
Welcome to 'Indonesia'! Feminist Readings of “teach yourself Indonesian” Self-Learn- ing Language Course¹

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Abstrak

Bertepatan dengan perayaan 80 tahun Sumpah Pemuda 1928, tulisan ini menawarkan bacaan mengenai materi belajar bahasa mandiri “Teach yourself Indonesian.” Materi ini ditawarkan kepada dunia yang berbahasa Inggris, metode mempelajari bahasa Indonesia, juga “menggali” Indonesia dan bahasa Indonesia. Bacaan yang disajikan mengambil dari perspektif bahwa konsep, ide, dan norma dibentuk melalui pengulangan dalam praktik sosial sehari-hari, seperti pengulangan dari enam belas unit “Teach yourself Indonesian”. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan dari bacaan unit pembelajaran, siapakah pelajar “normal” bahasa Indonesia dan di sisi lain, dengan siapa saja pelajar akan berinteraksi dengan memfokuskan pada konstruksi dan batasan norma gender. Tulisan ini juga secara singkat mencerminkan kejadian Mei 1998 “yang terlupakan”, yang membentuk bagian penting dari proses penulis mempelajari Indonesia dan bahasa Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Indonesia, Orang Indonesia, Mei 1998

Abstract

Coinciding with the celebration of 80 years of *Sumpah Pemuda 1928*, this paper offers a feminist close reading of the “teach yourself Indonesian” self-learning language material. “Teach yourself Indonesian” offers for the English speaking world, ways to learn bahasa Indonesia, but it also offers ways to “discover” Indonesia and Indonesians. The close reading provided in this paper draws from the perspective that concepts, ideas and norms are constituted through reiteration in everyday social practices, such through repetition of the sixteen learning units of the “teach yourself Indonesian”. This paper aims to illustrate from the readings of the learning units, who are the “normalized” students of Indonesian language, and who, on the other hand, Indonesians and Indonesia with whom the students will interact, with a particular focus on constructs and boundaries of gender norms. Paper also briefly reflects the “forgotten” events of May 1998, that form an important part of the authors process of learning Indonesia(n).

Keywords: Bahasa, Indonesian, May 1998

INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE STAGE FOR PERFORMATIVITY

Listen to these introductions several times. Then when you feel that the sounds are familiar, have ago at repeating after the Indonesian speakers...So now (laughter) when you are familiar with the self-introductions in this section, we are going to let you hear them again. But this time, at full, natural conversation speed (Byrnes and Nyimas 2003, Unit I: Welcome to Indonesia).

One part of the learning a new language is learning

the fluency of using it through repetition. Repetition at first is slow and feels cumbersome. However, with the effort of doing homework and listening to the dialogues in the learning units again and again, the student is rewarded by “getting things right” and being able to use right words and idioms in the right contexts – even perhaps in real life situations. A closer look at the language course materials is not only about the vocabulary and grammatical structures. It offers possibilities to understand how course materials- such

as dialogues in the learning units – simultaneously construct the world that is being introduced and discussed. How certain ideas and concepts become “normalised”.

Judith Butler’s (1999 [1990]) work on performativity of gender provides an important entry point to talk about repetition and how gendered subjects are produced through materials such as “teach yourself Indonesian”. As Alecia Yongblood Jackson (2004) has argued, performativity for Butler,

does not refer to performance by subject, but a performativity that constitutes a subject and produces the space of conflicting subjectivities that contest the foundations and origins of stable identity categories (Jackson 2004, 675).

This process can never be final, and thus, there is always space for resistance and subversion: the ideals what Indonesia, a student of bahasa Indonesian, Indonesianess, or being Indonesian woman, or man could mean. An analytical focus on discourses allows us to understand how the world around us is constructed and made understandable to us. While at once it allows ways to understand the world, it also shows the limitations of sayable (Foucault 1991, 59) – what remains absent from the picture painted for us.

Sara Ahmed (2006) has noted

This paradox – with effort it becomes effortless – is precisely what makes history disappear in the moment of its enactment. The repetition of the work is what makes the work disappear (Ahmed 2006, 56).

