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## Palembangese in print: An NLS look at literacies, linguacies, communicacies, and culturacies in South Sumatra

Jacob M. Hall

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PALEMBANGESE IN PRINT:  
AN NLS LOOK AT LITERACIES, LINGUACIES, COMMUNICACIES, AND CULTURACIES IN  
SOUTH SUMATRA

by

Jacob M. Hall

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

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August

2009

This thesis, submitted by Jacob M. Hall in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Chairperson

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This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Dean of the Graduate School

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Date





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To my beloved wife, Karen,  
my midwife in this work.



## ABSTRACT

People have been interacting with print in the South Sumatran city of Palembang for well over a millennium. Most of this literate activity has been carried out in languages other than the vernacular. Even now, the vast majority of print in the public realm in Palembang is in Indonesian, English, Arabic, and Chinese. And yet there are examples of the local language, *Baso Palembang*, in print. This thesis looks for reasons behind these variations from the norm.

After exploring the perspective offered by the New Literacy Studies (NLS), this paper builds upon the foundation provided by these works. Through use of this new framework, in which an understanding of literacies is clearly connected to (and distinguished from) other cultural skills, this thesis is equipped to examine the who, what, when, where, and how of literate skills, practices, interactions, and events. This analysis allows a fuller understanding of the questions of why particular cultural actors interact with print in specific ways in specific situations. Armed with this framework, the paper proceeds to examine Palembangse texts from a variety of sources (e.g., newspapers, text messages, the internet, etc.).

This research demonstrates that people in Palembang choose to use the language of their hearts and homes in print for a variety of reasons, reasons that can best be understood through careful examination of the specific cultural environment in which texts are produced. Some of the reasons established in this study were 1) the desire to build or sustain solidarity and trust, 2) the desire to draw in readership through the shocking rarity of seeing the vernacular in print, and 3) the desire to authentically report the utterances of local people.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

People have been interacting with print in the South Sumatran city of Palembang for well over a millennium. Kulke and Rothermund (2004:158) comment on the reputation that Palembang, as the capital of the Sriwijaya Empire, had as a center of learning and scholarship, which included print-based practices, as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Sanskrit, Old Malay, and Chinese were some of the first languages read and written on the site. Arabic, Dutch, Indonesian, and English were added to the tradition at later dates. Much of this history carries over to the present time. When residents of this city interact with print, they generally do so using one of four languages: Chinese, Arabic, Indonesian, or English.

And yet, most of the speaking in the city—used over a wide range of day-to-day affairs—is carried out in another language, one that is related to these other languages, but distinct. This vernacular, a city-dialect of the regional Malay language, is here referred to either as *Baso Palembang* or Palembangese.<sup>1</sup> This local speech variety is widely spoken, but rarely written, while the languages mentioned above are often written, but spoken only in a small proportion of circumstances.

This thesis examines this paradox. In particular focus are the modern day exceptions, the instances in which people choose to use their vernacular language in print. Because of the status quo, each of the resulting texts is in some way marked. There needs to be some special reason or rationale for people to combine the two cultural practices of using Baso Palembang and using language in print. What this research finds is that different texts result from different situations in which a variety of factors move cultural actors toward using the local language in print. Different cultural actors, with different goals, are creatively forming new ways of interacting with print, ways that include Baso Palembang.

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<sup>1</sup> The difference between the terms is simply that the former is the name given to the dialect by people in the city when they are speaking the language itself. The latter is the name given when they are speaking English. This paper uses the two terms interchangeably.

This paper searches for reasons behind particular instantiations of Palembangese in print. In order to find this *why*, other questions, such as *what* and *how* must first be carefully examined.

The writers who provide the best theoretical framework for this kind of research come from a school of thought known as the New Literacy Studies (NLS). Their work is particularly helpful in showing how literate skills and practices<sup>2</sup> relate to other cultural phenomena. The theory section of this paper, expands the NLS perspective in ways necessary for a thorough description and explanation of literate events in Palembang. Whereas scholars such as Gee, Street, and others examine the phenomenon of multiple, locally-realized socially-bound literacies in sweeping “macro” terms which lend themselves well to etic analysis, the theoretical framework presented here, while by no means exhaustive, allows closer description of the emic *why*'s and *how*'s and *what*'s of literate practice. The result, presented in Chapter 4, is a concise analytical tool for the dissection of Skill/Practice/Interaction/Event Clusters. This tool is called the “SPIE Analysis Sheet.”

Through applying this tool, and the larger framework it represents, to a series of examples in Chapters 5 through 8, this paper shows that vernacular literate skills and practices are arising in a variety of different arenas for a variety of different reasons. Among these, the desires to report authentic speech and be seen as “authentic people” are joined by the desire to attract an audience by the shocking juxtaposition of the vernacular language and printed media.

Before moving to theory and data in later chapters, the remainder of this chapter gives the reader an introduction to the location of the research and the languages spoken there.

## 1.2 Introducing Palembang

### 1.2.1 Present day Palembang

Straddling the 250-meter wide Musi River, the Palembang metropolitan area is home to over one and a half million people. Many of the citizens have been in the area since birth, descendants of the Malay, Chinese, Indian, Arab, and European peoples that have come to the city in waves over the last few thousand

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<sup>2</sup> Guerra (1998) opts to use the term “literate practices” rather than the possibly more common term “literacy practices.” This paper follows his lead in preferring the adjective “literate” over the noun “literacy” as the descriptor of choice in reference to all related phenomena. The result is that this thesis will speak of “literate skills” and “literate events” and avoid the terms “literacy skills” and “literacy events.”

years.<sup>3</sup> Many others have come from upstream to seek their fortunes in the big city. Still others have come from Java or other parts of the country, either as part of the government's ongoing transmigration program (see Tirtosudarmo 2001:200) or on their own initiative. Local colleges and universities such as the University of Sriwijaya host a similarly broad range of students.

Despite this diversity, the people of the city report and demonstrate a remarkable degree of unity. This unity is represented and expressed in a variety of ways. One is the local motto given by countless sources: *Wong Kito Galo* 'All Our People.' Another local rallying point is the Musi River. It is variously said that if one bathes in or drinks the Musi, one will always return again to this city and its river. Yet another symbol of local pride is the *Jembatan Ampera* 'Ampera Bridge.'<sup>4</sup> Standing opposite the Great Mosque, this grand structure was a technological marvel in its day, measuring over a kilometer in length and featuring a mid-section that could be raised to allow large cargo ships to pass underneath. Connected as it is to the all-important river and the populations on either side, the bridge has become solidly linked in the minds of the people with the concepts of progress, tradition, and unity.<sup>5</sup>

But few things bring the people together and inspire more local unity than *Baso Palembang*, the city dialect of the regional Malay spoken in much of Southern Sumatra (McDowell & Anderbeck 2007).<sup>6</sup> Rich and poor, native and non-native, all speak this local vernacular to some extent. One man, a native of Java, when questioned about how he spoke Palembangese so fluently after having lived in the city for only four years replied that learning the language was a necessity if one wants to *bergaul* 'have relationships' or 'connect,' with neighbors. Knowing the language is the first step toward becoming part of *Wong Kito Galo* 'All Our People,' an expression which itself is only used in the vernacular.

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<sup>3</sup> Details of this process are given in section 1.2.2 below.

<sup>4</sup> The name *Ampera* is actually an abbreviation of the phrase *Amanat Penderitaan Rakyat*, "Order [of the] Suffering [of the] Populace." This name alludes to the fact that the bridge was financed by war reparation funds from Japan after WWII.

<sup>5</sup> Further evidence of the strength of the public unity in Palembang can be seen in the enduring bonds between residents who move away from the city. Ciangbai and Siu-lun (2007) describe the virtual kinship network that has sprung up in Hong Kong among former students of Chinese schools in Palembang.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1.2.3 below gives more details about the language situation in the city.

During eight months in the city, I witnessed the language being used in homes and in offices, including government offices like Immigration. It is broadcast on local radio waves as well as in several programs on the two local TV stations, *Palembang TV* (or *PAL TV*) and *Sriwijaya TV*. A visitor need only to speak a few words of *Baso Palembang* in order to gather an admiring crowd proclaiming *Dio pake baso kito!* ‘He is speaking our language!’

Once the seat of multiple trading empires, Palembang today commands greater national and regional attention and power than its political status as capital of the province of *Sumatra Selatan* ‘South Sumatra’ warrants. It continues to be one of the wealthiest cities per capita in Indonesia with exceptional opportunities for growth in the coming decades. According to the Indonesian center for statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS), the province of South Sumatra ranks 8<sup>th</sup> among the nation for per capita regional GDP (2007).

With natural resources including petroleum, rubber, and palm oil, the city has plenty of goods for export. Basic industries such as the Pertamina refinery and the immense *Pupuk Sriwijaya* fertilizer plant are able to add value to these products before the Musi River takes them to the sea. In recent years, investment from Jakarta and overseas has also risen dramatically. One such plan, with finances coming from the United Arab Emirates “would bring a total investment worth \$1.5 billion to construct an integrated port at Tanjung Api-Api, and a railway line from Palembang to Tanjung Api-Api” (Jakarta Post, May 6, 2008). The last decade alone has seen the construction of three super-malls hosting stores like the French retail giant *Carrefour* and the American *Ace Hardware*.

### 1.2.2 History

Since the beginning, the area in which the city of Palembang now sits has always been a crossroads, a place where roads and smaller rivers crossed the larger waterways headed to the sea. It was an inland trading port before it was anything else.

Contributing to this was a combination of two providential factors. The first was ready and easy access to the large inland, upstream populations living on rich agricultural land. The second was a treacherous, seasonally variable, but nonetheless possible access to the Straights of Bangka and the wider world. This location was thus provided with a fount of production on one side and a protected means of export on the other.

Starting in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. this location served as a seat for the Hindu-Buddhist Sriwijaya Empire (Bellwood 1997:137; Cohen 2000:86). Over the course of the coming centuries the city of Palembang arose as a center of learning and power and trade affecting the whole region. Kulke and Rothermund (2004:158) describe how the Chinese explorer, I-tsing studied Sanskrit in Palembang on the way to a 14-year stay in India. So impressed was this Buddhist monk with the level of learning that he would later spend several years in Palembang and recommend the location to his colleagues as a place where a thousand monks were diligently at work and study.

Economically, the empire was supported not only by exporting local forest products, but also by exerting control over the whole region. This was done not only through its own navy, but through alliances with the nomadic *orang laut* ‘sea people,’ who lived on the coasts and islands of the regions (Kee-Long 1998). With time, the empire and its influence diminished, but the embers of this past civilization continued to smolder along the Musi River.

Then, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for black pepper surged along with the realization that this potent berry was well-suited to the soil and climate of much of the Sumatran interior. First introduced from India in the northern Minangkabau areas in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, *piper nigrum* soon became the main cash crop for many upstream farmers (Andaya 1993:43-44).

Palembang, along with its fraternal rival Jambi to the north, once again rose to prominence not only as a regional but also as global port of trade. Both the Chinese and the Europeans competed for the supply of pepper being funneled through Palembang. This in turn, spurred production to levels that eventually glutted the global market. In the meantime, the relatively small population in Palembang headed by a *pangeran* ‘prince,’ and his court walked a tight line as middlemen. Fighting against the constant threat of external takeover and internal intrigue, the *pangeran* also needed to give constant attention to the delicate business of maintaining relations with his upstream “subjects” (Andaya 1993).

“Subjects” is in quotes here because, as Andaya points out, the relationship between the downstream court and the upstream producers never fit neatly into the categories offered by Western powers. Whereas the Dutch, who eventually became preeminent, expected the sovereign to exercise his clear and absolute authority over his “subjects,” the downstream court knew that its control over the upstream hinterlands was tenuous and needed constant care. Those upstream, who produced pepper and occasionally provided labor

for large building projects, did so with the understanding that the downstream royalty would continue providing its own services. These included the supply of exotic goods such as Indian cloth (usually on credit), the bestowal of honorary titles to local leaders, and occasionally, the supply of relief aid in the form of rice in times of scarcity (Andaya 1993).

Culturally, the court in Palembang, already a mixture of all that had come before, continued to find new sources of enrichment. These included the styles and manners of competing courts on Java. Of particular fascination and envy was the court of Mataram. Like Peter the Great seeking to fashion his palace and capital after the models then prevalent in Paris, the Sultans of Palembang and Jambi to the north looked to cast themselves as peers of the Javanese (Andaya 1993:67, 78).

Another crucial detail, particularly from Palembangese perspective of history, is the arrival in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century of a particular Arab by the name of Syaikh Abu Bakar Baspato. From that time, there grew to be a sizeable settlement of Arabs in the city. Because of their purported lineage as descendents of the prophet of Islam, this group became quite prominent in business as well as religion (Andaya 1993:205, 220).

As mentioned above, the prosperity brought by the pepper trade to all the residents in and around Palembang was fleeting. As supply exceeded demand, the ability of the Sultan to appease both his upstream clientele and his fickle Dutch allies diminished. Fortunately, just as one product was plummeting in value, another possibility rose to the surface: tin. This metal, of increasing importance, was found to be abundantly plentiful on the nearby island of Bangka (Andaya 1993).

In the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin exercised a remarkable combination of political, military, and business acumen to gain and keep control of the local tin trade. This trade grew all the more lucrative with the arrival of large numbers of Chinese miners from the mainland and from Borneo. Just as important as their labor, this new population brought more advanced technology that mechanized much of the process of mining and refining. The result was dramatically increased output (Andaya 1993:185-190).

During this time, the Sultan continued, in the tradition of those who came before, to exercise the dynamic authority described above. His role as an “older brother” over the people of the region, was achieved and protected not only by his services, but also by the aura that attended his power and wealth. As

Andaya (1993:184) puts it: “For the ordinary man and woman [the king’s] treasure was clear proof that Sultan Mahmud was not of the common herd, but had been favored by destiny.”

So great was the Sultan’s fame that half a century later, his great-grandson took the title of Badaruddin II in order to solidify his own authority (Andaya 1993:178). With this power, the new Sultan accomplished many things, and is now commemorated on the 10,000 rupiah banknote. But time and the constant pressures from outside eventually wore the dynasty down, and with it the power of Palembang as an independent entity. Over the coming centuries, the indefatigable Dutch took control of this area and most of the rest of the archipelago.

Eventually, yet another lucrative natural resource would be discovered near Palembang: petroleum. During World War II, this resource and the refineries built around it made Palembang an early target for the Japanese.<sup>7</sup> According to Chant (1986:133), the production coming out of the two refineries in Palembang was eventually “capable of meeting three-quarters of Japan’s total requirement for aviation fuel.” Three air strikes made by the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy in 1945 from January 24-29 crippled the refineries for the remainder of the war (Barber 2008:51-52).

After the war, the Dutch attempted to reassert their control over their lost colony. As any student of the area will know, the residents of the archipelago, despite their diverse makeup, resisted. The result was an independent state united by an ideology and a language which were both still under development. The next section discusses the formation of this national language and its relationship to the languages spoken in Palembang.

### 1.2.3 Language

At the time of its independence, Indonesia was a nation composed of untold numbers of self-differentiating ethnic groups speaking hundreds of distinct languages. The largest of these languages, by population of speakers, was Javanese, but the founders decided against using this as the national language. Instead they decided to build a national language from the widespread, interrelated web of local Malays.

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<sup>7</sup> Another significant detail concerning the city and WWII was the establishment of a prisoner of war camp outside the city where men and women from a variety of nationalities were detained for the duration of the war. Toward the end of the war, this camp contained just under 1200 prisoners. Of these, about 260 died in the final four months before armistice; i.e., May-August 1945 (Mason: 514).



These languages had been being built up for millennia as the various peoples from the archipelago and beyond sought to trade and interact with one another and with representatives from distant lands. Now this network of Malay languages would be used to draw the people of the islands together into one nation.

One difficulty was that, while they were clearly related, these local variations showed significant differences. Another obstacle was that none of these languages had the vocabulary necessary for discussing all the things required in a modern state. The solution, wrought under the direct supervision of the new president, was a careful and conscious development of one local Malay into a language capable of university-level instruction in all subjects. The result is modern day *Bahasa Indonesia*.

While this one language has been promoted from the national level down to the local level, particularly through the use of ever expanding general education, local languages have continued to be used by populations throughout the country. This is true of large non-Malay languages such as Javanese and Sundanese. It is true of small non-Malay languages like those spoken in Papua. It is also true of the many local Malays that continue to be spoken in areas such as South Sumatra.

In categorizing the language situation in southern Sumatra, this paper follows the work of McDowell and Anderbeck (2007) who have made a case for a few large Malay clusters spoken across most of the province of *Sumatra Selatan* ‘South Sumatra.’ While traditional reckonings put the number of local languages (i.e., the languages spoken by upstream peoples) at over a dozen, more recent study has shown that, at least in the present day, most of these local tongues are better understood as local dialectal variations of a few large clusters.

The language use of central concern to this paper falls within one of these Malay clusters which McDowell and Anderbeck (2007:22) have termed the “Musi Dialect Cluster.” The dialects in this cluster are spoken as a mother tongue by an estimated three million people spread over the northern half of the province. The two other prominent language groups currently native to the province of *Sumatra Selatan* are the closely related “Central Malay Cluster” to the south and west (McDowell & Anderbeck 2007) and the less closely related Komering to the southeast (Gordon 2005).

The research presented in this paper was conducted entirely in the city of Palembang. As a result, this work focuses almost exclusively on the use of the vernacular language, which city dwellers refer to as *Baso*

*Pelembang* or Palembangese. The former is the name given to the language by speakers while speaking the language itself, and the latter is the name given by speakers while speaking English.

In Chapter 7, one example is presented which refers to a second dialect. This dialect is spoken to the west of the city, most prominently in the city of Sekayu. This dialect is referred to in that chapter using the term *Base Sekayu*. Note that this name given by residents of the area highlights one of the distinctive elements of their pronunciation, the word final <e>, pronounced /ə/.

The dialects within the Musi Cluster are separated from other Malay varieties, such as the national language *Bahasa Indonesia*, by significant vocabulary and grammar differences. In addition, they present a variety of phonological distinctives. Given the focus of this paper, a few aspects which mark the pronunciation in and around Palembang are given special attention here.

One of the phonological distinctives marking vernacular language use in and around the city is a velar fricative /ɣ/ in place of Indonesian's trilled /r/. While many in the city have been influenced by the Indonesian pronunciation, there is a significant minority of speakers who retain the /ɣ/ even when speaking the national language. Another mark of the local Malay is an increased prevalence, when compared with Indonesian, of the vowel /ə/ and the subsequent loss, through elision, of the same in many circumstances.

In differentiating their manner of speech<sup>8</sup> from the national language, and other dialects in the area, speakers of *Baso Palembang* themselves most frequently point to the /o/ which prominently replaces many of the word final /a/ phonemes in Indonesian. This is easiest to see in cognates. For example, in place of the Indonesian *kita* 'we' and *biasa* 'normal,' Palembangese uses *kito* and *biaso*. Because there are so many lexical similarities marked only by this phonological variation, many of the people in the area assert that the local language is just a low form of the national language with a few marked differences in pronunciation and a couple of unique vocabulary items.

Those who think this way are undoubtedly encouraged in this belief by an interesting phenomenon in Palembang in which the local language and the national language are mixed together in varying degrees,

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<sup>8</sup> As discussed in greater length below, people vary in their perception of the relationship between their language and other languages and dialects. Many simply see their language as a low form of "proper" Indonesian.

depending upon audience and social context, by bilingual speakers. McDowell and Anderbeck (2007:14)

describe the situation like this:

In the regions of southern Sumatra that were researched, the Malayic speech varieties fill the role of the basilect, being spoken in the nonformal domains of home and neighborhood. Indonesian fills the role of the acrolect, being used in schools, most media, and religious and government domains.

In and around Palembang, members of the largely diglossic populace are constantly negotiating a middle ground between these two poles. The resulting mesolects exist in a variety of forms constructed in reference to the two poles. The surface form in any given situation will depend upon a variety of factors including the abilities of the speakers, the composition of the audience and the social context in which the language event takes place (McDowell & Anderbeck 2007).

Based upon extensive research McDowell and Anderbeck (2007) demonstrate that some speakers are aware of these linguistic variations around them. They note, for example, that the basolect in and around the city can be called many things depending on who is doing the classifying. Examples of local classifications include *Palembang Kasar* ‘Coarse Palembang,’ *Palembang Dusun* ‘Rural/Village Palembang,’ and *Palembang Asli* ‘Authentic Palembang’ (McDowell & Anderbeck 2007:14).

Meanwhile, according to McDowell and Anderbeck (2007:14), the mesolect, particularly in more rural areas where it is used as a language of wider communication, is sometimes referred to by the term ‘*Palembang Pasar*’ ‘Market Palembang.’ Something which these researchers leave unclear is the precise identity of the acrolect and basilect poles in this case. Put another way, McDowell and Anderbeck leave unclear whether *Palembang Pasar* forms are: a) in between the language of the *dusun* ‘rural’ or ‘village’ and the national language; b) in between the language of the *dusun* and the *asli* language of the city; c) in between the language of the *dusun* and the mesolects of the city (themselves formed between the *asli* language and Indonesian; or d) some combination of the above.

In comparison with the complexity evident in the above discussion, the situation in the city is quite a bit simpler. Most people in the city are aware that their everyday language is a result of mixing the national language with something they call *Baso Palembang Asli*, ‘Authentic Palembang Language,’ but few consider themselves proficient in this ‘purer’ tongue. Instead, they consider themselves bilingual, speaking both *Baso Palembang* (or Palembangese) and *Bahasa Indonesia*.

These people are similarly aware that the language they and their neighbors speak varies according to circumstance and background of the speaker, but this mixed form (identified with the mesolects above) is simply regarded as the “normal” form. *Baso Palembang Asli*, is seen as something that only a few people can speak well, since almost everybody tends to *campur* ‘mix’ this form with Indonesian (and as soon as it is mixed, it naturally ceases to be *asli*).

In light of this local taxonomy, this paper will distinguish only between *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Baso Palembang*. While there is certainly further work to be done in exploring the language use patterns of the city and surrounding countryside, this paper is not the proper vehicle for such an exploration. Here, the focus preempts a need to distinguish between all the different mesolects that exist between basilect and acrolect (or between the mesolects themselves and the basilect).

For the purposes of this thesis it is enough simply to note that something other than the acrolect is making its way into print. The general tendency of people in the city is to read and write only 100% pure Indonesian. Any deviation, even if it is just the use of the distinctive Palembangese <o> is a marked activity. The question of this paper is why certain cultural actors in certain situations opt to use vernacular forms in print. The next section looks at this question in greater depth, but first it might be helpful to look briefly at the three most significant non-Malay languages spoken and written in and around Palembang: Chinese, Arabic, and English.

Of these three, the one with the oldest tradition in the area is certainly Chinese. As described in the history section above, at various times and for various reasons Palembang and the island of Bangka have attracted waves of visitors and immigrants from China over the centuries. The present result is a thriving subsection of the population who are almost purely of Chinese descent. Many, but not all, of this group possess some degree of proficiency in one or more dialects of the Chinese language in written and spoken forms.

These linguistic and literate abilities are utilized in different ways and for different purposes within Chinese the population of the city. For some, the language is connected to a Christian (often Catholic) heritage. For others, it is a language of family and friendship networks. For many, reading and writing Chinese allows them access to profitable trading relationships, both within the country and beyond. In this way, hundreds of years of history continue to the present day.

Arabic, similarly, was initially introduced in the city under the mantle of trade. Over time, as the religion of these Arabic traders grew in influence, the language of the Koran also increased in importance among the general populace. By the present day, it has become something of an assumption among the Malay speaking people, both within Palembang and throughout the region, that “to be Malay is to be Muslim.” One part of this identity is the ability to decipher the Arabic script and chant the Koran in public and private worship.

Although there are a good many borrowings from Arabic that have made their way into *Baso Palembang*, actual comprehension of the language itself remains quite low. Besides a few phrases that are ubiquitous in the Muslim world such as *Allhamdulillah* ‘Praise be to God’ and *Insha’ Allah* ‘God willing,’ most people in Palembang never speak the language of their scriptures. As discussed in greater depth below, a greater importance is placed on being able to interact with the sounds of the language through deciphering the print. The common belief in the city is that the sounds themselves bless the hearers, with or without comprehension. For believers of ordinary means, this is all that can be expected, and it is therefore regarded as enough.

