

## A NEW INDONESIAN TEXTBOOK FROM AUSTRALIA

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Elementary instruction in modern foreign languages at the university level in the United States is very different now from what it was before the second world war when, despite the pioneering contributions to teaching the spoken language by figures like Henry Sweet, Otto Jespersen, and Michael West, foreign language instruction still consisted largely of grammar and translation to prepare the student to study the literature of the language and the civilization it reflected. Yet except for the specialist it was the unusual student who from this training learned a foreign language well enough to use it effectively even in reading.

During the war the United States armed forces taught foreign languages for very practical purposes in intensive spoken language courses. The substance of the teaching materials was supplied by native informants; their organization and the grammatical analysis was done by a linguist. Native speakers presented the materials in class under the supervision of the linguist. The success of these courses brought about something like a revolution in foreign language teaching in American universities after the war: classes became smaller, contact hours were increased, native speakers presented the material orally, and sessions in the language laboratory supplemented classroom instruction.

The design of textbooks for such courses does not vary greatly. A typical lesson opens with a dialogue containing the new vocabulary and structures, there are questions on the content of the dialogue, a grammar section, and copious oral drills to be done in class and the lab. In addition there may be explanatory notes on cultural features, supplementary short dialogues or reading passages with oral comprehension questions, and "free" conversations built on elements of the dialogue and cued with English instructions.

The intent of such a beginning course is to present small units of controlled and graded oral material with periodic review so that the beginner will overlearn what he has studied and be able to use it freely and unhesitatingly in circumscribed but more or less real-life situations. Such an ability to use the spoken language is generally held by linguists to be basic to acquiring the skills of reading, composition, and translation.

The dialogues are usually intended to be memorized since they constitute the core of the lesson. Dialogues have over the years tended to become shorter and shorter, the new material presented in a lesson has correspondingly decreased in amount, and each new teaching point is more intensively drilled. The highly desirable result of these changes is that even the slow learner more often experiences each successive lesson as a satisfactorily surmountable plateau in his ever ascending journey. But such improvements do not change the fact that a high price must be paid for proficiency in speaking a foreign lan-

guage; hundreds of hours of instruction are needed before even the quick learner will begin to attain it.

Drills are usually presented in their order of complexity: simple substitution drills (I've had some *milk, soup, dessert*, etc.), conversion or transformation drills (I've had some milk; I'll have some milk), and response drills (A: Have you had enough? B: Yes, I have), which begin to approximate language in a real situation and which, when carefully designed, can often teach the same points taught in a more mechanical substitution or conversion drill. Occasionally, even in a good textbook, some poorly designed drills seem only to be teaching the drill, as when the learner is asked to exchange the positions of the Indonesian subject and predicate without the context needed to point up the shift of emphasis. The rationale of drilling is that in manipulating the elements of a basic sentence the learner will acquire a fluency and correctness which is transferable to free use of the language in speaking. Drilling is an effective and necessary step in reaching this goal, but much more is required and is given in the best textbooks: a large amount of carefully prepared conversational activities that not only teach the learner to answer questions but to fashion his own appropriate response to a comment (A: The pie was good! B: Have some more).

*Bahasa Indonesia: Langkah Baru: A New Approach*, by Yohanni Johns with collaboration from Robyn Stokes,<sup>1</sup> is similar in many respects to the American textbooks described above and notably different in others.

There are eighteen lessons. Lesson one presents pronunciation and lessons seven, twelve, and eighteen are review lessons. The remaining lessons have the following organization: a wordlist of the new vocabulary, a text in Indonesian for reading and comprehension followed by an English version, a simple and clear structural analysis of one point at a time with the example sentences in frames, the English for them, and the grammar explanation, followed immediately by the drills bearing on the point in question.

The clear layout of the text and the accuracy and completeness of the Indonesian-English wordlist (pp. 400-419) reflect the skill and care of the authors. However, it would have been useful to have an English-Indonesian wordlist and an indication in the Indonesian-English wordlist of where words are introduced.

