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Moving languages:
Syncretism and shift in Central Java

by

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Moving languages: syncretism and shift in Central Java
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Introduction

In this paper I will provide brief examples of syncretism between languages defined as Indonesian, Javanese, and English, with a focus on the former two. The examples below are based on my own recent examinations of linguistic landscapes, communicative repertoires, and language in education polices in Central Java, Indonesia. These examples combine to demonstrate that ‘modern’ approaches to language that treat language as contained and singular entities rarely capture the realities of language use on the ground, which is generally informed by much more fluid and long-term histories than language policies can, or are intended to, account for.

The data in this article are a few brief selections of data that I collected for an ethnographic study during the 2009–2010 academic year, when I was a teacher-researcher in the undergraduate English Department (ED) of a medium-sized private Christian university, here abbreviated CJCU, in a town I call Betultujuh in Central Java, Indonesia. Eight fourth-year undergraduate English majors were my focal participants, and these eight represent a common range of religious, ethnic, and geographic characteristics of the students at CJCU.
Table 1. Focal group participant biographic information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Primary language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angelo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Semarang</td>
<td>Indonesian/ngoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satriya</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Betultujuh</td>
<td>ngoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>Christian-Mennonite</td>
<td>Rural outside of Betultujuh</td>
<td>ngoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Rural outside of Betultujuh</td>
<td>ngoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Betultujuh</td>
<td>ngoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese/Javanese</td>
<td>Christian-National Church of Indonesia</td>
<td>Betultujuh</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Semarang</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidya</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese/Dutch/Javanese</td>
<td>Christian-Charismatic</td>
<td>Semarang</td>
<td>Indonesian/ngoko</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language policies and the indeterminacy of language practices

As is well understood by now, language policies are frequently based on ossified and idealized definitions of particular ‘languages’ rather than on the slippery indeterminacy of language-in-use (Moriarty, 2014). The definitions of language that de jure policies are based on in turn inform language use in public spaces, where “language displays … communicate[ ] a message, intentional or not, conscious or not, that affects, manipulates or imposes de facto language policy and practice” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 111). Thus, I treat language policies as informed by and formative of language use on the ground.

Recognizing the ‘indeterminacy of language-in-use’ is not to say, though, that ‘languages’ dissolve into chaotic or unorganized substance. Rather, I prefer to examine language as instances of linguistic performativity, or “languaging” (Pennycook, 2007), in which linguistic and communicative resources derived from multiple codes and multiple speech communities are assembled meaningfully in order to accomplish communicative
goals. To question the existence of ‘Indonesian’ and ‘Javanese’ in Betultujuh as unproblematically bounded entities then is not to suggest that linguistic landscapes and language use in general consist of linguistic free-for-alls. Even where language mixing is the rule, there are many local constraints on the forms that linguistic hybridity can take in (Huebner, 2006).

Betultujuh, with an estimated population of 175,000 in 2010 (BAPPEDA), is a small, landlocked city in a slightly elevated location in Central Java. The town is majority Javanese, but it is also one of the most diverse cities on Java. The presence of the highly esteemed CJCU attracts students from all over the archipelago who unite through a common Indonesian language. The university’s Christian presence on an island that is otherwise 95% Muslim\(^1\) has also allowed a Chinese ethnic minority to grow in the city to a larger degree than in the surrounding areas.

**Syncretic Linguistic Landscapes**

In Betultujuh, a history of national language policies attempting to enforce only Indonesian on public signs of any sort may easily lead one to assume that most signage actually is ‘purely’ in Indonesian. In this sense, the national language policy is fully successful; however, I argue that it is not fully successful in actually making all of the signs Indonesian, but rather in leading people, including myself, to believe that they are. In reviewing at greater length the many pictures I took of signs in Betultujuh during my time there, it became apparent to me that any simple, “language by language” analysis—which signs use what languages—would not be possible. The more I investigated the

\(^1\) For this percentage I made my own calculations based on numbers available at the website of Badan Pusat Statistik.
words used on many signs, the more I noticed that syncretic, or bivalent (Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Genovese, 2007) if not trivalent words were pervasive.

