

Title	<Book Reviews>Zane Goebel. Language, Migration, and Identity: Neighborhood Talk in Indonesia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, xvii+221pp.
Author(s)	Choksi, Nishaant
Citation	Southeast Asian Studies (2017), 6(3): 560-563
Issue Date	2017-12
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2433/231047">http://hdl.handle.net/2433/231047</a>
Right	© Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University
Type	Departmental Bulletin Paper
Textversion	publisher

studies, media studies, and history. With respect to his approach, Rafael's methods are rigorous and sound. He is able to historicize concisely and substantively the various issues. Moreover, Rafael analyzes textual evidence, cultural phenomena, and translation practices with clarity and intelligence; his style uses a range of registers: aphoristic, descriptive, wryly ironic, and philosophical. Rafael is also keenly aware of the contentious and historically charged politics of the events he considers, and the ambivalences they generate.

Rafael's materials include US military manuals; concepts from Jacques Derrida, Roman Jakobson, and Emile Benveniste; songs and accounts from the Philippine Revolution; documents from the Spanish and American colonial periods; narratives from his fellow scholars; and eyewitness reports from events such as EDSA II. The plurality of these materials demonstrates Rafael's extensive grasp of various archives, as well as his capability to read his sources against and alongside each other. There are rare occasions, though, when Rafael could have added some more substance: in Chapter 3, for example, his reading of middle-class politics in EDSA II ("the utopian side of bourgeois nationalist wishfulness: the abolition of social hierarchy" [p. 86]) is buttressed by just one account of a participant. My sense is that the account Rafael closely reads, although compelling and visceral, may need other complementary sources: one story does not make it into a metonym for the middle class.

All told, Rafael's *Motherless Tongues* is a valuable contribution to translation studies, especially in relation to Philippine history and culture, American empire critique, and area studies. The flow of the chapters is well considered: the book attends to the Philippines, then focuses its attention on the United States, and concludes with accounts of various individuals whose lives are embedded in—and critique—these mutually enfolded contexts. Rafael's gifts as an essayist are on full display: his prose is typified by equal parts charge and clarity; the gravity of colonization and empire is counterpointed by the lucidity and brio of his prose.

Vincenz Serrano

*Department of English, Ateneo de Manila University*

### ***Language, Migration, and Identity: Neighborhood Talk in Indonesia***

ZANE GOEBEL

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, xvii+221pp.

Zane Goebel's monograph detailing the face-to-face encounters between residents in the ethnically and linguistically diverse town of Semarang (Central Java) provides an excellent case study of the way linguistic ethnographic methods illuminate larger questions of urban transformation, social incorporation and exclusion, and patterns of migration in Southeast Asia. In fact, with the exception

of a few dated studies done in Java (Errington 1988) and on the island of Sumba (Kuipers 1990; 1998; Keane 1997), very few linguistic ethnographic-oriented monographs have been written about Indonesia, and even fewer about other parts of Southeast Asia. Goebel's book, therefore, which takes care to explain and highlight some of the more technical concepts used in the field, serves as an introduction to the field while also advancing social theory.

The title of the book, *Language, Migration, and Identity*, is rather straightforward but also somewhat deceptive. In fact, the book takes care to complicate each of these terms in ways that can only be accomplished through detailed analysis of face-to-face interaction and a familiarity with semiotic theory. Rather than going through a chapter-by-chapter analysis, I will touch on each of these aspects in turn, noting how Goebel complicates them in order to provide a more nuanced picture of daily life in Semarang.

First I touch on what should be the main focus of linguistic ethnography, which is the concept of "language." Goebel begins the book by outlining what is a supposed binary between "Indonesian" and what he calls LOTI, or "languages other than Indonesian." In official discourse, Indonesian—as the national language—is supposed to represent national and interethnic unity, truth, objectivity, and also the ethnic "Other," the opposite of place-based LOTI, such as Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese, etc. Thus, within this ideology, codes such as Indonesian and Javanese form what Goebel calls "semiotic registers," communicative assemblages in which language is associated with personality traits and types of personhood.

However, while these semiotic registers permeate official state institutions, they are not hegemonic within the local ward meetings of Semarang town, where Indonesian and, in this case, Javanese (which itself has multiple registers, such as the more familiar *ngoko* register and the more formal *krama*) are creatively deployed by participants to accomplish different ends. In fact, Goebel shows how in multilingual settings, language use cannot be neatly mapped onto social function (as is often done in naïve discussions of "code-switching"). Therefore, instead of the word "language," Goebel opts for "medium," demonstrating how particular linguistic tokens mediate social relations. For instance, in the excellent discussion in Chapter 5 of the conversations of female residents in Ward 8, who more frequently attended ward meetings than their male counterparts, he shows how many non-Javanese speakers, many of whom had low overall competence in Javanese, would sprinkle their talk with *ngoko* Javanese words or particles, creating a sense of both familiarity and belonging in the ward. This kind of practice is the same for non-ethnically Javanese male residents of the working-class Ward 5 (Chapter 9). Even though these residents may not have been fluent in Javanese, their use of the *ngoko* register, together with their perceived familiarity and ease of interaction, created an impression to Javanese-speaking counterparts *as if* they were competent in Javanese (this is called, in linguistic ethnographic terminology, "adequation"). This differed from the non-Javanese male residents in Ward 8, who rarely used Javanese tokens at all, while the male Javanese used *krama* forms to each other (Chapter 7). Thus, the difference in linguistic code

(Indonesian vs. Javanese) or ethnic identity (Javanese vs. non-Javanese) did not structure interaction as much as distinctions between familiarity and unfamiliarity.

