

# TRANSLATOR

## Retaining the Nuances and Cultural Values Contained in Local Languages While Engaging the Global Community Online

### BLANK SLIDE 2- intro

Let me begin by opening the lecture the way we would begin to speak in the West.

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Hello, I'm Rosemarie Kowalski. My primary research is in Intercultural Studies and I am pleased to be with you today. My thanks to the University president and the rector, to the faculty and students of UPI and all of you attending the conference today. A special thank you to the committee for inviting me.

And then I would get to my lecture. That would be all a Western university would expect from a special speaker.

But let's take a minute to think about who else should be acknowledged in an Indonesian context. Are there important others who should be mentioned? Should I have made my thank you longer?

Should I have used less direct language and more formal words?

"What a privilege it is for me to be with you today. I am very honored to be among such eminent colleagues and the distinguished guests who are present today. And then name of a list of people who should be appreciated and acknowledged?"

I purposefully did not ask for those names or that cultural nuance to give you an understanding of the difference that language and culture makes in every situation, even in academia.

### SLIDE 3

It is not just the words, but which words are chosen. Formal or informal? Who do I thank or acknowledge? How long or short should the communication be? How direct or indirect? Personal (I, you) or communal (we)? I'll use both today.

If I am presenting this lecture online, who will care about the greeting to people in this room?

### SLIDE 4

Lera Boroditsky says there are 7000 languages – different structures, different words for different concepts and ideas.

"To have a second language is to have a second soul" Charlemagne (father of Europe)

#### SLIDE 5

Technology is changing how people connect with each other. Adapting to technology means a change in how we communicate – but how can we appreciate the unique and important parts of our heritage and keep them alive? How can we honor our past as we develop 4.0 technology? How will we honor each other and our traditions, values, and worldviews?

#### SLIDE 6

An overarching question today is, **“How can we understand, appreciate, and adapt to things we see and share online?”** For example, when the *jaipong* dance of the Sundanese is broadcast to a wider audience, how does that sensuality and expression of culture transfer to a broader audience? Who will appreciate it? Who will think it is beautiful? And who will be offended by it?”

#### SLIDE 7

Language – Includes general and specific words. It includes the tone and politeness

For example:

We can use “halo” in Bahasa Indonesia – Sundanese – English. It is a universal informal greeting.

Hi there! vs “selamat pagi, Bu?”

English – hi, how are you doing?

To a peer: Sunda: Kumaha damang, Pak/ Bu?

Bahasa Indonesian: apa kabar, Bapak / Ibu?

\*\*\*But are those greeting still relevant when we are online – or do we leave the polite greeting behind and just engage without politeness or an introduction?

#### SLIDE 8

Language can be public or very intimate. The way I communicate to people will be different, if I speak to a childhood friend in a coffee shop or if I am speaking to academics in a seminar setting.

My English will be different if I am speaking to native English speakers or those with English-as-a-second language.

It will also be different if I am trying to understand something online. Or if I am posting a comment or a new idea. Does that matter? Medium: How does meaning change how I communicate in a text or message? Blog, self-publish a book or comic

#### SLIDE 9

Language has meaning beyond mere words. The expressions I choose may depend on whether the person is from my culture or not. Where you come from and who



taught you a word may make a difference in how you understand it. What status does the word convey?

#### SLIDE 10

If I say: "you are very kind, thank you." What do you think of? Someone who has been polite? *Silahkan. Anda pergi dulu, Bu.*

Someone who is interested in my well-being? *Hati hati, saya piker ini lebih bagus, Bu.*

Someone who does something nice for my child or my sister?

But online, I may say, *kasih*. Or post an emoji. Does that convey the same relationship of a personal greeting? And if a child has mostly online interactions, how will they learn interpersonal manners or culture?

#### SLIDE 11

There are words that your mother and father used, that your neighborhood friends used to describe play and work and food and religion and learning, what is important to "us". And no one else outside your village or your language group uses those words the way you learned them. If you have no one with which to say them, is that meaning lost from your life? Perhaps.

#### SLIDE 12

Culture and worldview is present in every local language. When we say "strong, good quiet, helpful, alone..." negative or positive?

They mean different things to different language groups. Modern linguists worry that meaning is lost when a language is lost. When you move from your village and can no longer speak your language fluently, what part of your thinking is also lost?

#### BLANK SLIDE 13

When we moved to Indonesia, we found ourselves knowing less than a 3-yr-old. On the *angkot*, the little children are chattering with their mothers in Sundanese or Bahasa Indonesia. That young child already understands more than we ever will – about what their mother is saying. They are tuned in to her voice and way she shapes the message, which means more than the words.