The pictures below are from a selection of pictures I took in the 2009-10 academic year and they are concentrated around what I consider the “commercial zone” of Betultujuh: the area most concentrated in stores and selling/buying activities, and with the highest concentration of pedestrian activity.

In Central Java and specifically in Betultujuh, the Javanese ethnicity and language dominate in daily talk despite its higher level of diversity. There is minimal international immigration, but there is substantial intranational immigration. While there is some segregation among these ethnic groups, all still share the national language, and those involved at the university and its surrounding boarding houses engage in much interethnic contact. In signage, then, most of the immigrants to Java, being of Indonesian nationality, are expected to be able to understand what the signs say. Additionally, these immigrants often come to understand a basic set of Javanese vocabulary words in a community where the informal language of communication is often Javanese. The Indonesian government has tried numerous times, most recently in 2009, to require that signs be in Indonesian only, except where a local word is absolutely necessary. That is to say, despite some syncretism on these signs, they can in large part be officially considered Indonesian, despite which ‘separate language’ any word actually originates in, which is often unclear.

The first sign I wish to discuss appears outside the local Avon store, as seen at the top of the front window in Image 1. To the left of the store name, there is a banner advertising “OX,yGNdw”.

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Based on the pictures that accompany the brand, we can imagine that this product is a water drink with added oxygen. The super- and sub-scripted ‘y’ and ‘e’ letters evoke
the periodic table of chemical elements, perhaps signalling, for those who recognize this, scientific knowledge possessed by the producer of this drink, as well as some aesthetic playfulness, perhaps to attract attention among a wider swathe of potential consumers.

The “dw” ending on the word Oxygen, as we read further, stands literally for “drinking water”; however, it is a clever play on words because the word *dewe*, pronounced like the individual letters, is actually a Javanese word for “alone” or “independent”. While it is not recognized as an Indonesian word in any dictionary I have consulted nor in my regular Indonesian conversations, *dewe* is a word that I frequently encountered while living in Betultujuh, and thus the reader might be expected to know the word even if they are not a long-term resident of the town nor a native Javanese speaker. Perhaps it is the case that this play on words also might draw in a reader unfamiliar with English ‘oxygen’ and the English pronunciation of ‘dw’ by signaling, in a local language, that this product might enhance independence or the strengthening of the body.

Not far from the Avon store, a strip of furniture stores appear. English is quite common in furniture advertisements (see Images 4 and 5), and this is in contrast to other signage in the area. For instance, in Image 3, a sign I saw directly under the sign in Image 4 is handwritten in a more formal Indonesian and says:

**NEEDED.**

**WORKER: WOMAN**

**EXPERIENCE**

Store of Rich Sources
It is suggested in the language choice here that useful professional or formal communication, which in this context can be expected to mostly take place among Javanese people, switches to Indonesian language, at least in writing. This also indicates a general level of “buy-in” among local residents to the national and official Indonesian language, as reflected in the choice of Indonesian and not Javanese in an informal handwritten sign. This language choice reflects the fact that Javanese is increasingly not seen in writing; it might simply be people’s expectation by now that any written sign should not be in the language that they speak daily, but in Indonesian, the language of written and formal communication. The Dreamline banner (Image 4) above the handwritten sign, and the American Pillo store sign to their right (Image 5), are largely in English, excluding the store’s officially documented name, street address, and telephone number in the bottom third of the sign.
On the American Pillo sign, “Toko Sumber Jaya”, translates as something like ‘store of rich sources’. The Indonesian word jaya is, in Javanese, joyo. There is frequent alternation from ‘a’, pronounced /a/ in Indonesian to a Javanese pronunciation of /ɔ/ or /o/, which can be written ‘a’ or ‘o’; thus, Javanese ‘jaya’ can be written in Javanese as ‘jaya’ or ‘joyo’ and still pronounced ‘joyo’ (/dʒɔjo/) in Javanese, and a Javanese speaker
reading Indonesian might very well say ‘joyo’ despite the ‘jaya’ spelling. According to two dictionaries I have consulted and two friends from Betultujuh whom I asked about some of these pictures, ‘toko’ and ‘sumber’ are bivalent: part of both Indonesian and Javanese lexicons, though it took them some conversation to realize this (I address the English upper 2/3 of the sign elsewhere (Zentz & O’Connor, under review)).

