

STATEHOOD, SCALE AND HIERARCHY: HISTORY, LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN INDONESIA

Lauren Zentz

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Lauren Zentz's book is a welcome addition to the sociolinguistic works on contemporary Indonesian language landscapes (cf. Goebel, 2010, 2015), wherein multilingual resources compete and contest for meanings and prestige in the wider contexts of nationalization and globalization. Zentz focuses on three languages, Indonesian, Javanese, and English, to examine nationalization processes through the lens of language policies and ideologies. In doing so, she analyses various linguistic data, those from the KBI (*Kongress Bahasa Indonesia*: Indonesian Language Congresses) statements of language planning, to her own interviews with young Indonesians on language ecology in Central Java. Through this analysis, Zentz successfully presents how the three languages are constantly remapped and rescaled into a socially conceived matrix where people define and negotiate the values and meanings of each language in specific time/space.

Most of all, this book provides a well-balanced work between macro- and micro-levels of analysis, as it integrates a historical-structural approach and fine-grained ethnographic details. At the macro-level, Zentz examines the historical and structural settings of specific language plans and policies as embedded in Indonesia's nation-state building and globalization processes. At the micro-level, she discusses how people's communicative repertoires have changed through time by examining the research participants' linguistic biographies across their life courses. The individual participants' motivations for language learning are also examined in relation to their notions of selves, as imagined and reflected in what languages they want to learn for their expected future selves. As the sub-title of this book indicates, the author ambitiously explores the issues of history, language, and identity in Indonesia, the three main topics that she manages to investigate by weaving together the global, national, and local levels of language policies, ideologies, and their changes across time and space.

To illustrate the dynamic and multiple interplays among the languages and linguistic resources, this study employs various theoretical concepts and research methods. Largely informed by such theoretical concepts as "linguistic performativity" and "scales" (pp. 14–17), Zentz examines how Indonesian speakers construct and perform their identities through their language practices across global, national, and local scales. She adopts the postmodern performative approach that shifts "the researcher's focus from *language* to *linguaging*" (p. 14), while emphasizing the discursive power that language can perform through its usage. By "scale," the author refers to "multiple planes, on which people evaluate their and others' behavior" as well as language practices, including evaluations from "good to bad, valid to invalid, 'language' to 'not language' or center to periphery" (p. 17).

At the same time, this study challenges the naïve view of language and language competence in multilingual contexts that constructs multilinguals as having complete “language competence” and almost perfect knowledge of L1 and L2. By expanding “language competence” with “communicative repertoire” (p. 21), Zentz focuses on people's active performance of various linguistic resources, which include not only discrete languages, but also diverse types of semiotic resources that are changing across scales and specific time-spaces. Viewed from this point, people do not simply “have” competence. Rather, people are considered to select appropriate and relevant linguistic and semiotic resources from their locally available communicative repertoires for successful communication (p. 21). In this sense, a person's notions and evaluations of “language competence” can be redefined and judged differently, according to the space/time in which the speaker is situated.

Methodologically, Zentz employs various types of research methods and conceptual tools, such as conversation analysis, narrative analysis, stance analysis, linguistic landscape analysis, textual analysis of policy documents, and people's biographic descriptions of language usage and learning (p. 26). As a “teacher-researcher” who worked as an English instructor in UKSW (*Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana*: Satya Wacana Christian University) in Central Java, Zentz draws her main ethnographic data from her own classes. Fully engaged in the local community as a teacher, she was able to collect data from her active interactions with the student-participants, whose comments in class as well as their written assignments consisted of the primary source of the data analysed in this book. The eight students, the focal research participants of the book, are college students whose major is in English. The students are privileged, since the opportunity to pursue higher education at tertiary level is still relatively limited in the local contexts. By combining interviews, in-class comments, essay assignments, and other types of language materials, such as English words on their t-shirts, the book is able to provide rich ethnographic details with in-depth analyses of each participant's linguistic and social life and its changes.