#### SLIDE 14

Local language shapes the identity of its people – the way they think, the culture they live in, and the worldview they experience. So if that child moves to another country or if they attend an international school and lose their language, do they also lose something of the meaning of life?



When I spoke to my grandmother in German, I said completely different things than I would say to people in English. The things that interested us, what we talked about when speaking in our childhood language, were even different. We talked about things in our home, about our friends and family, how people are doing, who is working where – in other words ... village gossip. Shapes how things are supposed to be.

In our current world, language and words are made up and shared quickly. Apps use language that you have to learn. But using only those terms, do we lose specific, nuanced expressions or *arti yang ber makna ganda*?

#### SLIDE 15

In our generalization, how are we understood by others online or in a product manual? In the classroom or online, we have to use words everyone can understand. We use general or globalized language. That might be a whole country's language like Bahasa Indonesia or a world language like English or Chinese.

But by using only those larger languages, are we also losing the way our home culture feels. Will we lose how we learn about people and the way things are done. Do we lose the worldview of our parents and grandparents?

And if we generalize too much, or use only impersonal media, what else have we lost? What part of our heart is missing in our exchanges?

#### SLIDE 16

Social media reflects the values of their creators. Want to know a lot of people? Get a crowd together? Find someone for a date? Toss out some words online and see what happens. You use the app you have at hand.

But the creator's meaning and morals, their ethics and beliefs are hard-wired into the systems we are using. People can be direct – or even very rude online. They may use words and ideas they would never risk in personal conversations. So is that progress – or a problem in real life?

What is shared, exchanged, or lost?

I asked some students what they wished for future 4.0 development and language. They hoped local groups would personalize media for their own people group. What would a local group produce? How would they design an app that reflected their own worldview. Would they make the app the same or different if developed for everyone or just for their language group – what if they used culturally appropriate music, art, and words that their own people used every day?



Let's have you develop something together. I want you to develop a counting game for children who are 3-5 years old. Let me give you instructions before we get into small groups.

**SLIDE 16 This is the assignment:** develop a counting game

Target: 3-5 year olds (15 minutes).

- Please get together in groups of 4-5 people.
- Someone should take notes with a paper and pen OR use your computer or smart phone. This person is the note-taker or recorder of your ideas.
- Someone else can be the presenter for the group.

It doesn't matter where you're from or who you're with. Who has the most brothers and sisters? The children from that person's *kampung* or city is the target for your project.

**SLIDE 18**

You're developing the concept for a game for children. Here are a few considerations:

- How high will you count? To 10, 100, 1000? (why choose that number?)
- What will you count – what items can the child recognize – and of what can they imagine having more than one or more than 10 of? (not speedboats in the jungle. Not fish in the desert.)
- Who will teach them the game?
- What kind of words/word pictures will you use? = local pictures and art or imported graphics?
- What kind of background do you need? Music/art/ level of sophistication?
- What materials do they have (electronics, natural material, paper or not, toys?)
- What reward is given for playing: Attractive graphics or music? prize or points for "winning"? Chance to move up to more difficult levels?

(5 minutes) NOW, choose someone from your group as spokesperson or presenter. Trade your spokesperson with someone from the group beside you – listen to the game that the other group developed (or how far did they get in developing the game?)

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**OPTIONAL DISCUSSION:** How did the other group consider language and customs and the setting (village or city) of the children?

Is that important in today's online community? Why or why not?

**SLIDE 20**

What if most online games and education were developed to support the values of local groups – in their own language. Would the new games be the same ones as global games, still be played the same way?

Would learning focus more on math or being a gentle person? Would the lesson focus more on reading and writing correctly or on manners and being a good person? What is more important to the village or language group.

An example that is easy to understand is fighting games. Where there are teen boys and young men, there will be fighting games. What do you learn about a culture from its weapons and the way they fight? Do they fight hand to hand, or blast away from a distance?

Would it be more appropriate for Indonesian games to have martial arts or fighting with a *keris* or *parang* rather than American guns and explosions?

OR Imagine that a group of Sundanese teens from Bandung are on a chat – what kind of language, what slang or *kampung* terms or Bahasa Indonesia abbreviations are they using? Are there words borrowed from English TV shows? Why is this different from kids in Bali or Medan? Does this affect the topic they might discuss – or how they talk about it?

