

Abstract Title: *Imperfect Perfection: Claims and Capabilities of Indonesian Orthographies*

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Bahasa Indonesia (BI, also: “Standard Indonesian”) is a relatively young language, its name “invented” in the 1920s; the language itself, a variety of Malay, was made the national language when the Republic of Indonesia gained independence in 1945.

Nevertheless, BI can look back on not less than five reforms of its orthography (in 1947, 1956, 1959, 1966, and 1972) after the initial standardization of Malay writing in Latin letters during Dutch rule (1901).

The current orthography is labeled *Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan (EYD)* ‘perfected spelling’ and is claimed to be optimally suited to BI and easy to use. Ever since, the EYD has been the role model for orthographies of almost all regional languages of Indonesia, including major languages like Javanese or Sundanese, as well as many previously unwritten languages of the archipelago.

In my talk, I will take a closer look at the EYD and some of the regional languages’ orthographies (e.g. Javanese, Balinese, Kaili, Acehnese) to compare the sound-to-letter-correspondence of these orthographies and some of their predecessors, and to evaluate how “perfect” and “user-friendly” these standards actually are. Arguably, there is still room for further perfection of the *perfected spelling(s)*...

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