While repeating the units of the “teach yourself Indonesian” language course first time in 2006, it suddenly occurred to me. To understand what appears to be normal, requires the listener to play, pause, rewind, and replay; and pay close attention to the disappearing histories, meanings and assumptions, the processes of normalizing that are lost in the repetition.

This paper, coinciding the celebration of 80 years of *Sumpah Pemuda 1928*, focuses on the analysis of “teach yourself Indonesian”, the material with which I started my bahasa Indonesian studies in 2006 before

arriving in Indonesia for the first time. My aim in this paper is to illustrate the representation of “Indonesia” and “Indonesians”, but also representation of those “who arrive”, and “learn Indonesian”. The book under close reading is the 2003 edition of the “teach yourself Indonesian”. The analysis does not attempt to be exhaustive, merely it is an attempt to illustrate what intertextuality and feminist close reading “does to a text”. The focus of the analysis is on the dialogues and the illustrations of the book. Thus, this essay does not claim to have completed the close reading. In fact, keeping the method in mind, it would be impossible to claim that there is a particular moment when the reading has come to its end.

The structure of this paper is the following: the first part introduces a theoretical framework for a method for feminist reading. The second part, after short introduction to “teach yourself” book series, provides examples of feminist close reading of the bahasa Indonesian learning materials.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist method of reading that will be introduced next can be located belonging to the “linguistic turn”² in International Relations, where the focus is often in the writings of French philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes, which are further used and developed by various literature theorists and political and social scientists (Gregory 1989, xiii-xiv; also DerDerian & Shapiro 1989).

What seems to be common for “linguistic turn”, is the interest in how knowledge, truth and meanings are constituted (Gregory 1989, xiii). The focus of the research is on workings of language that construct the world, concepts and ideas that are perceived as facts/values, and discourses that constitute “regimes of truth” (Gregory 1989, xiv). Thus, identities, knowledge and power relations and constructions of Self and Otherness are placed into the centre of the analysis. This analysis involves a critical interrogation of the exclusionary operations by which “positions” are established and it requires that concepts and terms

used in the research are reused and rethought .

Not all feminists, however, accept the idea of linguistic turn without criticism. For example, postcolonial feminists are critical about postmodern idea of the loss of essence of concepts and identities (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvii) and say that although postmodernism can be practiced as an oppositional critique of modernism, it remains on a continuum with modernism (Grewal and Kaplan 1994, 4). Furthermore, the fear of essentialism has created confusion regarding the interconnections between location, identity, and the construction of knowledge (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvii). However, postmodernity is also seen as a useful concept to analyze the way that modernity is produced in diverse locations and how these cultural productions are used and circulated. The analysis enables to understand processes of domination and subordination in those diverse locations. (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvii; Grewal and Kaplan 1994, 5).

Along with the lines of linguistic turn and Judith Butler in particular, I argue that instead of being a man or a woman, it is necessary to replace the verb being with a vocabulary of action – becoming or doing. To Judith Butler, identity categories, such as gender, should be understood as normative and performative activity, which constitutes itself through the cultural and social repetition and rearticulation. Concepts do not exist before they are performed in a social context and they become seen as natural through regulative knowledge and power relations. Thus, gender can be thought of a way of acting the body, yet one does not become gender through a free choice, as gender identity is governed by taboos, conventions and laws that operates within social practices (Butler 2004, 41).

The distinction between sex (male/female), a matter of biology, and gender (masculine/feminine), a set of culturally and socially defined characteristics, has been central to a significant body of gender theory, and this distinction is nowadays seen as a ‘natural’ part of Introduction to Gender/Women Studies courses: “sex is a natural, biological fact, but gender is

a cultural, historical and linguistic production or achievement” (Chambers and Carver 2008, 56). Some scholars locate the emergence of the word ‘jender’ or ‘gender’ into the Indonesian vocabulary after introduction of the English concept by Asia Foundation and Ford Foundation in early 1990s. These days it is an integral part of taught Women and Gender studies, and widely used by the women’s NGOs (see e.g. Jamil and Lubis 2003 and Rinaldo 2006). A common notion of gender is based on the idea of binary opposition of two sexes and exclusionary categories of man and woman are created. Based on this construct, one can be only one gender, never the other, or both.