None of this should in anyway diminish the real importance of this language in the minds and hearts of the people of South Sumatra. The Arabic language is everywhere. It is chanted through loudspeakers five times a day from the minarets of the area’s thousands of mosques. It springs readily from the lips of well-known preachers played on the radio and television. It is chanted at every wedding and funeral as well as at the thanksgiving parties given for safe childbirth and the subsequent safe development of children as they grow. Moreover, gleaming plaques with quotes from the Koran hang in almost every business, office, and home.

Another international language currently enjoying prestige in Palembang is English. As in many places around the world, English is the linguistic vehicle of globalization. Entertainment, education, and the promise of opportunity are all held out to those willing to learn this language of global communication. So far, the people of Palembang have shown themselves eager to take part in this wave of change.

Much of the video and music programming selected by the people of the city is English based. Whether through British soccer or Hollywood films, citizens young and old expose themselves to a

constant stream of English while watching popular television programming.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, whether in the mall, on the streets, or in the karaoke club, English songs remain popular despite a thriving national music industry.

These informal means of language acquisition are often supplemented by English language lessons offered to children both during the regular school day and through a plethora of after-school programs available throughout the city. The driving force behind such study is not only a better understanding of favorite films and music, but also the hope of a better economic future. Competition for office and sales jobs is fierce and every little edge makes a difference. Being able to deal with English in spoken and written forms is seen by many as the *sine qua non* of success in the workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Part of the power that surrounds the English language lies in the aura of education and progress it conveys. Public leaders, business people, and academics will all code-switch into English as a means of making crucial points come across more powerfully. The same technique is used in advertising to show that a product is truly international quality.

The result of all of this exposure is that nobody in the city of Palembang can confess to absolute ignorance of this language even though its native speakers surely number, at most, in the hundreds.<sup>10</sup> Men, women, and children from all walks of life are slowly bringing English words and phrases into their linguistic repertoire. One effect of this ongoing shift is that people in Palembang interact with print in the English language far more than they read or write in their own mother tongue.

The next section discusses this apparent paradox in greater depth.

### 1.3 Questions Regarding the Vernacular in Print

Despite the fact that people have been interacting with print in this area of the world for centuries, these literate practices have always been carried out predominantly in languages other than the local vernacular. According to many traditional views of the rise and spread of literacy, this is a puzzling

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<sup>9</sup> Indonesians strongly prefer subtitles to dubbing, so most of the audio for this programming remains intact.

<sup>10</sup> While reporting to the police upon arrival, I was informed that at that time there were only about 70 expatriates currently living in the city, with the majority being from Malaysia.

situation. Scholars such as Walter J. Ong (1982:175) argue that literacy gives great power and benefit to all those who apply it. He writes:

Literacy opens possibilities to the word and to human existence unimaginable without writing. Oral cultures today value their oral traditions and agonize over the loss of these traditions, but I have never encountered or heard of an oral culture that does not want to achieve literacy as soon as possible. (Some individuals of course do resist literacy, but they are mostly soon lost sight of.)

The difficulty with this assertion is that so many geographic areas of the world have, despite constant exposure to a variety of literate traditions through trade, remained for centuries without an explosion in popular literacy. One would expect this valuable skill to have quickly leapt over the boundaries of specialty-use and language to spread throughout the island's dozens of language and cultural groups. By the present day, one would expect every man, woman, and child to be seated under a tree with a book in one hand and a pen in the other.

As evidenced in places like Palembang this expected storyline of literacy expansion caused by the populace desiring "to achieve literacy as soon as possible" is in no way guaranteed. On the contrary, if, on occasion, literate practices spread in so rapid and unbidden a fashion, this should be seen more as the exception than the rule.

As the next chapter will show, literate practices are cultural practices. As such, they will spread in ways similar to other cultural practices and will face similar obstacles along the way. Potential users will consider many factors before and during the process of adoption. They will ask whether these new practices are relevant to their lives, if they show potential benefit, whether they are adaptable to local customs and goals, and whether there are risks to their present way of doing things.

Spreading new literate practices in an Indonesian city is similar to convincing Ukrainian pig farmers to switch to new feeds and techniques of animal husbandry. In addition to asking many questions, the potential user will usually desire to try out new practices in little ways, before going "whole hog," as it were. If the benefits are absent or unclear, the cultural experimenter will most likely stick with more traditional practices.

This is precisely the argument used by theorists such as Street, who use it to explain why vast national and international efforts to spread "Literacy" around the globe have yet to achieve their goal. People are reluctant to change because they perceive that potential benefits are smaller than the costs and risks (Street

1995:18). In this view, eager and rapid adoption of Western literate practices in any other society should be seen as an exception rather than the rule.

So, if the central question of this thesis was simply to explore why vernacular literate practices are rare in Palembang, the answer would be simple: It does not seem worth it, at least not to the main stakeholders, namely people who might potentially form and take part in these practices.

A more interesting and complicated question is why people *are* choosing to use their language in print. After all these years and in the face of strong traditions to the contrary, why do people, here and there, decide to use the Palembang language in print? Why, in these instances, do they not choose languages such as Indonesian, English, or Arabic, all of which have a long history of being used locally in printed form?

To answer these question, this paper assembles texts from a variety of sources in Palembang. These texts are examined using a theoretical framework whose foundations are found in the school of New Literacy Studies (Chapter 2). In order to more thoroughly analyze these textual artifacts and the practices behind them, the basic NLS framework is necessarily expanded in complexity and precision (Chapters 3 and 4).

The data analysis section of this paper (Chapters 5-8) is an application of this framework to a variety of texts collected in Palembang, mostly during the 8 months in which I lived in the city between the fall of 2006 and summer of 2007.<sup>11</sup> Chapter 5 looks at two examples in which the cultural actors put *Baso Palembang* in print in order to clearly communicate informational content. Chapter 6 explores ways the vernacular in print can be used to catch people's attention and draw in readership. Chapter 7 shows that the local language can also prove useful in advertising and politics as it builds solidarity and underscores authenticity. Chapter 8 gives an example of one man's use of the local language in an online community. The concluding chapter makes a few comparisons between these examples and points to areas in which future research might give the academic community and the people they serve still further insights into the nature of vernacular literate skills and practices.

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<sup>11</sup> The fieldwork informing this thesis was mainly conducted during an 8-month stay in Palembang from October 1, 2006 through June 6, 2007. Two other short visits, totaling only 12 days, were made at a later date (one in the November of 2008 and one in April of 2009). Other information was accessed through online sources as well as friends and colleagues in Indonesia.



## CHAPTER 2 THREE NLS SCHOLARS

### 2.1 Shirley Brice Heath

Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) work in the Piedmont of the Carolinas studying three communities and their distinctive communicative practices set a new standard in the fields of education, ethnography, and linguistics. Indeed, by combining these three disciplines in her research, and then reporting on her findings in such a cogent manner in her book *Ways with Words* (1983), she has made the thought of definitively separating any one of these fields from the other two indefensible. And though she did not coin the term, it is fair to say that her book heralded the birth of what would eventually be called the New Literacy Studies (NLS).

In her book, Heath describes her research which examined three communities living in the Piedmont of North Carolina: "Roadville," "Trackton," and "Maintown." Each of these communities is shown to have done an excellent job of enculturating their children in locally appropriate "ways with words." Children from each group were each seen as competent and intelligent communicators in their respective communities. Yet when these same children entered mainstream schools, their home-based ways of communication were judged according to mainstream communication expectations and standards.

Notably, students coming from each of the communities had been exposed to literate practices in their communities before and during their school years. The problem was not that reading or writing were foreign practices in their own right. Instead the students' difficulties grew from the difference between home-based and school-based literate practices (Heath 1983:235).

Heath (1983:200) introduces two key ideas into the discussion and study of the way people interact with print: communities' various "ways with words" and the "literacy events" in which they may be observed. In doing so, Heath problematizes old views of "literacy." She shows it to be, like other cultural practices, a multifaceted phenomenon, as well as a localized one. In short, she shows the error of those who

view “literacy” as just *one thing* to be taught and learned and used in *one way* by all people (Heath 1983:230).

## 2.2 Brian V. Street

While Heath was studying Carolina schoolchildren in the 1970s, another ethnographic researcher was gathering data 7,000 miles away in Iran. As Brian V. Street (1995:55) observed the variety of ways in which the Iranians around him interacted with print, he was distressed to find that they did not fit neatly within the bounds presented by theories of literacy at the time.

In Street’s (1996:55) words:

Searching for a research literature to help make sense of the complexity of the local uses and meanings of literacy in Iran, I was concerned to find instead that the development and educational accounts of literacy at the time -- rooted in an autonomous model of literacy -- tended to provide accounts of village life that ignored or demeaned local literacy practices.

Anthropological theories of literacy, such as those by Goody, also struck Street as overly simplistic, as they attempted to lump people into two categories, the literate and the oral, with a ‘great divide’ in between the two (Street 1995:21, 55; cf. Goody & Watt 1968).

As a result of this struggle to find a theoretical footing while interacting with complex cultural and communicative phenomena, Street has spent the last three decades developing a new framework attempting to address the depth and breadth of the world’s literate activity. Below is a brief summary of Street’s ideas.<sup>12</sup>

Street’s (1995:21-23, 28-29) approach to studying literacy tends to revolve around four basic concepts: the ideological view of literacy, the concept of multiple local social literacies, the fallacious but prevalent “autonomous” view of literacy, and finally the equally common and erroneous perception of a “great divide” between orality and literacy.

### 2.2.1 The ideological view of literacy

Street argues that the proper view of literacy is an “ideological” one. In claiming this, he wishes to emphasize at least three things. First, he wants to underscore that literacy is a human behavior and a human construct, so it is cultural in the same way that hair combing, food preparation, and child rearing are

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<sup>12</sup> The treatment of Street’s terminology presented here is based upon his book *Social Literacies* (1996).

cultural. But more than that, Street wants to drive home the fact that like all cultural endeavors, and especially all inherently communicative cultural endeavors, literacy is “ideological.” At its most basic, this means that values are being exercised whenever and wherever literacy is promulgated and practiced (Street 1995:29).

Street will not rest, however, with such a gentle definition of “ideology.” He insists, as well, on the more radical uses of the term common in critical studies and recent anthropology. As such, the “ideological” view of literacy shows this practice to be not just cultural, and not just value laden, but also a conduit and tool of power (Street 1995:160-161; see 65 for a specific example). And as all such instruments, it is frequently exercised oppressively by those who have it. Thus the “Haves” rule over the “Have-Nots”, controlling the use, propagation, and ongoing definition and redefinition of “literacy” (Street 1995:106, 135). If literacy spreads from outsiders to insiders of a culture, it can be termed “colonial literacy.” If on the other hand it spreads from rulers to subjects within a culture, it is simply “dominant literacy” (Street 1996:16, 30). In both cases, an under-recognized part of the “why” of teaching literacy is subjugation of the literacy-recipients to the literacy-bearers (Street 1996:45).

That said, Street does not assume that all power and control reside with the ruling elite, whether they live outside or inside the focus community. All individuals have their own reasons for embracing or rejecting the efforts of the “teachers,” and these reasons act to meld and shape the ultimate form of the resultant literacy practices (Street 1995:36).

#### 2.2.2 The concept of multiple local social literacies

It is the idea of multiple locally social (i.e., socially-formed and practiced) literacies that gives title to Street’s seminal work. As central as it is, this concept proves itself to be a bit more difficult to pin down in discussion and practice. This may be part of the reason it has caused so much debate both within and outside of NLS circles.

What Street makes clear is that he intends by his usage to emphasize once again the social or cultural basis of literacy practice, but this time with a new slant. While he uses the concept of the “ideological” view of literacy to bring out the *power* and *value* elements of *socially-constructed* literacy practice, Street (1995:2, 21-23) uses the idea of multiple social literacies to bring out the *localized nature* of the phenomenon as well as their inherent *plurality*.

That is, he desires to help his readers take some of the most basic anthropological principles and apply them to literate skills and practices as well. Cooking, basket weaving, and storytelling can be done in different ways from community to community and even within a given community. The same then is true of literate skills and practices (Street 1995:59).

Through such observations, scholars influenced by NLS thought have begun to see more clearly the multiplicity of “literacies” and the way they are practiced in different localities. The skills people use as they interact with bus schedules, for example, becomes separated from the ways in which mothers read to their children.

Two points remain unclear in Street’s framework. Both are concerned with the question of how scholars should best apply the term “literacy” once it has become something other than a monolithic, traditionally negotiated, and unconsciously assumed given. In effect, the following discussion can be summarized by two questions: 1) Where does one “literacy” end and another begin? 2) What is a “literacy” and what is not a “literacy” (Street 1995:134-135)?

Street leaves the first question purposely underdefined. His reluctance to provide a precise definition stems from his conviction that any attempt to provide a clearer definition risks falling into the same pitfalls as the scholars of “Literacy” who have gone before him. He argues that specific delineation of what amounts to a “literacy” would be tantamount to once again erecting a definition of a capital “L” pan-human “Literacy” (Street 1995:134).

As a result, Street (1995:134) is also opposed to efforts designed to hammer out a definitive list of “the world’s literacies.” Again, he fears that to do so would necessitate some kind of a list of criteria, which would inevitably reflect the cultural biases of the list makers. On the other hand, he himself admits to making something of a local list in his analysis of Iranian literacy practice (Street 1995:134).

The second question seems to be an area left vague simply because Street himself is unsure where to draw the lines. Once one begins to see the similarities between “literacies” and other social practices, it is difficult to know what, if anything, should be called “not a literacy.”

Must writing be phonemic, or can it be pictographic? And if it can be pictographic, what about other symbols and markings, such as the child who “reads” the fast food sign? And if this is a “literacy,” what of other graphic arts? After all, graphic arts also does some of the things that “literacy” does (e.g.,

communicate with others, freeze an aspect of otherwise free-flowing experience for later reference; span distances of space and time, etc.). If criteria like these bring graphic arts into the fold of “literacy,” what of other forms of expression? And if all artistic activity is included, why should the term not be applied more broadly to refer to any form of human communication, or indeed any behavior/skill (human or other)?

Street seems caught at the mouth of Pandora’s Box. On the one hand, he dismisses as “metaphorical” the broadest use of “literacy” as applied to any ability or skill (Street 1995:135). In another section, Street (1995:105) laments, “the concept of multiple literacies...[is] a concept that I believe is crucial in challenging the autonomous model, but which is beginning to be discredited as each observer offers his own criteria for different literacies and as metaphors and extensions of the term move further and further away from the social practices of reading and writing.”

Yet, in other circumstances, he gives tacit approval to those who would apply the NLS lens to various forms of graphic arts (Street 2005). Furthermore, he makes clear that an accurate understanding of “literacy” requires a treatment that goes far beyond a simplistic what-does-the-text-say mentality to include such factors as form and font (Street 1995:5, 169-171).

While Street (1995:105) laments that NLS critique of the “autonomous” view of literacy “is beginning to be discredited,” Street’s own inability or unwillingness to clarify his terminology—and therefore his conceptualizations—have unfortunately played a significant role in perpetuating this kind of confusion.

### 2.2.3 The autonomous view of literacy

Wherever Street might desire to put the bounds on the use of the concept of multiple literacies, and whatever one might desire to include in a description of any particular local literacy, one thing is clear. Street regards as an anathema the traditional understanding of literacy being one solid thing, one practiced set of skills spreading across the globe and bringing “development” in its wake. Calling this the “autonomous” view of literacy, Street (1995:13) attacks this perception from every angle. Literacy is not one thing, but many. It is not the same in every environment, but different. And these different things, singularly or en masse, do not necessarily bring peace and prosperity with their arrival (Street 1995:76).

This leads to the next argument made by Street (1995:108-109), that local ways of communicating are often overlooked and undervalued. This is especially true if the onlooker and judge happens to be

comparing these “other” little and parochial communicative practices with their own “autonomous” global and traditional view of literacy.

#### 2.2.4 Conquering the “great divide”

Street (1995:21) presents a whole-hearted denial of what he refers to as “great divide” thinking in regards to orality and literacy. Whether it comes from an earnest desire to make the world a better place by empowering those outside the literate pale, or from overtly ethnocentric individuals and groups who plan to make the ignorant savages more like us, Street decries the promulgation of the idea that there is a huge difference between people who can read and those who cannot.

Street is simply unconvinced by arguments that literate people and oral people can really be divided into two distinct camps. To support these claims, Street (1995:156) notes that those who can read and write often act and think in ways quite similar to those who cannot. And those who cannot read and write are often seen acting in “literate” ways (Street 1995:22, 157). Beyond this, however, there is also the question of whether anyone in the world is truly untouched by literacy (and therefore, if anyone is truly “illiterate”) (Street 1995:19-20).

#### 2.2.5 Summary and brief analysis of Street

At his heart Street is a synthesizer. Throughout his work, the reader can see a trend in which he favors joining together rather than dividing. He wants to close the “great divide” and bring an end to discussions that divorce writing from speaking (Street 1995:21). At the same time he, like Heath, desires to bring an understanding of culture to bear on issues of literacy and education. So, where others have set boundaries between disciplines, practices, and subject matters, Street has worked to show that these are all connected. Even where he might be seen as dividing instead of synthesizing, namely as he argues for localized literacies, he fights against the tendency to compartmentalize individual literacies as if they were separate from each other or from other elements of society (Street 1995:134-135).

It follows, then, that Street’s big weakness is his failure to define and delineate. He so wants to show the connections that he does not make enough distinctions. Because of his desire to give all “literacies” equal standing, he refuses to get specific on where something ceases to be a “literacy” and begins to be something else (Street 1995:135).

What Street does best, and where he adds most to Heath's work, is developing the concept of the ideological nature of the spread of "literacy." Along these lines, his work does a splendid job of paving the way for James Paul Gee, whose work, discussed in the next section, explicitly addresses the connections between the political nature of "literacy" and its role in the identity of the individual and the community.

### 2.3 James Paul Gee

A linguist specializing in discourse analysis, Gee has spent more than a decade developing a new way of looking at language that posits the identity of participants within society as a primary driving force behind communication. At the heart of his work is his distinctive use of the word "Discourse." Gee (2005:33) notes that his conception of this term has been influenced by French deconstructionists such as Foucault. Given that part of his background and present work is "discourse analysis" of a more traditional sort, Gee uses capitalization to reduce confusion. In his words: "I will reserve the word 'discourse,' with a little 'd,' to mean language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories). 'Big D' Discourses are always language plus 'other stuff' " (Gee 2005:26).

#### 2.3.1 The concept of big-D Discourses

Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or "types of people") by specific groups, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort, businesspeople of a certain sort, church members of a certain sort, African-Americans of a certain sort, women or men of a certain sort, and so on and so forth through a very long list. Discourses are ways of being "people like us." (Gee 2008:3)

In short, Gee's "Big D" Discourses are cultural practices that people use that mark them as belonging to groups using such practices.

The important thing for Gee in the use of language and culture is to make sure that the language you use and the "other stuff" that you add gets recognized as a suitable Discourse. One of Gee's favorite examples of this claim is drawn from the image of a "biker bar." Gee (2008:2-3) writes:

Imagine I park my motorcycle, enter my neighborhood "biker bar," and say to my letter-jacketed and tattooed drinking buddy, as I sit down: "May I have a match for my cigarette, please?" What I have said is perfectly grammatical English, but it is "wrong" nonetheless, unless I have used a heavily ironic tone of voice. It is not just the content of what you say that is important, but how you say it. And in this bar, I haven't said it in the "right" way. I should have said something like "Gotta match?" or "Give me a light, wouldya?"

But now imagine I say the “right” thing (“Gotta match?” or “Give me a light, wouldya?”), but while saying it, I carefully wipe off the bar stool with a napkin to avoid getting my newly pressed designer jeans dirty. In this case, I’ve still got it all wrong. In this bar they just don’t do that sort of thing: I have said the right thing, but my “saying-doing” combination is nonetheless all wrong. It’s just not what you say or even just how you say it, it is *who* you are and *what* you’re doing while you say it. It is not enough just to say the right “lines.”

This “*who*” doing a specific, recognizable “*what*” is essential for Gee’s concept of Discourses. As Gee (2005:27) writes:

The key to Discourses is “recognition.” If you put language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together in such a way that others *recognize* you as a particular type of who (identity) engaged in a particular type of what (activity), here-and-now, then you have pulled off a Discourse (and thereby continued it through history, if only a while longer).

This brings up the question of what happens when people act in unrecognizable ways, ways outside of an acceptable Discourse. One answer is to imagine what might happen to Gee were he to act as he suggests in the barroom situation described above. At the very least, he would be seen as an outsider, someone who does not belong, and probably somebody who will not be welcomed or accepted.

One of the main goals in life then becomes “pulling off” Discourses (Gee 1995:7). In any situation, an individual works to successfully negotiate an identity acceptable within the realm of acceptable Discourses. A range of words and actions are acceptable, but they must fit within the constraints of allowable Discourses.

As a result, Gee views language differently than many of his colleagues. For him, language is not so much about meaning as it is about the identities people possess and the ways in which society supports and is changed by the actions of people within it. As Gee (2005:1) states:

Many people think that the primary purpose of language is to “communicate information.” However, language serves a great many functions and giving and getting information, even in our new Information Age, is by no means the only one. If I had to single out the primary function of human language, it would be not one, but the following two closely related functions: to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions.

Of course, these two functions are connected. Cultures, social groups, and institutions shape social activities and identities: there are no activities such as “water-cooler gossip sessions” or “corridor politics,” no identities such as water-cooler gossip or corridor politician, without an institution whose water cooler, social arrangements, and corridors are the sites of these activities and identities. At the same time, though, cultures, social groups, and institutions get produced, reproduced, and transformed through human activities and identities. There is no institution unless it is enacted and reenacted moment-by-moment in activities, and the identities connected to them, like “water-cooler gossip



sessions,” “corridor politics,” meetings, and numerous other sorts of social interactions, all of which partly have a life of their own apart from larger cultural and institutional forces. Groups and institutions render certain sorts of activities and identities meaningful; certain sorts of activities and identities constitute the nature and existence of specific social groups and institutions.

Here, it may be helpful to use the biker bar example once again in a paraphrase to capture the import of this last sentence: “[Biker bars] render certain sorts of activities and identities meaningful and certain sorts of activities and identities constitute the nature and existence of [bikers and biker bars].” These activities and identities are at the heart of Discourses. But Gee (2008:168-178) is not solely interested in describing Discourses as they are practiced, but also in understanding how they are formed and adjusted over time.

Notice in the extended quotation above how Gee speaks of “cultures, social groups, and institutions get[ting] produced, *reproduced*, and *transformed* through human activities and identities” (emphasis added). Discourses are not static. They change in a variety of ways. Individuals can put new spins on old ways of doing things. Individuals and communities can also combine two or more different Discourses to create one or more new hybrid Discourses (Gee 2008:169).

This brings to mind Street’s assertion that “literacies” coming from outside of the community are not received passively by the so-called “recipients.” Instead, individuals and communities work to “adapt” these outside means of doing things to fit locally valued goals (Street 1995:36). People being oppressed by the introduction of new Discourses, such as those involving written treaties and records of land deeds, cannot be viewed as simple victims. To do so overlooks the power they do have to mediate change and take an active hand in reworking those Discourses to suit their needs and to protect themselves from the motives of others (Gee 2008:178-181).

Nonetheless, Gee, like Street and Heath, sees linguistic researchers as ethically bound to do what they can to act as informed change agents in society to help the oppressed. As he writes, “The fact that people have differential access to different identities and activities, connected to different sorts of status and social goods, is a root source of inequality in society. Intervening in such matters can be a contribution to social justice. Since different identities and activities are enacted in and through language, the study of language is integrally connected to matters of equity and justice” (Gee 2005:22).

Also, like Street and Heath, Gee argues forcefully for the plurality of our “ways with words” (and “other stuff”). We grow up acquiring a “culturally distinctive way of being an ‘everyday person’-- that is, a

non-specialized, non-professional person” which he terms a “primary Discourse” (Gee 2008:156). But this is only the beginning. The normal person, even within an entirely monolingual community, must constantly work to creatively apply and adjust their primary Discourse, while at the same time acquiring new or “secondary Discourses” (Gee 2008:157).

