

## **Language Attitudes, Acquisition, and Usage of *Osob Kiwalan Ngalam*:**

### **An Indo-Javanese Language of Malang**

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Although considered only an insignificant slang, *Osob Kiwalan Ngalam* like any other language carries that historical, cultural, and personal significance that forms a piece of the mosaic of the human experience. *Osob Kiwalan* is a language spoken only in the city of Malang (East Java). Its speakers pull from the vocabulary of both Indonesian and Javanese, flipping around the pronunciation so that they create the tools of this new tongue. The study's primary purpose is to investigate the attitudes of *Osob kiwalan* speakers toward this local tongue, the reasons speakers use *Osob kiwalan*, and the ways through which the speakers acquire and perpetuate the language. The researcher investigates when and how speakers employ *Osob kiwalan* in their community. He then explores how much speakers employ *Osob kiwalan* with younger generations and how much younger generations employ it themselves, understanding the socialization processes for its acquisition. This study relies on interviews and surveys to obtain and clarify information concerning *Osob kiwalan*'s function in the culture and society of Malang. This study challenges the idea that local languages or dialects are of less importance for understanding the human experience, for indeed, it may be that local languages show the social heart of language and human life.

Keywords: language and society, slang, socialization, place language, Java, Indonesia, Southeast Asia

*[A]rek-arek Malang yang tinggal di kota-kota besar lainnya seperti Surabaya, Jakarta, bahkan di luar negeri pun pada saat bertemu, jika sedang berbicara tidak pernah menggunakan bahasa gaya Jakarta-an, apalagi bahasa Inggris..., [d]alam pertemuan itu kami...menggunakan osob kiwalan (boso Walikan).... Ada suasana romantisme tersendiri ketika berbicara osob kiwalan. Di samping itu juga untuk menjaga identitas sebagai arek-arek Malang sejati!*

*[A]rek-arek Malang (children of Malang) who live in big cities such as Surabaya, Jakarta, even abroad, when we meet, when speaking we never use Jakartan slang, let alone English...in those encounters, we use osob kilwalan.... There is a distinct atmosphere of romance when speaking osob kiwalan. In addition, it is also to keep the identity of the true arek-arek Malang!*

—Dukut Imam Widodo<sup>1</sup>

Language is the center of social life. Languages carry historical, cultural, and personal significance for all those who share a common community. Whether it is an international, national, ethnic or local community, language takes root in the social existence that defines humanity. *Osob Kiwalan* is a language whose speakers originate from the city of Malang in East Java. Speakers use the vocabulary of

Indonesian (*bahasa Indonesia*) and Javanese (*bahasa Jawa*) in order to make this language. In Osob kiwalan, the native Malangese renders the pronunciation of Indonesian or Javanese words reversed. So that *boso* (meaning “language”) of Javanese becomes *osob* and *saya* (meaning “I or me”) from Indonesian becomes *ayas*, just to name a few examples. While most words are derived from either Indonesian or Javanese, there are also a few words of English and several words that are special to Malang.