In the Indonesian context, in addition to the sex/gender (*jenis kelamin/ jender*) divide which has been an important part of the feminist discourse since 1990s, a third concept, *kodrat* (natural character) is as important. Term *kodrat* is used to refer to the biological ‘facts’ or intrinsic nature of woman and man, which has also gained religious meanings as ‘God’s will’ and ‘creation of God’ (Tiwon 1996, 48). At the national level the concept ‘women’s nature’ is built on various pre-colonial and mainly selected Javanese aristocratic ideals during the colonial period, although they are portrayed as the norm and universal (Wieringa 2003, 72; 2002, 35; Dzuhayatin 2001, 256-260).

For Butler, the category of ‘woman’ achieves its stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix in which

for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositional and hierarchical through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (Butler 1999[1990], 208 footnote 6).

The assumption of coherence of bodies requires processes of regulation, where certain behaviours and ways of life are constituted as ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ - against which all people are measured (Carabine 1996, 59-60). The concept ‘normative violence’, or ‘violence of norms’, refers to violence which takes place in the formation of subjectivities. An attempt to denaturalise gender aims to make this violence visible (Butler 1999

[1990], xx-xxii; Chambers and Carver 2008, 78, 81).

I use the concept normative heterosexuality to refer to the norms that govern heterosexuality and regulations that control heterosexual practices. For example roles between men and women in the public, and in the private sphere. This means that there are heterosexual practices that are non-normative and "queer" or odd (Richardson 1996, 2-9). However, instead of insisting a binary between normativity and non-normativity, I understand normativity as a gliding scale, and a product of continuous negotiation of norms that take place in various locations, and historical moments (See e.g. Bhaiya and Wieringa 2007; and Wieringa, Katjasungkana and Hidayana 2007).

To be able to locate the representations of normativity, I use the concept of feminist close reading. By close reading I refer to what Sara Ahmed has also called as

reading which works against, rather than through, a text's own construction of itself (how the text 'asks to be read')..The disobedient reader...is a reader who interrupts the text with questions that demand a re-thinking of how it works, of how and why it works as it does, and for whom (Ahmed 1998, 17).

Critical reading can involve simple tactics of hesitating and pausing. It does not mean that critical reading assumes a 'meaning' or 'truth' that can be uncovered. Rather, the aim of the reading is to make judgment on how those texts constitute their objects. (Ahmed 1998, 14, 19-20). Concepts such close reading make the reader to focus on the details which open up possibilities to interpret against the conventional meanings.

The concept of intertextuality as a way of reading offers the possibility of seeing the reading as a process where textual relations are formed and discovered. Text is a link in a chain of texts, reacting to, drawing in, and transforming other texts.

Texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed. All texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society

through discourses (Allen 2000, 36).

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

TEACH YOURSELF – TAKING PART IN WORLD POLITICS SINCE 1938

Teach yourself -books is a UK based book series under the category of "self-help" books. The first *teach yourself* - book was published in 1938 in Britain and the titles produced around the Second World War reflected the nation in war with the aim to "help the British nation survive" in their everyday lives, producing titles focusing on pig and poultry keeping. Other titles were also dedicated to more directly towards the "war effort" and increasing citizen's knowledge of flying, air navigation, and trigonometry (www.teachyourself.co.uk). Thus, the link between the "teach yourself" series and the world politics is closer than one could have guessed. According to the publisher's website, over the last sixty years, more than forty million people have learned about over 750 subject areas. Currently advertised books include over 500 titles arranged under fourteen different categories, such as language, buying home abroad, business & careers, health & well-being, history and politics and creative arts. The changes in topics illustrates interestingly the imagined typical reader, and the needs of "self-improvement".