These secondary Discourses are often learned in the public sphere and can have a dramatic effect on primary Discourses (Gee 2008:157). As Gee (2008:157) dramatically asserts, “Primary Discourses can change, hybridize with other Discourses, and they can even die.” At another point, he is careful to point out that Discourses can also “split.” The example Gee (2005:30) gives is how “medieval ‘natural philosophy’ eventually split into philosophy and physics or other sciences.”

Significantly for this paper, Gee (2008:175-176) conceptualizes “literacies” as essentially the “mastery” of Secondary Discourses. For this reason, a proper understanding of literate activity must always take into account the rest of the “patchwork” of life which is composed of “thoughts, words, objects, events, actions, and interactions in Discourses” (Gee 2005:7).

### 2.3.2 Summary and brief analysis of Gee

In many ways, Gee may be seen as simply giving a new perspective on the old concept of culture, as he himself states (Gee 2005:33). Nonetheless, it is a different enough perspective that one must be careful to see what is brought over from previous treatments, and what is left out. For this reason, his use of different terminology is helpful.

One thing that he adds is the idea that much of human behavior is not just cultural, but is also a means of broadcasting one’s identity. For Gee (2005:7; 2008:118), it is difficult to imagine people acting without also striving to be understood and accepted as a certain kind of person, belonging to one or more Discourse communities. People practicing Discourses are understood by other people who have acquired the same or similar Discourses. In many cases, this understanding is not so much about comprehension of meaning as acceptance of identity (Gee 2008:3).

People who “pull off” a Discourse in a biker bar or a sushi bar are rewarded with acceptance and the ability to continue interacting within that setting (Gee 2005:7). Moreover, as every confidence artist knows, if a certain identity is accepted thoroughly enough, culturally-valued “social goods” such as respect, freedom, and money often follow (Gee 2008:66, 162).

Gee argues that all of society works in this way. Although he does not use the term, he clearly argues that we are all, for better or for worse, confidence artists. Much of what we do every day is an attempt to get accepted as a certain kind of *who* are doing a certain kind of *what*, i.e., to gain people's recognition and confidence. If we go to the bank, store, or restaurant and "pull off" being a customer, we can get things done. If we fail to pull it off, all manner of bad things can happen.

At the same time, the identities we practice and the Discourse communities to which we belong are not static. One of Gee's greatest contributions is the way he describes how people creatively ply their cultural repertoire to new situations. People are constantly creating Secondary Discourses, often by the hybridization of Discourses that they have practiced in the past (Gee 2005:30-31). The trick is keeping these new Discourses in the constraints of what will be recognized, understood, and accepted (Gee 2005:33).

This kind of thinking has much to benefit an examination of the ways in which people in Palembang take their culturally acquired ways of interacting with print and combine them with their primary Discourse of using Palembangese and being *Wong Kito Galo* 'All Our People.'

#### 2.4 Summary of NLS Perspectives: Heath, Street, and Gee

Scholars such as Heath, Street, and Gee problematize simplistic views of literacy. In place of an autonomous supra-cultural capital-L Literacy they present a variety of localized literacy practices interacting with other communicative and cultural practices. These practices are formed, constrained, guided, utilized, etc. within a cultural/ideological grid which is intrinsically joined with the identity of individuals and communities.

Armed with these anthropologically informed views, NLS scholars do a good job of explaining why one culture's "ways with print" should not be expected to spread easily throughout the world. Each people has its own goals and its own cultural ways of accomplishing those goals. New cultural ideas and practices arriving from the outside do not always find a place at the table.

But sometimes new ideas do enter the lives and practices of a community. Usually, when this occurs, it does so through a process of adaptation. Street (1995:29-45) points out that this process is not always peaceable. There are many instances in which a bad fit is forced upon a community from the outside. In these oppressive cases, the goals of local people are not the sole deciding factor of whether to adopt or how

to adapt a new idea. Instead, the goals of outsiders become the main driving force behind the formation of new localized practices. Street (1995:36) and Gee (2005: 30) also remind their readers that this adaptation may include a degree of hybridization of old practices and new. The resulting skills and practices are different from what has come before. As they have been brought together with existing roles, practices, and purposes, something new emerges.

This is the way that cultural skills and practices “spread.” This is the way literate skills and practices “spread.” The literate “ways with words” developed in Palembang, Indonesia are not going to be the same as those in the Piedmont of the Carolinas. At the same time, distant cousins that they are, there will be similarities.

Each of these scholars stresses that people naturally live within a complex social environment. In this cultural milieu, there are many ways of being many different kinds of people. These different kinds of people, in turn, do many different kinds of things. All of these things are done in many different kinds of ways. “Literacies” are just one of these “cultural things.”

#### 2.4.1 Shortcomings of New Literacy Studies perspectives

NLS scholars provide many useful leads in the effort to understand the ways people interact with print in places like Palembang. Nonetheless, a few pieces are still missing.

Perhaps the most obvious of these pieces is a clear definition of “literacy” itself, a gaping hole which Street and Gee both consciously refuse to fill. As mentioned above, Street has his reasons for not defining “literacy.” He wants to avoid making the mistake others have made in trying to force people around the world to accept a view of literacy that has arisen from and been shaped by one particular cultural setting (Street 1995:134).

Gee (2008:175-176), similarly, desires to avoid specificity and states that, “I define ‘literacy’ as: Mastery of a secondary Discourse.” To say anything more, according to Gee, is too much. He states, “If one wanted to be rather pedantic and literalistic, then we could define ‘literacy’ as: Mastery of a secondary Discourse involving print” (Gee 2008:176). As the next chapter will demonstrate, the clarity that comes from being “rather pedantic and literalistic” is well worth the trouble.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Appendix A provides a further discussion of this perceived shortcoming in the work of Street and

#### 2.4.1.1 The need for a new framework

The NLS perspective also falls short of providing a framework for answering the question central to so much of the study of literacy events: “Why is this person using print in this way in this situation?” Answering this question requires a thorough examination of the specific event, including finding answers to the questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how*.

Each NLS scholar is helpful in drawing some level of attention to the need for addressing these questions. Heath (1983), in bringing in the need for an anthropological view of communicative practices, was one of the first to say that reading is not just about *how*, but also about *who*, *where*, and *why*. Street (1995) builds upon this understanding, and especially focuses on the macro discussions of the ways in which the “autonomous” view of “Literacy” fails to account for all of the *why*’s behind the discussion of “helping” the “illiterates” around the world. Gee (2005; 2008) focuses on the *who*, and thereby provides some of his own reasons *why* people communicate in the ways they do.

What is missing is a framework that draws all of these questions together. In particular, a new framework will need to show the ways in which the *who* and *why* of any “way with words” interrelates with the *what* and *how*. Since the writings of the NLS scholars are so strongly focused on the *who* and *why*, the frameworks they present do not do enough to address the basic questions of *what* and *how*.<sup>14</sup>

#### 2.4.1.2 Looking forward

Despite the aid that it provides, neither the core NLS perspective nor the developments provided by Street or Gee provide the necessary framework for defining or describing “literacy” in Palembang. The works summarized in this chapter show some of the complexity without accounting for all of it (e.g., multiple languages). At the same time, they also fail to give enough explanatory order (e.g., a definition for “literacy”). The next two chapters will address both issues.

Chapters 3 and 4 will present a more robust framework with more precise terminology. This will allow for better description of the various ways people interact with print in Palembangese. At the same time, it will provide the resources for addressing the various motivations people have for using their mother tongue

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Gee.

<sup>14</sup> Appendix B discusses this need in greater depth, particularly in reference to the work of Gee.

in print. In essence, this framework will allow the user to account for the form, content, and goals of all cultural phenomena and then to situate literacy within this context. Towards the end of Chapter 4, this framework will be brought together into a one-page instrument to use in the analysis of the data, which will be presented in the main data section of the paper (Chapters 5-8).

CHAPTER 3  
THE BEGINNINGS OF A NEW FRAMEWORK: THE CULTURACIES, LINGUACIES,  
COMMUNICACIES, AND LITERACIES TAXONOMY

3.1 Introduction

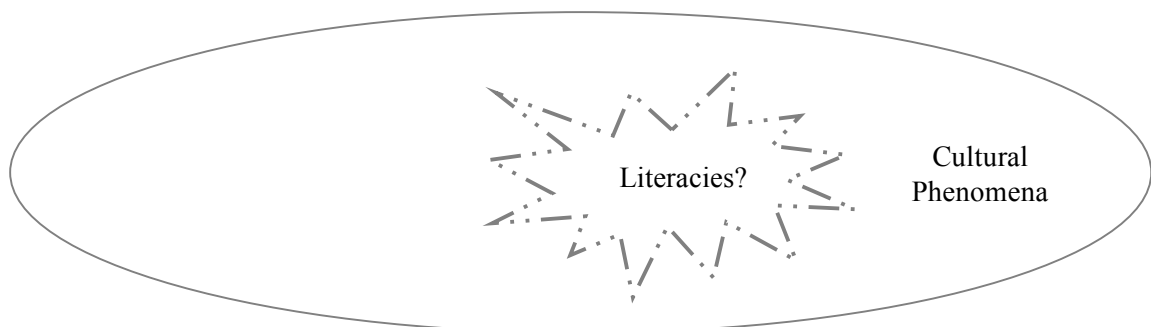
Any framework attempting to understand a cultural phenomenon such as literacy must do two things. First, it must show where this one group of cultural phenomena fits in a larger range of cultural phenomena to which it might be compared. There is some debate within NLS circles as to whether “literacies” should best be described as skills or practices or something else. Before addressing this question, this section focuses on another matter. In the meantime, literacies and their peers in human activity will simply be called cultural phenomena. Second, it must discuss the “guts” of such phenomena. This chapter deals with the former issue. The latter issue will be addressed in Chapter 4.

3.2 The Culturacies, Linguacies, Communicacies, and Literacies Taxonomy

3.2.1 Understanding literacies in the context of their peers

As NLS scholars make clear, literacies are part of a vast sphere of cultural phenomena. What they are less able to do is describe that sphere and to find exactly where literacies fit. Below is a figure showing the NLS view:

Figure 1: “Literacies” and Other Cultural Phenomena from the NLS Perspective



The difficulty in this picture is that literacies have no clear peers. They are just some kind of cultural “something.” A literate practice is a kind of cultural practice. A literate event is a kind of cultural event.

But what exactly is a “literacy?” The English language simply lacks terms that, through their form, show themselves to be peers of this term. In short, there are no “-acies” that deal with something other than “liter-.”

This last sentence is written somewhat tongue-in-cheek, with an understanding that technically, these are not the proper morpheme breaks for this word. Nonetheless, the fact that authors recently have begun writing about terms such as “computeracy” (Algeo 1993:226) and “graphicacy” (Roth et al. 2005) demonstrate that people seem to be using “-acy” as a productive suffix in its own right.<sup>15</sup>

In his discussion of how one might categorize secondary Discourses, Gee (2008:176) seems also to struggle with this same problem. He writes:<sup>16</sup>

If one wanted to be rather pedantic and literalistic, then we could define “literacy” as:

Mastery of a secondary Discourse involving print

(which is almost all of them in modern society). And one can substitute for “print” various other sorts of texts and technologies: painting, literature, films, television, computers, telecommunications – “props” in the Discourse – to get definitions of various other sorts of “literacy” (e.g., “visual literacy,” “computer literacy,” “literary literacy,” and so forth).<sup>17</sup>

Notice that, as Gee moves from defining Discourses “involving print,” he continues to use the term “literacy” even though these other Discourses really have nothing to do with “literacy,” at least not in the etymological sense of the term.

What Gee is playing with is the metaphorical application of the idea of “literacy” to other areas, that is, Discourses dealing with other “props.” In doing so, he is not alone. He is actually taking part in a widespread move among English speakers to build up a legion of peers for the term “literacy.” As an example of just how common this practice has become, one need only read the report recently published on

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<sup>15</sup> Another analysis of this productive practice is that English speakers are creating portmanteaus by conflating terms such as “computer” and “graphic” with “literacy.” Either way, these new words are filling perceived gaps in English vocabulary.

<sup>16</sup> The formatting for this quotation follows that of the original text (see Gee 2008: 176).

<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, Gee (2008: 176) rejects this whole line of thought, not because of the awkwardness it creates in discussing what might be termed “literary literacy,” but because he sees no benefit to setting such Discourses apart from other Discourses “other than to assuage the feelings of people committed (as [he is ] not) to reading and writing as decontextualized a isolable skills”.



the back of a series of Doritos® bags which refers to 2007 Brick Awards Winner, Devine Bradley, and his organization which provides training in “financial literacy” and “career literacy.” Collins and Blot (2003:3) give the further example of “moral literacy” as discussed within the politics of education.

The difficulty with such terminology is that it is essentially using the term “literacy” as a generic way of talking about culturally acquired ways of interacting with cultural “stuff.” But then, if one wants to talk about culturally acquired ways of interacting with literate “stuff” one will have to talk about “literate literacies.”

As mentioned above, the root problem of this terminological confusion is that, partially because of its form, the term “literacy” seems to stand as an island unto itself without peers. One traditional result has been that the term is treated with magical deference, referring to something to which humanity has attained that is like nothing else. A separate, more recent result has been the flood of metaphorical “literacies” that have begun springing up to refer to every culturally acquired way of interacting with any and every kind of “prop.”

This paper proposes two solutions to the apparent, but false, uniqueness of “literacy.” Both are efforts to deal with the peculiar form, efforts which break down the parallels with other culturally acquired skills and competencies.

Perhaps the easiest solution to the problems described above is to simply get rid of the offending term altogether. Instead of talking about “literacies,” people should instead talk only of “literate skills” (or “literate competencies”). This would yield nice parallelism with all the other kinds of skills discussed above, (e.g., computer skills, graphic skills, etc). Literate skills taught in schools would be just one of many cultural skills children learn throughout their formative years and beyond.

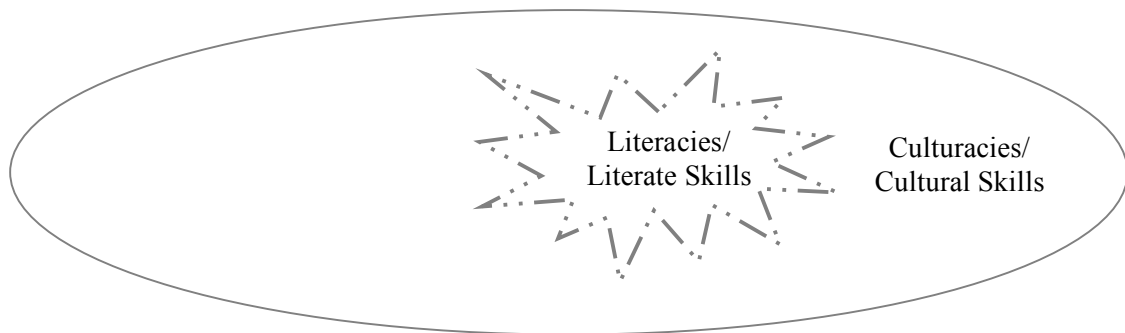
Unfortunately, it is doubtful that the terms “literacy” or “literacies” are going to go out of fashion anytime soon. For this reason, this paper suggests a secondary, backup solution. Instead of removing the “unparalleled” term, “literacies,” another possibility is the creation of other terms, other “-acies” as it were, to balance it out.<sup>18</sup> All of these culturally acquired skills or competencies could then be called *culturacies*.

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<sup>18</sup> In addition to the examples of this practice discussed above, another prominent author using this device in recent years is John Allen Paulos (2001:17), who popularized the term “numeracy.” Yet another

In a real sense, these two solutions outlined above are just two ways of doing the same thing. They both allow literacies (i.e., literate skills) to be understood in the context of their non-literate peers (i.e., culturacies of every kind). Both solutions are an effort to emphasize that literate skills are simply a particular type or subset of the wide range of cultural skills people use everyday. This understanding allows for an improvement upon the conception illustrated in Figure 1 above by yielding Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Literacies as a Class of Culturacies



The next step is to provide clear definitions for the terminology introduced thus far. This will serve to remove even more of the “fuzziness” so apparent in the NLS discussion of “literacies” and still reflected through the hazy border around “literacies/literate skills” in Figure 2 above.

### 3.2.2 Cultural elements and the definitions of culturacies and literacies

Following Gee, this paper seeks to describe culturacies through recognition of the various “props” involved (Gee 2008:176). Different skills involve interaction with different kinds of “things,” whether physical, environmental, mental, etc. By recognizing that different “props” mark different sorts of skills, the way is opened for clearer distinction between and discussion of these cultural skills.

Theoretically, this could result in the identification of an infinite number of culturacies. Not all of these need to be given names, though, especially not here. Instead, this paper will focus in on a relatively few number of “classes” of culturacies, one of which is literacies. This one specific class of cultural skills can be identified through the presence of literate “props,” themselves a subset of the larger body of cultural “props” involved in the practice of all cultural skills.

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example of this approach, picked up on later in this chapter, is the coining of the term “communicacy” by OleKambainei and Sintim-Misa (2003:168).

Gee's (2008:176) discussion on the topic suggests that these literate "props" might be distinguished from other cultural "things" by the presence of print. Another possibility is implicitly suggested by Collins and Blot (2003:3) as they speak of "ways with text." The important thing to show here is that in both cases the authors are using the presence of "literate stuff" to distinguish literacies. Literacies are culturacies. More than that, they are a particular class of culturacies dealing with particular "literate" kinds of cultural "props."

This paper follows Gee's tentative treatment up to this point, but suggests the term "elements" instead of "props." The reasons for this change will become evident to the reader over the course of this chapter and next. In the meantime, it is enough to say that this new term does a better job of conveying the central and fundamental role these cultural "things" play in the practice of culturacies.

So, one helpful way of classifying different culturacies is by the distinctive cultural elements with which people interact when utilizing these skills. Those cultural skills focused on literate elements can be termed literacies.

At this point, several definitions can be given:

**Cultural Element:** any "thing", physical or abstract, which enters into the experience of a human being<sup>19</sup>

**Literate Element:** any cultural element that involves print

**Culturacies/Cultural Skills:** culturally acquired ways of interacting with cultural elements

**Literacies/Literate Skills:** culturally acquired ways of interacting with literate elements

### 3.2.3 Cultural events, practices, interactions, and skills

Since practices and events are actually the way in which skills are made manifest to the observer, these terms will also find frequent use in this thesis.

**Cultural Practices:** the patterns of activity by which cultural skills are acquired and applied in a community

**Cultural Events:** the manifestations of cultural practices in particular times and in particular places

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<sup>19</sup> Naturally, this includes pretty much anything anyone can ever see, feel, smell, touch, hear, or imagine.

For the purposes of this paper, another term is also helpful, serving to bridge the gap between practices and events:

**Cultural Interaction:** the application, within a specific cultural event, of cultural skills to a particular element or group of elements

A simple fictitious example helps to explain these terms further:

#### Making Clay Pots

A certain community uses a certain kind of clay to make a certain kind of pot. Children in the community acquire this cultural skill from a young age. During the rainy season, this cultural practice might be commonly observed throughout the community. On one particular day, at one particular house, an observer watches a man and his wife create 12 pots. During this cultural event, the observer is fascinated by the way in which the man and wife worked together to move clay from a pile in the corner across the table, performing a series of tasks that resulted in these pots appearing on a tray resting on a table at the other side of the room. The observer describes what she sees in a notebook. What she records is a description of the cultural interactions she has witnessed. These are representative of cultural practices and their corresponding cultural skills.

Because of their interrelated nature, cultural skills, practices, interactions, and events may be treated as clusters when dealing with this kind of example. These Skill/Practice/Interaction/Event (SPIE) Clusters are the subject of this study. Below, in Figure 3, is a chart showing their relation to each other and to the other key terms introduced thus far:

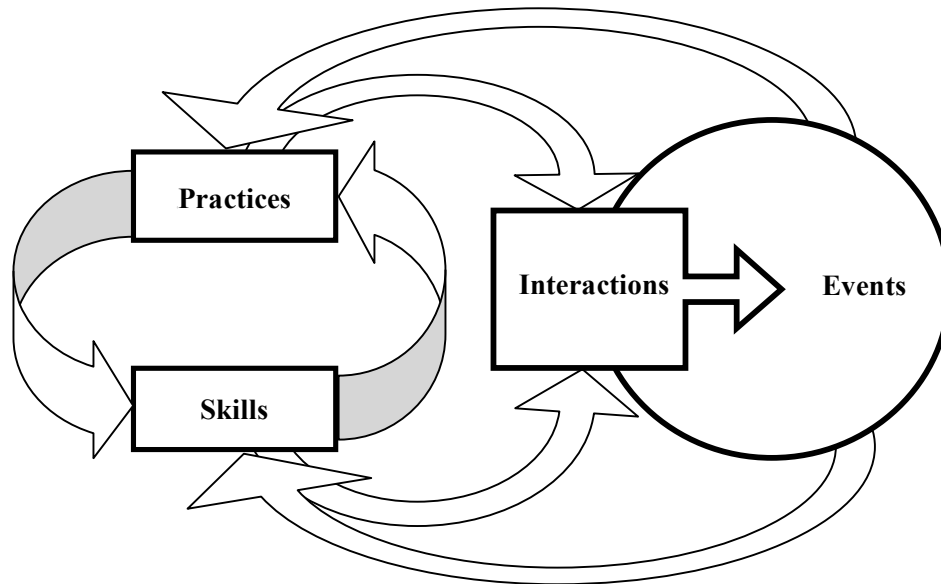
Figure 3: “-acy” Terms along with Their Elements and SPIE Clusters

“-acy” Term	Elements	Skills	Practices	Interactions	Events
Culturacies	Cultural Elements	Cultural Skills	Cultural Practices	Cultural Interactions	Cultural Events
Literacies	Literate Elements	Literate Skills	Literate Practices	Literate Interactions	Literate Events

In the pot-making example above, the observer was specifically recording descriptions of the cultural interactions she witnessed. These occurred within a phenomenon she might have classified as a day-long cultural event. (She might also have decided to split this event into smaller events, e.g., the creation of each pot). Both the interactions and the events are manifestations of larger patterns of behavior, e.g., local cultural practices of pot making. And all three of these are ways of approaching the concept that these people have built up specific cultural skills, practiced over time, and applied through interactions during events.

The following figure represents this interrelationship of SPIE clusters:

Figure 4: The Relationships Between Skills, Practices, Interactions and Events



### 3.2.4 Communicacies and linguacies

For some, the definition of “literacies” given in the sections above will be too narrow. For some, it will be too broad. For both groups of critics, it will probably be considered too vague. What does it mean to focus on cultural practices than involve print? Does that include eating alphabet soup? Does it include a toddler “reading” the sign of his favorite fast food restaurant? What about playing cards or tarot cards? What about signal flags and clip art?

The solution proposed here is not meant to change the definition of the term “literacies,” but rather to emphasize the importance of two other classes of culturacies, namely communicacies and linguacies. This section shows the benefit of a using this classification of culturacies (and the two new SPIE clusters that go with them) in the study of literacies. In effect, this method of accounting for the range of cultural practices allows for both flexibility and focus.

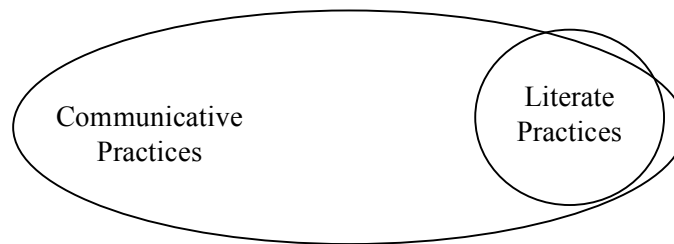
On the one hand, it cuts out a lot that some might want included. Literacies are not to be identified with all culturacies. At the same time, it also leaves in a lot that some might want to exclude. The discussion below is particularly for the sake of this latter group, but by the end there should be something for everyone

to like. After all, a person who wants to study more than just those culturacies that focus on print might decide to study the larger class of culturacies that focus on communicative elements.

In the definition for “literacies” given in the sections above, interaction with literate elements (i.e., print) is presented as the sole distinction necessary in identifying any given culturacy as being “literate.” At the same time, there are a two other characteristics that are also usually present. Although not definitive in their own right, these characteristics influence such a wide array of literate practices that it is reasonable to deal with them here.