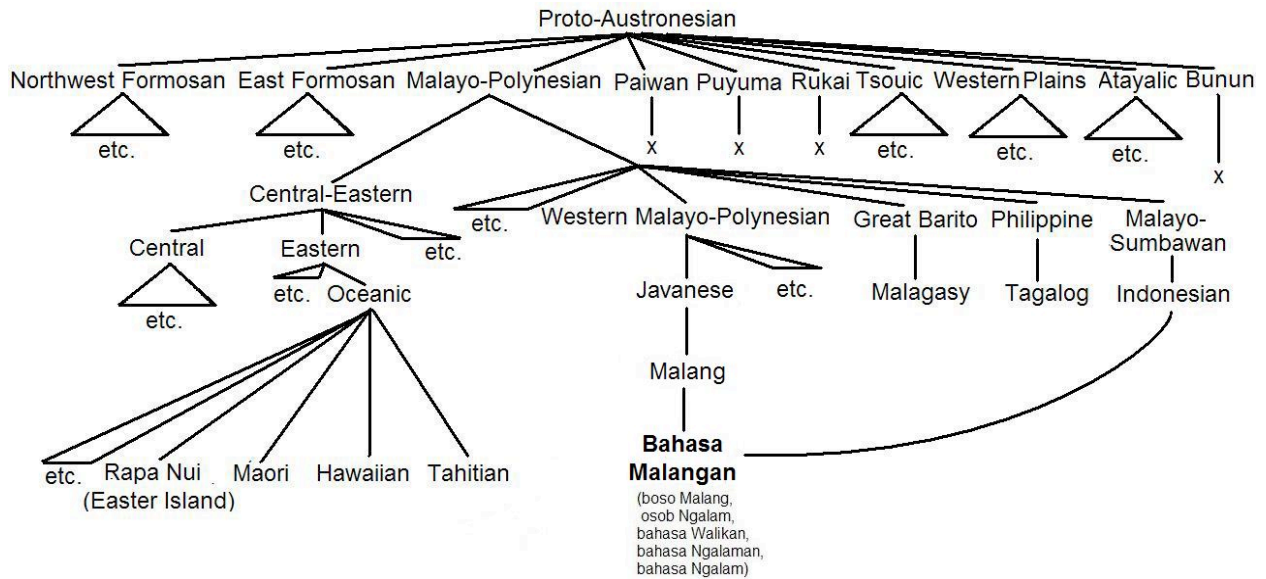
Osob Kiwalan has many names. People refer to it as *bahasa Malangan* and *bahasa Ngalam*. Those are the more Indonesian names for it. There is also *boso Malang*, *osob Ngalam*, *Osob ngalaman*, and *bahasa Walikan* which are the more Javanese names. Of them all, the most popular names would be *bahasa Walikan*—*walikan* coming from the Javanese *walik* “to reverse” and the Indonesian *bahasa* meaning “language”—to literally give the name the “reversed language” and also *bahasa Malangan* which literally means the “Malangese language”. *Bahasa Malangan* is slightly ambiguous and may refer to the words that are neither Javanese nor Indonesian, but are specific to the city of Malang. I discuss this presently. Nevertheless the term is used to describe this reversed form of speech as well. This paper uses the name Osob kiwalan<sup>2</sup> as this is the name that speakers would say in the language. Thus *boso* [Jav. “language”] becomes *osob* and *walikan* [Jav. “reversed”] becomes *kiwalan*.

Osob kiwalan belongs to the Austronesian language family—one of the largest and most geographically extensive language families in the world. The Ethnologue (Lewis 2009) estimates 1,257 languages making approximately a fifth of the world’s languages Austronesian. Spanning from Madagascar to Taiwan, from Indonesia to Easter Island, the Austronesian family was the solely most extensive language family before European colonialism. [See Figure 1, Page 3]

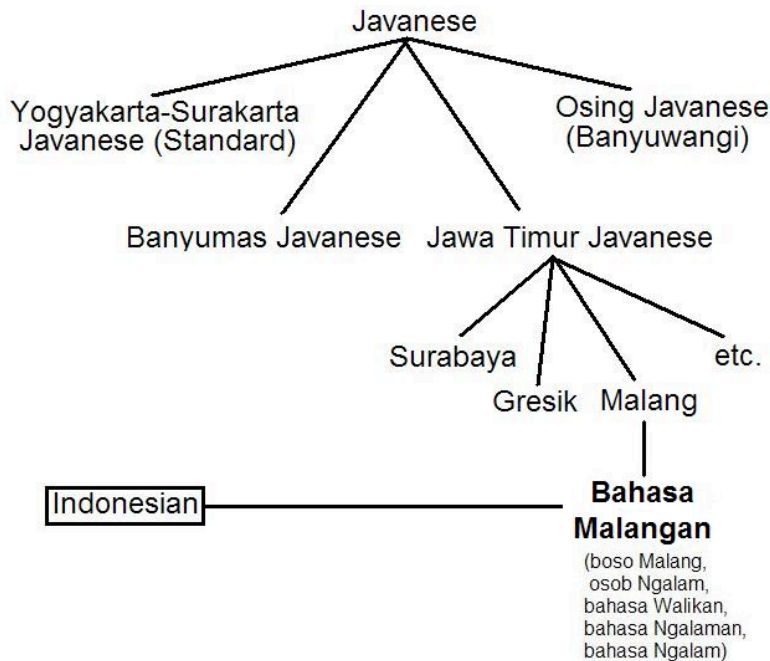
In the same way that Welsh, Hindi, French, Lithuanian, English and 434 other languages derive from a Proto-Indo-European ancestor (Lewis 2009), languages like Malagasy, Ilocano, Maori, Tahitian, Javanese, Indonesian, and 1,252 other languages share a common ancestor through Proto-Austronesian. Osob kiwalan is another of these Austronesian tongues. Osob Kiwalan, although truly a mixture of

languages, is derived primarily from the Javanese language, the dialect of East Java, through the subdialect of Malang. [See Figure 2]

**FIGURE 1. Austronesian Language Family Tree [Abridged]<sup>2</sup>**



**FIGURE 2. Javanese Dialect Tree<sup>4</sup>**



When interviewing, I asked each informant what exactly they felt Osob Kiwalan represented to them personally. Informants generally gave a response similar to this one:

[Osob kiwalan] adalah bahasa gaul... anak muda untuk pergaulan. Jadi bukan bahasa inti atau bahasa sehari-hari tapi untuk bahasa gaul...[B]ahasanya pun bukan bahasa Indonesia yang baku, tapi dicampur dengan *bahasa daerah* malangan.