The history of Indonesian language materials within the book series is relatively long one. While preparing the first version of this paper in 2007, I managed to get hold of at least two different earlier versions of the *teach yourself*, one from 1965, and another from late 1980s. The dialogue based learning seems to be a more recent pedagogical tool, whereas the 1965 version introduces vocabulary and grammar through short texts and examples.

INTRODUCTIONS: UNIT 1 "WELCOME TO INDONESIA (AT THE AIRPORT)"³

Mr. Anton: Excuse me! Are you Mr Knight?

Mr. Knight: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Anton: Welcome to Jakarta. We are from the CITRA company. Pleased to meet you.

I'm Anton and this is Mr Bambang.
Mr. Bambang: Pleased to meet you.
Mr. Knight: Pleased to meet you too.

The units of the “*teach yourself Indonesian*” are divided into two dialogues (dialogue A and dialogue B). Both of the dialogues in the first unit take place at the Sukarno-Hatta airport, where two main male characters arriving from the English speaking world are introduced. The dialogue A introduces Ken Knight, a businessman from New Zealand with an Indonesian wife and a son and a daughter. The dialogue B, on the other hand, introduces Mark Spencer, a student from Leeds/United Kingdom who has flown to Indonesia to meet his e-pal, Reza, for the first time. Ken Knight is an expatriate⁴ living in Jakarta. Being an ‘expatriate’ locates Ken Knight to certain (geographical and social) locations in Jakarta. How to track down the expectations of the expatriate life style? Internet provides various resources to find out the possibilities for living as expatriate in certain occupations, in certain countries and websites offer practical information about housing, hiring staff for your household and living in your new hometown.⁵ Similarly, Mark, gets located in social spaces reserved for the young university educated generation in Jakarta.⁶

Through the experiences of Ken and Mark, the book constructs a picture of *bule* which literally means “white person” but is generally used for non-Indonesians. Many expatriates find the term offensive. What is remarkable however, based on Fechter’s study in Jakarta, white expatriates refuse to recognise their status as a ‘race’, and discourses on “being *bule*” persist the notion of whiteness as a racial norm. Focusing on the offensiveness of the naming, attention is rarely drawn into the processes of maintaining dominant power positions (e.g. economic and social) (Fechter 2005, 89, 96-97, 101).

In what contexts do Ken Knight and Mark Spenser do business and study? The two Indonesian colleagues of Ken Knight work for CITRA (in English image) company. So what business is Ken Knight doing? The statistics of the Indonesian government might be

helpful in contextualizing the matter. According to the statistics of the Ministry for Manpower and Transmigration, in 2008 most of the expatriate workers were involved in industry, trade and mining and large proportion in unspecified sectors. 70 percents of the expatriate workers are from Asia (22 % from ASEAN countries, 50% from other Asian countries). Largest expatriate group was Japanese (15%), although citizens of South Korea, the US, Australia, United Kingdom, India and China were all between 7-9 % of the total. Mark Spencer, on the other hand, visits his friend Reza, who is a student at the University of Indonesia in computer science.

The “learner” of Indonesian is primarily represented as someone who comes to Indonesia for professional and family reasons, or to continue a friendship. Ken Knight represents the business community that has been actively invited, especially during the New Order period and reformation period, to “boost” the Indonesian economy. Mark Spencer, as the e-pal of Reza, represents the 21st century’s young generation that has access to the world through internet and travelling.

Both protagonists repeat the idea of white middle-class male independence. Their activeness is reinforced on the cover pages of the book which promise “be[ing] where you want to be with teach yourself” and it locates the book very close to independent traveller books (such as Lonely planet) or the colonial travel writing where the idea of the independent global traveller is maintained and ideas about rational, dynamic, masculine and modern are repeated.