The local synchronic “snapshots” that we take in linguistic landscape studies are ubiquitously rooted in diachronic, historical processes, which create local meanings. Important to this analysis and to working toward defining a more well-defined framework for analyzing linguistic landscapes, two concepts are essential to keep in mind: 1) mobility is part and parcel of all linguistic landscapes, whether it be people or texts that move; 2) one factor that might be truly defining of globalization is that the blurry definition of what ‘a language’ is and where one language ends and another begins is now screamingly evident, due to technologies of signage and to ubiquitous mobility across socially, economically, and politically defined borders. With regard to language policies, it is clear to see that from the top-down, languaging becomes what policy makers wish it to be: Javanese-Indonesian syncretism is widely understood to just be Indonesian when many people look at these signs. Only a diachronic component can bring us to understand how very unclean the borders between languages are, and how borderlessness between de jure languages is rooted in sociopolitically and -economically influenced de facto worldwide and historical movement, of texts, and people, which we will see more of below.
Syncretic Repertoires

The images above quite briefly reflect the local language ecology, which I have drawn out in Table 2 based on research participant Satriya’s descriptions of his language use in multiple contexts locally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Languages and their practices in Betultujuh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Javanese (ngoko)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Javanese (kromo)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Javanese Indonesian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese Indonesian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>other dialects of Indonesian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized³ Indonesian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classical Arabic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>multiple languages indigenous to other islands (Torajanese, Batak, etc.)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satriya had learned to regard ‘his Indonesian’ as locally and ethnically marked in a way that placed his accent and vocabulary low on a nationalized scale of language value (see Blommaert 2010 and Zentz 2014 for discussion of scale). This was made apparent to him beyond time spent with his girlfriend, who was from another island in Indonesia and would frequently tease Satriya for speaking Indonesian with a medhok, or ‘country bumpkin’, accent. In one class essay, Satriya described an interaction he had had with debate competitors from Jakarta and other highly reputed universities on Java. He
expressed that the non-Javanese, elite university students he encountered at this regional debate competition did not want to ‘get close with’ him and his other Javanese peers. As he wrote:

Text 1: … their accent is still close to my Javanese accent…

Even though [the other Javanese debaters] speak Indonesian I feel easier to get close with them compared to other debaters from [Universitas Indonesia, in Jakarta], [Indonesian State College of Accountancy, in Jakarta], and UGM [Universitas Gadjah Mada, in Yogyakarta]. At that time, I felt that students from Jakarta and UGM do not want to close with my friends and me from [CJCU]. I think that the main reason why I can easily get close to them compared to other universities from Jakarta is because their accent is still close to my Javanese accent so it makes our communication easier although all of us speak using Indonesian.

(Satriya, Sociolinguistics Essay, 9 November 2009)

Satriya scaled not only these other students’ language, but also the students themselves, the universities they attended and the larger cities from whence they hailed, higher than his Javanese, smaller-university and smaller-town, peers. The translocal Indonesian language did serve to unify participants in an ‘Indonesian space’ beyond their separate localities; however, within this space, a Javanese variety of Indonesian united Javanese students under a sort of ‘pan-Javanese’ identity that Satriya felt was scaled lower than students from larger cities and bigger, more prestigious schools. Furthermore, Satriya assumed that these students, in their elite positions, must have held a certain disdain for himself, his Javanese peers and the Javanese dialect of Indonesian that they spoke.

As he progressed through his English studies at CJCU, Satriya accumulated new communicative resources and combined them in novel ways across languages. With his expanding communicative repertoire, he found himself resituating his language use locally by using multiple communicative resources across defined ‘languages’, and in the
following text, using any and every code and communicative resource available to him to reach his goals:

**Text 2:** … if I use Indonesian my initial intention somehow is not fulfilled yet.

Nowadays, I use Indonesian more often than my Javanese because I spend almost of my daily activities with the people who talk Indonesian. For example, when I talk to my college friends, my girlfriend, and my debate students, I use Indonesian. When I teach my students at [the high school] Debate club, I speak English as a medium of instruction but when they do not understand what I mean I change it into Indonesian. I feel being benefited if I use English or Indonesian rather than Javanese to them, because they will obey and follow all my instructions. However, I sometime do not like the gap which exists between teacher and students when I use English, or Indonesian. Therefore, I talked to some of them using Javanese, especially to my students who were prepared for [regional debate] competition. I talk to them using both Javanese and Indonesian to make them more cheerful and more relax. Sometimes, I make code-switching between Indonesian to Javanese because if I use Indonesian my initial intention somehow is not fulfilled yet. Further, I do not feel comfort when I have to speak Indonesian because many of my friends and students said that my Indonesian is so ‘Medog’ (has a strong Javanese accent), so I sometimes switch my Indonesian to Javanese in order to make me comfortable and my interlocutor get my point instead of laughing at me. However, Indonesian has given me a lot of benefit in my social interaction. For example, I can get closer to my friends who dominantly speak Indonesian. Then, I also found that I used Indonesian in purchasing something in more modern market such as mall, shops, and stores, whereas I know that the sellers can speak Javanese, and they know that I can speak Javanese too.

(Satriya, Sociolinguistics Essay, 9 November 2009)

For Satriya, Indonesian was just a language of circumstance, garnering little affective attachment and even a sense of being demeaned for being his Javanese self in Indonesian. At the same time, there was strong instrumental motivation to use it—even to use it more than any other language he spoke—as it was the common academic and inter-ethnic Indonesian language, and even the language of higher classed activities such as mall-going despite the fact that his interlocutors also spoke Javanese. Satriya maintained a strong pride in being Javanese, however, and although he felt devalued in a national space because of it, his medhok masculinity actually helped him to feel more secure.
within this national atmosphere when he was able to display along with evidence his higher education (this I explain more elsewhere, see Zentz, 2014). He wanted to use English and the communicative resources he had gained in English spaces in his life; he had to use Indonesian; but he would remain fully, proudly, Javanese and medhok while using them all.

**The Protection of Local Languages: *Muatan Lokal***

After the very monolingualizing and monoculturalizing regimes of Sukarno and Suharto from 1949 to 1998, it was not until Indonesia’s Reformation period, beginning in 1998 with social, economic and political upheaval, that President Habibie’s (previously Suharto’s Vice President) national government undertook to restore the nation’s emphasis on the pluralism underlying its one unifying language:

Persatuan dan kesatuan yang dibangun itu tidak pernah dimaksudkan untuk meniadakan kemajemukan masyarakat. Kemajemukan masyarakat sama sekali bukan merupakan kendala atau hambatan bagi persatuan dan kesatuan.

(Republika Online, 1998a, cited in Foulcher, 2000, p. 400)

*The unity and one-ness we are building is never intended to deny the plurality of our society. Social plurality in no way represents a restriction of or an obstacle to unity and one-ness.*

(ibid., p. 405)

Keith Foulcher points out that never before, throughout both the Sukarno and Suharto regimes, had such an emphasis on pluralism been described by an Indonesian president in commemoration of the *Sumpah Pemuda*, or Youth Congress, the early 20th c. independence movement. In light of Suharto’s departure, “the call for greater openness was part of a widespread rejection of the New Order's emphasis on conformity,
standardisation and centralisation in the interests of a de-centred and localised social and political pluralism” (Foulcher, 2000, p. 400).

Habibie’s and the national government’s call for decentralization may not only have been a direct rejection of New Order centralized policies, as it also fits well with calls for language preservation that started as early as the 1980s (Bjork, 2004).

The national government began more genuine attempts to decentralize after 1998. *Muatan lokal*, or local content courses, were the educational component to this (Bjork, 2004). Provinces are given priority over what their own *muatan lokal* (local content) curricula look like. The national Department of Education’s National Ministry of Education Regulation (*Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional*) 22/2006 requires two hours per week of *muatan lokal* study, the content of which is left to the discretion of province level governors:

Muatan lokal merupakan kegiatan kurikuler untuk mengembangkan kompetensi yang disesuaikan dengan ciri khas dan potensi daerah, termasuk keunggulan daerah, yang materinya tidak dapat dikelompokkan ke dalam mata pelajaran yang ada. Substansi muatan lokal ditentukan oleh satuan pendidikan.