Osob kiwalan is slang. Slang between... young children for social interaction. So it is not a real language or an everyday language, but for the purpose of slang... This language also is not standard Indonesian, but mixed with the *place language* of Malang. (I conducted all interviews in Indonesian and I have written all the translations myself).

This informant mentions that Osob kiwalan is a mixture with the “place language” or *bahasa daerah* of Malang. As aforementioned, this reference to *Bahasa Malangan* is slightly ambiguous and may refer to the words that are neither Javanese nor Indonesian, but are specific to the city of Malang. However, because speakers also use that term to describe this reversed form of speech, I consider Osob kiwalan the same as the *bahasa daerah* or the “place language” and will use this term in my description of Osob kiwalan and its social function.

In this study, in order to understand the social function of this language I pose the questions: what are the attitudes of Osob kiwalan speakers toward this local tongue, why use Osob kiwalan, and how is Osob kiwalan acquired and perpetuated? To begin to answer these questions, I have spoken with native Malangese and academic professionals in formal and informal interviews while also relying on survey data and field notes and observations. My research suggests that Osob kiwalan is not slang in any simple sense, but is a “place language” with a specific social niche that creates a sense of friendly intimacy, social equality, and communal solidarity among the Malangese.

In this paper, I begin by discussing the social and cultural context of the language ecology within which Osob kiwalan exists. Then I briefly describe the grammar and structure of the language. I continue to the next section where I clarify what slang is and is not and why Osob kiwalan does not necessarily fit the criteria of being one. I discuss the methods I used in my research in order to understand this language and collect all of the data presented here. I recount the historical experience of Osob Kiwalan which reaches back into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the heart of this study is the section on language and society, explaining that specific social niche that Osob kiwalan creates. I then conclude with a section for

understanding what exactly my findings explain about the nature of local languages and their connection with human linguistic and cultural sociality.

### **Sociocultural context of the Language Ecology**

Here I briefly describe the social and culture context of the linguistic ecology within which Osob kiwalan speakers use this language. Indonesia is a country of nearly 800 languages from various language families and language groups. The western half is primarily Austronesian. Among all these languages, Indonesian or *bahasa Indonesia*, literally the “language of Indonesia” serves as the national language and lingua franca among hundreds of local, regional, and ethnic languages. Sometimes foreigners—including myself at times—refer to Indonesian as simply *bahasa*, but this is incorrect as this only means “language”.

Indonesian is based on the standard register of Malay which the people of this region have used for centuries as a lingua franca throughout the Indonesian archipelago, especially for trade. Indonesian, as the national language, of the world’s fourth most populous country, is rapidly becoming one of the most widely spoken languages on earth. There are 22,800,000 speakers in Indonesia and 387,680 speakers outside of the country, bringing the total population to 23,187,680 speakers worldwide (cf. Lewis 2009). Besides Indonesia, this language is spoken in the Netherlands, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the United States (Lewis 2009). There are approximately 140,000,000 speakers of Indonesian as a second language. Indonesian is classified in the Austronesian language family through the Malayo-Polynesian subfamily in the Malayo-Sumbawan group through the North and East subgroup in the Malayic branch through the Malay sub-branch and is 80% cognate with standard Malay (Lewis 2009). Most national media, formal education, governmental organizations, workplaces, books and literature, and other types of formal situations or types of transnational culture are conducted in the Indonesian language. Indonesian functions as the source of national identity, national pride, and one of the primary unifying factors among hundreds of diverse ethnic groups. It serves as the principle vehicle of communication among different islands, provinces, regions, and ethnic cultures.

Historically, Indonesian is believed to be based on the standard register of Riau Malay originally spoken in northeast Sumatra. For hundreds of years before and after the encounter with the West, Malay served as the lingua franca of commerce throughout the region. Because of its history with Malay, Indonesian is almost identical with Malaysian (*bahasa Malayu*) spoken by its neighbors to the northeast. There are differences though, mainly in the vocabulary because Indonesian as a Dutch colony (Malaysia was British) pulls a number of loan words from Dutch. There is also the influence of Arabic on Indonesian through Islam as Indonesia has the highest population of Muslims in the world. Indonesian was later incorporated as a vehicle for nationalism against Dutch colonialism and declared the official language of the region in 1945.