What caught my attention after repeating the units for several time was, that remarkably, the narrator/instructor on the CD, is the only non-Indonesian female character in the material that I could be identifying myself with, yet she was native English speaker. Her role was crucial to bind the units and materials together, to keep the listener/learner interest in the materials using positive encouragement. She is the one, teacher, who instructs the listener to repeat, and complete the exercises of each unit.⁷

THE IMAGINED INDONESIA

Indonesian language has a fascinating history and is often described as a product of independence movement and nationalism from early 20th century, developed from modern Malay. As Benedict Anderson points it out, 'Indonesia' as idea of a unified nation is a twentieth-century invention, as most of today's Indonesia was only conquered by the Dutch between 1850 and 1910, and the emphasis of 'newness' of the language (vs. Malay) is part of the process shaping the Indonesian's nationalist consciousness (Anderson 1990, 124; 1991 [1983], 11). Anderson's point of 'imagined community', referring to an active process of performing the idea of 'Indonesia' is useful for reading the *teach yourself Indonesian*.

The 1965 version of the teach year self Indonesian narrates the history of politics of language: Malay was used as the *lingua franca* since 15th century of the coastal harbour towns of the archipelago, known as Indonesia today. The arrival of European traders strengthened the use of Malay as the language of commerce, and later during the Dutch rule, Dutch authorities used Malay to make contact with the Indonesian sultans and chieftains (Kwee 1965, xi).

Max Lane (1996 [1984]), the famous translator of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's works, in his translation of the "Buru Quartet" continues, that the use of language was an important indicator of a person's social cast during the colonial period. Dutch was the language of the governing caste and local languages, such as Javanese, the language of the common people. Malay was the language of interracial, or rather intercaste communication (as many elite could speak Dutch), as well as the language of many Eurasians. In situations where the social caste order needed to be emphasized, Natives were forbidden to use Dutch. (Lane 1996 [1984], 9).

The use of Malay was encouraged by the Dutch and the Dutch-sponsored village schools established in the early 1900's taught in Malay. Only in 1930s, when the Indonesian nationalism started increasing it's political significance⁸, the colonial government change the main medium of village primary instruction to local lan-

guages. Later on, when different regions in Indonesia (such as East Timor, Aceh and Papua) have struggled for their independence, the role and uniqueness of local languages have gained new political importance in differentiating the areas from rest of Indonesia .

Whereas the 1965 version of the *teach yourself Indonesian* has an introductory chapter explaining the history of the bahasa Indonesia, the 2003 edition does not refer to that history, nor to any other language spoken in the archipelago. The book takes part in the nation-building effort with the idea of "unified" Indonesia in which language plays an important role.

The focus of the book is on the urban Jakarta, and the notions of 'diversity' of the Indonesian archipelago is portrayed only through illustrations of ethnic dresses, visit to the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Unit 6: Tourist Information). Where as Jakarta is introduced as the place for studying and doing business, Bali is introduced as a tourist destination, fully in line with the Indonesian government's longstanding focus on Bali as the sources of national culture, but importantly as economic development through tourism (Vickers 1996[1989], 175).

Bali stands out as the "natural" destination for anyone visiting Indonesia in different versions of the "*teach yourself Indonesian*". Where as the 2003 version illustrates the intensified tourist industry of packet tours, the 1965 version starts with the following dialogue:

- Where does the sculptor live?
- Over there
- Is it a long way off?
- No, it is near by
- Would you show me the way?
- All right

This dialogue, remarkably, points towards the older history of tourism in Bali, the period between the world wars, when Bali, and especially Ubud, became the images of culture and art for foreign tourists, especially focusing on local artists and their paintings and sculpture, e.g. work of I Gusti Nyoman Lampad.

Bali was, for many Europeans, their escape from the war but also from tightening morals against homosexuals. The period around 1920s and 1930s, due to long-term residents such as Walter Spies in Ubud, attracted many upper-class tourists in search of art and eroticism. Vickers points out however, that this erotic and magical side of Bali was dropped effectively by Indonesian tourism planning authorities by using Puritanism and anti-colonialism as their ways to recreate Bali (Vickers 1996[1989], 141, 105-106, 194). Different versions of “*teach yourself Indonesian*” seem to take part in creating Bali, and it will be interesting to see how the future editions of the book will reflect the later history of Bali: bombings, and opposition to and impacts of the newly approved law on pornography.