*Muatan lokal is curricular content intended for the development of competencies that are tailored to the region’s characteristics and potential, including regional specialties that cannot be grouped into course subjects already available. The substance of muatan lokal will be decided by the educational department.*

(Department of Education, 2006)

Central Java’s own prescription for *muatan lokal*, as described in Resolution by the Governor of Central Java (*Keputusan Gubernur Jawa Tengah*) 423.5/5/2010 (see Appendix), presents a curriculum for the teaching of Javanese language to students throughout primary and secondary schooling. It draws out goals for students to become conversant in both “literary” and “nonliterary” forms of expression in Javanese, and it
aims for them to understand the Javanese syllabary writing system. These are positive aims toward the maintenance of this regional language; however, the curriculum written in Resolution 423.5/5/2010 presents a syllabus that looks much like language education programs that reify and stereotype cultures, and that early language planners endorsed (see Alisjahbana, 1971, 1974; Moeliono, 1986). Students I asked about these courses ubiquitously referenced their all-around uselessness and even discouraging effects.

Additionally, while these muatan lokal classes were legislated at two hours per week, students regularly told me they attended just one hour per week in school (Smith-Hefner (2009) corroborates these claims).

In my experiences talking to both high school and English Department students, muatan lokal classes had a reputation as immensely boring and as a place where students who daily speak Javanese go to get told they cannot speak it. The result has been a reification of a pre-modern or “proto-national” (Errington, 2008) local “high” culture, placed in the past and out of touch with today’s youth, who, as research participant Nisa once stated, learn that they can “no longer” speak it. It seems that one thing these courses do effectively teach is something not written into the curriculum: a feeling of nostalgia, consisting of ceremonial poetry (geguritan); a culturo-religious mythology through wayang kulit (leather shadow puppet shows largely based in a local hybrid form of Hindu and Muslim mythologies that is now often associated with superstition and backwardness); music practices with gamelan, an instrument very important to wayang performances; and learning the Javanese script mentioned above, now largely limited to symbolic purposes. Students generally come out of the classes able to write their own and others’ names in it, but nothing else. Further, the muatan lokal curriculum has eliminated the
lower register of Javanese, *ngoko*, which is still most Javanese speakers’ primary language of communication (see Table 2 above), from the field of languages by not including it past Grade One. Ngoko is thus legislatively placed outside of the scope of “the Javanese language”; it is portrayed instead as a children’s version of it—something to be grown out of. Based on the written curriculum and on student reports, it seems that Javanese classes are teaching little about a living culture, and this is reinforced through the quite limited resource allocation that these local content courses receive as well as through national discourses, policies, signage, and media, which communicate only through the national language.

Despite the overwhelmingly poor reception of *muatan lokal* classes among students, though, it still seemed enough, according to some of the people I spoke with, to keep the Javanese language alive and well:

[Today at the] Depdiknas (*Department of Education*), I met with Pak A, director of [X] section of the Depdiknas Semarang. I asked him about the laws that are put out by his office and he said that SBI [International Standard Schools] stuff comes from national, *muatan lokal* comes from a Surat Keputusan Gubernur [Governor’s Decree] concerning *muatan lokal*. He said that the point of *muatan lokal* is for people to appreciate local culture…He mentioned at one point that Japan has a good culture of maintaining respect for their own culture. This is one thing that *muatan lokal* is there to promote—what’s called Etika in Indonesian, sopan-santun in Javanese...

(Fieldnotes, April 11, 2010)

The goal of *muatan lokal* was clear, and Pak A’s faith in it seemed certain. *Muatan lokal* in Java will be enough to uphold the Javanese “ethic”.

Moreover, many of the same students who had taken and generally been bored in their own *muatan lokal* classes had just as much faith that these classes would maintain and preserve Javanese culture and language as did Pak A. In the following group
conversation, Dewi, Ayu and Dian all explain why Javanese is not under threat

(translation follows original):

Transcript 1: It’s not possible for local languages to be left behind.