As aforementioned, most Indonesians, aside from speaking the national language, are often fluent in another regional language (examples including Javanese, Balinese or Minangkabau) which speakers use commonly in the local community and at home. In the case of Malang, other than Osob kiwalan or Indonesian, the language of the people is quite regularly Javanese.

Javanese (*bahasa Jawa* [Indo.] or *boso Jowo* [Jav.]) is spoken by 84,300,000 people in Indonesia and approximately 84,608,470 worldwide. Javanese speakers live in Malaysia, Netherlands, Singapore, the United States, and Suriname (cf. Lewis 2009). Although Javanese is the regional and ethnic language of Java, speakers live throughout the entire country. Javanese is classified in the Austronesian language family through the Malayo-Polynesian subfamily.

Javanese is most well known for its hierarchical nature. Javanese has three main levels: *kromo*-high Javanese, *madya*-middle level Javanese, and *ngoko*- low or plain Javanese. Most speakers with whom I spoke in Malang never mentioned *madya*, but divided the language into: *kromo inggil*-high or tall kromo Javanese, *kromo*-middle level Javanese, and *ngoko*- low Javanese. These hierarchies are traditionally manipulated by age and social status. In Malang, however, this hierarchy is less observed and people tend to use *ngoko*. The dialect of Malang is less hierarchical in practice although the hierarchy is observed with people of really high status.

As I mentioned before only a small proportion of Indonesia's large population are first speakers of Indonesian, nevertheless there are still over 163 million people who regularly use this national tongue. In daily conversations, few Indonesians use this formal language. Most people reply on local and ethnic languages such as Sundanese, Javanese, and Madurese. This is not different with the city of Malang where people in the formation of communal identity employ the “place language” *Osob kiwalan*.

### **Grammar and Structure of the Language**

Here I will briefly discuss the grammar and structure of *Osob kiwalan*. I will begin with the vocabulary. *Osob kiwalan* pulls primarily from Javanese and Indonesian so that words like *boso* becomes *osob* “language”, *sepatu* becomes *utapes* “shoe”, *mobil* becomes *libom* “car”, *sepeda motor* - *adapes rotom* “motorcycle”, *arek-reka* “child”, *Malang-Ngalam* “city of Malang”. There are also words and expressions that come from English so that “Relax” or *rileks*, as it is spelled in Indonesian, becomes *skelir* and *slow* to *woles*. The word for “rich people” *orang* [people] *kaya* [wealthy] becomes *ayak men* where the English syntax of placing the adjective first is used and the Indonesian *orang* is replaced with *men*. Only the word *kaya* “rich, wealth” is reversed: *ayak*. There are also many words that are only used in Malang. There is *ojir* (*ocir*) which becomes *raijo* “[Eng] money, [Indo] uang” and others are words derived from the reversed pronunciations: *lawet* “be sold” from *dijual*, *idrek* “work” from *kerja*, *nes* “something good” from *zen*, *oker* “smoke” from *rokok*. Words *ebes* “parent”, *naskin* “eat” and *ojir* “money” are frequently used, but have no clear origins (cf. Soenarno 2011).

The sound system of *Osob kiwalan* reflects that of both languages from which it pulls so that Javanese words retain Javanese phonological rules and Indonesian words retain Indonesian phonological rules. What is special is simply that based on the rules of these phonologies, certain words may be reversed and others cannot. If the reversing of a word disobeys the rules of either Javanese or Indonesian phonology (which are actually not that different from each other), the word will flip, altering in accord with the sound rules or will not be reversed at all. An example would be the word *Malang*. Reversed it becomes *Ngalam*, not \**Gnalam* which is permitted in neither Javanese nor Indonesian phonologies. Also

words that are particularly long and difficult to use are not reversed.

As for morphology, Osob kiwalan tends pull more from Javanese than from Indonesian. For example *-e* is the third person possessive suffix from Javanese which is very different from the equivalent form *-nya* in Indonesian.

- (1.1) OSOB K: Kera-**e** gak onok.  
GLOSS: child-**3PER.POS** NEG be.  
JAV: Arek-**e** gak onok.  
INDO: Anak-nya tidak ada.  
TRANS: His (Her) child is not here.