WHERE ARE INDONESIAN MEN AND WOMEN?

- **Marking the Boundaries of Nation and Constructing Ideal Indonesian Citizenship**

In this section, I will provide examples of how the ideal pictures of Indonesians are portrayed in the dialogues. The book does not portray just one picture, but rather, portrays two different pictures: one of the older, already settled, generation (dialogue As), and the younger generation of a female university student who connects with her grandmother living in a kampung in Jakarta (dialogue B).

Following the A dialogues, early on, Anton and Bambang, Ken’s two Indonesian colleagues are introduced. The main aim of the chapter 3 is to learn how to describe your marital status when introducing yourself to new people. The dialogue confirms the heterosexual norm of being or planning to get married. Several other dialogues directly orient the reader towards normalized heterosexual relationships, and normalized ‘family time and space’: family and home, time before marriage, and time after the marriage. Women are specifically positioned as holding the reproductive role taking care of the household, children and the husband as wives.

For example, in the unit titled “Family and Home” Ken has a discussion with his Indonesian colleague Anton about their wives and children. The role of the

wife as a mother plays an important role in strengthening their roles as men, proper citizens.

UNIT 5: FAMILY AND HOME

Ken and Anton take the opportunity to get to know each other a little better during a coffee break in the company canteen.

Ken: You’re already married, aren’t you.

Anton: Yes, my wife is from Padang. We have three children. The first one is a boy (who is) still (at) elementary school. The second ones are twin girls. They are very, very cute.

Ken: How old are they?

Anton: Ten years and seven years old. And you, how many children do you have?

Ken: I have two children. The first born is a girl and the youngest is a boy.

Anton: Does your wife work?

Ken: No. She used to be a secretary but now she’s just a housewife. (She) looks after (her) children and husband. She is a good wife. Does your wife work?

Anton: She is an English teacher but we have a housemaid to look after the children.

Ken: That’s good. My wife and children will arrive next week from New Zealand. They want to see their grandfather, grandmother and cousins.

Anton: Does their grandfather still work?

Ken: He was a senior lecturer at Padjadjaran University, but now he is retired. My wife has a big family. She has two brothers and two sisters. They are all married.

Anton: Please don’t forget to introduce them (to me) if they come to Jakarta. I will invite them for dinner.

Ken: Sure. Thank you.

The book locates women into their well defined places, into heterosexual relationships with men (as wives, daughters, grandmothers or e-pal’s) the referent object being the male actor. The role of the mother plays an important role in strengthening their roles as

men as breadwinners of the family.

Scholars who have focused on the constructs of the family through the official state discourse argue that the 'family' as father, mother, and two children, inhabits the modern official spaces where the ideal Indonesian citizenship is built (Shiraishi 2000 [1997], 164). The gender ideology of the New Order period is described as 'state ideology of motherhood' (Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis 1987; Suryakusuma 1996), which focused on 'Five Duties of Women'. The hierarchical order of these duties illustrates the importance of marriage and giving birth to children as a qualification for a membership of society. Women are generally not considered as adults until they have married (Graham 2001, 13; see also Wieringa 1992, 110.). Krishna Sen (1998) has argued that in the early 1990s there was a shift from women as 'wife and womb' into women as reproductive workers (Sen 1998, 45).

The strong emphasis on motherhood, however, also includes emphasis on having housemaids, which Arlene Hoschild has called as the nanny chain, "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" – and crossing the social and economic classes within one society. A global care chain might start in a poor country and end in a rich one, or it might link rural and urban areas within the same poor country. More complex versions start in one poor country and extend to another slightly less poor country and then link to a rich country. In Indonesia, women take up all different roles in the global care chain. For example, there is a growing number of women working in Malaysia and Middle East (especially in Saudi Arabia) as domestic workers (See e.g. Hugo 2002, 158-164), and women's activists have attempted to raise concern of their protection, due to reports of violence and sexual harassment against women (see e.g. *Work of Solidaritas Perempuan*).