After introducing the author's main theoretical orientations and methodology in Chapter 1, the book moves on to examine three languages—Indonesian, Javanese, and English—to demonstrate how these languages are scaled and re-scaled into language hierarchies in Indonesia. The following three chapters that investigate the three languages are nicely intertwined with research participants' linguistic biographies, a very efficient way to show an individual speaker's changing linguistic practices and their meanings across their life course within the broader contexts of Indonesia's social and political changes.

In Chapter 2, Zentz describes the historical backgrounds of the development of Indonesia's national language, by examining the activities of the Indonesian Language Congresses and the written documents of Indonesian language planning. This chapter successfully delineates significant macro-level backgrounds of the Indonesian language policies, and the nation-state's careful “engineering” of languages and language planning. In this process, the languages spoken in Indonesia have been (re) scaled and reevaluated. For example, the national language of Indonesia, *Bahasa Indonesia*, has been constructed as “modern” and rational, while local languages have been marginalized as being less modern, or “traditional” at best. The local languages, thus, are repositioned as traditional languages that should be “preserved” (p. 90) as emblems of local identities to celebrate “Unity in Diversity” (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), the national motto of Indonesia. Therefore, the development of the languages in Indonesia needs to be understood as closely associated with the Indonesian nation-state building process and the government's ideological construction of the languages.

Against this macro-level backdrop of Indonesia's language planning and policies, Chapter 3 moves to the local level and examines the history of Javanese, focusing on how the lower register of Javanese, *ngoko*, has been “erased,” while the higher register, *kromo*, has become the “standard” or “official” form of the Javanese language (pp. 104–105). Through her field research, Zentz has always encountered

Javanese speakers who claim that they do not know Javanese, although in fact they usually speak a lower variety of Javanese, *ngoko*, in their everyday life. From the local people's perspective, *ngoko* is not a language, but just a "daily talk" (p. 104). Zentz explains that such "erasure" of the lower variety is due to the educational programme of *muatan lokal*, or "local content courses" where the high form of Javanese, *kromo*, and the traditional Javanese scripts are taught as the Javanese local language to the exclusion of the lower form of Javanese, *ngoko*. In this process, *kromo* is reshaped and redefined as the only variety of the Javanese language, whose highly complicated grammar and archaic scripts are hard to learn. Therefore, the local language, in this case, *kromo* Javanese, becomes a form of local tradition and heritage that should be maintained and preserved. At the same time, new technological advances in communicative platforms such as the internet, and other media resources, expand Indonesians' everyday encounters from local to national and international levels, while promoting the use of Indonesian and English, not local languages, in their daily online and face-to-face interactions.

Chapter 4 explores the addition of another significant linguistic resource, English, to Indonesian speakers' linguistic repertoires in global contexts. English is placed in a rather ambiguous position in Indonesia's national project. The Indonesian government considers English to be an important tool by which Indonesian citizens can have access to a wider world market. Yet, at the same time, in the midst of Indonesia's active nationalization, the Indonesian language has been emphatically associated with Indonesianness and high morality in comparison to the stereotypical English speakers' images in the West.

This chapter on English is especially rich in ethnographic detail. In this chapter, Zentz provides a comprehensive analysis of the various local forms of language resources, and their semiotic meanings as they emerge through people's everyday interactions. At the local level in Indonesia, English rather works as an "indexical of the English language" (p. 188), which Zentz calls "local Englishing" (pp. 188–189). As illustrated with the episode of the broken English expressions written on a t-shirt sold at a local boutique, English in this local scene is not meant to be read or understood. Instead, English serves as a speech act, that is, it "acts on" the world, as its speaker "performs" his/herself as having *gensi* (prestige). The inclusion of English in the local repertoire, furthermore, opens up a new space where other types of selves and subjectivities are possible through various semiotic processes. For example, English can allow a Javanese speaker to do "opining, rejecting, disagreeing, and debating" (p. 190), which are speech acts that are rarely employed in Javanese conventional social encounters that emphasize *rukun*, the traditional values of social harmony and mutual respect. On the other hand, according to the research participants, speaking English itself makes the speaker "feel girly" (p. 191), although speaking English with a Javanese accent, a speech style often called *medhok* (country pumpkin) (pp. 191–193) can be understood to index its speaker's masculinity. The contrast between Javanese and English is projected onto the features of masculinity and femininity within the local group, where the insider–outsider relations are projected onto intra-group differences recursively in a fractal pattern (cf. Gal & Irvine, 2000). Zentz concludes this chapter with a discussion on "expanding repertoires and motivation" (pp. 200–201) that go beyond "code-bounded notions of languages and second language acquisition" (p. 201).