As for functional words such as auxiliaries, Osob kiwalan tends to favor Javanese. *Wis* which can mean “already”, but functions more like a grammatical past tense marker—like *have* in the English perfect tense—comes from Javanese. The Indonesian equivalent is *sudah*.

- (2.1) OSOB K: Ayas **wis** nakam  
GLOSS: 1PER **AUX.PAST** eat.  
JAV: Kula **wis** mangan.  
INDO: Saya sudah makan.  
TRANS: I have already eaten.

Word order in Osob kiwalan is subject-object-verb (SOV) just as Javanese’s and Indonesian’s word orders are. Osob kiwalan affects the system of discourse as well. An example from Osob kiwalan is the usage of the discourse particle *iyu mas* similar to “yeah man” in English becomes *oyi sam*. This expression is one of the most common phrases. It is even used by those who do not speak the language.

As previously stated, not every word may be reversed. Specifically, there are those words that disobey the phonology, but there are others as well. Some words cannot be flipped because of their structure. Others cannot because they serve a grammatical function so that *atas*, a preposition, cannot become *\*sata* or in the example 2.1 above *wis* did not become *\*siw*.

One may also notice that there is a clear inclination toward Javanese. This may be because Javanese, like most local languages, including Osob kiwalan, creates a feeling of propinquity and intimacy in the situation at hand and the relationship of the speakers.

### **Is Osob Kiwalan a Slang?**

As mentioned above, many speakers share the attitude that “Osob kiwalan is slang. Slang between...young children for social interaction”. Recent scholarship has been working to refine our understanding of the concept of slang. Slang in a general sense are words invented, usually to express new ideas or concepts, that are yet not able to be employed in formal situations and writing. This definition almost works for Osob kiwalan except for having to be “new” since Osob kiwalan has been around for nearly a half a century. In order to gain a deeper understanding of what slang is, I look at some recent research on the topic.

Drake explains that slang functions as both a distance-creating mechanism from social norms and solidarity-creating one for the participants of a given group (cited in Moore, 2004, 1980). Eble delineates three typical functions of slang which are 1) to express casualness, 2) identify participation in a group, and 3) resist traditionally established power (cited in Moore, 2004, 1996). Finegan defines slang as the type of speech “used in situations of extreme informality, often with rebellious undertones or an intention of distancing its users from certain mainstream values” (cited in Moore, 2004, 1994).

Slang functions within such assemblies as “... an act of featuring and obtruding the self within the subculture—by cleverness, by control, by up-to-dateness, by insolence, by virtuosity of audacious and usually satirical wit, by aggression” (cited in Moore, 2004). Although it is true that slang functions within the realms of certain subcultures, it does not explain why slang eventually is moved into the mainstream. For in the case of Osob kiwalan, what started as a language of a very specific group in society—fighters during the war of resistance against the Dutch as I will recount in further detail later—now is used almost without boundaries by a rather large population and geographic area.

According to Moore, “slang is probably used as much within mainstream society as among subcultures” (2004). Dumas and Lighter (1978) give four features that slang may possess: 1) “It lowers the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing”, 2) “Its use implies the user’s familiarity either with the referent or with the less statusful or less responsible class of people who have such special familiarity and use the term”, 3) “It is a tabooed term in ordinary discourse with persons of higher social status or greater responsibility”, 4) “It is used in place of the well-known conventional synonym, especially in order to either protect the user from the discomfort caused by the conventional item or protect the user from the discomfort or annoyance of further elaboration” (Moore, 2004). Their first criteria is considered crucial to any language being slang (Moore, 2004). Any language that possesses two of the features mentioned above is considered slang.

Osob kiwalan possess three of these features. In general, it can seem to lower the prestige of formal or serious speech and writing and it is taboo with those of higher status. Additionally, the vocabulary of Osob kiwalan is also used in place of well-know conventional synonyms. Therefore according to Dumas and Lighter, Osob kiwalan would be slang. However, I would like to point out that Javanese as well, although it has its own refined literary cannon and art in speech, if used in the wrong context can lower the dignity of any given formal or serious text. Yet Javanese can by no means be considered slang. In addition, Javanese, even *kromo inggil* (High Javanese), is taboo with people of higher status in certain situations. Usually in those types of situations, Indonesian is the language of choice. The situations are usually those surrounded by the customs of transnational culture such as national media, formal education, governmental organizations, workplaces, and books and literature as aforementioned. As for their criteria that the words of slang are used in place of well-known synonyms, this falls apart in any situation of diagglossia where “two distinct varieties of one language coexists throughout a speech community, each being allotted a range of different functions with little overlap” (Coulmas 2005). For any society with social dialects sees this as a norm without necessarily calling any one variety of language employed slang.

