

Toward a task-based textbook for Indonesian language learning

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Abstract

In this textbook review I summarize and evaluate the content, objectives, target audience, structure, and activities of a free online and in-print language resource for Indonesian language learning and teaching. In particular, I review how the figures from the textbook illustrate an interactive, contemporary, and authentic approach to language learning through a communicative, and potentially task-based textbook. My goal is, through this textbook review, to inform Indonesian language instructors of this great resource. I encourage Indonesian language instructors to implement this free online and in-print resource for teaching and learning Indonesian with their students.

Keywords: Textbook Review, Indonesian language, Task-based language teaching

1. Descriptive Summary

The Indonesian Way is a textbook resource for beginning study of the Indonesian language. It was initially developed by Dr. George Quinn of Australia National University and later revised and updated by Dr. Uli Kozok of the University of Hawai'i. The newest version of the textbook resource offers interactive online materials and downloadable PDF files of the textbook available for free by registration on this website: <http://indonesianway.com/>. The textbook is broken up into eight modules, which will be explained in more detail below. The online version can be accessed with any computer operating system and reliable access to the Internet.

The objectives of this textbook are stated that, through consistent and disciplined use of this textbook, students can improve their Indonesian language proficiency from the Novice level (no knowledge of Indonesian language) to Intermediate Mid according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale. The Intermediate Mid level of language proficiency indicates that speakers are able to function in predictable and concrete conversations in the target language, such as those about personal information, preferences, needs, and daily activities.

The target audience of the textbook is beginners of the Indonesian language, mostly likely those with English as their native language and from a Western country (i.e., Australia, the United States, or Canada). The introduction material states that the textbook is a flexible resource. It can be used as the foundation for an independent study, or more suitably, in classroom instruction or with a small group and native-speaking Indonesian teacher or tutor. Throughout the modules, a number of the activities require a partner for dialogues and role-plays.

This textbook is organized by eight thematic modules of mostly essential tasks one may have upon arrival in Indonesia: (1) Arriving in an Indonesian Town, (2) A Visit from a Census Official, (3) Daily Routine, (4) Planning and Discussing a Trip, (5) An Interview for a Job, (6) Working as a Tour Guide, (7) Buying and Selling, and (8) Getting Advice. Each module states the functional

aims of approximately separate fifteen lessons that are included within each module. For example, the first module presents vocabulary, sentence shells, and cultural skills that first-time visitors to a new Indonesian town would need to navigate their visit. The titles of the fifteen lessons in Module 1 demonstrate a scaffolding progression throughout a module: Getting a conversation going: *Where are you from?* Talking about buildings and places: Asking simple questions: Review and asking more yes/no questions: Asking about distance and location: *Whose is it?* (possessive phrases): *How do I get there?* (transportation): *Let's complain! What do you think?* (opinions): Saying 'no' and 'not,' *This is a good restaurant; Thank you, but sorry...I can't* (polite refusals); Helping a visitor to your campus; and Getting oriented in an Indonesian town. These lessons prepare students for a larger role-play at the end of the module, in which students are prompted to act out an arrival in an Indonesian city. In Figure 1 is a screen capture of the home page of Module 1, which appears in the online interactive version.

AIMS

- To practise asking where a person comes from
- To get to know the Indonesian names for a number of countries

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Here are some of the frequent words used in this lesson that have appeared in previous lessons. Using the **flashcards**, check that you remember their meanings.

Anda, biasa, duduk, apa kabar?, kenalkan, nama, pagi, siapa

GETTING A CONVERSATION GOING

002.mp4

For a transcription click [Transkripsi](#), for a word list click [Kata Baru](#)

LATIHAN

- [latihan_01](#)
- [latihan_02](#)
- [latihan_03](#)
- [latihan_04](#)
- [latihan_05](#)
- [latihan_06](#)
- [latihan_07](#)
- [latihan_08](#)
- [latihan_09](#)
- [latihan_10](#)
- [latihan_11](#)
- [latihan_12](#)
- [latihan_13](#)
- [latihan_14](#)
- [latihan_15](#)

KOSA KATA

- [kata baru](#)
- [flashcards](#)
- [OnlineDic](#)

DONATE

- [Support us!](#)
- [Terima Kasih!](#)

UNDUH

- [Module 1](#)

Figure 1: Module 1, Lesson 1 homepage

Each module is composed of lessons that provide aims, vocabulary words, pronunciation guides, sample conversations for listening, cultural and linguistic insights, dialogue practices, and diverse exercises such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, crossword, and comic story-telling.

Dialogues and role-plays are an essential element in this textbook. While the instructions state that correct grammar is important, more attention is placed on incorporating previous material from lessons and extending the conversation beyond the prototypical dialogues provided. Throughout the textbook, students are encouraged to be creative, use all the words they have learned, and continue to communicate despite breakdowns. In one of the first dialogues assigned in the textbook, the author instructs the students in the following way (see Figure 2):

Role Play: Satisfying a Friend's Curiosity

Most of us have friends who are curious about us and who want to know the smallest details of our lives. Imagine you are in conversation with such a friend. With a classmate or with your teacher/tutor role play a situation in which two friends meet over a cup of tea or coffee, perhaps in a *warung kopi*. One of the pair quizzes the other at length about their preferences in food and drink, place of residence and transport arrangements. When you have exhausted all possible questions and answers (and this should take some time), swap roles.

Don't forget to begin your role play with greetings and smalltalk of the kind you practised in Lesson 1. Then use the model conversation above as your beginning point to develop a lively dialogue. But don't just re-cycle the model conversation. Massage it, amend it, edit it, add to it, subtract from it – in short use your own ideas and experience, and other material in the lessons you have studied so far, to say things that are not in the model conversation.