The first “usual” characteristic of literate practices is that they tend to be communicative practices as well. This relationship is shown in the following figure:

Figure 5: Literate Practices and Communicative Practices



To understand the relationship between these two kinds of practices requires defining what makes some cultural practices communicative. In this case, saying that communicative practices are those practices in which the actor interacts with communicative “things” (i.e., elements) will not be sufficient, as this merely puts off the question of what kind of “things” are communicative.

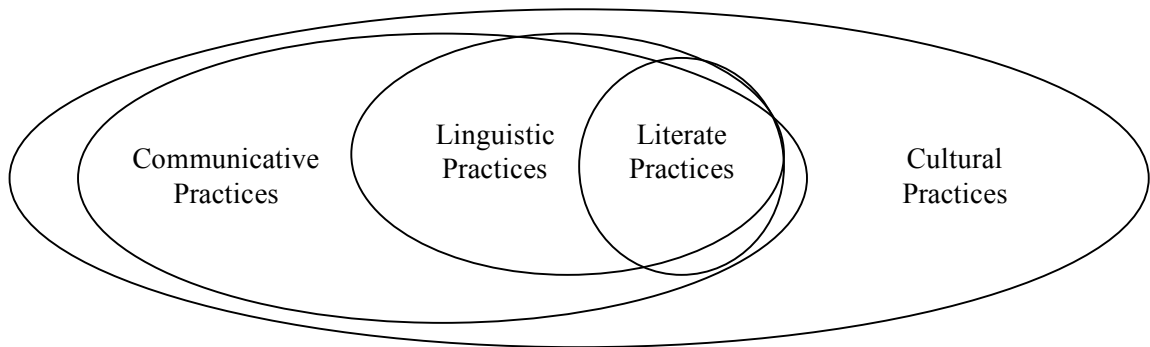
Here, this thesis turns to Sperber and Wilson (1995), who give a straightforward way of determining if a cultural practice is communicative. They write, “We will argue that when you communicate, your *intention* is to alter the cognitive environment or your addressees; but of course you expect their actual thought processes to be affected as a result” (Sperber & Wilson 1995:46; emphasis added). The key here is the intention. In determining whether a given practice is communicative, one must look for intent on the part of the speaker. If the speaker does not intend for his or her actions to be communicative, they are not. Other actions (or events) might serve as fodder for interpretation and meaning, but that is a different matter. The key to recognizing communicative practices is to look for an intention on the part of the speaker/writer/actor/artist to communicate. This is one notable area where this paper departs from Gee. In

effect, Gee (2005:7) seems to assume that all cultural practices are communicative with communication of identity as one of their principal functions. In following Sperber and Wilson over Gee, this paper allows for some cultural and literate practices that are not communicative.

So, literate practices are usually, but not always, communicative. At the same time, communicative practices are sometimes literate. Literate practices are usually a subset of the larger, more common group of cultural practices that involve communicative intent.

Another observation about most literate practices is that they tend to be linguistic in nature. Human language is usually involved. A little creative thought will provide examples in which this is not the case, but by and large questions of literate practice must take into account questions of linguistic practice as well. The figure below provides a summary of the distinctions made up to this point:

Figure 6: Literate, Communicative, Linguistic, and Cultural Practices



Notice that this diagram leaves open for discussion some of the possibilities that draw so much attention in NLS circles,<sup>20</sup> while at the same time not ignoring what seem to be the general tendencies of literate practices; i.e., the core of literate practices is linguistic and the core of linguistic practices is communicative.

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<sup>20</sup> Cowan's (2005) treatment of "Latino visual discourse" represents one example of this interest in literate-like activities. In such practices, Cowan describes people as interacting with a culturally formed visual code that communicates identity. Such practices are obviously cultural and communicative, but not linguistic. The question for NLS scholars such as Cowan is whether these practices are literate.

And yet there are exceptions. Some are silly: “If a series of trees fall in the forest and spell out a word, is it linguistic and literate even though it obviously lacks communicative intent?”<sup>21</sup> Some are not so silly. For example, in Indonesia most parents send their children to an *Iqro*’ class at a young age. Usually held at the local mosque, these classes have as their goal that the children would *belajar membaca Al-Qur’an* ‘learn to read the Koran’ (Humam 2000).

In accomplishing this goal, children learn to perform a variety of tasks. They learn to hold their *Iqro*’ books and open them from the correct side. They learn to pronounce the sounds modeled by their instructor while also acquiring the ability to decode Arabic text starting with the single syllables and moving up to whole phrases. Within the first class period, there is no doubt that these children are interacting with text in a powerful and important way.

At the same time, given that none of the children speak the language that they are reading, this practice is certainly not communicative. There is little expectation that the children are going to comprehend what they read, at least not at this point. Understanding is to come later at a *pesantren* (a specialized Islamic school). Whether it is a part-day *pesantren*, or an extended stay at a boarding *pesantren*, in this setting children are given the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Koran and its language. The children are therefore taking part in an interaction that is cultural, linguistic, and literate, but not yet communicative.

The next chapter continues to build a framework for examining all cultural interactions in greater depth. It also introduces a tool for analyzing these interactions along with their corresponding skills, practices, and events.

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<sup>21</sup> One answer to such a riddle is to observe that the situation immediately becomes cultural, linguistic, literate, and communicative as soon as someone comes along and reads it.



## CHAPTER 4 CULTURAL INTERACTIONS DISSECTED

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced a taxonomy whereby different kinds of cultural skills, practices, interactions and events may be distinguished from each other. At the heart of this system are SPIE clusters in which cultural actors interact with cultural elements of a variety of sorts, (e.g., linguistic, literate, etc.). The present chapter further dissects the concept of SPIE clusters, starting with a more rigorous look at the idea of cultural elements. Before moving forward, however, it may be helpful to remember the reason for developing this framework.

### 4.2 Goals of the Thesis Revisited

This thesis seeks to do two interrelated things. First, it examines some of the “ways with words” practiced by the Palembang people, specifically, those ways which include the vernacular language in print. In short, it looks to describe the *how*'s practiced by a certain group of *who*'s as they interact with a certain kind of *what*'s. The second goal of this thesis is to find out some of the *why*'s behind these usages. As this chapter will show, neither of these endeavors can be achieved without the other.

The *why*'s are inextricably bound with the *who*'s, *how*'s, and *what*'s. The goals/motivations cannot be separated from the forms and contents of the various SPIE clusters in which people take part everyday around the world.

At the same time the identity of the participants in their particular social and historical setting must also be addressed. A thorough examination of “ways with words” also requires answering the questions regarding the *who*'s. This, in turn, requires a look at the *where*'s and *when*'s in which cultural participants live and act.

As discussed at the end of Chapter 2, NLS perspectives provide a great deal of help in forming a descriptive and interpretive framework for understanding communicative practices in a variety of

communities. What is lacking in this framework is a terminology for discussing—in a complete and interrelated manner—the most basic questions: *who, what, when, where, why, and how*.

### 4.3 New Key Terms and an Example

#### 4.3.1 Elements revisited. Core elements, forms and products introduced.

People interact with a variety of “things” as they go through life. These “things” can be called *cultural elements* and defined as anything that enters the interactional sphere of one or more human beings.<sup>22</sup> Note that these cultural elements may be concrete objects such as rocks and bar stools, or they may be less concrete ideas such as rock ‘n roll and ghouls. They may be elements of nature, such as trees, or, they may be the result of previous human interaction, such as blue jeans. The important thing is that at some point in time, a human being interacts with a “something” and this something then becomes a cultural element.

In most cases, a person will interact with more than one element at the same time. Often, one of these elements stands out as central. In the present framework, that key element is called a cultural interaction’s *core element*. The other elements, meanwhile, play a less-central, supporting role. Through this interaction, the *cultural actor* will often create some sort of *cultural product*. This product might be seen as a mixture of the elements involved in the interaction, it might be a modified core element, or it might seem to be an entirely new thing.

Below is a simple example meant to demonstrate how the above terminology can be applied to an actual situation.

#### Making Tea

A man (a cultural actor) approaches an assemblage of cultural elements: water, a teapot, a stove, heat, teabags, teacups. The man does a variety of things with/to these elements to create something new, a cup of tea.

This little story provides a clear and concise example of a cultural interaction. The man is the cultural actor. He is “doing something with/to” cultural elements. Notice the interrelationship between actor and element. Since the drink maker is a cultural actor, anything he brings into his cultural sphere is a cultural element regardless of its history. If it is fresh spring water never seen or touched by a human before, it is a cultural element when he interacts with it.

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<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this paper, discussion of nonhuman “culture” will be set aside.

All it takes is the most basic interaction for something to become a cultural element. In this case, the interaction is of a sort that includes recognition of the substance as a linguistically and culturally defined thing, that is “water.” Sometimes, the interaction is more confused. The actor may find himself interacting with an ill-defined object (e.g., “A something just flew at me”). In both scenarios, a person interacts with an element of reality; and it thus becomes a cultural element.

Through the interaction of the actor, the water and other elements involved are melded into a cultural product, namely “a cup of tea.” The difficulty arrives when an attempt is made to zero in on one element as the central core element, and relegate the other elements to secondary helping status as formatic elements.

One analyst might decide that the obvious core element is the water. In many situations around the world, the reason that people drink tea is to keep from dehydration. If one does not prefer the taste of plain water, or water in a particular area has an unpleasant odor, tea offers an alternative flavor. Tea, then, is just a flavoring agent, an aid in the drinking of the water. In this view, tea is merely a formatic element that adjusts the central core element, water. In a similar way, the teapot, the stove, heat, and teacups all act as formatic elements, serving secondary roles around the core element, which is the center of the cultural interaction.

All that being said, another analyst might argue (through observation or assumption) that the tea is meant to be medicinal. Whether for the fluoride it offers, or for the caffeine, or for the antioxidants, consuming *tea* might be the actual goal, not consuming water. In this case, the water is simply a medium whereby the core element of tea is ingested.

These are but two of the possibilities available. A third analyst might argue that it is actually the warmth that is sought. In this case, the water and tea are formatic elements that give shape and form to the core element of the heat from the stove. Meanwhile, a fourth analyst might say that the entire scenario is simply “background” to the core element of socializing that is about to ensue.

Notice that in each of these cases, assumptions are made about the goals of the actor as well as the ultimate use of the cup of tea. Certainly more information may help to settle the debate. If the observer knew the kind of tea or the situation of the person for whom the tea is being made, this information would help the observer decide on which element is better labeled as a core element and which elements should be seen as serving a secondary, supporting role as formatic elements.

All of this shows that proper analysis of the *what's* is linked with an understanding of the goals of the cultural actor. The same product may be intended for multiple uses, depending on context. The *what's* of cultural interactions (i.e., the elements and products) are intrinsically linked to the *why's* (i.e., the hoped for results).

#### 4.3.2 Further discussion of results and goals

Usually, the production of a cultural product is not the end goal of a cultural interaction. In the case of the example above, the end goal is not really a cup of tea. As in this case, the product is intended for further use, either by the original actor or by someone else. In this new interaction, it will be treated as a cultural element, perhaps a core element, in its own right. As noted above, a true understanding of the *why's* of any given interaction often depends on understanding the range of goals the actor has. These goals may be short-term goals, such as making a bit of tea, or they may be longer-term goals such as building relationships with the people waiting out front. In this latter case, the tea may be considered a communicative element, part of a larger message of hospitality, friendship, and welcome.

#### 4.3.3 Comparison and contrast with the work of Hymes

At this point it may be helpful to note that in several ways, the approach of this paper parallels a similar attempt by Dell Hymes to guide sociolinguist research into answering the questions, *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how*. Hymes summarized his framework with the mnemonic SPEAKING, standing for "Situation, Participants, Ends, Acts Sequence, Key, Instrument, Norms, and Genres" (Hymes 1974). One difference between the two approaches is that while Hymes framework was specifically focused on linguistic events, the present work aims at building a framework that normalizes the relationship between all different kinds of cultural SPIE Clusters. This is related to a second difference, which is the role of the cultural element, both as the focus of interaction and as the means by which SPIE clusters are categorized (e.g., cultural, literate, etc.).

#### 4.3.4 Introduction of the SPIE Analysis Sheet

The reader has now been introduced to the main aspects of the framework being presented in this paper. The last two chapters have presented cultural phenomena of all kinds as clusters of skills, practices, interactions and events. At the heart of each of these SPIE Clusters lies a process of interaction. Cultural actors interact with certain "things" called elements. Within this interaction, the researcher can often

witness the actor working to modify one core element through use of a variety of secondary, formatic elements. In all of this, the actor is carefully working toward the creation of a product. The entire interaction is expected to accomplish one or more goals or results.

This framework is consciously designed to treat the whole of spectrum of cultural phenomena in the same way, for only by doing so can the dividing wall between “literacy” and other cultural phenomena finally be torn down. Within this framework, the difference between literate SPIE clusters and other cultural SPIE clusters is simply the presence or absence of literate elements. “Literacies”—equated with literate skills and defined simply as ways of interacting with a certain type of cultural element—suddenly cease to be a special case, needing special treatment. They are just one class of a larger group of culturally acquired skills that can be called “culturacies.” Moreover, these “-acies” or skills, categorized by their elements, can then be fit neatly within the larger taxonomy of the SPIE Cluster.

The present framework proves useful, therefore, in that it carefully, clearly, and completely fits “literacies” into the larger field of ethnography. The rest of this chapter will introduce a research instrument that takes the framework presented above moves it into the practical realm. This tool will then be used in the main body of the thesis to analyze a variety of texts from Palembang.

This instrument is called the “SPIE Analysis Sheet” and is presented in the figure on the next page.

Figure 7: SPIE Analysis Sheet Example

1	<b>SPIE Title:</b>
2	<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> cultural <input type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input type="checkbox"/> communicative <input type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
3 <b>When and Where and Who</b>	<b>Time and Date:</b> <b>Location:</b> <b>Contextual Background Information:</b> <b>Actor/s: Communicator: Audience:</b>
4 <b>What and How</b>	<b>Elements:</b> <b>Core Element:</b> <b>Product:</b> <b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> <b>Interaction Analysis:</b>
5 <b>Why</b>	<b>Effects/Results:</b> <b>Goals:</b>

This worksheet is meant to be applicable to any skill/practice/interaction/event cluster including, but not limited to, the literate SPIE clusters represented by the Palembangese texts later in this paper. Because of the way it is designed, this form forces the user to address all of the main questions in a succinct fashion. At the same time, the length cannot be considered absolute law, as will be seen later in this paper.

The remainder of this section will be spent walking the reader through this worksheet, one numbered panel at a time.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4.3.4.1 Panel 1, “SPIE Title”

This line gives the user the opportunity to label the SPIE cluster currently in view; e.g., “Tea Making.”

#### 4.3.4.2 Panel 2, “Classification of SPIE Cluster”

Here the analyst decides which of the major classes of cultural skills/practices/ interactions/events are in view. In the tea-making example above, so far as was evident in the initial description, there were no linguistic, communicative, or literate elements involved; as a result, only the “cultural” box would be checked. It would have been different had the man been muttering “A watched pot never boils” or listening to a lyrical song on the radio.

This particular panel will not prove its worth in this paper, since, as it turns out, all of the SPIE Clusters observed in the data section turn out to be cultural, linguistic, communicative, *and* literate. Thus all four of these boxes would be checked. The value of including these options would become quickly apparent, however, if one were to study some of the “borderline” literacy practices of interest to many in NLS circles (or non-literate practices such as the tea-making example above). One such “borderline” example is the Arabic reading class described in Chapter 3. This would be an instance where the analyst would be well served by this panel and its choices. The interested reader is referred to Appendix D for an example of Analysis Sheet filled out in reference to this *Iqro*’ class and the related SPIE cluster.

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<sup>23</sup> Appendix C contains an example SPIE Analysis Sheet, filled out in reference to the tea-making example above.

#### 4.3.4.3 Panel 3, “When and Where and Who”

In this section, the real work starts. Entering the time and date is straightforward. Then the researcher enters a brief description of the location. In the example above, little information is known about where the action takes place.

The next blank allows the user to enter cultural information relevant to the interaction at hand. In almost no instances will this amount of space be sufficient to list all the possible cultural details. Often, the analyst can simply use the space to refer to outside sources of information. This may include ethnographies or other longer descriptions of the culture in question.

The same principle holds in the space designated for “actor(s).” The space allows for only the briefest description. In some cases the actors will already be known from previous description. In some cases a few words will suffice. In all cases, much of the relevant information of the *who* involved in the practice will become evident through the kinds of things these actors do.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.3.4.4 Panel 4, “What and How”

This panel focuses on many of the things overlooked by Street and Gee. The first three spaces are the three *what*'s of the interaction under scrutiny. The second two spaces focused on the *how*'s. Notice here that in an effort to analyze an SPIE cluster, the real focus of any observation must be actual interactions. Skills cannot be observed. Practices, as defined in this paper, are patterns of activity. As such, they can also only be observed through the interactions that represent them. Similarly, events are best understood as the physical and temporal boxes in which interactions take place. It is these interactions that form the contents of the event. So, all studies of SPIE clusters begin with a careful understanding of these interactions.

And yet, not all interactions are so simple or as readily observable as a man making tea. Indeed, in the case of this paper, the texts compiled are the only information available regarding the interactions which created them. Here is where the overlap between the *how* and to *what* becomes most useful.

The texts included in this paper serve as rich cultural artifacts, evidence of the interactions that created them. A thorough exploration of these cultural products allows the analyst to reconstruct some of the

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<sup>24</sup> This is where Gee's work comes into its own.



process by which they were formed. The centrality of interactions to the study of SPIE clusters remains undiminished even when those interactions cannot be witnessed firsthand.

#### 4.3.4.5 Panel 5, “Why”

In many cases, the two items in this panel may be nearly identical. The actor has certain goals to achieve through any given interaction. If the actor succeeds, these goals are realized as Effects/Results. Sometimes, the goals of an interaction and the results may be quite different. Imagine, for example, that the man in the example above, in making the tea, broke one of the cups. This would be a result unrelated to the man’s original goals.

### 4.4 Special Issues in Dealing with Communicative SPIE Clusters and Their Products

#### 4.4.1 Formatic elements revisited

Imagine a woman writing the word “stop” on a sheet of paper. She may write briskly, awkwardly, carefully, elegantly, or forcefully. She may write with red ink or black. She may write with blood or paint. She may decide to write with pencil, erase part of the word, and write it again more carefully. She may opt to use a different kind of paper, or an envelope, or a piece of corrugated cardboard, or a perfectly square and rounded 5 mm thick sheet of white plastic. She may decide to use a computer and printer. She may decide to write with large alphabet stickers. She may shuffle through a sheet of fonts before deciding on one which best matches the feeling she is trying to convey.

These are just some of the *formatic elements* this literate actor decides to use in interacting with her chosen word. The next two sections briefly address two other formatic decisions this actor might have made while writing that one little word.

##### 4.4.1.1 Print and other media as formatic elements

Notice that the example above assumes that the woman has already decided to write the word, i.e., to use the word in print. This in itself may be seen as a formatic element, one which she is purposely choosing to achieve an intended effect. She is choosing to interact with a linguistic core element in a literate way, i.e., with the formatic element of print. She is choosing to use a literate practice, and thereby ensconce the word in the form of print.

Depending on the options available, the writer might have interacted with the word in other media as well. She might have put the word in the form of a video to be displayed on TV, computer, or internet. She might have recorded the word, sung the word, whispered it in a corner, or shouted it from the rooftops. In each of these cases, she would be choosing to use these media formatic elements in her central interaction with the core element, which is her word of choice.

#### 4.4.1.2 Language as a formatic element

If the cultural actor under discussion happens to be one of the billions of people around the world who speak more than one language, she has another formatic choice as well. For the standard citizen of Palembang, the choice of which language to use when saying a certain thing in a certain setting is made on a daily basis. This language choice becomes just one more in a long string of possible forms that an actor may choose to apply to a linguistic core element. This is similar to what Gee (2008:93) notes in monolingual situations as speakers choose to use different styles and voices within different Discourses.

#### 4.5 Looking forward to application

The last several chapters have developed a framework for observing, describing, and analyzing cultural practices. Given the goals of this paper, special attention has been paid to communicative, linguistic, and literate practices. In particular, terminology and notational devices have been presented in an effort to tame the complexity of these various “ways with words.”

A proper study of vernacular literate practices in a place like Palembang needs to take account of all of the possible elements people choose to use. Remember, the goal of this framework is to allow for description and analysis of these practices. To do this, the framework needs to be able to cogently discuss the key questions lacking in other studies of literacy, namely *who*, *what*, *how*, and *why* (assuming that contextual questions such as *where*, and *when* are also addressed through more traditional means).

In the coming pages, a variety of texts collected over the course of eight months’ fieldwork in Palembang will be presented. Given the relative scarcity of the vernacular being used in print in the city, this collection pretty well covers the spectrum of local language texts available as potential core elements for public interaction.

## CHAPTER 5 INFORMATIONAL CONTENT AS CORE ELEMENT

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines two examples in which Palembangese authors find themselves producing a printed product in order to communicate certain information. While in the midst of this interaction, they choose to utilize the form of the Palembangese language (i.e, *Baso Palembang*<sup>25</sup>). In the first case, a mother is writing an SMS<sup>26</sup> to her daughter. The personal aspect of the communication requires that she use the local language even though this is not the usual language of print. The second example comes from an informational brochure published by the local waterworks. In it, the writers decide to include a dialogue between a meter reader and a housewife in order to convey certain informational content about the function and use of the water meter. Once again, the local language here finds its way into print.

### 5.2 Data Text #1: A Mother's SMS to Her Daughter

In this rather straightforward example, a Palembangese mother, Madam Yulismawati has written a text message to her grown daughter, Ms. Yulia. The original text and a translation produced by Madam Yulismawati herself are presented in the Example Box in Figure 8 below. This information comes from an article written by Singaporean court reporter Arul John in early 2009.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in the first chapter, this paper will use these two terms interchangeably.

<sup>26</sup> In Indonesia, as in many parts of the world, the term SMS (Short Message Service) is used in place of the more common American term “text message.”

<sup>27</sup> This private text made its way into the public domain through the unfortunate murder of the recipient within a week of her mother's message (John 2009).

Figure 8: Example Box, A Mother's Text Message<sup>28</sup>

**Original SMS Text:**

'ya ma pai blk td mlm? Mslh raju nak mlmr kbh malm ngjng  
'kbh mkr kdai mkmn gk roi ape kbh dik ksian amu pck jngn di lsng  
'kh gk raju rupui kdai abis2mk gnl kbh lngit luar  
'negri itu jauh b n u'

**Mother's Translation:**

'Ya, mama just came home last night. About Raju wanted to propose to you, Mama asked you to think first, how about Roi Do you feel pity for him. If possible don't proceed first with Raju and think first deeply, later you will get lost as overseas is very far.'

This example is representative of countless similar messages sent every day throughout the city of Palembang. Such messages are certainly the most common way the Palembangese language finds its way into the form of printed text.<sup>29</sup>

As discussed in the introduction, the city of Palembang is full of language in print, but the vast majority of these texts are in the national language, not the vernacular. For this reason, even though thousands and thousands of Palembangese people send text messages like the one above everyday, these messages still must be regarded as something of an exception. The question this paper asks is: What is causing this long and deep, but nonetheless narrow, break in the general societal norm that Palembangese is not the kind of language one puts in print?

The argument presented here is that this exception is caused by the convergence of several variables. When these occur together, the author is "forced" to do something that she would not usually do, namely use her native language in print. In this case, the key variables are all to be found in the SPIE Analysis Sheet found on the next page.

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<sup>28</sup> The translation here is that of Madame Yulismawati herself (John 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Other examples of text messages in the public domain can be found in special text-message-to-the-editor sections of local newspapers. This practice is discussed (in more length) in Chapter 6.