It seems that many of these definitions are too general and apply to the language ecology of English. When in Indonesia, the language ecology is very different and thus the rules and definitions of the scholars mentioned above do not necessarily apply. While some may still suggest that *Osob kiwalan* is slang, I think it is much more appropriate to call it a *bahasa daerah* or “place language” where everyone in a given place is joined together through the solidarity that this language facilitates.

### **Methods**

During my fieldwork in Java, I used observation methods by taking field notes and keeping a journal for reflection. I had teachers at the University of Malang read over my journals not only as language practice, but also to critique any thoughts or ideas I had concerning *Osob kiwalan* so that my observations and interpretations remained accurate.

I initially planned to record by video the activities where *Osob kiwalan* is most frequently used, especially with children. Using these methods, which were used by linguistic anthropologists Alessandro Duranti and Elinor Ochs, I wanted to get to know the community through the home stay family that my hosting organization provided and I hoped this would give me a place to begin exploring language use especially through video recorded media. I also already possessed the necessary electronic equipment for this project: 1) Samsung WB210 video camera, 2) I Phone Audio Recorder (good quality/used in the past for linguistic/ anthropological field-projects), and 3) Compaq Presario CQ60 Notebook PC laptop. The methods of video recording turned out not to be possible due to time constraints for getting to know community members. I decided to rely on in-depth interviews and extended questionnaire surveys in order to understand how much *Osob kiwalan* speakers are consciously using their language, gathering information on language attitudes, acquisition, and socialization. The surveys were important for the sake of getting a general, brief idea of people’s attitudes and conceptions; however I recognized early on that a focus on qualitative methods and what those indicated would be most important to this study.

As for researching in a foreign language, I was also completing language training at the University of Malang (Universitas Negeri Malang) in the morning. My level in Indonesian is

conversational which was sufficient for conducting and understanding interviews. For the sake of time, I had a language learning tutor transcribe interviews, but all translations were done by me. I learned Osob kiwalan much as possible while chatting with people about the topic, but because it is a language for those who live in Malang, fluency by an outsider was not expected. In addition, the distance as an outsider is particularly helpful for ethnographic analysis (cf. Duranti 1981; Crowley 2007). For times when I needed help with translating, there were language tutors and other translators who were there to assist me.

I divided the work for this study into separate weeks, taking one given week to focus on a certain aspect of the research. During my first week in Java, I began with my language learning program at the University of Malang. I also began discussing Osob kiwalan with students there at the University.

During my second week, I met with linguistic specialists and academics, discussing and planning the project in further detail. I was also granted a lecture in the linguistic history and sociolinguistics of Osob kiwalan, Javanese and Indonesian with a linguistic scholar. I visited and received a consultation from the University librarian. I also started my field notes this week.

During my third week, I began my recorded interviews. My first interview was with a native of Malang who had formally studied linguistics and Osob kiwalan. Had she decided to do a doctorate, Osob kiwalan would have been her topic. I also began seeking public written use of Osob kiwalan. I began book research on the language; seeking out the few resources there are and continued with field notes.

My fourth and fifth weeks were filled with interviews. I also used some of this time to do some transcriptions myself before handing it over to my language helper, as a exercise in dictation, improving my Indonesian language skills. After hearing about a similar “reversed language” in the city of Yogyakarta during an interview, I took a weekend trip there to find resources and more information about this language of comparison. It turned out that *bahasa walikan Yogyakarta* really is slang and not a very well known one, only known by a small section of society and reaching the mainstream on the periphery. According to my language helper who was from “Yogya” as it is commonly called, this language was

mainly for the purpose of reversing swear words so that outsiders would not understand, but natives of Yogya would. This language also functioned very differently in structure from the language in Malang. I continued with the notes and started journaling for the review of my teachers at the University.

My sixth and seventh weeks were consumed with in-depth interviews. I also conducted surveys at the University and at a parade of the city's soccer team's anniversary—as I will discuss later, soccer is an important place for Osob kiwalan speakers.

During the last week, I completed my language program, submitted a four page field report, and gave a public presentation entitled *Osob Kiwalan: Bahasa Walikan di Masyarakat Malang* “Osob Kiwalan: The Reversed Language of Malangese Society” at University of Malang in Indonesian. I continued to collect interviews within the time remaining and wrote up the last of my field notes.

