indonesian. *NUSA*, 15: 1-26.

Black, P. 2000. *The Rosetta Stone* and *LanguageNow!* — A review of some language learning software. Electronic document available from http://www.ntu.edu.au/education/csle/research/ls/ls0.html.

Goebel, Z. (in preparation) *Communicative Competence in Indonesian: Code Choice in Inter-ethnic Interactions in Semanang.* Ph.D. thesis for the Faculty of Education, Northern Territory University, Darwin.

Goebel, Z. 1996. *EAL521: Indonesian in context* [distant education package]. Darwin: Faculty of Education, Northern Territory University.

Goebel, Z. and P. Black. (in preparation). Language variation in Indonesia: A student-centred multimedia exploration of the functions of Indonesian vis-ˆ-vis regional languages.

Hoven, D. 1997. *Improving the management of flow of control in computer-assisted listening comprehension tasks for second and foreign language learners.* PhD thesis, University of Queensland. (Also available as an electronic document from http:// jcs120. jcs. uq. edu. au/ ~dlh/ thesis/.)

Kartomihardjo, S. 1981. *Ethnography of communicative codes in East Java.* (*Pacific Linguistics*, ser. D, no. 39.) Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.

Kramsch, C. J. 1993. *Context and culture in language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lian, A. and A. Lian. 1997. The Secret of the Shao-Lin monk: Contribution to an intellectual framework for language-learning. *ON-CALL* May: 2-19. (Also available as an electronic document from http:// education. canberra. edu. au/ ~andrewl/ mlapl/ shaolin/ psupres2. htm.)

Little, D. G. and D. M. Singleton. 1988. *Authentic materials and the role of fixed support in language teaching: Towards a manual for language learners.* Dublin: Trinity College Centre for Language and Communication Studies.

Long, M. H. 1991. Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching. In K. de Bot, R. B. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (eds). *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspective*, pp. 39-52. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Mizutani, O. and N. Mizutani. 1987. *How to be polite in Japanese.* Tokyo: Japan Times.

Nunan, D. 1989. *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oller, J.W. 1983. Story writing principles and ESL teaching. *TESOL Quarterly,* 17: 39-53.

Sneddon, J. N. 1990. Directions in Indonesian language teaching: Formal, informal or both? *Asian Studies Review* 14(2): 94-100.

Wolff, J. U. and S. Poedjosoedarmo. 1982. *Communicative codes in Central Java.* Ithaca: Cornell University.

Zurbuchen, M. 1984. Contexts and choices: Spoken Indonesian in Bali. In A. Morgan & L. J. Sears (eds), *Aesthetic tradition and culture transition in Java and Bali,* pp. 247-266. Madison: University of Wisconsin.