In the final chapter, Zentz summarizes and reiterates the theoretical implications of her findings, by suggesting two key concepts, "ideology and access" (p. 210) in understanding the processes of "inclusion, exclusion, language learning, and reshaping and evaluating language forms" (p. 210) as they take place in the promotion of nation-building and globalization, the social changes that Indonesia is currently undergoing. According to her, "it is access to language forms, and identity negotiations and motivations" (p. 211) that plays a crucial role in one's language learning and practices. However, even the possibility of people's learning and access to any particular languages has been ideologically constructed. For example, the notions of "ease" and "difficulty" of learning a specific language are in fact ideological constructs that are created and circulated through formal education and mass

media (p. 210). However, people rarely acknowledge that their access to a specific language depends largely on the shifting situations and local conditions in which the language learners are positioned, and “not necessarily a sequence of syntactic formations devoid of contexts” (pp. 210–211). In conclusion, Zentz argues for “the production of language as entirely inseparable from its local context of production” (p. 212), which is often positioned and nested in multiple and overlapping scales over time—from micro to macro, and from local, national to global.

As I mentioned above, Zentz succeeds in showing the dynamic interplay of multiple scales of language policies and practices, by combining a textual analysis of the Indonesian government's written documents on language planning and the author's ethnographic data in Central Java. Her vivid descriptions of the ethnographic data enrich our understanding of the Javanese Indonesians' language ideologies and practices as conceived and realized through people's “linguaging” or linguistic performance. By examining individual participants' personal stories and linguistic biographies through her ethnographic interviews, Zentz is able to include multiple voices of the local speakers to articulate the subtle changes in the forms and meanings of language practices in this specific time/space.

To achieve a fuller understanding of the local scenes presented in this book, however, the author may want to offer more detailed contextual information on the field site and her research participants. For example, the university (UKSW) where Zentz did her research is unique in terms of its members' religious compositions, as it is a Christian university located in Central Java, a Muslim dominant region. Accordingly, the majority of the focal research participants (five out of eight students) were Christians, and some of them were ethnically Chinese descendants (three out of eight). Therefore, the author cannot simply assume the participants to be representative of the Javanese of the region. Rather, she needs to elaborate more on the unique and distinctive characteristics of her research participants, as Chinese Christians and Javanese Muslims may develop different language practices and ideologies in accordance with their discrete religious domains and required communication styles.

Given the author's focus on the locally specific semiotic meaning-making processes, it might have enriched her findings even further to introduce and discuss some of the cultural concepts, such as *alus* and *kasar* (refinement and roughness), *gens*i (prestige), *rukun* (harmony), and *adat* (customary law), the traditional values and principles by which local people organize and regulate their social and linguistic interactions with others. Due to her main emphasis on the English language and globalization, on the other hand, she does not pay closer attention to the intricate ways in which the Indonesian and the Javanese languages are mixed and melded for specific pragmatic effects and identity formation in the neighbourhoods (cf. Errington, 1998; Goebel, 2010). With greater sensitivity to the complicated local linguistic practices, Zentz would have been able to provide more complex and nuanced ethnography of the language practices and ideologies in contemporary Indonesia.

Overall, I find this book a valuable contribution to the studies of language policies and language shifts in contemporary Indonesia. Zentz's ways of dealing with various types of data, from the textual analysis of written documents of language policies to the conversation analysis of interview scripts, offer an effective tool by which we can examine the dynamic interplays of language practices across multiple scales. By adding English to the expanding repertoires of young Indonesians, she also succeeds in complicating the local usage of languages with globalizing forces. Finally, this book will be of great interest to those scholars and students who work on Indonesia and its language ecology as well as those in sociolinguistics in general. The questions raised by Zentz are all very crucial and deserve further research in the future.

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