### **History of Osob Kiwalan**

Osob kiwalan began as a secret code form of communication for Indonesians in Malang when fighting their war for independence against the Dutch in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This language was the communication code to conceal Gerilya Rakyat Kota (GRK) “Guerilla Citizenry City” a resistance group in Malang during that war. In a his journal, Dukut Imam Widodo writes [*Osob kiwlan*] *ini dianggap perlu guna menjamin kerahasiaan, efektivitas komunikasi sesama pejuang* “Osob kiwalan was considered necessary to guarantee the secrecy, effectiveness of communication among fighters” (Doea, Djilid, Dukut Imam Widodo et al.; 2006). One of my first informants--who once pursued a doctorate in order to study this Osob kiwalan's heritage--explains this history in further detail:

*bahasa or boso Walikan...walik the meaning of this is “to invert”, so bahasa Walikan is the language that is inverted. The history of it began with Dutch colonialism...during the period of Dutch colonialism there were many [Dutch] spies... and many Indonesia spies [for the Dutch side of the war] as well...when [the Indonesian fighters] speak, they [the Dutch] understand...like operations or plans...so they [the Indonesian fighters] felt they had to have a special language.*

What was once only the language of war fighters has now become the language of solidarity to all who live in the city of Malang.

... because most people speak the language now, finally it has become the [natural and] special language of Malang ... so now if a person is Malangese or born in Malang ... [or] lives in Malang... —a child of Malang—surely he would know this reversed language.

There is an alternative history that I heard only very rarely that claims Osob kiwalan was the secret language of *preman* “ young gangsters and thugs” in Malang during the 1970’s; however those few who mentioned it either only heard it as an alterative rumor or were not native to Malang after all.

### **Language and Society**

As aforementioned, Osob kiwalan is a *bahasa daerah* or “place language” with a specific social niche that constructs a sense of friendly intimacy, social equality, and communal unity among those *asli Malang* or those “native to Malang”. This section is the heart of this study, explaining exactly that specific social niche that Osob kiwalan creates and its social function. I investigate when and how speakers employ Osob kiwalan in their community, how much speakers employ Osob kiwalan with younger generations, and how much younger generations employ it themselves, understanding the socialization processes for its acquisition and maintenance.

The Malangese learn and use Osob kiwalan in order to create of feeling of *akrab* among friends and family members of equal status. Status is based on age in this sphere. I have translated *akrab* often throughout this study as “friendly intimacy” and it describes an emotion of “closeness” and sometimes “communal solidarity”. The principle places and contexts where speakers acquire and use it are in the home, within the scholastic system, and in the world of soccer.

The first place where people usually hear Osob kiwalan is in the home. When friends or family of parents—that are around that same age—pay a visit, call by phone, or make some sort of contact with those in the home, Osob kiwalan is the choice language. Older siblings may also use Osob kiwalan and this may be this first place a young one would hear the language. The parents and older siblings generally do not use the language toward young children before the child begins to employ it him or herself. When

the child is old enough—usually after well situated with Javanese and Indonesian—first time he or she hears Osob kiwalan, he or she will ask those using it to describe what it is:

When in SD, my father was chatting with his friends and I did not understand. I thought “what is the world is that?” Then I asked my mom and she said “Oh, that is Osob kiwalan”. Then I also heard it at school.

Parents and older siblings may begin using the language with the young children after this point. Due to hierarchy by age embodied in Indonesian and Javanese culture, although parents may speak it to them, children may not use this language with their parents as it is disrespectful:

If friends of the same age group, we occasionally use Osob kiwalan, but if I am with my parents, I would not dare [to use it].... If with peers, we may use it because indeed Osob kiwalan is for social interaction in order to be close or friendly, but with parents, in Indonesian culture, we have to respect our parents, [thus] we cannot use Osob kiwalan.

Although some parents employ it with children, not all decide to do so. Because the language is a means of creating solidarity among those who are socially equal—and the largest of Indo-Javanese hierarchies being age-based—there are some parents that will not use Osob kiwalan at all with children in order to teach them respect. After asking one informant whether he speaks the language to his children, he replied:

No, never. Because Osob kiwalan is slang, when with children, you have to have limits. When with friends, peers, it is good to use Osob kiwalan because it is more intimate, but when with children there must be a difference.

Although there is the reason of respect, some local languages—including Osob kiwalan as well—are not passed down to younger generations through the parents, because other languages are more important in the views of the parents. One informant never spoke Javanese, let alone Osob kiwalan at home with his children, because he wanted them to be completely comfortable with Indonesian. Indonesian as the national lingua franca is not spoken by everyone. Many older and less educated individuals will only speak regional languages—such Javanese in Java, Balinese in Bali, and many others. In order to have his children accustomed to speaking Indonesian well, he only uses that language with his children and they use only Indonesian with him.