Most of the texts are in dialogue form, some are narratives, and the text for lesson seventeen is a poem by Boeng Oesman with a commentary adapted from H. B. Jassin's *Kesoesasteraan Indonesia dimasa Djepang*,<sup>2</sup> in which it was published. Each of the three review lessons has four texts. The texts are all skillfully written and interesting and present various aspects of Indonesian life. The early ones are quite short; the later ones are longer. That of lesson seventeen is about five hundred words, and about 225 new vocabulary items are introduced in the lesson both for the text and for the grammar points and

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1. (Canberra: Department of Indonesian Languages and Literatures in association with the Faculty of Asian Studies, the Australian National University, 1975). Distributed in the United States and Canada by International Scholarly Book Services, Post Office Box 4347, Portland, Oregon 97208.
  2. H. B. Jassin, *Kesoesasteraan Indonesia dimasa Djepang* (Jakarta: Balai Poestaka, 1948).

drills. In all, about nineteen hundred words are taught, about twice the number taught for example in John U. Wolff's *Beginning Indonesian, Part One*<sup>3</sup> or in Eleanor H. Jorden and Hamako Ito Chaplin's *Beginning Japanese, Part I*.<sup>4</sup>

The language used throughout the textbook is formal in style even in conversational passages and common colloquial forms are not taught, e.g., *kasi* "to give" and verb forms without a prefix like *lihat* for *melihat* "to see, look (at)." Confusion is avoided by presenting only one of two or more alternative forms or constructions: *hanya* "only, just" is taught, but not *cuma* or Jakartan *cuman* "id.," *dibeli (oleh)* *mereka* "bought by them" is taught, but not *mereka beli* "id.," etc.

Much and varied drilling is given, but considering the extent of the passages and the vocabulary load in each lesson the density of drilling is less than for example in *Beginning Indonesian, Part One* and is much less than in a fairly recent introductory textbook reflecting some recent trends in lesson design,<sup>5</sup> in which the dialogue of the last lesson, consisting of six short speeches with twelve new vocabulary items, is followed by nineteen drills and a variety of exercises. But in view of the purposes and organization of *Bahasa Indonesia: Langkah Baru*, the grammar notes and drills occupy a very prominent place in the whole textbook.

The stated purpose of the course is to develop a mastery of Indonesian in its standard written as well as its spoken form. As used in the Australian National University it does not alone constitute the teaching material for the first-year Indonesian course but is supplemented by Mrs. Johns's reader *Melawat ke Negara Tetangga (Visiting a Neighbouring Country)* and S. Soebardi's *Learn Bahasa Indonesia: Pattern Practice*, and the syllabus includes translation and study of texts and composition as well as phonology and grammar and drill on basic speech patterns; in the textbook itself short compositions are assigned in the last lesson. If *Bahasa Indonesia: Langkah Baru* is used in a comparable first-year course in the United States it will have to be supplemented by additional drilling material to conform to American expectation and practice; the proportion of four periods of tutorials to three of lectures at the Australian National University in contrast to five to two in the United States is a clear indication of this.

*Bahasa Indonesia: Langkah Baru* embodies years of experience and practice of an able teacher and textbook writer. The differences between its approach and treatment and those of current American beginning Indonesian textbooks can be ascribed to differences between Australia and the United States in language teaching and the needs felt in teaching and learning Indonesian. Many of those studying beginning Indonesian in the United States will be using the spoken language in Indonesia as foundation or foreign service employees, or as graduate students undertaking research; their practical needs are clearly defined. For Australia, on the other hand, Indonesia is an

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3. John U. Wolff, *Beginning Indonesian, Part One. Lessons 1-18* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program, 1971).

4. Eleanor H. Jorden with the assistance of Hamako Ito Chaplin, *Beginning Japanese, Part I* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962).

5. Nguyen-Hy-Quang and Eleanor H. Jorden and associates, *Vietnamese Familiarization Course* (Washington: Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, 1969).

is an important neighbor, and the purposes of Australians in studying Indonesian are necessarily more various.