Dewi: kalau bahasa local ditinggalkan juga nggak bisa, ya? soalnya pakai-
sekarang mulai dari SD sampai SMA itu anak dapat pelajaran di sekolah
dapat pelajaran bahasa jawa. jadi kalau ditinggalkan nggak mungkin.

Ayu: terus misalnya di rumah diajari bahasa jawa, secara simple, seperti saya,
dulu saya waktu kecil belajarnya bahasa jawa kromo. dari kecil saya
tahunnya kromo. tapi setelah saya masuk sekolah, as long kindergarten and
elementary school uh, i forget my kromo and then I switch into ngoko
sampai sekarang. jadi saya itu sudah lupa kromonya karena like TK itu
saya sudah interact sama teman-teman dan teman-teman pakai javanese
semua. dan saya ikut-ikutan pakai bahasa indonesia, sudah nggak pernah
pakai yang kromo lagi.

Lauren: okay. so what language will you use with your children at home?

Ayu: home?

Dian: at home?

Lauren: at home.

Dian: javanese.

Lauren: javanese?

Dian: javanese. i think i agree with ayu. if we teach bahasa indonesia and english
in fact uh, their grand mother and father speak in javanese, the children will
be able to adapt.

Lauren: okay.

Dian: kan bisa sendiri gitu lho.

Lauren: okay.

Translation (original Indonesian in italics, English in plain font)

Dewi: it’s not possible for local languages to be left behind. because they use-
now starting from elementary to high school kids get studies at school get
javanese language studies. so it’s not possible for it to be left behind.

Ayu: then for example at home I was taught javanese, in a simple way. like I,
first when I was little I learned javanese kromo. from when I was little I
knew kromo. but after I entered school, as long kindergarten and
elementary school uh, I forget my kromo and then I switch into ngoko until
now. so I like already forgot kromo like at kindergarten I already
interacted with friends and my friends all used javanese. and I joined in
using indonesian, already I never used kromo again.

Lauren: okay. so what language will you use with your children at home?

Ayu: home?

Dian: at home?

Lauren: at home.
Dian: javanese. I think I agree with ayu. if we teach indonesian and english in fact uh, their grandmother and father speak in javanese, the children will be able to adapt.
Lauren: okay.
Dian: you know they can do it on their own like that.
Lauren: okay.

(Lidya, Ayu, Dian, Dewi, Interview 4, May 20, 2010)

This conversation is framed with students’ statements that Javanese will not be lost. Dewi, herself a descendant of Javanese royalty who was raised in an urban environment and claims to speak only Indonesian, starts out by explaining that it is not possible for Javanese to be lost because it is taught in muatan lokal courses. The excerpt closes with Dian’s claim that her future children’s Javanese proficiency will be guaranteed as they will speak Javanese with only their grandparents, and Indonesian and English with her and her future husband. However, right in between these two statements Ayu, in what seems to be her attempt to agree with Dewi and Dian—that muatan lokal classes are enough to maintain Javanese—contradictorily tells us all the story of how, from the moment she started going to school she shifted her own language use away from the high register kromo (which a child of that age would not be expected to speak much of anyway) and into ngoko and Indonesian. Amid their very own strong claims in many of the conversations we had over the year to language loss or shift toward Indonesian (see Zentz 2015), these three students maintain beliefs that Javanese will not be lost because it is being safeguarded in the same muatan lokal classes that, by reputation, do not teach students to speak Javanese, and because their children will speak the language with only their grandparents. Furthermore, Ayu demonstrates well—even if unintentionally—how the community fabric through which kromo would be learned no longer exists, by claiming that she was learning kromo before she started her schooling, but as soon as she
started leaving home and spending her days at school, those moments where she might have learned kromo decreased, peer pressure to use other forms of language increased, and her kromo faded away.

Angelo, on the other hand, did not provide a convincing case that muatan lokal would keep Javanese in use. While he did speak ngoko in daily conversation with many of his friends, he claimed that before he started school he never had seen Javanese script, and that his family’s use of kromo was not fluent. In comparison to his exposure to English, which I will not discuss here, his learning of Javanese felt forced, “useless,” and unwelcome.

**Transcript 2:** I didn’t feel interested.

_Angelo:_ dari awal itu udah nganu- jadi pelajaran bahasa jawa waktu kecil, yang pertama kali aku dapat itu udah nggak enak.