This unit also points towards a certain socio-economical status of the families which is rather clear from the topics of conversation: housemaids and university education. The focus of the discussions is

what males do and think, however, the listening exercises also include female characters applying for jobs and travelling abroad.

DIALOGUE B

Although the material seems to portray a strong context of family life, there are alternate narratives to it too. Both Mark and Reza remain "just" friends throughout the units. In several dialogues, Reza's neighbour, friends and family, assume that Mark is her boyfriend, which she decisively denies. In general, sexuality of women, has been used to mark boundaries of nations (See e.g. Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989 and Yuval-Davis 1997). Some scholars argue that in the Indonesian context, the binary positioning of women divides them into good and bad, the model and the maniac. The model referring to women who are able to control their desire and passion and wait for marriage, and the maniac referring to women who speak out loud and show sexual passion.

The fear of "loose women" is still present in Indonesia, where female citizens are expected to fulfil their roles as mothers within the heterosexual framework (Wieringa, Katjasungkana, Hidayana 2007). The idea of compulsory marriage is underlined in the "teach yourself Indonesian", which advises to use the term "not married yet" or "bukan" even if one might not be planning to get married at all. This cultural expression is introduced early on when Ken asks his colleague Bambang if he is married, and gets a short response "not yet" or "bukan". What is interesting here is that this is the only conversation that Ken has with Bambang. Bambang disappears after this chapter whereas the heteronormative performances continue in other chapters between Ken and Anton and later with Ken and his family.

As argued by several postcolonialist feminists, portrayals of harmonious families are necessary for state's ability to constitute and imagine itself, thus women's appropriate sexual behavior becomes an important part of the state discourse (Alexander 1997, Kandiyoti 1993). Women's sexuality, or "sexual agency and autonomy" challenge the image of the

nuclear family, the ideological anchor and source of legitimacy for the state.

PRESENCE IN ABSENCE

Several themes appear strikingly absent from the “*teach yourself Indonesian*” units. It seems that the learning of Indonesian can continue without disruptions through lives of Ken and Mark without having to worry, or even reflect upon events like the economic crisis, student movement protests, anti-Chinese riots leading to rapes and killings, or the years of reformasi that followed after the fall of Suharto’s regime. For example, listening the learning unit (Unit 4 “Working and Studying”, dialogue B) where Mark visits Reza’s campus, I cannot by think about the year 1998 after having read Komnas Perempuan’s lengthy reports and survivors narrations of the violence that took place. May 1998 has remained one of the stories of my own family, as it was exactly around the time of the student killings, when my father’s business visit to Jakarta and Pekanbaru included worried phone calls back home, sharing information of the escalation of violence and killing of four students on May the 12th, and finally, leading to his evacuation to Singapore.

Remarkably, the different revisions of the *teach yourself Indonesian* book have coincided major political changes in Indonesia: independence in 1949, military coup in 1965, economic crisis and fall of 30 years regime of President Suharto in 1998. However, the sociological, economical or political context of the Indonesian archipelago is not discussed at all in the edition 2003.

Furthermore, family and public life appears as secular, as none of the characters seem to be practicing any of the officially acknowledged religions in Indonesia. The characters also live their everyday lives without having contact to government bureaucracies and other state authorities, such as police or military, are absent from the pages of the book. Several units, however, point directly to the ongoing political debates on women’s rights for citizenship and sexuality – the boundaries of nation and citizenship, when read carefully. In Unit 7 “Invitations” Anton invites