Figure 9: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “SMS (Text Message) Writing”

<b>SPIE Title: SMS (Text Message) Writing</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> December 10, 2007  <b>Location:</b> Indonesia (and Singapore)</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> Some time ago, Ms. Yulia went to Singapore to work as a maid. Her mother, Madam Yulismawati, remained in Indonesia. The two women kept in touch through phone conversations, but also took advantage of the far less expensive option of SMS. While in Indonesia, Ms. Yulia had had some affection for a young man named Roy. But once abroad, Ms. Yulia met a Bangladeshi construction worker named Raju and, at the time this SMS was sent, she was considering marrying this new friend.</p> <p><b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> Madam Yulismawati (a 48 year old Palembangse woman); <b>Audience:</b> Ms. Yulia (a 25 year old daughter of Madam Yulismawati who works as a maid in Singapore).</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Informational Content, Palembang Language, Print, SMS Medium</i>  <b>Core Element:</b> <i>Content</i>  <b>Product:</b> SMS text (Example Box #1)</p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> Madam Yulismawati took the <i>Content</i> she desired to convey to her daughter and put it into the form offered by <i>Print</i> via the <i>SMS Medium</i>. In doing so, she also chose to use the <i>Palembang Language</i>.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> Madam Yulismawati decided to take the content she desired to share with her daughter and put it into SMS form. (This may have been because of financial reasons—SMS being far less expensive than even a brief phone call.) The mother knew that she was communicating with her daughter; as a result, she chose to use the language of their house and home, Palembangse.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Ms. Yulia became aware of her mother’s thoughts regarding her relationships with Raju and Roi.</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> Madam Yulismawati desired that: 1) her daughter receive the <i>Content</i> of her message 2) her expenses would be minimized 3) her daughter would recognize her note as heartfelt mother-to-daughter communication</p>

### 5.2.1 Discussion of the text

Madam Yulismawati probably chose to write SMS's to her daughter in order to maximize the amount she could communicate given the money she had. Almost all Indonesians use prepaid calling plans. In 2007 (when this text message was sent), international calls would have rapidly depleted the credit in their account, while SMS's would have been only a few hundred rupiah (a few cents). Madam Yulismawati had a pressing economic reason to choose SMS as a primary means of communication with her daughter.

Now since SMS is a form of print, it would make sense for this author to use the national language, the language of education, for composing the text. Almost all of the printed words Madam Yulismawati would see on a day-to-day basis would be in the national language.

But in this case, the author had a pressing reason to overrule this general trend. She was writing to her daughter. It would have been totally unacceptable for this mother to write to her daughter in so formal a language as *Bahasa Indonesia*.<sup>30</sup> This would be especially true in so personal a communication as is represented by the text here.

So, for economic reasons, an Indonesian mother may do the unlikely (i.e., untraditional) thing of writing her daughter short electronic letters. These economic reasons force her to use print. Daily experience of the way text in print is ordinarily used might nudge a person in the direction of using the national language, but much stronger cultural rules override this tendency in this case. People from the Musi river basin speak their language to one another, especially when they are related or when they are speaking about personal matters, and certainly when they are doing so with close relatives.

On one hand, then, the author is "forced" to use print by economic reasons. At the same time, she is "forced" to use her vernacular for cultural reasons. Because of these two things working together, she is "forced" to use the vernacular in print.

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<sup>30</sup> Stories are told in Indonesia of children who go off to seek their fortune for a few years. If they fail to make enough money in the first few years, they may stay away for longer. But then, some reach a point where they realize that they have forgotten so much of their mother tongue that they cannot return. They simply cannot face their parents with the thought of being able to communicate with them only in the national language.

To some extent, the discussion above may put too much decision-making power in the hands of Madam Yulismawati. This cultural event (i.e., this mother writing a text message to her daughter) is only one instantiation of a cultural practice that has become commonplace in Palembang (i.e., sending Palembangese text messages to friends and relatives). It may be that Madam Yulismawati need no more think about what combination of cultural elements she will use to communicate with her daughter than she would need to think about whether a spoon and a bowl would be a good choice of elements for eating soup.

Even if this were the case—even if in some sense these decisions have become automatic, decided by standing cultural precedent—it is helpful to use Madam Yulismawati and her text to show that the cultural tradition she is following has been formed for particular reasons. So strong are these reasons, that even if there were no societal precedent, it is likely that this author would still have been “forced” into using the same combination of Palembangese and print.

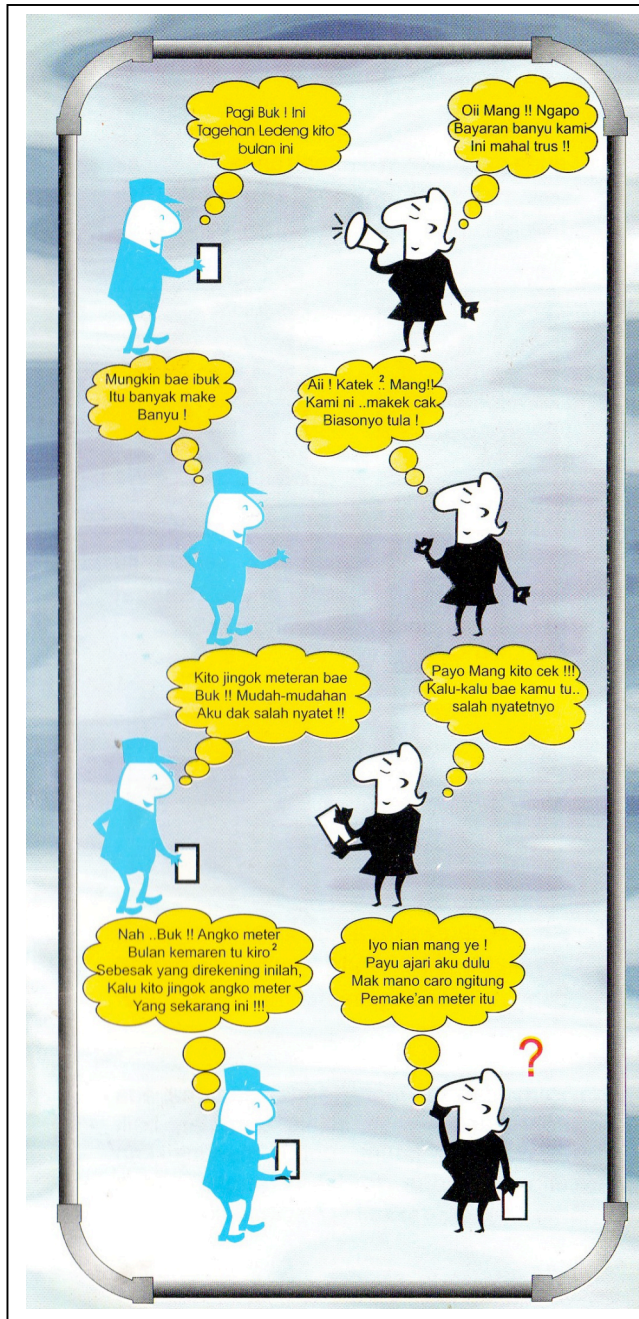
### 5.3 Data Text #2: Water Meter Brochure Dialogue

This next example provides another case where the authors may have been “forced” into putting Palembangese into print once they had committed to making a certain kind of product containing a particular set of elements.

In this case, an author in a rather different situation makes similar decisions for similar reasons. The difference is that this next author’s task is far less common, i.e., making an informational brochure. Because the task is less common, it can be treated more confidently as a case of “independent invention,” a cultural actor creating something novel in the face of a new challenge. Significantly, this author’s creativity proves to be channeled along paths quite similar to those affecting our text message writers above. The result is Palembangese once again finding its way into print.

The example is one page of a six-page trifold brochure produced by Tirta Musi, the company responsible for waterworks in Palembang. This page contains a dialogue between a meter reader and one of his customers. Figure 10 on the next page includes an image of brochure page as well as a free translation of the discussion. The SPIE Analysis Sheet falls on the following page.

Figure 10: Example Box, The Waterworks Pamphlet



**English Translation:**

**Meter Reader:** Morning ma'am! Here is your water bill for this month.

**Woman:** Oh, man!! Why is our water payment always so expensive!!

**MR:** Maybe you just use a lot of water ma'am!

**W:** Ahh! No way sir!! We just use it in an ordinary way.

**MR:** We'll just look at the meter ma'am!! Hopefully I didn't note it incorrectly!!

**W:** Alright, sir, let's check it!!! Perhaps you just noted it wrong.

**MR:** Okay ma'am!! The meter measurement last month was about as big as in this account here, if we look at the meter measurement as it is right now!!!

**W:** Oh my sir! How about teaching me how to keep track of water usage with that meter?



Figure 11: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “Public Service Brochure Dialogue”

<b>SPIE Title: Public Service Brochure Dialogue</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> 2006  <b>Location:</b> South Sumatra, Indonesia</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> Public utilities, such as the water company, are in a constant battle to prove that they are legitimate businesses. They want to show but they are not corrupt and that they charge fairly for the goods and services they provide. The general public, as a rule, is predisposed to critically analyze any expenditure of money. The water meter, properly understood, can reduce the inevitable friction significantly.</p> <p><b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> Anonymous Brochure creators working for the the water company, “Tirta Musi” <b>Audience:</b> Customers of “Tirta Musi,” (Residents of Palembang)</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Informational Content, Dialogue Genre, Dialogic Content, Palembang Language, Brochure Genre, Print, Layout, Formatting, Pictures</i></p> <p><b>Core Element:</b> <i>Informational Content</i></p> <p><b>Product:</b> Brochure Dialogue (Example Box #1)</p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The authors set out to communicate <i>Informational Content</i> in a <i>Brochure Genre</i>. They decide to put the <i>Informational Content</i> into the <i>Dialogue Genre</i>. The <i>Content</i> is thus transformed into <i>Dialogic Content</i> in the <i>Palembangese Language</i> in the mind of the authors. This <i>Dialogue</i> is placed into one page of a brochure using <i>Print, Pictures, Layout, and other Formatting</i> to create the final product.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> The author, desiring to communicate clearly and winsomely with the intended audience, decide to put the <i>Informational Content</i> into a <i>Dialogue Genre</i>. Having determined to write a dialogue between a Palembangese meter reader and a Palembangese housewife, the authors proceed with writing down, as authentically as possible, how such a dialogue would play out. The result is a Palembangese dialogue in print.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Unknown</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The writers desired that: 1) readers understand the function of the water meter through interacting with the brochure 2) they be seen as creative employees doing their job well 3) readers be drawn into reading a pamphlet containing information which otherwise may not interest them</p>

### 5.3.1 Discussion of the text

As in many cases, the SPIE Analysis Sheet on the previous page condenses multiple interactions into macro interaction. A fuller treatment might divide this interaction into at least two parts. The product of the first would be a “raw” dialog, bereft of all formatting evident in the brochure page. The core element of this interaction would be the *Informational Content* that the authors desired to convey. The product of the second would be the page as it was formatted when it went to press. The core element of this interaction would be the *Dialogic Content*, received as a product from the first interaction.

One difficulty with such an analysis, however, would be that the “raw” dialog (i.e., the *Dialogic Content*) may never have existed outside of the mind of the authors. In the end, a product that was printed is the product that is available for analysis. An analogy of the archaeologist is helpful. The sculptures currently standing on Easter Island are evidence of a whole series of interactions that must have taken place. The questions for the archaeologist are what these processes might have been and what order they might have followed. The same is true in this case.

Since not everything is visible to the observer certain things are unknowable. For example, it might be that this dialogue was originally written down in *Bahasa Indonesia* and only in a later draft translated into the local vernacular. It might also be that this dialogue was not written by a team, as assumed in the SPIE Sheet, but rather by an individual.<sup>31</sup> Whole storylines could be developed around such assumptions.

The present treatment strives to get beyond such questions and focus on the skills and goals of whomever it was who put the whole thing together. In this simplified view, a team acts upon an assignment they receive. This team produces the final printed product. Everything in between is considered one SPIE cluster.

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<sup>31</sup> The assumption that the brochure was made by a team rather than an individual is based on three arguments. First, it is the general tendency of Indonesians to do things in groups whenever and wherever possible. Second, given that publishing hundreds or thousands of copies of a brochure costs quite a bit of money and given the general desire to avoid errors, general rules of economy the world over tend to put this responsibility in the hands of a team rather than an individual. Finally, specific observations in field research in Palembang (in a large non-Western business setting) showed that publications of this sort were assigned to teams.

That said, this paper is particularly concerned with one part of that SPIE cluster, the question of why this author decided to resort to the rare practice of putting Palembangese in print. The SPIE Analysis sheet leaves open two possibilities. Far from being mutually exclusive, these two possibilities most likely worked together to bring about the result evidenced above.

The first is that this anonymous authorial team was, like the text message author in the previous example, backed into a situation where Palembangese just kind of spilled onto the page as a result of a confluence of circumstances. Wanting to communicate information (i.e., *Informational Content*), and deciding to write a dialogue, the authors were faced with a small conundrum. A dialogue between two Palembangese people would surely be carried out in the language of Palembang. At the same time this dialogue was supposed to happen between two characters on a page of a brochure; it would have to be recorded in print.

Unlike the SMS in the previous example, there was always a possibility that this dialogue could be written down in *Bahasa Indonesia* instead of the vernacular. The rest of the brochure was entirely in the national language. This page could have followed suit. Plus, while this was supposed to be a dialogue between two Palembangese people, and while they would naturally speak Palembangese to each other in real life, this was not real life, this was print. In the printed world, people almost never speak Palembangese to each other.

So while the authors might have found themselves in a situation that “tricked” them into considering the unorthodox practice of putting the local language in print, they were not entirely forced. They had an excuse for using Palembangese in print; they could probably get away with it. But it was not as if they had no other option.

This leads to the second possible explanation for why they used Palembangese in print. The authors were no doubt aware that brochures from the water company are not everyone’s idea of a good time. Given that almost nobody in the region reads for pleasure, few indeed will be the individuals who will actually pick up a trifold brochure and read all six panels. The authors’ strategy then becomes simply getting the intended audience to read something. If the authors’ primary goal is to make sure that “readers understand the function of the water meter through interacting with the brochure,” they must do what they can to make sure that the readers actually interact with the brochure.

As they created their brochure, and as they came up with the idea of including a dialogue in Palembangse, they certainly knew that if it made its way to press this little publication would be something of a novelty. This language in print could be counted on to draw in a reluctant readership.

It is possible, although somewhat unlikely, that this second line of thinking actually served as the driving force behind the creation of the entire dialogue. That is to say, the creative team may have started with the idea: “I bet we could get more people to read this thing if we put part of it in the local language!” From here, they would have looked for the most natural ways to include the language in this printed context. The result of this line of thought then would be a dialogue as printed.

Whichever came first, the idea to include the language, or the idea to include the dialogue, the combination of the two would certainly encourage the intended Palembangse audience to give the brochure more than a passing glance. The combination of the two also serves to bring the contents of the brochure down to a most straightforward easy-to-understand level. For these reasons, it seems the safest to assume that all of these thoughts worked together as the creative team came up with this brochure.

#### 5.4 A Few More Remarks on These Texts

While different in many regards, both of the example texts above demonstrate a clear desire on the part of the authors to communicate information. Madam Yulismawati, in writing to her daughter, was not simply trying to be recognized as a certain kind of person doing a certain kind of thing. She was trying to convey her thoughts and opinions about her daughter’s love life. The anonymous authors of the Tirta Musi waterworks dialogue were creating a brochure to communicate information with customers.

In both cases, the *Content* of the message served as the core element around which other elements played a supporting role as formatic elements. Given the constraints in which the authors worked, *Print* became one of these formatic supporting elements in both cases. In the former case, a printed text message was the cheapest option to convey personal thoughts and feelings with one individual. In the latter case, a printed brochure was the most cost-effective option to convey particular information with a widespread customer base.

The authors in these two situations also ended up using another common element, the *Palembangese Language*. A similarity not brought out in the analysis above is that in both of these cases, this language was used to convey quoted speech. Madam Yulismawati was, in some sense, quoting herself as she

composed her message (at least to the extent that she was writing what she would have otherwise said on phone).<sup>32</sup> The waterworks authors were “quoting” from a fictitious conversation. In both cases, the use of the vernacular served to “authenticate” the content. The daughter heard her mother’s voice, and the brochure reader heard a conversation between two “people like us.”

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<sup>32</sup> This possibility is discussed in greater depth in the conclusion in Chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 6 USING PALEMBANGESE TO DRAW IN READERSHIP

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a different type of communication. In these coming examples, the content is not so important. The main goal of these authors (and those for whom they work) is to draw in readership to local newspapers. As discussed above, using a little Palembangese in print seems to help.

The first example, from a fictional column recounting the misadventures of a man named *Mang Juhai* 'Uncle Joker' is placed on the first page of the paper in an effort to draw in readership. The second example comes from a popular section on crime and tragedy found in a competing newspaper on the last page of the publication. In both cases the form of the local language is combined with shocking content in order to attract a particular kind of reader.

### 6.2 Data Text # 3: Mang Juhai, the Palembangese Andy Capp

Through the next example, the reader will become acquainted with one of the most famous personalities in Palembang, Mang Juhai. This fictional character appears several times per week in the newspaper *Palembang Pos*. The column that recounts his less than moral escapades always begins in the lower right-hand quadrant of the front page and continues (with the rest of the first page stories) on page 10.

In many ways, Mang Juhai can be compared with the British comic strip character, Andy Capp. Both men are lazy good-for-nothing, working-class (but never working) married men known to drink in excess, fight with their wives, and stay out womanizing with their friends late into the night.

Like his British counterpart, Mang Juhai is also constantly in a battle to live as he wishes despite the constant friction this causes with his wife and public authorities. In this struggle, he is joined by his best friends Mang Oding and Mang Benu.

The comparison between Juhai and Capp breaks down eventually, however, simply because the former man's character and actions are just so much worse. Given the rather conservative religious norms of the

city, it is amazing to read some of the things that Mang Juhai gets away with, particularly in the area of his extramarital relationships with “girls.”<sup>33</sup>

Another important point for this thesis is that Mang Juhai also gets away with another sort of rule bending. He and all the other characters in the column manage to get quoted exclusively in Palembangse. The narrator’s words reflect a bit more sophistication as they largely fall within the range of standard Indonesian—although, here too the reader will often find conscious code-switching back into the local vernacular.

The “Mang Juhai” column is the most consistent and widely published source of Palembangse-in-print currently available. Furthermore, it is without question the most read Palembangse literature in the history of the language. It is therefore due to receive close attention in these pages.

#### 6.2.1 Questions of history and sequence

Mang Juhai gets away with his moral and linguistic audacity because it is entertaining and draws in readers. And he draws in readers because he breaks the rules. These two realities feed off each other. As in the case of the waterworks brochure in the previous chapter, this makes it difficult for the analyst to figure out after the fact the question of which came first, the entertaining product or the idea to use that product as bait for accompanying material.<sup>34</sup>

Once again, rather than get caught up into a chicken vs. egg contemplation, this paper will proceed with the present situation. The “Mang Juhai” column is formed in such a way and then placed in the newspaper in such a way that it acts as a hook to pull in readers. In order to best understand this process, and the role of Palembangse in print, the two steps, “column writing” and “column formatting/placement,” will be treated in separate SPIE analyses.

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<sup>33</sup> This term is used purposefully. This is it a direct translation of the word *cewek* so frequently used to refer to Mang Juhai’s relational interests. Note the following quote: “*Melihat cewek baru berdada montok, Mang Juhai pastilah keblingsatan. Apalagi cewek tersebut sesuai dengan seleranya, yakni berkulit putih plus pantat lebar*” (“Seeing a new girl with voluptuous breasts, Mang Juhai is surely sent spinning. Especially when that girl is according to his tastes, that is with white skin and a wide backside.”)

<sup>34</sup> Appendix E discusses some of the possible sequences that could have led to the creation and present use of the “Mang Juhai” column.

## 6.2.2 Analysis Part 1: “Mang Juhai” column production analysis

The first step in bringing a “Mang Juhai” column to the intended audience is the composition of the story itself. The Analysis Sheet on the next page examines the related SPIE cluster. This analysis shows how the author weaves together a variety of cultural elements to create a *Story* to achieve his goals.

As part of this process, he leverages the power of the vernacular in print in ways that are calculated to draw in readership. Coupled with spicy *Story Content*, the novelty of vernacular in print helps the author create interest through shock-value humor. This causes new readers to give a “double-take” and old readers to get future editions in hope of more of the same.

In the June 3, 2007, edition of the *Palembang Pos*, the story follows the exploits of Mang Juhai and Mang Oding one night as they travel from one popular local hang-out to another in search of a good time. Things seem to be going well for the two men until Mang Juhai decides he would like to get double service. As a result, the prostitute feels cheated and ends up threatening to call her man. In panic, Mang Juhai offers his cell phone as collateral for later payment. In the end, they decide to hire a prostitute near the “Fish Pond,” an area known as a red light district. The story ends with the embarrassed duo returning home, muttering in disappointment. Excerpts from the story are reproduced in the Figure 12 below (Note that bold italics in the example box mark Palembangese). The SPIE Analysis Sheet follows on the next page.

Figure 12: Example Box, “Mang Juhai” Quotes<sup>35</sup>

**Original Text:** “*Payo kando, jangan lamo igo di sini ni. Gek ditangkep Pol PP,*” celoteh Mang Oding

**Translation:** “Come on friend, let’s not fool around here for long. Later [we] will be arrested by the Civil Service Police,” remarked Mang Oding.

**Original Text:** “*Apo-apo-an kak ngenjuk cak ini. Nak Nambahi dak. Kapan idak kupanggil lanang aku,*” ancam cewek itu.

**Translation:** “What’s the deal, with you offering to pay this amount? You want to add something, right? If you don’t, I will call my man,” threatened the girl.

**Original Text:** “*Aii Ding, dikijangi betino itu kito malem ini. Madaki mintak bayar tengah duo ratus, laju HP tegadai,*” gerutunya kesal.

**Translation:** “Oh, Ding, we were run over by that lady this evening. It’s enough to ask a hundred and fifty thousand, and then the cell phone gets taken as collateral,” he complained crossly.

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<sup>35</sup> Source: *Palembang Pos*, June 3, 2007:1, 13.



Figure 13: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “ ‘Mang Juhai’ Column Writing”

<b>SPIE Title: <i>Mang Juhai</i> Column Writing</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> June 2-3, 3007  <b>Location:</b> Palembang</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> Though not as widespread as one might find in other big cities around the world, Palembang does have a “night life” which at certain times and certain locations includes such elements as prostitution, alcohol, and drugs. Mang Juhai and his friends are thus taking part of a well-known subculture, one which is usually confined to the young, but also includes older married individuals, particularly men. Naturally, such antics are frowned upon by religious and civil authorities.</p> <p><b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> Newspaper Columnist <b>Audience:</b> Palembangese Newspaper Readers</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Story Idea, Story Content (including Information about Palembang Places and Practices), Palembangese Language, Indonesian Language, Print, Newspaper Column Genre</i></p> <p><b>Core Element:</b> <i>Story Idea</i></p> <p><b>Product:</b> <i>Story</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The author takes the <i>Story Idea</i> and wraps it in <i>Story Content</i> (itself a product of a variety of elements) to bring it to <i>Newspaper Column</i> length. In the process he also puts this <i>Content</i> into a form that combines <i>Indonesian Language, Palembangese Language, and Print</i>.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> This is not the first time the author has written this column for these purposes. Many of the decisions have become automatic. He starts with an idea for a story. This kernel is then formed according to his goals. Aware that a major goal is providing a “hook” to catch readers who may glance at the beginning of the work, he creates a catchy title, one that contains a distinctly Palembangese word. Also toward this end, he makes a point of including a rhetorical question within the first couple sentences as a device to pique the reader’s interest enough to desire to open the paper. Finally, in a continued interest of keeping up the reputation of providing titillating stories and shockingly familiar language use in print, he makes sure to include plenty of spicy Palembangese dialogue.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Mang Juhai continues to hold its place in the on the front page of the paper.</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The author desires to: 1) write an interesting story, 2) catch the reader quickly, 3) produce a product that fulfills the expectations of his employers, and 4) continue his prestige as a public figure</p>

Very few individuals who read the stories about Mang Juhai would ever find themselves in situations like those described above. But almost everybody knows such a person. He, like Andy Capp, is an anti-hero of common and mediocre proportions. At the same time, his language use proves him to be, for better or for worse, one of the people. All these things work to draw people into the author's story. The next section shows how the editors of the newspaper use the "Mang Juhai" column to draw people into the newspaper as a whole.