_Lauren:_ u-huh.

_Angelo:_ udah nggak enak, jadi dipaksa harus bisa menulis jawa, dipaksa harus tahu bahasa krama, terus bahasa gini, gini, gini itu jadi nggak suka.

_Lauren:_ ya. okay.

... 

_Lauren:_ okay. tetapi juga ada exposure bahasa jawa?

_Angelo:_ sangat minim.

_Lauren:_ okay.

_Angelo:_ sangat minim. karena di keluargaku nggak ada yang bisa bahasa jawa one hundred percent. termasuk yang sampai aksara Jawanya dan sampai, termasuk bahasa krama-kramanya yang ini itu nggak ada yang seratus persen bisa. dan itu memang aku pertama kali belajar itu murni baru, sangat bener-bener baru.

_Lauren:_ okay

_Angelo:_ diperkenalkan dengan huruf jawa baru. dan aku nggak merasa interested, merasa, “useless lah belajar ini semua.” so, I learned that not because I want to but because I have to.

**Translation** (original Indonesian in italics, English in plain font)

_Angelo:_ from the beginning already- so javanese classes when I was little, from the very first time it already didn’t feel good.

_Lauren:_ u-huh.
Angelo: it already didn’t feel good, so I was forced, had to be able to write in javanese, forced to know kromo, forced in language this, this, this like that so I didn’t like it.

Lauren: yeah. okay.

…

Lauren: okay. but there was also exposure to javanese?

Angelo: so minimal.

Lauren: okay.

Angelo: so minimal. because in my family nobody can speak one hundred percent javanese. including javanese script and kromo that’s like this or like that, nobody can one hundred percent. and that the first time I studied it pure, it was truly really new.

Lauren: okay.

Angelo: introduced to new javanese script. and I didn’t feel interested. I felt, “well this is useless studying all of this.” so, I learned that not because I want to but because I have to.

(Angelo, Interview 2, November 27, 2009)

Javanese class was just a drag, forced, and a place where a good student like Angelo went to get bad grades.

By relegating the only institutionally ratified speaking of Javanese to a two-hour maximum per week language class modeled on “Culture with a big C” classes that are actually taught through the primary medium of Indonesian (National Law 24/2009 Article 29 requires this, Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, (n.d.),) and that consist of a cultural essentialization that scholars of language teaching take increasingly critical views of (see Block, 2007; Canagarajah, 2008; Kramsch, 2009; Pennycook, 2001), the government has created more contexts where Indonesian becomes the primary acceptable mode of communication and high Javanese a language of the past. Other forces such as nationalized media accumulate to work against Javanese’s maintenance: toward the elimination of kromo, toward more spaces for local syncretism between ngoko and Indonesian, and toward a Javanese dialect of Indonesian becoming the widely preferred mode of daily communication (see also Cole, 2010). In school-based attempts to preserve
local cultures based on modernist language ideologies, state ideologies about learning language do not necessarily lack an understanding that there are connections between language performance and cultural ways of interacting; it seems, however, that their attempts to preserve these cultural fabrics function under an assumption that cultures can be upheld by the same institutions and materialities that exclude them instead of by the entire community fabrics that previously upheld them\(^2\).

**Conclusion**

In nationalism, and especially in 50 years of extremely and punitively centralized national governmentality (from 1949-1998), material and ideological resources are wholly dedicated to the national language, ensuring its spread and survival often at the expense of others. Language shift is rapidly taking place, both in Java and throughout Indonesia more broadly (J. Bertrand, 2003; Cohn & Ravindranath, 2013, 2014; Florey & Bolton, 1997; McConvell & Florey, 2005).