#### SLIDE 21 Assignment:

Develop an educational game teaching safe transportation to teenagers. Choose the village or city of the person with the closest birthday, coming after today.

- Choose one thing they need to know about transportation to school. What do they already know?
- Are they urban, rural, isolated, or somewhere between?
- What equipment do they have (smart phones? Computers? Phones? Tablets? No electronics?)
- What do they do for fun?
- Is a peer-driven game or information from an authority?
- Is it played solo, as a one on one competition, or a group activity?
- Will you use local or imported graphics and words?
- What kind of background do you need? Music/art/ level of sophistication?
- What kind of humor or language – slang, international English, or ... will you use?
- What reward is given for playing: prize or points for “winning”? Chance to move up to more difficult levels? Or?

Why was it hard or easy to decide on factors for the game?

#### SLIDE 22



When you are developing a product or introducing a scientific advance,

- **is it more important to get things done** – – to give a task (be direct and go-for-it)
- **or to build a relationship?** (Here, must be polite and ask 3 times before someone takes a piece of cake) What can you learn from the patience of waiting? Or of immediate action? How do you build that into your service or project or games?

What assumptions are you making of the people you are reaching? When you share something new, how does the meaning change with the language (Mandarin, English, Bahasa Indonesia, Sundanese, Ambonese). How does the platform you use – (books, social media, online links) change the meaning?

### **SLIDE 23 New Normal:**

I send a weekly picture and explanation to about 500 people every week. These are things people in Bandung see every day and don't think about. But to my readers, they are astonishing. So how do I bring them into my new world?

- **Family transportation.** You can have a whole family on a motorcycle?
- **Go up.** There is no railing on a stairway? (Don't people fall off and get injured?)
- **I don't feel safe.** Maybe someone will attack me. Or, is that hole in the sidewalk 1/2 meter deep? (Doesn't anyone fall in and get hurt?)
- When you talk about the **family home** – usually means where the parents lived when the children grew up, wherever that is. Parents probably have moved already. The whole family lives in one house for generations? (But don't the grandparents want privacy?)
- **Storage.** A house without shelves and closets in every bedroom? (Where will you store your things?)
- **Gather around.** Where are the chairs? People sitting on their heels? (How can they get up? Esp the older people?)
- **Let's all relax.** Do you go into your by yourself to read a book or play online, or does it mean the neighborhood will gather to eat and watch a puppet show?
- **Let's meet up.** Does that mean a group in person or online? Jono (30) – friends across the USA, gaming together and sharing their jobs, lunches, etc. via text and pictures.

### **SLIDE 24**

By contrasting and comparing what people in Canada and the USA see if normal here, with what is normal for them, they begin to understand that they do not have all the answers. What works here may not work at home.



To teach our children, I was not always direct with, "Don't do that." Sometimes I would use a positive or negative role model. One day we were in a store, buying food. A little girl at one end of the store threw herself onto the floor, kicking and screaming. My children looked at her and at me. I asked them, "Do you like the way she is behaving?" "Oh no, mama! She is being naughty! *Anak perempuan sedang nakal!*" "So what should her mother do?" "She should take her outside and spank her!" – they were so much more strict than I. I said, "You wouldn't want to be like that little girl, would you?" Oh no, mama! That is not nice. ... and they didn't forget – they didn't want to be like that. They learned by contrast.

How can we use new media, new techniques, and new technology to teach tolerance of other cultures? We share how things work for other people in a different way. We begin to appreciate how other people see the world. We learn from people with other problems and other solutions.

When you replace the normal life of your neighborhood or village with a new normal, what do you get in exchange? That's something intercultural researchers are interested in -

#### SLIDE 25

It's important to own what we know. When you neglect or leave behind your home language, if you never visit your childhood home, what will you lose? But what if you can continue to access your culture and your traditions online? What if your parents and grandparents can connect with you from anywhere? What if there are YouTube recordings of the past – of your history? You could pass on to the next generation ways of thinking or problem-solving so that your children don't miss out.

#### SLIDE 26

How might you plan the future of technology and innovation so that the best of the past is integrated into the best of the future?

I am leaving you with more questions than answers. These are issues we explore in intercultural relationships, and in the study of how languages and cultures develop. These are things you also need consider for the future, as you develop and share tools, technology, relationships, entertainment, and other cultural artifacts.

SLIDE 27 Thank you ---- Slide 28 – OPTIONAL questions/comments

Distance, time – L to R (direction of writing for English)

Puk Tite – organize time East to West (time is locked on the landscape)