Ken and his family to his house for dinner. While discussing the food, Anton asks “do your children feel home at here?” At the time of publishing the book, a child born to an Indonesian mother married to a foreigner could not get citizenship of Indonesia and woman would also loose her citizenship if she decided to take the citizenship of her husband. This would require visits to the local immigration office once a month to extend the children’s, and husband’s visa, if they would prefer staying longer than the two months given for social and cultural visits. So the question of children feeling at home, points to the direction of feeling home without the citizenship rights of one’s “home” – or rather, making the point that the home is not in Indonesia. The law on citizenship was changed in 2006, and now allows children to have dual citizenships.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to provide one attempt to close read the *teach yourself Indonesian* language book, and by no means have given justice to the whole book, or its narratives of ‘Indonesia’. Based on my reading, the learning units in the book construct a portrait of wealthy, healthy, modern, secular and urban world where Ken, Anton, Bambang, Mark and Reza interact. This construction not only repeats the idea of modernized and unified Indonesian citizens, but also the picture of white male globetrotters.

‘Indonesia’ gets constructed as a united country, where being modern, middle-class (see the discussions about family and occupations in chapter 5) and urban Jakartan is normalised. Other parts of the country appear as the exotic and traditional Other. This is supported by the book’s illustrations of men and women in traditional costumes and traditional occupations (such as farmer, fisherman) whenever other parts of the country are referred in the text. Thus, to gain it’s dominant position as modern nation, or modern citizen, illustrations of the “Other” are offered: short visits to Reza’s grandmother in the kampung of Jakarta and tourist visit to Bali, and narratives of “not yet married” population.

The two dialogues in each of the learning units, also provide interesting view to two different generations: the already settle one cherishing traditional family values, and the younger one, enjoying the fruits of the modern nation: university education and economic stability, not necessarily however, reflecting the realities of most Indonesians. This picture remains in the realities of university educated, urban middle class – the sphere where the foreigner learning Indonesian is hoped to mingle in. Strangely enough, my family's story repeats the dialogues A & B. Whereas my father visited Indonesia due to forestry business related reasons, I arrived to learn Indonesian with the aim to pursue my PhD studies on gender policies in post-tsunami Aceh and interact with the university educated NGO activists, drawing attention to the "forgotten" histories of global trade and politics in Indonesia – including the environmental problems of the heavy deforestation – an added learning unit to be discussed with my family once back in Europe?

In Jakarta, 22 November 2008

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Marjaana Jauhola is currently preparing her PhD thesis on the negotiation of gender norms in gender mainstreaming initiatives in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. The author wishes to acknowledge support of the European Community under the Marie Curie Early Stage Research Training Programme and Academy of Finland project Gendered Agency in Conflict. Earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference 'Reading: Images, Texts, Artefacts', Cardiff University 28-29 June 2007.
- ² Linguistic turn is also often referred as postmodern/poststructural turn.
- ³ The English translations of the dialogues are original translations from the 2003 edition of the language course. Through out the course/book, both Indonesian and English versions of the dialogues exist one after another.
- ⁴ According to the Mac OS X Oxford American Dictionary, 'expatriate' is a person that lives outside of their native country (*American expatriates in London*) or archaic meaning, a person that is exiled from their native country.
- ⁵ To get ideas of what the expected expatriate life styles are, see websites Living in Indonesia, Expatriate.com, and @llo' Expat.
- ⁶ Tertiary enrolment was 17 per cent in 2006 (Unesco Statistics Institute 2008).
- ⁷ My other experiences of learning bahasa Indonesia took place in two different language schools in Jakarta and Yogyakarta and formed rather different experiences of what is the assumed role of the female foreigner learning Indonesian language. The first one in

Jakarta in 2006, due to two other housewives of their expatriate men, focused heavily to build up vocabulary of "domestic sphere" and how to deal with domestic help. The second one in Yogyakarta in 2007 was tailor-made for my learning needs as a "PhD student in International Relations" and focused on general socio-political and economic topics, but also on issues such as student movement, New Order regime and fall of Suharto, reformation and current political affairs.

- ⁸ "We speak one language: the Indonesian language" was declared the youth conference held in 1928 (Kwee 1965). Later in 1938 a conference on the forming of the Indonesian language was held and it was decided that the modern Malay would be the basis of Indonesian language (Kwee 1965)

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