The social significance of Javanese mouthings in Indonesian Sign Language

Nick Palfreyman

(nickpalfreyman@cantab.net)

International Institute for Sign Languages
and Deaf Studies (iSLanDS), UCLan, UK

Mouthings in sign languages are mouth patterns deriving from contact with spoken languages (Boyes Braem & Sutton-Spence 2001). Not all signs have mouthings, and some sign languages seem to use mouthings more than others. Mouthings appear to occur more frequently in Indonesian Sign Language (Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia, or *Bisindo*) compared to some other sign languages such as Indo-Pakistani Sign Language and American Sign Language (Palfreyman 2014).

Interestingly, some sign language users employ mouthings that derive from more than one spoken language (Zeshan 2001), and *Bisindo* is a case in point. For speakers, code-switching between Indonesian and Javanese has been well-documented (Errington 1998), and given the use of Javanese in the home, it is perhaps unsurprising to see that some signers incorporate Javanese mouthings as well as Indonesian ones. (Javanese mouthings are shown in (1) and (2) using italic type.)

(1)   mouthings: empat   *wolu*   *rolas*
         manual signs: FOUR   HERE   EIGHT TOTAL TWELVE
         meaning: 'He had four [children with that woman], and eight here, 12 in total'.

         gelap   lampu   ada   *asu*   lihat   *goblok*
(2)   DARK   LIGHTS   NEG-EXIST   WE-CRASHED   I-WOBBLED   LOOK
         'It was dark, no lights were visible. I was hit by a motorbike. I shouted at him "You dog! Look what you've done! Stupid!" '

In this paper, I examine the social significance of code-switching in the mouthings of *Bisindo* users in the Javanese city of Solo. My analysis draws upon an annotated corpus of spontaneous, conversational data from 17 Solonese signers, broadly balanced for age and gender, containing 90 minutes of data in total. In particular, I examine who switches, when they switch, and what the likely explanations are. There is compelling evidence to suggest that this is often a social practice employed by signers to index a Javanese identity. I also highlight what appear to be interesting differences in the Indonesian-Javanese code-switching practices of signers compared with speakers.

References

Boyes Braem, Penny and Rachel Sutton-Spence (eds.), 2001. *The Hands are the Head of the Mouth: The Mouth as Articulator in Sign Languages*. Hamburg: Signum.

Errington, J. Joseph, 1998. *Shifting Languages: Interaction and Identity in Javanese Indonesian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Palfreyman, Nick, 2014. Sign language varieties of Indonesia: A linguistic and sociolinguistic investigation. PhD thesis, University of Central Lancashire.

Zeshan, Ulrike, 2001. Mouthing in Indopakistani Sign Language (IPSL): Regularities and variations. In: Boyes Braem and Sutton-Spence (2001), 247-271.