Repeat the role play several times. Time yourself, trying each time to "break your record" for the length of your conversation.

As you talk with your partner, monitor each other in order to ensure that what you say is always grammatically correct.

Figure 2: Module 1, Lesson 1 dialogue directions

The textbook also focuses on pronunciation. The pronunciation guides (see Figure 3) are well written and helpful. In addition to the written description of pronunciation and a simplified phonetic alphabet with attention to stress marks, a number of sound files are provided. This additional input is invaluable for students without access to native-speaking Indonesian instructors, and is also helpful for work at home.



PERHATIAN!

AWAS !!

For the most part the spelling of Indonesian is regular and fairly faithfully follows the sounds of the language. But there is one letter in Indonesian that represents a different sound from what is usually represented by the same letter in English. The Indonesian letter "c" stands for the sound /ch/ as in the English words "cheese", "church" etc.

So the Indonesian word *Cina* is pronounced /CHEE.nã/ (not /KEE.nã/ or /SEE.nã). And the word *Prancis* is pronounced /p'RÃN.chees/ (not /p'RÃN.kees/ or /p'RÃN.sees/).

Cina ▶ 0:02 🔊

Prancis ▶ 0:02 🔊



UCAPAN: PRONOUNCING INDONESIAN VOWELS

As mentioned in Lesson One, in Indonesian there is roughly even stress on each syllable with – in most, but far from all cases – a slightly heavier stress on the second-to-last syllable. One exception to this rule occurs when a word has an unstressed "e" in it, like the "e" in the English words "later" and "after" or the "e" sounds in "phenomenon". When this kind of "e" appears in an Indonesian word, the following syllable is usually stressed, even when that syllable is

the last syllable in a word. Here are some examples:

terima ▶ 0:02 🔊

kenalkan ▶ 0:02 🔊

Jepang ▶ 0:02 🔊

Mesir ▶ 0:02 🔊

Vowels in Indonesian are normally pronounced "pure", that is they don't tend towards diphthongs as is often the case in English. Practise saying these words without twisting or distorting the vowel sounds. Check the accuracy of your vowel sounds against the pronunciation of a native-speaker or the pronunciation in *The Indonesian Way* audio exercises.

Figure 3: Examples of pronunciation guides

A number of supplementary materials accompany each module: a wordlist, a listening key for all the listening exercises, and a printable format of vocabulary words with Indonesian words and the phonetic spelling on one side and English translation on the other. The authors note that by the end of the eight modules, students will have learned around 2,000 words. The vocabulary learning method used in this textbook is called the spaced repetition system (SRS), which recycles the vocabulary words in increasing intervals so that the vocabulary always stays fresh in the learners' minds. More on SRS and technology will be discussed in the evaluation section.

2. Evaluative Summary

I find this textbook to be particularly useful for today's Indonesian language teachers because the methods promoted in this textbook are current and can be supplemented well by teachers who adhere to task-based language teaching principles. This textbook falls in line with the aims of communicative and task-based language teaching for a number of reasons. First, the tasks in which the students learn grammar, vocabulary, and cultural insights will directly impact their ability to communicate in authentic ways, fulfilling Long's (2015) call for pedagogic tasks that are relevant, motivating to students, and approximate real-world language use. Explicit lessons on grammar are embedded within the broader context of what students need to know to be polite and best understood by Indonesian interlocutors. Only necessary grammar items are taught, and they are taught in a progressive order of complexity according to the demands of the task. For example, most of the Indonesian verbs in the textbook are initially taught in their root form, and affixes that modify the transitivity and agency of the verb are introduced later when students need that enhanced information. Long (2015) also suggested that language elements are presented with consistent redundancy and removed gradually when student proficiency improves. Teachers can see this principle at work in the Indonesian Way textbook throughout the course of dialogue assignments; students are first provided prototypes as models, encouraged to memorize, and finally elaborate beyond the starting dialogue.

In coordination with task-based principles, this textbook includes insights into Indonesian culture that are critical to language education (Byram, 1994; Kramsch, 1993). Each lesson highlights cultural notes in the margins about the Indonesian way of conversation, family life, and daily activities; needless to say, the Indonesian way may drastically differ from Western students' lives. Most cultural references to slang, traditions, and legends represent the majority Javanese subculture in the extremely diverse 17,000-island nation. For students who have integrative motivation to study the Indonesian language and culture, learning culturally embedded

phrases and traditions in the first year of language study is an empowering element.

Finally, the spaced repetition system (SRS) of vocabulary acquisition used in *The Indonesian Way* is in line with progressive research on explicit practices of lexical acquisition. Ellis (1995) and Nation (2009) suggested that vocabulary acquisition is better when students are presented with spaced repetition versus massed repetition. Although the exact nature of exposure, spacing, and frequency of vocabulary for best outcomes continues to be under investigation today, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) researchers and practitioners have developed computer-based algorithms for easy-to-use flashcard systems that track and recycle vocabulary words (Bailey & Davey, 2011; Eldridge et al., 2010). *The Indonesian Way* employs the free, open source program called Anki (Godwin-Jones, 2010; see the website for more information: <http://ankisrs.net/>).

In summary, this textbook is an invaluable staple for learning and teaching the Indonesian language. Indonesian is a Less Commonly Taught (LCTL) and critical language as identified by the U.S. Department of State due to its growing importance to global politics, religion, culture, and geography. Nonetheless, there are few Indonesian textbooks that are up-to-date, available for free, age-appropriate for adults, and weave cultural learning alongside language development. This textbook is an excellent resource for language teachers who are looking for interactive, interesting, and task-based lessons.

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