### 6.2.3 Analysis Part 2: "Mang Juhai" column formatting and placement analysis

The double shock of Mang Juhai's exploits and the language with which they are recorded have done much to bring him notoriety in South Sumatra. For the editors of the *Palembang Pos*, this column is clearly a money maker. Proof of this can be seen in the way in which the editors choose to use the "Mang Juhai" column in the general layout of the paper. The diagram of the cover of the June 3, 2007, *Palembang Pos* on the next page shows how the Mang Juhai story fits in this larger scheme.

The discussion continues below with a brief analysis of the formatting of the column itself. This is followed by a broader look at the page and paper formatting decisions of the cultural actors involved in creating this finished product on the front page of the paper.

#### 6.2.3.1 Column formatting

The editors want the reader to notice the "Mang Juhai" column. A distinctive and colorful header marks the spot. Within this space, a goofy picture of the protagonist stands next to the words "Mang Juhai" spelled out in a playful red font. These formatting choices highlight these words, and in doing so, they draw attention to the fact that this is a Palembangse guy, *Mang* 'Uncle' or 'Mister' being the local equivalent of the Indonesian *Pak* 'Father' or 'Mister.'



### 6.2.3.2 Page and paper formatting

The editorial team at any newspaper has a variety of goals. One goal is informing the public of recent events. Others include advancing certain political views and selling their product. Of these, the most basic is the latter. If funding stops, printing stops. If printing stop, no other goals can be accomplished. This is part of the reason that in the SPIE Analysis Sheet on the next page the core element for the interaction of doing the layout of the front page is simply the blank sheet of paper. As noted in Chapter 5 above, decisions like this are in some sense arbitrary. Another analyst, or the newspaper editors themselves, might argue that the “news” is the core element, and everything else, including the paper and the advertisements, are formatic elements necessary to get the “news” into the hearts and minds of the people.

Here, the core element is the blank “Front Page.” The news, the advertisements, the colors, fonts, and everything else, are formatic elements applied to this base. As noted in the SPIE Analysis Sheet below, all of these formatic elements are applied to the blank front page in an effort to capture the attention of potential readers.

Figure 15: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “Newspaper Reader-Hook Formatting”

<b>SPIE Title: Newspaper Reader-Hook Formatting</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> June 2-3, 2007  <b>Location:</b> Palembang</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> This was a generally slow news day, with two clear local stories, a traffic jam and a political party meeting (both also being reported in competing papers).  <b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> <i>Palembang Pos</i> Editorial Team <b>Audience:</b> Palembangse Newspaper Readers</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>A Blank “Front Page”, Articles, Columns, Advertisements, Pictures, Colors, Paper Dimensions, Palembangse Language, Indonesian Language, English Language, Print, Newspaper Genre (Itself Including Elements Such as Columns, Headlines, etc.), Other Pages</i>  <b>Core element:</b> <i>The Blank “Front Page”</i>  <b>Product:</b> <i>The Front Page ready for copy</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The editors, acting with a view toward disparate goals, place the <i>Articles, Columns, Pictures, and Advertisements</i> on the paper in such a way as to maximize potential readers’ interest (and advertisers’ satisfaction). In doing this, they apply secondary formatic elements such as <i>Colors</i> and <i>Language</i> choice to catch the eye.  <b>Interaction Analysis:</b> On a day with only one major local story likely to rouse any interest in the reading public, the editors had their work cut out for them as they sought to “sell” the day’s product. The major local story fits in the top and center headline position. This <i>Article</i> is given greater importance through the use of formatic elements such as a blue, red, and white stamp reading “BIG STORY.” The second and third story fit underneath it, while part two of a series goes to the bottom. Besides advertisements, the rest of the page serves as bait to draw in readership. Three human-interest stories are introduced across the very top and at the two upper corners. Below the middle fold are placed two items of lower moral quality. They are far enough down on the page so as not to threaten the respectability of the <i>Pos</i>, but still on the front page so as to maximize their effect. On the left is a scantily clad starlet with a sultry headline. On the right is the <i>Mang Juhai</i> column.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> To date the following effects can be observed. 1) The <i>Palembang Pos</i> is still in business 2) “Mang Juhai” is a household name and his column continues in its front page slot.  <b>Goals:</b> The actors desire that: 1) the paper continues to operate 2) people buy the paper 3) the public is made aware of local, regional, national, and world events 4) readers find reading the <i>Palembang Pos</i> a beneficial activity (e.g., enjoyable, productive, etc.) 5) the newspaper succeeds in advertising and promoting itself 6) advertisers be satisfied that their products are well represented.</p>

While the analysis sheet highlights some of the ways the editorial team uses the elements available to them to draw in readership, discussion here will focus on six items that might be considered peers of the “Mang Juhai” column. Together these elements stand out on the page for being more entertaining than informative.

The first three are located on the very top of the page. The one deemed most interesting is placed in a headline font along the page’s upper border, above the newspaper’s title. It reads: “In the restroom at Km 5 Market, two pedicab drivers have a crystal meth party...” To either side of the newspaper’s title are text boxes containing introductions to two more stories. The first of these, an account of a simple mugging, would hardly make the news at all, much less the front page, except for the titillating fact that the victim was the wife of a police officer. The second reports that after seven days on the lam, a murderer has turned himself in.<sup>36</sup>

The second three entertainment items are located below the fold. These deserve closer attention. The first item is all about sex appeal. Almost without fail, the spot to the far left, just below the mid-line of the front page of the *Palembang Pos*, is dedicated to drawing in male readership with a woman in less than modest dress.<sup>37</sup> In this instance, the headline, “Beginning to dare to expose more,”<sup>38</sup> is sexy enough even to warrant red ink. Non-incidentally this is the same color as the daily title of the “Mang Juhai” column, which on this day stands precisely opposite the actress’s prominent bare leg.

Besides the actress and “Mang Juhai,” the lower half of the page also sports one other “non-news” item that might serve to draw in readership. Tucked underneath the local “Prayer Time Schedule,” sits a little

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<sup>36</sup> Note that while this actually seems to be a newsworthy event, its placement here (and absence in other newspapers of the day) indicates that it is being used here less for its informative content and more for the emotional draw it might have for potential readers. Nonetheless, it is marked as a “Serious News Story” in Figure 14 above.

<sup>37</sup> In a random sampling of seven editions between May 23 and June 6, 2007, only one *Palembang Pos* did not have this feature. On that day (May 23) it was replaced by a murder-suicide story from Jayapura in which the victim and perpetrator were both police officers.

<sup>38</sup> This paraphrase seeks to give a sense of a difficult to translate phrase. Literally this title is more like “Beginning to brave opening [things up].” The story continues to describe how this celebrity’s new courage is shown by her appearance at her latest film’s premier. On that occasion, Memey drew “the attention of the eyes of men. Wearing a gown made of denim, with the top part open...”

green banner advertising a feature called “SMS Online.” This space also gives the number to which readers can send their text message opinions about anything under the sun. As seen in the story about Madam Yulismawati and her daughter in Chapter 5, when Palembangese people send text messages, they often write in their mother tongue. For this reason, even though the majority of these short letters to the editor take care to write in “good Indonesian” several also contain the vernacular. Readers know this<sup>39</sup> and enjoy this feature all the more as a result.

When viewed alongside its peers on the page, the “Mang Juhai” column and its role in the paper become increasingly clear. The goal of the author in writing the column is shock-value entertainment. The goal of the editors in formatting the page is to draw in readership. These editors use the products of their staff in such a way as to catch the eye of potential readers. These products contain elements that help serve this purpose. Bare legs, bare arms, and *Baso Palembang* in print all get mixed together. Sex, drugs and the vernacular all work as one to grab passing attention and keep it long enough to create a reader out of an innocent bystander.

### 6.3 Data Text # 4: Criminal Quotes

When not reading the “Mang Juhai” column in the *Pos*, Palembangese people wanting to interact with their heart language in print frequently turn to the *Sumatra Ekspres* and its regular section entitled simply “Dor.” This word is an onomatopoeic reference to the sound of gunfire, and the section often includes somebody who has been shot by police after an attempted crime.

Although largely dedicated to criminals, their victims, and their fate, “Dor” also includes stories about tragic accidents as well. The three biggest headlines from the May 29<sup>th</sup> edition are: “*Calon Karyawan PLN Tewas Ditujah: Duel Maut, usai Main PS*,” ‘Electric Company Employee Candidate Killed by Sparring: Duel to the Death, after Playing Play Station;’ “*13 Pemain Narkoba Dicidaduk*,” ‘13 Narcotics Users {lit. “players”} Arrested;’ “*Perampok Tewas Ditembus Pelor Polisi: Sempat Baku Tembak*,” ‘Thief Dies, Shot with a Police Bullet: Able to Return Fire.’

Besides the sensationalism that naturally attends such stories, readers are also drawn in by the fact that victims and criminals are usually quoted with direct transcriptions of what they have said. This is a

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<sup>39</sup> When asked in informal questioning where in the paper (besides “Mang Juhai”), a person might find Baso Palembang, more than one person chuckled and suggested looking over these messages.

departure from the standard journalistic practice of “cleaning up” the language of the interviewee. I personally experienced this professional courtesy on occasion when I was interviewed by the various papers. On one occasion, having been in country for little more than a year, the difference between the stuttering half-formed answers that were given and the “translations” of these quotes that were printed was astounding (*Berita Pagi*, November 17, 2006). For reasons to be examined below, the subjects of “Dor” pieces do not appear to have received this treatment.

Below is an Example Box that gives a few examples of the kinds of quotes that appear in the “Dor” section of the *Sumatra Ekspres*. These each come from different suspects from the “13 Narcotics Users” story mentioned above. Here again bold italics mark Palembangese.

Figure 16: Example Box, “Dor” Quotes

<p><b>Original Text:</b> “<i>Aku</i> dengan Irman, beli Rp100 ribu Pak <i>samo AI</i> (masih buron). <i>Rencananya</i> kami di situ <i>nak</i> pesta ganja,” aku Edi.</p> <p><b>Translation:</b> “I and Irman, bought 100 thousand Rupiah [worth of marijuana] Pak from AI (still a fugitive). Our plan there was to have a marijuana party,” admitted Edi.</p>
<p><b>Original Text:</b> “<i>Kami cuma ngumpul bareng bae. Dak tahu siapa yang nak make ganja,</i>” cetus Defri.</p> <p><b>Translation:</b> “We only get together occasionally. We don’t know who will use marijuana,” remarked Defri.</p>
<p><b>Original Text:</b> “<i>SS aku beli sepaketnyo Rp100 ribu, samo dengan ineksnyo sebutir Rp100 ribu. Aku beli ini dengan H</i> (bandarnya masih buron) <i>karena ado yang mesen,</i>” ujar Carolin.</p> <p><b>Translation:</b> “I bought a packet of crystal meth for 100 thousand rupiah, along with a pill of ecstasy for 100 thousand. I bought this with H (ringleader still a fugitive) because there was someone who put in an order,” stated Carolin.</p>
<p><b>Original Text:</b> “<i>Aku jugo memakai Pak, tapi jarang-jarang.</i>”</p> <p><b>Translation:</b> “I also use [it] Sir, but very rarely.”</p>

One thing to note is that these quotations fall in different places upon the spectrum between “pure” *Baso Palembang* and “pure” *Bahasa Indonesia*. This is a clue that they are, in fact, authentic quotes. This is what people said, and this is what is getting reported. This is in marked contrast with the majority of the quotations in the newspaper. Despite the fact that the vernacular spoken throughout the city and across all



social classes, the vast majority of the things people are reported to have said in the city are quoted in the national language.

Now it may be that part of this difference is that these other people are careful to talk to reporters only in a more formal way. Perhaps most people, knowing that they will be quoted in the paper, are careful to use the language of print, i.e., Indonesian. This may be the case. But that does not explain why this particular section of this particular paper is overwhelmingly marked by quotations in the local language.

The SPIE Analysis Sheet on the next page begins to address how the “Dor” section of the *Sumatera Ekspres* may be using Palembangese in similar ways as “Mang Juhai” in the *Palembang Pos*. One major conclusion of this analysis is that the authors of the “Dor” articles are specifically choosing *not* to translate the quotations that they have written in their notes. This is despite the fact that the main bodies of their articles are carefully crafted in Indonesian from the same notes.

The reporters arriving on the scene ask people what happened. Most likely this questioning occurs in Palembangese. Given that reporters need to quickly win the trust of the people they are interviewing, one can only assume that they will use this most basic relational strategy to do so. The people then predictably answer in kind. The result is a series of notes recording what the people said. This is the point where the SPIE Analysis Sheet picks up the story.

Back in the office, the reporters craft articles from the notes they have taken. While most of the story is put in the form of Indonesian, the quotations are kept in the original form in which they were received. But there is a difference. At the moment the notes were recorded, two Palembangese people were talking to each other as *Wong Kito Galo* ‘All Our People.’ Now, in print, the quotations are set off like fish out of water. They are Palembangese quotes in the context of an Indonesian news article. As if to further highlight the way in which they do not quite belong, these words are put into italics.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Prior to the spring of 2007, the “Mang Juhai” column also put the dialogue of the characters in italics. At some point, perhaps because the vernacular was increasingly slipping over the edges of the quotations into the main storyline, this attempt to distinguish the two languages was quietly dropped.

Figure 17: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “Quoting Common People”

<b>SPIE Title: Quoting Common People</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> May/June 2007  <b>Location:</b> Palembang</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> Journalists will “clean up” quotations.  <b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> Author/Journalist/Interviewer, Interviewee  <b>Audience:</b> Palembang Newspaper Readers</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Notes (including Transcribed Quotations and Informational Content), Events, Palembangese Language, Indonesian Language, Print, Interview Genre, News Article Genre, Indonesian Newspaper Genre, Italics</i>  <b>Core Element:</b> <i>Notes</i>  <b>Product:</b> <i>An Indonesian News Article with Palembangese Quotations</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The author/interviewer starts this transaction with <i>Notes</i> from a news story to be written. A significant part of these notes are <i>Transcribed Quotations</i>. These <i>Quotations</i> form the core of the <i>Informational Content</i> from which the author will craft a <i>News Article</i>. The author takes this kernel and puts the majority of it into the form of <i>Indonesian Language in Print</i> according to the rules of the <i>Genres</i> with which the author is working. In the process, the author decides to keep part of the original form of a few of the quotations. The result is that these quotations show up in the story in the forms of <i>Palembangese, Print, and Italics</i>.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> In this interaction, the kernel is the journalist’s own <i>Notes</i> which include a variety of things that people have said about the events in view. The author’s job is to take these notes, any information they contain and form them into a news article that will keep the interest of readers. Because the author is trying to write a news article in a way that will be accepted by supervisors and readers as serious news worthy of print, the author writes most of the story in the <i>Indonesian Language</i>. At the same time, knowing that readers will delight in seeing the <i>Palembang Language in Print</i>, the author also finds the opportunity in the quotations to meet this desire as well. The author gets away with this because the <i>Informational Content</i> and the participants in the <i>Events</i> are seen to fit with the vernacular language. These people are not in the paper because of their power and education. They are just normal people who have experienced a crime or tragedy. Part of the interest in these stories is that something like this could happen to anyone. Language choice (i.e., the author’s choice of when and where to translate the account) underscores this reality.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Unknown</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The author desires to: 1) report what the interviewee has said, 2) draw and keep the interest of readers, and 3) do a good job in the sight of his/her supervisors.</p>

Whether or not they “belong,” these words are put here with an obvious degree of intentionality. The authors and the editors know that these quotes are there. They know the language being used and they know that it serves a purpose. One of these purposes, perhaps the main purpose, is to draw readership. This section is one of the most popular parts of any newspaper in the city.

An observer can frequently see young men gathered around in a cluster reading the back of the *Sumatera Ekspres*, with smiles on their faces. People in Palembang do not read very much, but they will read this. As a result, it has earned the dubious honor of being put on the very back of the paper.<sup>41</sup> That is, all the stories begin on the back page, before continuing on a page located further within the paper. Placing the headlines, lead-ins, and pictures for these stories on this page allows for fast access for folks more interested in seeing pictures of criminals and corpses than they are in the faces of actors and politicians. They need only to unfold the paper and turn it around.

In both the *Palembang Pos* and the *Sumatera Ekspres*, the local language is tied together with the seedy underbelly of the news. Where “Mang Juhai” links the vernacular with sex and drugs, “Dor” joins it with blood and gore. In both cases, the papers win themselves an otherwise uninterested readership.

While the “bait” factor might be the main reason that the local language finds itself in print under these circumstances, it does so only because of other underlying factors. One thing that separates “Dor” from “Mang Juhai” is that it is not on the front page. Also, the local language rarely even occurs on the main page of “Dor” itself. Unlike their colleagues at the *Palembang Pos*, the editors of the *Sumatera Ekspres* force the readers to actually open the paper to find the italicized Palembangese in print. The reader should recall that while most of the juicy quotations in “Mang Juhai” are also inside the paper, the editors often choose to use the vernacular in the title as well.

“Mang Juhai” draws in readers from the first glance with a combination of Palembangese-in-print and a naughty story hook. “Dor” draws in readers from the start with the shock of tragedy, often with a bloody

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<sup>41</sup> The *Sumatera Ekspres* as sold in the city is made separated into two parts serving as almost two distinct papers with the one being tucked inside the other. The first paper, bearing the title *Sumatera Ekspres*, is usually between 12 and 16 pages in length. The last page (i.e., back spread) contains sports news. The second paper is entitled *Palembang Metropolis*, and the last page of this is completely covered with the lead-ins to the “Dor” stories. Thus, when the latter is tucked into the former, the very last page is the always graphic and interesting criminal and accident news.

photograph. It is only as the story unfolds that the reader is introduced to the characters and their words. Usually, if the article contains a quote in the local language, and not all of them do, it will be a single quote.<sup>42</sup>

The effect of this quote is nonetheless powerful. In a way that a translated-into-Indonesian quote would not, it shows that the people involved, victims and criminals alike, are part of *Wong Kito Galo* ‘All Our People.’ These people are not in the paper because of their power and education. They are just normal people who have experienced a crime or tragedy. Part of the interest in these stories is that something like this could happen to anyone. Language choice—i.e, the use of the vernacular—underscores this reality.

#### 6.4 A Few More Remarks on These Texts

The writers and editors of the *Palembang Pos* and the *Sumatera Ekspres* are in the business of selling papers. They fill these papers with a variety of items including accounts of recent events, advertisements, pictures, and fiction. Something that publishers of both papers have found is that including the local language in print helps them sell their product.

At this point, they do not feel that putting the entire paper into Palembangese would be their best course of action, given the variety of goals that they have. For example, in addition to drawing in readers, they are also trying to maintain a sense of authority in the minds of those readers. As a result, they are selective and cautious in their use of Palembangese. Language choice is a powerful tool, so powerful that it might threaten to upset the balance between the vernacular and other languages it got out of hand.

As this chapter has shown, using *Baso Palembang* in print can draw in readership just as well as sex and gore. This chapter has also touched on some of the other effects of the language in print, effects which give it the power to draw in readership. One of these is the shock value created by using the language in print. If the language in print became common, this shock value would dissipate. By keeping it in limited quantities, the editors can continue to use it as bait.

Another effect that the language has is that it authenticates the words and the identity of the person shown using it. In the case of Mang Juhai, the language he uses shows him to be a real Palembang person,<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The example examined here happens to be an exception.

<sup>43</sup> This effect is strengthened by the fact that he is also shown frequenting well-known city landmarks.

even when he is, in fact, not a real person at all. In the examples from “Dor,” real people struggling with real problems are shown in all of their humanness. The language they use proves that these stories did not occur in some far away country, or even over on the island of Java. These things happened to real people somewhere here in the readers’ own hometown.

The next chapter will explore this last phenomenon in greater details. By looking at the use of *Baso Palembang* in advertisement and politics, the discussion will show that the desire to authenticate the identity of a person or business can often be enough draw the vernacular into print once again.

CHAPTER 7  
SOLIDARITY AND AUTHENTICITY AS GOALS

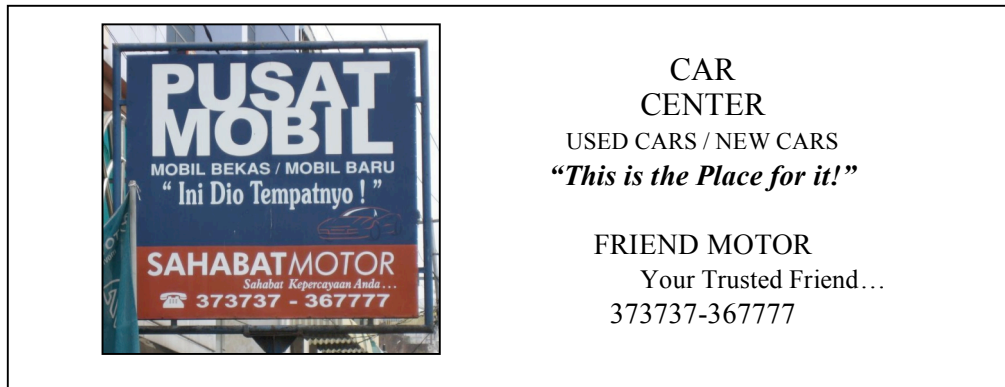
7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which cultural actors in Palembang use the vernacular to demonstrate the authenticity of a person's claim to be "one of the people." For this reason, this chapter is indebted to the insights of James Paul Gee and his argument that much of what people do when they act and talk is an attempt to be seen as "a certain kind of person."

7.2 Data Text #7: "Pusat Mobil" and Other Advertisements

Like the texts in the previous chapter, this next example is also trying to draw attention and sell a product. Unlike those shown previously, this next text is a straightforward advertisement. Located on Jalan Veteran, one of the main streets in Palembang, the sign shown in Example Box #5 below advertises a car dealership named *Sahabat Motor*. (Once again bold italics mark Palembangese.) The SPIE Analysis Sheet for this sign is given on the page that follows.

Figure 18: Example Box, "Sahabat Motor"<sup>44</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Photograph Courtesy of Andre Wehrli (2008).

Figure 19: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “Professional/Pro-Solidarity Sign Making”

<b>SPIE Title: Professional/Pro-Solidarity Sign Making</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other ____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> Sometime before 2007 <b>Location:</b> Palembang</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> The phrase “Ini Tempatnya” is a common expression in Indonesian. “Ini Dio Tempatnyo” is equally common in Palembang. This stretch of Jalan Veteran is home to a multitude of competing car dealerships, motorcycle dealerships, and repair facilities.</p> <p><b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> Sign creators working for <i>Sahabat Motor</i> <b>Audience:</b> Palembang people</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Informational Content, Palembangese Language, Indonesian Language, Print, Fonts, Quotation Marks, Paint, Structure and Surface, Images, Paint, Sign Genre</i></p> <p><b>Core Element:</b> <i>Informational Content</i></p> <p><b>Product:</b> <i>Sign</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The cultural actors here take the particular <i>Informational Content</i> that they wish to communicate and place it in <i>Print</i>. In doing this, they also make decisions resulting in one sentence being put into the form of the <i>Palembang Language</i>. This sentence is also put in a separate <i>Font</i> and in <i>Quotation Marks</i>. The rest of the texts are put in the <i>Indonesian Language</i> using a variety of <i>Fonts</i>. This text is further modified by the inclusion of a pair of <i>Images</i>. Finally, the entire design is <i>Painted</i> onto the <i>Structure and Surface</i> necessary for bringing the product to the people.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> The actors use many strategies to achieve their main goal of creating a sign to get people to come and buy vehicles at this dealership. Many of these are relatively simple and straightforward. They want people to know that this is a car dealership selling used and new vehicles and they want people to know how to contact this dealership. So, they put this information and the sign in <i>Print</i>. But they also want people to act on this information. They want people to choose to buy a vehicle from this dealership. As a result, they use language and content choice to emphasize that this is a dealership to be trusted.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> The company is still in business.</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The actors desire that: 1) people will come and buy vehicles at this dealership, 2) people will trust this dealership, 3) people will view this dealership as friendly, 4) their friends and supervisors will view their work as well done and clever, and 5) people will recognize that this is a car dealership</p>

On this sign, the only part in the local vernacular is the sentence, “*Ini Dio Tempatnyo!*” ‘This is the place for it!’<sup>45</sup> The rest is in the national language. Like the newspaper editors, this sign’s creators show a desire to hedge their bets. They want to be portraying this dealership as a legitimate and professional business, so they use Indonesian. But they do not want the business to seem cold and impersonal, so they use the local language as well.