This leads to the second concept of “identity.” Analyses of face-to-face interaction usually tend to avoid talking about identity in “attributive” terms, in which a person’s social position (i.e., ethnic or religious affiliation, class, gender, etc.) leads to certain social behavior. Instead, Goebel, like many linguistic ethnographers, prefers the term “processes of social identification” (p. 82), which focuses more closely on the means by which participants classify people and what categories are relevant at any given instance of interaction. For instance, in most of the ward meetings, which determined the finances of the ward and where dues were collected, the category of “payer” vs. “non-payer” was more important than ethnic or class identity. Those who then were classified as non-payer became stigmatized as socially deviant, or irresponsible, and talk about these categories of persons often occurred in the Indonesian language, even among Javanese (Chapter 5). While ethnic identity was not the primary factor, in some cases, such as among male participants in Ward 8, the association of non-payer and deviant was mediated through New Order discourses that targeted Chinese-descent Indonesians, and thus some Chinese-origin residents in Ward 8 were considered “deviant” (Chapter 8). Notice, however, how ethnic identity forms part of a larger semiotic register of exclusion that includes participation in ward activities, language use, and national-level discourses of discrimination.

Finally there is the issue of migration. This concept is not explicitly discussed much in the book, though it is implied, since residents are made up of both locals and those from the outside, and there is quite a lot of movement of people in and out of the wards. However, the book offers some analytic tools that help with the study of how migrants may be incorporated into or excluded from the neighborhoods where they live—for instance, the important point that “learning Javanese” (or what is called Javanese) does not depend on where one comes from or how long one has lived in the ward, but rather on one’s level of activity and involvement in ward meetings. Each person therefore has a “trajectory of socialization” (p. 41) into the community, and this trajectory is affected by language use, participation, individual biography, and, in some cases, ethnic or religious affiliation. Examining these trajectories is important to understand the actual social processes by which migrants are incorporated into or excluded from the community.

The book, as Goebel mentions in the preface, is challenging. However, it is to be lauded that the analysis does not shy away from the important, though rather technical, theories and concepts of linguistic ethnography so that we can better understand the complexities of social life in diverse, transient, and multilingual settings. Despite his use of technical terms, Goebel attempts to make these concepts as clear as possible for the non-expert (by defining and bold-facing the terms, for instance). Hopefully, in doing so, books such as this will make linguistic ethnography more accessible and inspire more scholars of Southeast Asia to take up its tools in order to further complicate issues of language, identity, or migration.

Nishaant Choksi

*Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University***References**

- Errington, James Joseph. 1988. *Structure and Style in Javanese: A Semiotic View of Linguistic Etiquette*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Keane, Webb. 1997. *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kuipers, Joel C. 1998. *Language, Identity, and Marginality in Indonesia: The Changing Nature of Ritual Speech on the Island of Sumba*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1990. *Power in Performance: The Creation of Textual Authority in Weyewa Ritual Speech*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

***Indonesian Notebook: A Sourcebook on Richard Wright and the Bandung Conference***

BRIAN RUSSELL ROBERTS and KEITH FOULCHER, eds.  
 Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, xxiv+262pp.

**The Color Curtain, The Colored Glasses**

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2013 novel *Americanah*, the protagonist, a strong-willed young woman named Ifemelu, leaves military-ruled Nigeria for the United States, where she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. "I came from a country where race was not an issue," Ifemelu reflects. "I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America." She later achieves academic success and is recognized for her thought-provoking blog about race in America. In this space she announces: "Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care."

This fictional figure's observation in the digital world of the 2000s echoes a number of Indonesian cultural elites' reaction to an encounter with the renowned African American writer Richard Wright in 1955. Author of the critically acclaimed novels *Black Boy* and *Native Son*, Wright traveled to Indonesia to attend the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung as a freelance reporter. During his three-week stay in Indonesia he exchanged ideas with a small group of the archipelago's leading intellectuals, the majority of whom were liberal minded with a cosmopolitan outlook. An important part of this cross-cultural dialogue took place at a mountain retreat north of Jakarta, where Wright and his Indonesian hosts had in-depth discussions over a weekend stay. Yet instead of being drawn to Wright by a shared sense of embitterment caused by white domination of people of color, the Indonesian literati felt bitterly misunderstood. They felt that instead of opening his