
Talking North: the journey of Australia's first Asian language

Edited by Paul S. Thomas

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In *Talking North: The journey of Australia's first Asian language*, editor Paul Thomas brings together fifteen dedicated practitioners in the field of Indonesian Studies to discuss the learning of Indonesian language in Australia in a historical perspective. This is a multidisciplinary book, encompassing history, international relations, Australian politics, and a detailed discussion of curriculum development and pedagogy relating to Teaching Indonesian as a Foreign Language.

Paul Thomas, over two chapters, explores the history of the earliest speakers of Indonesian in Australia. He makes a compelling case for Indonesian – or Malay as it was then termed – to be granted a special place in Australian history as our first Asian language which predates the introduction of English. In the next chapter he describes the early programs set up to teach Indonesian at university level, at a time when Australian government attitudes were influenced by the White Australia policy, support for Dutch colonialism and a fear of the apparent threat posed by communism in Indonesia. These historical groundings provide important context for the later discussions.

The development of Indonesian language teaching curriculum and pedagogy are considered in the next chapters. Charles Coppel, in chapter four, draws on his own personal archive from his years (1973–1987) as a lecturer in the program at University of Melbourne. Given that present day universities still face similar constraints – with inadequate funding and efficiency drives that seek to reduce subject offerings and merge programs – his recollections of similar curriculum challenges are instructive. In terms of pedagogy, Coppel paints a somewhat bleak picture of barely trained teachers, relying on old-fashioned teaching methods, obscure texts and basic technologies. In contrast, towards the end of the book, in a reflection Ron Witton recalls the year 1962 when he first enrolled in Indonesian language at the University of Sydney, remembering being enchanted in the class of Pak Emanuels who “was amazingly adept at ‘chalk and talk’” (236). In chapter five, language teachers will be delighted by the analysis of Julia Read and David Reeve. Their obvious passion for teaching is patent as they celebrate the coming of communicative language learning. From the 1980s, the introduction of vibrant new textbooks and shifting cultural attitudes towards Indonesia, saw students learning about everyday Indonesian culture and language. I was inspired to take down my own copy of the textbook *Bahasa Tetanggaku, A notional-functional course in Bahasa Indonesia*, by Ian White, which was published in 1988 and was indeed filled with a range of photographs and drawings of Indonesian peoples.

The other main chapters each examine the politics surrounding the teaching of Indonesian. In chapter one Firdaus takes us through the shifts in Australia politics starting with the prioritizing of learning languages other than English (LOTE) in 1987. The year 1994 saw the introduction of a stronger emphasis on Asian language learning, and not surprisingly 1995 to 2001 became the peak years for Indonesian language learning, followed by a steady decline. David Hill's chapter draws upon his important 2012 Report into the reasons for this decline. While he finds some positive initiatives since 2012, such as the New Colombo Plan which aims to help Australian students to study in Indonesia (and elsewhere), he notes that this plan does not encourage students over the age of twenty-eight. Rightly he

points out that mature-aged language teachers might benefit from in-country language learning. Finally, in a chapter by the late Pak Hendrarto Darudoyo, a compelling case is put forward for further support from the Indonesian government to encourage Indonesian language learning as a valuable cultural export.

Section II of *Talking North* includes a further eight short Reflections in which teachers such as Jan Lingard and Barbara Hatley recall their own inspiring journeys in Indonesian teaching and learning. These pieces are simply but powerfully written, celebrating the sense of hope and enrichment that came with engagement with Indonesian language. They help to strengthen the book's overall case for the importance of language-learning, and send a call to future governments, universities and students to learn from their experiences. Monash University Press should be commended for publishing this inspiring book of collected wisdom at such a modest cost. I sincerely hope that it will be read and acted upon and that we will see in the coming decades a resurgence in Indonesian language learning in Australia.

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A constant struggle: deaf education in New South Wales since World War II

Edited by Naomi Malone

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This book will be of interest to practitioners serving people who are deaf or hard of hearing in New South Wales (NSW) and historians more broadly. It is well worth reading. The book makes meaning of the historical puzzle that is 'deaf education' in NSW. The author is a highly qualified academic who is deaf; her deafness adds insight not always available to readers of this topic.

'*A Constant Struggle*' are facts curated, in part, with 'inside information' not easily obtained via other sources; e.g., the author uses her own research notes, interview data, and personal perspective. This book is thoroughly referenced, easy to read and logically progresses chronologically. Each chapter is easily digestible in themes that are engaging and illuminating.

The first chapter presents a brief, early historical context of deaf education beginning as early as 360 BC, offering a necessary foundation for the remainder of the book. Chapter two discusses in detail the trials and tribulations associated with 'oralism', the pedagogical practice of teaching children who are deaf to speak rather than to use sign language, in the 1940s through to the 1960s with extraordinary factual detail and a small dose of subjective opinion that the reader would not identify unless an expert in the subject matter. Chapter 3 takes the reader from the educational segregation of children who are deaf or hard of hearing to integration. Chapter 4 follows on with the concept of mainstreaming, educating children who are deaf in local neighbourhood schools, and the Australian Government's commitment to children who are deaf or hard of hearing. It further describes the progression of Australian sign language – Auslan. Chapter 5 highlights the 1990s and Australian non-discrimination legislation, associated regulations and the underpinning philosophy and practice of inclusive education. In this chapter, many other constructs are explored including identity politics – the display of disability as a positive identity; and bilingualism – the pedagogical practice of