The Informational Content of the sign can be roughly divided into two parts. The first part is the basic information about the business, i.e., type and name of the business, nature of product, and contact information. The second part gives information about the professed character of this business and its management, that is that it is friendly and trustworthy.

In order to maximize the use of the space, there is overlap between these two parts. For example, the name of the business, *Sahabat Motor* ‘Friend Motor’ emphasizes friendliness with the first word and the kind of business with the second. At the same time, some items, such as the phrase, “*Sahabat Kepercayaan Anda*” ‘Your Trusted Friend,’ are purely of the second sort.

The sentence written in Palembangse seems to draw the two parts together. On the one hand, the Informational Content emphasizes that this is the kind of place that one would go to if one were looking to buy a car. On the other, the use of the language emphasizes that this is a friendly and trustworthy establishment.

In a sense, the language form used in this sentence says exactly the same thing as the Indonesian phrase about the business being the customer’s *Sahabat Kepercayaan* ‘Trusted Friend.’ By using the local language, the sign maker emphasizes solidarity between this business and the potential customer. Karan (2008) points out that this is a common motivation, throughout the world, for using a local vernacular in place of a national or international language.

The catch, in this case, is that in order to use the vernacular to communicate with passersby the business must use a sign, and a sign is by nature a printed form of communication. The creators of the sign know that using Palembangse in print is not a fully sanctioned and accepted activity. That is why, despite

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<sup>45</sup> A more literal translation would be “This is the place of it” or, perhaps more simply, “This is the place!”



their desire to underscore that this business is a business owned and operated by people just like its customers, potential friends even, they shy back from putting the entire sign in the local vernacular.

Instead, they put just one sentence in *Baso Palembang*, and they set this sentence off with quotation marks as if to say, “This is the kind of thing that people say.” Once again, the vernacular finds its way into print inside the bounds of quotation marks.<sup>46</sup> Unlike some of the examples above, such as the waterworks brochure, however, the information conveyed by the text is minimal.

Up to this point, this is the clearest example from Palembang of Gee’s (2005; 2008) Discourses at work. The sign makers are quite obviously striving to be seen as “a certain kind of people.” To do this, they do “a certain kind of thing” in “a certain kind of way,” namely using the local language to convey a clichéd expression.

The image below provides some context for comparison and contrast. Here, in a “bumper sticker”<sup>47</sup> advertisement the same idea is conveyed in the national language. In this case, most of the text is in English, in order to demonstrate the sophistication and international quality this school will provide. Because of the English context the national language phrase, *Ya disini tempatnya* ‘Yeah, this is the place,’ actually does much the same thing as the vernacular in the context of the national language. It also stands as a shift toward the common tongue from a more formal and professional language (i.e., English).<sup>48</sup>

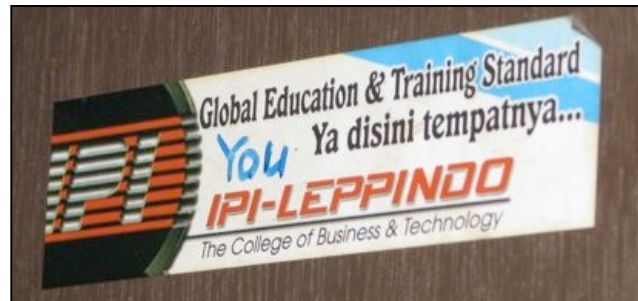
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<sup>46</sup> Another benefit of putting the sentence in quotation marks is that it acts, with the shift in font, to draw the attention of passersby. Such a use is quite common in the northern Midwest where quotes will be used to set off key parts of advertisements (e.g., Buy One, Get One “Free”).

<sup>47</sup> In this case, the sticker was not on a bumper, but rather on a wall.

<sup>48</sup> More discussion of the relationships between Indonesian, Palembangese, and International languages will be provided in Chapter 9.

Figure 20: “Ya disini tempatnya...”



Both the *Sahabat Motor* sign and the *IPI* sticker are attempts to walk a line between professionalism and solidarity. Bilingual language use is a powerful tool in straddling this divide. The next example moves the discussion into the arena of politics, where this challenge is just as important as in business.

### 7.3 Data Text #7: The Politician as a Man of the People<sup>49</sup>

Back in November 2007, a politician named Alex Noerdin was running for reelection as head of the *Kabupaten*<sup>50</sup> to the northwest of Palembang called Musi Banyuasin. The chief city of this district and its most prominent ethnic group are both called Sekayu. Unfortunately for Noerdin, his political career was suffering from continuing accusations that he was not a native son of this area.

So strong and public were these accusations that the discussion found its way into the papers. The next example comes from an interview with a respected elder citizen of the area that focused on this question. This interview was published in a special *Pilkada Muba* ‘Muba<sup>51</sup> Election’ section of the November 17th, 2006, edition of the newspaper *Berita Pagi*. An image of the article, which ran along the bottom of the front page of the “Muba Election” section, is included in the figure below.

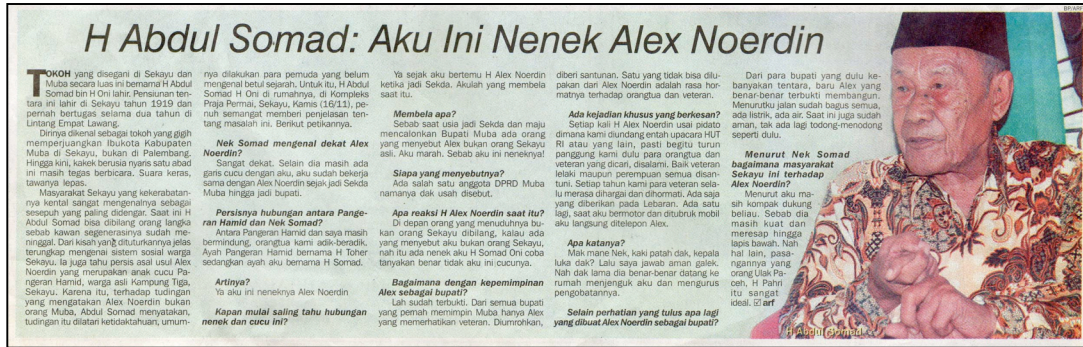
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<sup>49</sup> Note that in this section, the vernacular is not Palembangese, but rather another dialect of the Musi Dialect Cluster, here called *Base Sekayu*. The relationship between these dialects is discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>50</sup> A sub-provincial political district

<sup>51</sup> Muba is an abbreviation of “**M**usi **B**anyuasin.”

Figure 21: “Aku Ini Nenek Alex Noerdin”



The reporter begins the article by introducing the interviewee, H Abdul Somad. A man approaching 90 years of age, he has gained a reputation as a respected leader, first through his service in the military and then as a public servant. It is explicitly mentioned that his struggle has been for the capital of the Muba district, Sekayu, and not Palembang. The point of this introduction is that this is a man of the area and for the area, who has been around long enough to know who belongs and who does not.

Next, the report shifts to a question and answer format. The first topic of discussion is the relationship between Somad and Noerdin. Through his answers, Somad reiterates something that he has been asserting for years: He is the cousin of Noerdin’s grandfather, a blood relative, two generations senior. It is while discussing this subject that the interviewee provides the quote for the article’s vernacular title quote, “*Aku Ini Nenek Alex Noerdi*,” ‘I am Alex Noerdin’s [2<sup>nd</sup> generation senior blood relative].’<sup>52</sup>

Any South Sumatran reader who glances at the headline then is faced with a difficult-to-refute assertion of Noerdin’s identity as a man of Muba. Here is a respected elder citizen, whom many readers know by sight, stating in the language of the people that Noerdin is of his people.

But the interview is not over yet. The discussion then shifts to the topic of Noerdin’s character. In answer to the question “*Ada kejadian khusus yang berkesan?*” ‘Is there a particular event that left an impression [on you]?’ Somad gives multiple ways in which Noerdin has been particularly thoughtful

<sup>52</sup> While the words *aku*, *ini* and *nenek* are each also found in any Indonesian dictionary, they are here used in peculiarly local ways. The use of the pronoun *aku* in a formal setting, the use of the clitic *ini* for emphasis, and the use of *nenek* to refer to men as well as women each show this to be a non-Indonesian sentence.

toward veterans and other elderly citizens. Then he mentions one other incident, the time he was hit by a car when riding his motorbike. Alex Noerdin called immediately. “What did he say?” asked the interviewer. This question and Somad’s answer are given in Figure 22 below. Note that once again bold italics mark the words in the vernacular, which in this case is *Base Sekayu*.

Figure 22: Example Box, Pak Somad Speaking of Alex Noerdin

<p><b>Original Text:</b> <b><i>Apa katanya?</i></b> <b><i>Mak mane Nek, kaki patah dak, kepala luka dak? Lalu saya jawab aman galek**</i></b>(<i>need to check</i>). Nah, <i>dak</i> lama dia benar-benar datang ke rumah menjenguk aku dan mengurus pengobatannya.</p> <p><b>Translation:</b> <b>What did he [Noerdin] say?</b> How are you Grampa, did you break your leg, did you injure your head? Then I said that I was fine. Now, not long after, he actually arrived to the house to check up on me and arrange for my medical care.</p>
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After this exchange, the report of the interview concludes shortly with a couple more questions and answers about Somad’s opinions about Alex Noerdin’s fitness for office, but the main issue has been clearly and definitively resolved in the exchange above. Noerdin’s loyal aid to his elder kin serves to prove their relationship even while demonstrating his character.

Noerdin’s use of the vernacular shows that he is indeed a man of the people. His words, as reported by Somad and carefully transcribed in the paper, are not simply an evidence of humility and solidarity with the average voter. They are proof that he, in his personal moments, uses the language of the *Kabupaten* in which he is running for office.

In the end, it comes down to one printed letter. Noerdin is here reported to have said, “*Mak Mane Nek*.” Had he been speaking the Palembang dialect, he would have said, “*Mak Mano Nek*.” The one phoneme difference “proves” that he is not from Sekayu’s big-city rival to the east; he is from Muba. His language use, as duly reported by Somad, and faithfully transcribed by the reporter, puts to silence the accusations that he is not from Muba. An SPIE Analysis Sheet for this interview has been included below.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Note that as in the case of the “Dor” articles in the previous chapter, the SPIE analysis focuses here on the way the journalist interacts with the notes taken in the field.

Figure 23: SPIE Analysis Sheet, “Interview with a Local Leader”

<b>SPIE Title: Interview with a Local Leader</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> November, 2006  <b>Location:</b> South Sumatra, Indonesia</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> The journalist writing this report is also responsible for the 4 other articles on this page. One contains a genealogy tracing Noerdin’s Sekayu heritage back 6 generations. The diagram going with this story is somewhat selective as it shows the clear Sekayu line that traveled through Noerdin’s mother and her mother, but is not so specific about other, presumably less-Sekayu lines. The only advertisement on the page is a full-color, full-width banner in support of Alex Noerdin’s ticket. Another article announces a prominent religious coalition’s support of Noerdin and his running mate.</p> <p><b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> Interviewer/Reporter; H Abdul Somad (Interviewee); Alex Noerdin (Politician)  <b>Audience:</b> South Sumatran Readers</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Interview Notes (including Transcribed and/or Recorded Quotations and Informational Content), Events, Sekayu Language, Indonesian Language, Print, Interview Genre, Indonesian Newspaper Genre, Italics, Bold-Face Type, Formatting</i>  <b>Core Element:</b> <i>Interview Notes</i>  <b>Product:</b> <i>The Interview Article as Printed (with Indonesian and Sekayu Language Forms)</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The reporter works from <i>Interview Notes</i>. These notes are largely composed of <i>Transcribed Quotations</i> in a combination of the <i>Sekayu Language</i> and the <i>Indonesian Language</i>. The reporter organizes <i>Informational Content</i> and <i>Transcribed Quotations</i> into a <i>Format</i> suited to the purpose. This includes making sure that the majority is written in the form of <i>Indonesian Language</i> with some being written in the <i>Sekayu Language</i>.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> The interviewer/journalist seems set on proving that Noerdin has the heritage and the character to continue as leader in Muba (see Contextual Background Information above). In assembling this report on the interview of Somad, the writer includes nothing that might be interpreted as unsupportive of Noerdin. At the same time, from the selection of the title to the inclusion of Somad’s quoting Noerdin himself using the Sekayu language, the author skillfully weaves the elements at hand into a convincing defense of the incumbent candidate.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Alex Noerdin was re-elected to his office in Muba, and a couple years later was elected to the office of Governor of South Sumatra.</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The actor desires to: 1) set the record straight concerning Noerdin’s heritage, 2) clearly report on the words of H Abdul Somad, 3) be seen by supervisors as doing a good job, and 4) be seen by the public as doing a fair and honest job</p>

#### 7.4 A Few More Remarks on These Texts

James Paul Gee argues forcefully in his book *Discourse Analysis* for an increased understanding on the part of academics of the importance of people doing “certain kinds of things” in “certain kinds of ways” to show that they are “certain kinds of people” (2005). This chapter has given examples in which cultural actors prove themselves (or others) to be “certain kinds of people” through use of particular languages and dialects.

Which language communicators use as formatic elements in their utterances, or texts, is a crucial part of their “ways with words.” So crucial, in fact, that even when the overwhelming tendency is to not write certain languages in print, there occur instances in which the author decides that too much would be lost without a certain language (or too much could be gained with that language). The result is that this rarely transcribed language finds its way into print.

In the cases of the *Sahabat Motor* sign and the *Berita Pagi* interview, a lack of vernacular would mean a lack of authenticity. Sales people and politicians seek trust. Trust comes from familiarity and fraternity. Both of these traits are achieved through use of the audience’s mother tongue, whether this is *Baso Palembang* or *Base Sekayu*. And when the language use happens to be taking place in print, the only solution is to bring these two formatic elements together.

In the next chapter, a final example of the vernacular in print will be given. This case, an online chat group, is different from all the others presented in this paper. For here, the authors are not “forced” to write in the vernacular. They choose to do so.

## CHAPTER 8 A RETURN TO FREEDOM

### 8.1 Introduction

In Chapters 4 through 7, several examples from Palembang and its near neighbors have shown that the vernacular often finds its way into print in a somewhat reluctant fashion. In many cases, quotation marks or other distinctive formatic elements set the local language apart from other text. Authors are conscious that they are bending cultural norms by putting the vernacular into print, and so they persist only insofar as they can achieve one or more specific goals (e.g., attracting attention, building solidarity, etc).

Some of these goals, like shocking readers, are accomplished precisely because of the rarity of seeing the juxtaposition of two elements usually experienced separately i.e., local language and print. Other goals, like underscoring solidarity, are commonly sought and achieved in everyday speech. The examples above then are simply a normal, albeit uncommon, carry-over into the literate sphere of activity. In both cases, the cultural actors seem to work within a set of invisible limits governing the use of the vernacular, limits that are significantly tighter in the form of print than they are in the form of speech.

This chapter explores an environment in which these limits lose much of their power, an online community called Kaskus. In this setting, communicants interact in a virtual print-only world. Like a mother and daughter exchanging text messages, the actors are building and sharing interpersonal relationships. These relationships are upheld primarily through language in print. As a result, this language in print has slowly loosened itself from many of the constraints that are evident in the examples of the previous chapters.

### 8.2 “B A T M A N” and His Multilingual Tool Belt

On November 22, 2005, a man calling himself “B A T M A N” started a discussion thread on Kaskus, in the forum labeled “Console Games.” He wrote the subject line in English: “[ask] cheat GUITAR HERO.” Several people checked out his post, but no one responded. In a separate forum called “THE

LOUNGE” he posted: “*Berhasilllll.....*” ‘*Successssssss.....*’ This time he received some feedback, and it would seem that he was hooked (B A T M A N, 2005).<sup>54</sup>

Around that time he also made his first post in the forum called “Palembang,” a forum for which he became the moderator.<sup>55</sup> This post was a simple invitation in to talk (using Indonesian slang): “[usul] *ngobrol2 yok!*” ‘[suggestion] chit-chat, yo!’ This thread received 280 views and 37 replies before it petered out in late December 2005. B A T M A N’s first use of Palembangese in his thread titles came when he wrote: “GATHERING YOK.... (*yg ado di Palaembang-nyo nian!*)” ‘Gathering, yo.... (especially for those who are in Palembang!).’ This thread received 523 views and 84 replies.

Throughout his postings, he switches smoothly between Indonesian, Palembangese, and even, as seen above, English. In doing so, he demonstrates that he is relatively free from the constraints so evidently active in the creation of the examples in the previous chapter. He writes as he would speak, in a mixture of languages that he expects his audience will understand.

In this paper, it is not so important to figure out why he switches between languages where he does, but only to realize that he is not switching into Indonesian or English as a way to avoid, or minimize, putting the vernacular in print. He is long past this sort of squeamishness, at least in this environment. Here, he writes as he would speak. In this context, the formatic element of print flows together equally well with any language in his tool belt. There is not the oil/water effect seen above in which the vernacular clumps into its own separate spheres within the larger flow of the text.

The extended example below stands as a demonstration of this free-mingling of forms. The texts in this example are each taken from B A T M A N’s “Rules of Use” post. Here, two selections are given in Example Boxes with bold/italics marking Palembangese. These selections are also provided with free translations. The first Example Box includes the subject/title of the post, the salutations, and the introduction. The second, from the main body of the post, contains a few of the specific rules being suggested by B A T M A N. The following page contains an SPIE Analysis Sheet for this post.

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<sup>54</sup> Source: <http://www.kaskus.us/search.php?searchid=14590851&pp=15&page=4> (May 27, 2009.)

<sup>55</sup> At present, he co-moderates with another man who goes by the nickname “lord\_nara.”



Figure 24: Example Box, Introduction to Palembang Forum Rules of Use<sup>56</sup>

<p><b>Original:</b> “*Update (WAJIB DIBACA!!!) TATA TERTIB - PERATURAN - LINKS <i>Regio Plembang</i> “<i>mamang<sup>2</sup>, mancek, bicek, dulur, galo<sup>2</sup>nyo yang ngeraso aktif dan nak melok</i> berinteraksi / bergabung di Regio Palembang...”</p> <p><b>Translation:</b> Update (MUST READ!!!) ORDERED SYSTEM – RULES – LINKS Regional Palembang uncles, junior uncles, junior aunts, cousins, everyone who considers themselves to be active and wants to come and interact / get together in the Regional Palembang [Forum]...</p>
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Figure 25: Example Box, More Text from Palembang Forum Rules of Use<sup>57</sup>

<p><b>Original:</b> “nah...untuk mencegah hal<sup>2</sup> yang <i>idak di-inginke... kito sekarang berusaha punyo aturan di</i> Regio Palembang, <i>pecak ini</i> :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sebelum posting atau bikin thread...cek lah dulu...<i>ado dak thread<sup>2</sup></i> yang sejenis</li><li>• Dilarang keras memancing keributan, atau <i>nyari balak</i> di Regional Palembang... <i>men ado</i> masalah pribadi silakan selesaikan via PM</li></ul> <p><b>Translation:</b> Now, in order to avoid things that are undesired... we are now going to try to have rules in the Regional Palembang [Forum], as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before posting or creating a thread...check first...do similar threads [already] exist or not</li><li>• It is strongly forbidden to search for trouble, or look for misfortune... if you have a personal problem feel free to solve them through PM (i.e., private message)</li></ul>
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Notice that “B A T M A N” still uses a mixture of languages as was the case in the newspaper examples above. The difference is that he is not reverting to some default rule whereby all things must be written in Indonesian unless there is a pressing reason not to. He is simply writing down his thoughts.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Source: <http://www.kaskus.us/showthread.php?t=940907> (June 15, 2009)

<sup>57</sup> Source: <http://www.kaskus.us/showthread.php?t=940907> (June 15, 2009)

<sup>58</sup> The reader is here reminded that, as naturally spoken in most situations in the city, Palembangese is mixed with Indonesian in a free-flowing continuum between “full” Palembangese and “full” Indonesian.

Figure 26: SPIE Analysis Sheet, "Online Forum"

<b>SPIE Title: Online Forum</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> July 2, 2007  <b>Location:</b> Palembang</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> At the time of writing this B A T M A N had been an active user and moderator on the Kaskus community for years. As moderator has authority to discipline users who stray from these guidelines through means such as deleting or blocking their posts.  <b>Actor/s: Communicator:</b> B A T M A N <b>Audience:</b> Kaskus Users</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Informational Content, Palembangese Language, Indonesian Language, English Language, Print, Online Chat Group Genre, Formulaic Legalese Expressions</i>  <b>Core Element:</b> <i>Informational Content</i>  <b>Product:</b> <i>"Rules of Use" Post</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The author puts the Informational Content into a form appropriate for an Online Chat Group. He includes some Formulaic Legalese Expressions in the Indonesian Language. He also includes a variety of Palembangese Language phrases.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> The author uses a natural mix of Palembangese and Indonesian. To some extent, the nature of the text pushes him to use Indonesian, especially in those areas such as the title, in which he uses Formulaic Legalese Expressions to emphasize his role as an authority. But just as significantly, the author uses Palembangese in a variety of ways. For example, he does not use the local language for some limited purpose like urging his brethren to greater obedience for the common good. That is, he does not use the vernacular only to build up solidarity and encourage sacrifice. He also uses the local language to outline the rules. In doing so, he tacitly rejects the monopoly that Indonesian Legalese usually holds in such situations. In summary, he is writing a Palembangese text (with natural code switching into Indonesian) to Palembangese people. He is not writing an Indonesian text with a little Palembangese thrown in.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Unknown</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The actor desires to: 1) improve the quality of the forum, 2) reduce duplicate threads, 3) reduce thoughtless/ill-mannered posts, 4) reduce his own workload of shutting down threads that break these rules, and 5) save people the embarrassment of having their threads "disciplined"</p>

While the writer does switch back and forth in between the two languages (with a little bit of English thrown in here and there), this has less to do with print than it does with other natural language use patterns. As mentioned in the introduction, in Section 1.2.3, Palembangese at times acts like other creoles in that speakers use it and the LWC in a free-flowing continuum between “full” Palembangese and “full” Indonesian. As part of this flow, “B A T M A N” seems here to be creatively submitting to and playing with the rules governing register-use in situations like this.

Gee (2005:35-37; 2008:45-49, 91-93) frequently uses an example similar to this in which he performs an analysis of the back of an aspirin container. He notes that the label on such medication switches continuously between different Discourses with different sounding “voices” (e.g., the voice of a lawyer and the voice of a “caring, but authoritatively knowledgeable company” Gee 2005:37). “B A T M A N” does the same kind of switching here.<sup>59</sup>

He starts off with some degree of formal Indonesian; after all, he is about to lay down the rules. Since the government and big businesses usually are the one to lay down such “guidelines of use” it would be fitting for the actor here to slip into full-Indonesian mode. But he does not do this. People do not come to such a website to follow rules. So, he takes a different tack. Like the leader of a group of friends laying down the guidelines at the beginning of a trip on the Musi River, he cajoles his readers with a playful mix of formal Indonesian and less formal Palembangese.

The significant thing here is that print does not hinder him in this mixture. He has no editor who is going to tell him that he is embarrassing the newspaper. He has no boss who is going to tell him that he will not print this because it makes the company look uneducated. In short, he is free to be himself, and to do so in print.

In the concluding chapter, the discussion turns to what it might mean to be a Palembangese person in print. Given the dearth of cultural precedent, the SPIE cluster shown in the last analysis sheet, with its free mixing of local ways with language and print, is a new phenomenon. The question that remains is whether the particular kind of literacy shown at work in the online forum will spawn (or rise in parallel with) less technologically advanced literacies.

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<sup>59</sup> Gee (2008:93) points out in another example how a college-aged young woman will utilize a variety of “social languages” in dinner conversation with her parents.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Summary of Goals

This paper has set out to explain why people in Palembang are, in certain situations, choosing to use their vernacular language in print. Towards the accomplishment of this task, the writings of scholars working in the tradition of the New Literacy Studies have proven invaluable. Nonetheless, the perspectives provided by these writers have fallen short of providing a full-fledged framework for the study of literacies as culturally-based skills. So, building upon the foundation provided by the NLS perspective, this paper set about creating a new framework.