All of the students who participated in my study at CJCU have enjoyed great access to the resources that make them proper Javanese Indonesian citizens. They are highly educated and thus have lived daily since childhood through institutionalized interactions that consist in large part of the Indonesian language and of learning the proper Indonesian citizenship behaviors that lead to school success. On the other hand it seems that they have had little access to the daily interaction-based resources that an individual would require in order to attain the levels of proficiency and “correctness” required of what at least older generations assume to be proper Javanese young adults of their social location within their home communities. It is not simply that kromo language is disappearing and

\(^2\) Though the nuances of language use in prior eras are just as complicated, see Anderson, 1966, R. Bertrand, 2005. I am developing this information in my forthcoming book.
that Indonesian and ngoko are syncretizing; rather, it is the community interactions that are and were spaces where kromo would be spoken and passed on to younger generations are decreasingly coming to pass; informal interactions are increasingly influenced by nationally and media-dominant Indonesian; and signage is ideologically and often linguistically Indonesian and English dominant. Each speaker’s linguistic repertoire is constructed in proportion with the spaces where s/he spends time and the amounts of time that they spend there: Formal interactions have moved to the space of institutions like the Indonesian-medium public school, formal conversations in nationalized media take place in Indonesian, and pop culture prestige takes place in a multi-ethnic (yet Javanese dominant) national Indonesian speaking community. The entire linguistic ecology of Central Java, one which for centuries has been quite fluid, multi- and poly-lingual, continues to shift since nationalization, which, despite recent decentralization, continues to work in favor of (multiple, syncretized dialects of) Indonesian and less use of local languages.
Research Resources Cited


References


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>STANDAR KOMPETENSI</th>
<th>KOMPETENSI DASAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MENDENGARKAN Mampu mendengarkan dan memahami berbagai wacana lisan, melalui mendengarkan berbagai bunyi/suara atau bunyi bahasa, dan tembang dolanan.</td>
<td>1.1. Mendengarkan dan membedakan berbagai bunyi/suara dan atau bunyi bahasa.  &lt;br&gt; 1.2. Mendengarkan tembang dolanan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>BERBICARA Mampu mengungkapkan gagasan dan perasaan secara lisan melalui memperkenalkan diri, menyapa, menjawab sapaa sesuai ungkah-ungguh.</td>
<td>2.1. Memperkenalkan diri menggunakan kalimat sederhana dengan ragam bahasa tertentu.  &lt;br&gt; 2.2. Menyapa dengan kalimat sederhana dan santun.  &lt;br&gt; 2.3. Menjawab sapaan sesuai ungkah-ungguh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>MEMBACA Mampu mengeja huruf, membaca suku kata, kata, dan kalimat sederhana dengan nyaring.</td>
<td>3.1. Mengeja huruf.  &lt;br&gt; 3.2. Membaca suku kata dan kata.  &lt;br&gt; 3.3. Membaca nyaring kalimat sederhana dengan lafal yang tepat dan lancar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENT STANDARDS FOR LOCAL CONTENT COURSE TOPIC (JAVANESE LANGUAGE)
ELEMENTARY/MADRASSAH AND GRADUATION STANDARDS FOR LOCAL CONTENT COURSE TOPIC (JAVANESE LANGUAGE) ELEMENTARY/MADRASSAH

A. CONTENT STANDARDS FOR LOCAL CONTENT COURSE TOPIC (JAVANESE LANGUAGE)
ELEMENTARY/MADRASSAH:
consist of:

1. Class: I (One), Semester: I(One)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Competency Standard</th>
<th>Base Competency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>LISTEN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to listen and understand various oral discourses, through listening to various sounds/voices or language sounds, and <em>dolanan</em> (children’s play) songs.</td>
<td>1.1. Listen to and differentiate various sounds/voices and language sounds. 1.2. Listen to <em>dolanan</em> (children’s play) songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>SPEAK</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to produce ideas and feelings orally through introducing oneself, asking, and answering greetings in accordance with <em>unggah-ungguh</em> (Javanese customs).</td>
<td>2.1. Introduce oneself through the use of simple sentences in the proper Javanese register. 2.2. Greet with simple and polite sentences. 2.3. Answer greetings in accordance with <em>unggah-ungguh</em> (Javanese customs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>READ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to write letters, read syllables, words, and simple sentences aloud.</td>
<td>3.1. Write letters. 3.2. Read syllables and words. 3.3. Read aloud simple sentences with precise and fluent pronunciation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>WRITE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to write letters, syllables, words, simple sentences with free-standing letters.</td>
<td>4.1. Write letters. 4.2. Write syllables and words. 4.3. Write simple sentences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>