### 9.2 Summary of Theory

The new framework presented in this paper is based on a few simple assertions. Cultural phenomena of all kinds exist as clusters of the following components: skills, practices, interactions and events. At the heart of these SPIE clusters lie simple processes of interaction. Cultural actors interact with one or more cultural elements with the expectation of achieving particular goals through the creation of certain products. Within these interactions, it is often helpful for the analyst to find and label the element serving as the central or core element, and by doing so to see how other elements serve a supporting role as formative elements.

Literate SPIE clusters are no different. As a class of cultural activity, literate activity is marked simply by the presence of literate elements. Within literate SPIE clusters, cultural actors interact with literate elements to achieve particular goals by creation of certain products.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> While not of central importance to this thesis, it is significant for the wider discussions currently taking place in NLS circles to note that this framework clarifies discussion of the relationship between literate activity and the related spheres of communicative and linguistic activity. By focusing on elements and goals, the present framework offers the criteria for identifying various SPIE clusters. This, in turn, allows a clearer view of how they are related. Figure 6 at the end of Chapter 3 provides one view of the

One advantage of this framework is the clarity it gives to comparison of literate activity with other cultural phenomena. All SPIE clusters are treated the same, whether the elements are a few chunks of obsidian or a master's thesis. Cultural actors interact with elements in certain ways to create certain products to achieve certain goals.

As an aid to focusing on analysis of SPIE clusters, this paper has also introduced a tool called the SPIE Analysis Sheet. By guiding the user to address the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*, this research tool serves to underscore the need to understand the full context in which SPIE clusters occur before one can assume to understand any of its parts.

This thesis serves as an example of the usefulness of the SPIE Analysis Sheet. Starting with a particular research question—i.e., why certain elements like Palembangese and print co-occur in certain circumstances—the Analysis Sheet guides research, discussion, and analysis. It also, clearly shows which areas are still unclear or unknown. In some cases, this may indicate the need for more research. In other instances, it might reflect that the information is simply unavailable and that results and conclusions must be regarded as a bit more speculative.

The next section discusses some of the results obtained through the application of the SPIE framework and Analysis Sheet.

### 9.3 Conclusions

#### 9.3.1 A combination of reasons

This research found that *Baso Palembang* makes its way into print on any given occasion, for a situation-specific *combination* of reasons. Cultural actors, working creatively within the norms (and outside of the norms) of society decided on different occasions and for different reasons that the best way to fulfill their purposes was to create a product that included Palembangese in print.

In some cases, looking at the examples in Chapters 5 through 8, it seems as if the cultural actors decided from the start that they were going to combine the local language and print in order to achieve particular goals. In other instances, the juxtaposition of Palembangese and print seems more of an afterthought, the result of other decisions made along the way.

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relationship between cultural, communicative, linguistic, and literate SPIE clusters.

In both situations, the actors are working with a keen understanding of societal rules. They are aware of which languages can be used in which ways in which circumstances to achieve which effects. They are also aware of the significance of putting language in print. Similarly, they are conscious of the variety of ways of formatting printed matter depending on the content and the effect desired. In short, the cultural actors who create examples such as those in the preceding chapters are skilled in utilizing a variety of elements in an assortment of ways within the cultural environment in which they live.

So, whether they feel constrained to put Palembangese in print or they felt unusually clever in doing so, they are conscious that their intended audience will take the product that they create and interact with it in certain ways. The expectation of the authors is that these “certain ways” will yield an expected set or range of responses on the part of the audience. In this way, the cultural actors have some confidence of achieving the goals that drive them to start the process of interacting with all these elements in the first place.

The next section discusses some of the goals of these actors as evidenced by the analyses of the example texts in the preceding chapters.

### 9.3.2 Four groups of goals

#### 9.3.2.1 Solidarity and trust

Gee (2005:1) argues that one of the major uses of language, or any other human activity, is the establishment and reinforcement of the cultural actors shared sense of identity in society. Karan (2008) points out that this function of language is particularly relevant in situations where there exist multiple language options. Language choice, in these environments, can be motivated by a desire “to create or maintain a solidarity bond with an individual, group, culture or sub-culture” (Karan 2008:4).

As discussed in Chapter 1, these factors are definitely at play in Palembang where *Baso Palembang* is a major factor in the feelings of solidarity within the city. With globalization, nationalization, Christianization, modernization and every other threat to the traditional order knocking on the gates, everyone enjoys the opportunity to celebrate the security of unity expressed in being *Wong Kito Galo* ‘All Our People.’

By putting the local language in print, authors immediately accomplish two things. First, they draw attention to the language choice, since this is not a usual combination. Second, they do honor to the

language (and by extension, its people). After all, print, the medium of education and religion, is an honored place for a language to be.

What is remarkable is that in Palembang, even with all of these reasons, the local language does not find its way into print on a more regular basis. One explanation is that many of the sources of printed material in the city, such as businesses, media, and government, cannot allow themselves to be wholly governed by the desire to be well-liked and unified with the people. They also are concerned with the need to be seen as educated and powerful entities. In this regard, other languages win out. The combination of Indonesian and English on the advertising “bumper sticker” and Figure 20 gives one example of this. Newspapers provide another. If the newspapers were solely interested in communicating information, they would be written in a local vernacular. Instead, they must also concern themselves with looking like a reputable, informed source of information. For this, they need to use a more prestigious language, such as Indonesian.

All of this makes it even more remarkable when the local language does find its way into print. The *Sahabat Motor* sign and the “Mang Juhai” article both show a skillful use of the local language to build feelings of goodwill and solidarity with the intended audience. At the same time, both of these also show the tension between the national language and the vernacular, competing for space within the limited bounds of the printed page.

Notably, the *Sahabat Motor* sign goes one step beyond a simple effort to build solidarity. It also desires to build trust. The same can be said of the waterworks brochure. It might also be argued that the “Mang Juhai” column performs the same service on behalf of the newspaper. People who read the newspaper may trust the source more for feeling that the people who create it are *Wong Kito Galo* ‘All Our People,’ who understand the common man. In each of these cases, the companies represented by the texts possess a good deal of power, and could probably cheat their customers without too much trouble. And yet, in the texts themselves, these companies take great care to present themselves as normal folk, just trying to be a friend and help their customers out.

A final example, once again slightly different, is that of the mother writing an SMS to her daughter. In her case, her language choice is not so much a conscious decision to reach out and build solidarity so much as an avoidance of the alternative. To write in any other language would be to break down and deny the

unquestionable solidarity and relationship that already exists. It would be unthinkable for this relationship, founded in one language, to suddenly switch registers and continue in a language of business, schooling, and politics.

#### 9.3.2.2 Shock and surprise

Another goal driving cultural actors in Palembang toward using *Baso Palembang* in print is the desire to shock and surprise potential readers. By capitalizing on the rarity of seeing the local language in print, these authors are able to draw wandering eyes to their work. This was discussed at length in the main body of the paper, so only a few words are necessary here.

The editors of the *Sumatera Ekspres* and the *Palembang Pos* clearly are using the rarity of the local language in print to draw in readership. Their regular features, “Dor” and “Mang Juhai,” respectively, are clearly positioned to make finding them easy, while the content of both these pieces makes the seeking scandalously worthwhile.

This paper presented one example of advertisements, the *Sahabat Motor* sign. This is but one example. Throughout the city, and within newspapers, a small but significant number of businesses will use the local language in similar ways. Part of the reason for this is undoubtedly to build solidarity as discussed above, but another reason is to catch the eye of passersby. The local language in print is rare enough that simply seeing a distinctive key word, like *wong* ‘people,’ *kito* ‘we/our,’ or *galo* ‘all,’ is enough to catch one’s attention.

#### 9.3.2.3 Reported speech

Almost all of the examples presented in this paper include in some way the sense of reported speech. In the “Mang Juhai” and “Dor” newspaper columns, the local language is almost entirely delimited by quotation marks. In the waterworks brochure, it is contained in comic strip “bubbles.” Even in the *Sahabat Motor* sign, in which it is obvious that no specific person is really being quoted, the local language is given as reported speech, marked by the proper punctuation.

Similarly, the Pak Somad interview concerning Alex Noerdin’s claim to legitimacy as a member of the Sekayu people is given largely in the national language. And yet, within the bounds of quotation, the local language is allowed to spring out. Even in the title, as the Sekayu vernacular is featured in large bold type,



the author and/or editors are careful to present the text as something that the respected elder, Pak Somad, said.

Clearly, one of the major ways that the local language finds its way into print is in the context of an author reporting what someone else said. Significantly, while almost all of the examples reported in this paper share this feature, their use of this device serves different purposes.<sup>61</sup>

In the case of the Pak Somad interview, the use of the reported speech underscores the legitimacy and authenticity of the speakers. Both Pak Somad and Alex Noerdin, the politician, are reported to have spoken in the local language. As a result, the identity of both men as *wong Sekayu* ‘Sekayu people’ is underscored and authenticated. A similar process occurs in the *Sahabat Motor* sign, although it is unclear whether the purported speaker who says, “This is the place!” is supposed to be the owner or a customer. Either way, the attempt is made to make sure that the audience knows that this is a real hometown establishment.

As mentioned above, the use of the local language in the newspapers, however rarely, serves to demonstrate that the authors and editors of the paper know Palembangese and are therefore to be entitled to all the trust entitled to *Wong Kito Galo* ‘All Our People.’ At the same time, by keeping this language almost entirely in the bounds of quotation marks, the authors and editors protect themselves from being seen as “undereducated” or “backwards,” both major concerns among people of all sorts and Indonesia.

In all of this, the authors in Palembang seem to be taking part in a widespread tendency of peoples throughout the world. Until a tongue has a solid reputation as a “written language” it is treated tentatively in print. Mark Twain’s two novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* show one example of this from English. In the former work, originally published in 1876, the main text is written in standard English, while the quotations are given in a variety of dialects. In the second, published in 1884, one of the dialects has shifted into the main text, while the quotations continue to be a motley assortment of dialects. Time will tell if a similar shift occurs for *Baso Palembang*.

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<sup>61</sup> Even the example of the mother’s text message might be regarded as a sort of reported speech, since it takes the place of a phone call. It is, in this sense, the words that the writer would have said, had she not been constrained, by economic factors, to write them down instead.

#### 9.3.2.4 An attempt at “normalcy”

Of all the examples presented in this paper, the works of the online forum moderator, B A T M A N, come the closest to unmarked, normalized use of *Baso Palembang* in print. With all the options before him, with computer skills and language skills sufficient to make the riches of the online world accessible to him, B A T M A N has decided—on multiple occasions and concerning multiple topics—to write in Palembangse. He does not constrain the local language to quotation marks or to what other people have said. He simply writes what he wants how he wants.

Like the case of Mark Twain shifting the vernacular from the quotations to the main body of the text, this online personality has taken printed *Baso Palembang* into the realm of “normalcy,” if only in a limited online way.

Interestingly, text messaging seems to have produced similar results. As mentioned in the discussion of Madame Yulismawati’s text message to her daughter, the text in question clearly shows that this woman had grown accustomed to writing such messages.<sup>62</sup> Hers was not truly a creative act, but rather a representation of a larger phenomenon of people using Short Message Service to economically keep in touch with friends and relatives. The result has been a widespread use of the vernacular in print.

In both cases, technology seems to have served as a leveling device, bringing all languages (or at least all languages with a Roman-based orthography) onto equal footing. In the virtual world created by cell phones and computers, people have for years been forced to interact with each other via literate elements. During this time, Palembangse in print has been shared between friends and relatives, many of whom would have little other excuse to read or write in any language.

#### 9.4 Thoughts on the Future of Palembangse in Print

In many ways, Palembang seems poised on the brink of momentous change in the way in which people interact with print. With the foundation laid by text messaging, and with more and more people interacting through online social networking forums such as Kaskus and Facebook, hundreds of thousands of people have begun to make reading and writing *Baso Palembang* part of everyday life.

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<sup>62</sup> One indicator of this is her extensive use of a sophisticated system of abbreviation.

What is lacking is the production of more traditional printed materials using the local language in the widespread freestyle use of B A T M A N in his online posting. There are no newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories, or even comic books printed in *Baso Palembang*.

One result of this paucity of reading material in the mother tongue of the populace is that so far children in Palembang rarely read outside of school. This can be contrasted with the situation in cities such as Bandung on Java, where it is a common sight to see elementary school children spending their daily snack money to rent comic books for pleasure reading. In Palembang, it is rare to see even a middle-schooler do the same.

Nonetheless, technology continues to spread the use of print. Even as the price of actual telephoning via hand phone drops, the convenience and habit of text messaging continues. Moreover, the number of people with hand phones continues to increase, and the age of the owners continues to drop.

At the same time, Palembangese itself is rising in status. One example of this is the recent inclusion of *Baso Palembang* as one of five local languages to be highlighted along with Indonesian in the song commissioned by the General Elections Commission (KPU) promoting the national presidential election.<sup>63</sup> As a result, it stands eye-to-eye right next to Javanese, its old rival from the days of the Sultans and before. If a language receives that kind of treatment in the press, one has to wonder if it will soon gain the confidence necessary to start its own tradition of print.

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<sup>63</sup> “KPU introduces official election theme song,” *Jakarta Post*, June 9, 2009  
<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/06/09/kpu-introduces-official-election-theme-song.html> (June 9, 2009)

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: A CRITIQUE OF GEE AND STREET'S REFUSAL TO DEFINE "LITERACY"

Surprisingly, Gee (2008) mentions and then dismisses some of the helpful distinctions that could be added to the discussion of communicative practices. He notes, for example, that if one defined a certain kind of literacy as "Mastery of a secondary Discourse involving print" other kinds of literacy could also be described. One need only replace the term "print" with "various other sorts of texts and technologies: painting, literature, films, television, computers, telecommunications – 'props' in the Discourse – to get definitions of various other sorts of "literacies" (e.g., 'visual literacy,' 'computer literacy,' 'literary literacy,' and so forth)" (Gee 2008:176).

The reason Gee does not want to allow all of these "other sorts of 'literacies' " is not that he does not value these other skills so much as that he does not see how they are significantly different from literacies "involving print." Gee (2008:176) states:

I see no gain from the addition of the phrase 'involving print,' other than to assuage the feelings of people committed (as I am not) to reading and writing as decontextualized and isolable skills. In addition, it is clear that many so-called nonliterate cultures have secondary Discourses which, while they do not involve print, involve a great many of the same skills, behaviors, and ways of thinking that we associate with literacy -- for example, the many and diverse practices that have gone under label "oral literature."

Interestingly, this is precisely where Street (1995) also pulled back from defining literacy, although in this case, Gee seems less aware than Street of the benefit of such distinction. For his part, Street seems to suspect that in his desire to treat all cultures' ways of communicating with an egalitarian respect lacking in previous studies, he runs the risk of losing hold of the very term he is seeking to study. Remember that he dismisses as "metaphorical" the broadest use of "literacy" as applied to any ability or skill (1995:135). Gee here allows it, but calls it unnecessary, in effect because he sees many other abilities and skills acting in similar ways as literacy "involving print."

Recall again that Street (1995:105) warns that "the concept of multiple literacies...is beginning to be discredited as each observer offers his own criteria for different literacies and as metaphors and extensions of the term move further and further away from the social practices of reading and writing." The danger

that Street sees is theoretical pandemonium, with each theorist giving his or her own definition for “literacies” and proceeding from there. Nonetheless, Street gives no definition and Gee ends up giving “literacy” essentially the same definition as he would give to biker bar attendance, scuba diving, or underwater basket weaving. All are simply Secondary Discourses. This paper serves as a demonstration of one way that the analyst can make distinctions without dismissing other “Discourses” or “ways with words” or cultural practices as irrelevant.

## APPENDIX B: A CRITIQUE OF GEE'S LACK OF DISCUSSION OF THE "WHAT'S" WITH WHICH PEOPLE INTERACT

Without denying the insights provided by Heath and Street, this paper asserts that Gee's work does the best job at providing a theoretical scaffold for describing and analyzing the state of communication in Palembang. Indeed, Gee comes so tantalizingly close to providing the tools for the job that it is tempting to just use his theory "off the shelf." Unfortunately, the theory just cannot be stretched to cover the data. Part of the problem is that he simply does not give enough *why* and *how* and *what*, because he focuses so strongly on the *why* and *how* and *who*.

The great value of Gee's work is the focus he gives to the role of identity in communicative practices. One resulting weakness, however, is that he tends to underemphasize other aspects of these practices. Notice in the following quote how he does not consider it important to name the object, the *what*, of the verbs in his description of Discourses: "Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or "types of people") by specific groups..." (Gee 2008:3). Many of the verbs in his definition are transitive, but he does not give a direct object. Interacting with what? Valuing what? Thinking what? Believing what? Speaking what? And finally, reading and writing what? He does not give sufficient attention to these questions.

One of the weaknesses of Gee is that he does not seem particularly interested in talking about the "stuff" of culture, the "things" with which people interact as they carry out Discourses. He dismisses these as mere "props," secondary to the real action (Gee 2005:4, 27). This is why he ultimately rejects his own suggestion that Discourses might be labeled according to the kinds of "props" at play (Gee 2008:176).

The argument set forth in this paper is that the "stuff" with which people interact is central, and not a merely a distraction from what Gee (2005:4) calls "most of the action." Researchers cannot understand these practices without also understanding the elemental "stuff" at their core anymore than an archaeologist

can understand ancient cultures without an understanding of cultural artifacts. Cultural anthropologists dealing with living cultures are at a great advantage in that they are not limited to looking solely at the “things” of culture, but Gee turns this advantage on its head as he dismisses the importance of the what in favor of the who and how.

This brings up the matter mentioned in the extended quote in the section on Gee (Gee 2005:1) in section 2.3.1:

Many people think that the primary purpose of language is to “communicate information.” However, language serves a great many functions and giving and getting information, even in our new Information Age, is by no means the only one. If I had to single out a primary function of human language, it would not be not one, but the following two closely related functions: to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions.

What Gee does not sufficiently discuss here or elsewhere is the extent to which “giving and getting information” underlies the two functions which he claims as primary. Once again, the result is that his framework does not allow for enough specificity in regards to the content or the *what* of communicative practices. Instead, it pushes forward with an extremely helpful, but unbalanced focus on identity.

Gee covers some ground thoroughly and other ground with less care. The result is a decent wide-angle view of the landscape with a few more highly developed areas of focus. The particular strength of his work, then, is his ability to help his readers get the big picture and also recognize the importance of specific questions of identity. The problem lies in those areas which he, like Street, hurries over with broad strokes or leaves purposely hazy. For Gee this means an underemphasizing or ignoring the importance of the *what* of communication. For Gee, it seems, *what* people read is less important than *who* they show themselves to be by *how* they read.

This thesis argues that the *who* and *how* are interrelated with the *what*. One way of seeing this is by noting that a *who* and *how* are different depending on the kind of text—e.g., political, erotic, religious, etc.—the *who* is presently reading.

Another way of seeing the importance of the *what* of communication is by shifting from the perspective of the outsider to that of the insider. Outsiders, like Gee, may recognize more readily those occasions where talk is just talk and empty of “information”—a mere statement or reinforcement of identity or relationship. As a result, Gee’s framework focuses the observer’s attention strongly upon this



phenomenon of talk as “prop.” This threatens to cause researchers like him to overlook the perspective of the insider for whom talk is often regarded as more than just a tool of identity.

While a woman may walk into a bar and ask for a match as a conscious or unconscious way of marking that she is a certain kind of *who* doing a certain kind of *what* in a certain kind of way (i.e., *how*), most of the time she actually wants the match.

The theoretical framework presented in Chapters 4 and 5, while by no means perfect or exhaustive, aims at filling in a few of the areas that Gee and other NLS scholars have overlooked. This in turn will allow for closer description of the interrelating *why's*, *how's*, and *what's* of communicative practices in Palembang.

APPENDIX C: SPIE ANALYSIS SHEET OF TEA MAKING

<b>SPIE Title: Tea Making</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input type="checkbox"/> communicative <input type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> June 24, 2009  <b>Location:</b> Charlotte, NC</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> People around the world have been drinking water flavored by leaves, roots, and other botanical products for millennia.  <b>Actor/s:</b> A man</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Tea Bag, Water, Stove, Teapot, Tea Cup</i>  <b>Core Element:</b> <i>Water</i>  <b>Product:</b> <i>A Cup of Hot Tea</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> The man heats the <i>Water</i> in the <i>Teapot</i> on the <i>Stove</i>. He then pours the <i>Water</i> in the <i>Tea Cup</i> in which has been placed a <i>Tea Bag</i>. He waits for a few minutes before removing the <i>Tea Bag</i> from the <i>Cup of Hot Tea</i>.</p> <p><b>Interaction Analysis:</b> The man's actions bring the elements together to create a product containing the flavor of the tea leaves in the bag, the hydrating effects of the water, and the warmth created by the stove.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> The man had a special drink to go with his lunch.</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> The actor desires to: 1) have a drink of something besides just plain water</p>

APPENDIX D: SPIE ANALYSIS SHEET OF IQRO' READING

<b>SPIE Title: Iqro' Book Reading</b>	
<b>Classification of SPIE Cluster (check all that apply):</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic <input type="checkbox"/> communicative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literate <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	
<b>When and Where and Who</b>	<p><b>Time and Date:</b> 2006  <b>Location:</b> Indonesia</p> <p><b>Contextual Background Information:</b> Indonesians are often high identity and high practicing Muslims. They also value education in a variety of forms, holding fast to a belief that knowledge and ability open doors, both in the economic and spiritual realms. Being able to decode the Koran is a basic socially expected skill of all Muslims, regardless of social class.  <b>Actor/s:</b> Students</p>
<b>What and How</b>	<p><b>Elements:</b> <i>Iqro' Book, Arabic Script, Arabic Sounds</i>  <b>Core Element:</b> <i>Iqro' Book</i>  <b>Product:</b> <i>Vocalized Arabic</i></p> <p><b>Interaction Description (If Applicable):</b> Children, after a few Iqro' classes are able to begin decoding <i>Arabic Script</i>, written in their <i>Iqro' Books</i>. In doing so, they are able to make the <i>Arabic Sounds</i> that correspond to the symbols in the book.  <b>Interaction Analysis:</b> At this point, understanding of the content of the meaning of the Arabic written in the book is not the goal. Indeed, the first several lessons, like similar primers around the world, contain sequences which would be meaningless even to native Arabic speakers. The interaction is deemed successful if the student is able to produce the sounds which correspond to the symbols on the page.</p>
<b>Why</b>	<p><b>Effects/Results:</b> Millions of Indonesians can successfully decode the Arabic script and produce the sounds corresponding to the symbols.  <b>Goals:</b> The actor desires to: 1) make the correct sounds for each symbol taught 2) please teachers and parents</p>

APPENDIX E: CHART OF POSSIBLE SEQUENCES THAT MIGHT HAVE RESULTED IN THE CREATION AND USE OF THE “MANG JUHAI” COLUMN.

The chart below gives several possible timelines for the advent of the “Mang Juhai” column, organized according to the possible initial goals of the creator:

**Initial Goal of Creating Interesting Stories → Leading to →  
The Use of These Stories to Draw in Newspaper Readership**

**1) Idea for Interesting Morally Deviant Vernacular–Speaking Character in Entertaining Stories to Draw in Newspaper Readership**

**2) Idea for Interesting Morally Deviant Vernacular–Speaking Character in Entertaining Stories**  
Idea to Put Stories in the Newspaper  
Idea to Use Vernacular-Containing Stories to Draw in Readership

**3) Idea for Interesting Morally Deviant Character in Entertaining Stories**  
Idea to Use Vernacular in Dialogue  
Idea to Put Stories in the Newspaper  
Idea to Use Vernacular-Containing Stories to Draw in Readership

**Initial Goal of Drawing in Newspaper Readership → Leading to →  
The Creation of Interesting Stories**

**1) Idea to Use Vernacular to Draw in Newspaper Readership**  
Idea of Using Stories and Dialogue  
Idea for Morally Deviant Vernacular-Speaking Character

**2) Idea to Use Stories to Draw in Readership**  
Idea to Put Dialogue into Vernacular  
Idea for Morally Deviant Character in Entertaining Stories

**3) Idea to Use Stories to Draw in Readership**  
Idea for Morally Deviant Character in Entertaining Stories  
Idea to Put Dialogue into Vernacular

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