I use Indonesian with my children...I began when they were young so that they would be accustomed to Indonesian, not the local language.

In addition, there are probably subjectivities of prestige at play where the national language Indonesian and international language English take extremely high prestige over all regional and local languages. Several people with whom I spoke noted the view that speaking Indonesian and English is connected with ideas of intellectual prowess and prestige for the individual that knows them. Toby Alice Volkman, an anthropologist studying the regional Toraja language *bahasa Tae'* on the island of Sulawesi had encountered this issue:

We had studied Indonesian (*bahasa Indonesia*) in the United States, and once in Rantepao we began to study the Toraja language, sometimes referred to as *bahasa Tae'*. This was not, however, an ideal situation, since most people in Rantepao also speak excellent Indonesian and were not inclined to speak their “old-fashioned” language with Americans, especially with a *doctorandus* (Ph.D. candidate). Our Toraja tutor, a judge in Makale, was teaching his three year old daughters only Indonesian, believing that in the future it would prove more useful to them than their native tongue. The attitudes and contradictions revealed here were perhaps more significant than the actual Toraja language training. (1985: 9).

I suggest that attitudes of usefulness and prestige are at play when considering the use of Osob kiwalan in some parent-child relationships.

Another place where people are first exposed to osob kiwalan is within the scholastic system. The Indonesian education system divides into five principle parts: TK, *Taman Kanak-kanak* [literally the small child’s garden] SD, *Sekolah Dasar* [lit. foundational school], SMP, *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* [lit. first intermediate school], SMA, *Sekolah Menengah Atas* [lit. high intermediate school], and Kuliah [lit. lectures]. TK or kindergarten students attend from ages 4-5. Students attend SD or the equivalent of elementary school from ages 6–11. SMP or middle school students range from ages 12-14. High school students or SMA range from ages 15-17 and ages 18 and beyond are attend Kuliah or the University. During SMP, although sometimes earlier during SD, many students get their first real exposure to the language. For some, this will be the very first time it is heard, but even for those who hear it in the home, this is the first time that they are expected to understand and employ the language themselves. Usually older students, but also peers who may have had heavy exposure already, teach the others until everyone is using the language.

I learned much from the interview with one particular informant--a young adult named Sutejo--about how, when, and who uses Osob kiwalan. Sutejo grew up hearing Osob kiwalan from the time he was a kid since his parents are also originally from Malang. He mentioned though, that even from that young age, the language used, changed with age and with the situation (place and other context). I have already mentioned before concerning how this works in Indonesian. When in the home, parents will use Osob kiwalan with children, but children will not use it with parents, because it is deemed impolite. This is in accord with Javanese culture of speech as seen in Javanese's different levels. The older siblings will also use it with younger ones. Young siblings may also use it with the older one. Although Javanese traditionally has younger siblings to use a higher register with older siblings, as also aforementioned this hierarchy is dying especially in the Malangese dialect.

When people become elders, they refrain from using Osob kiwalan, probably because it is seen as something for the younger people. Although they no longer use Osob Kiwalan, they still can understand. My language helper suggested that elders may refrain from using the language because older people wish to look wise. Older people might occasionally slip in a word or two of Osob kiwalan into a conversation if they are ruminating on days of their youth, but this is rare. "Old" in the context can be about 60 or 65, but absolutely 70 and beyond. Older people would apparently feel *malu* "shame" if they used this language. If they want to achieve a feeling of *akrab* "closeness", they will use Javanese, but not with reversed pronunciation. Javanese is another language used in the home to achieve the feeling of *akrab*. Rarely is Indonesian used at home. In Malang, it is only Javanese and Osob kiwalan. However, when people step outside to talk to their neighbors, it is Indonesian that is used. Osob kiwalan and Javanese are things shared with the people with whom you are close. However, even when with those people, if the place changes, the languages may change too, so that even friends while at the university will sometimes use Indonesian among themselves. If you accidentally use Osob kiwalan or Javanese in an inappropriate situation, for instance it just slips out, a person would feel *malu* and have to apologize. This interview with Sutejo was particularly enlightening.

One of most important places where Osob kiwalan is used is in the realm of *sepak bola* or soccer.

Soccer teams use it very much and the people at the stadiums at games use Osob kiwalan among each other. A huge place for Osob kiwalan is at a soccer game. Malang's arch rival is Surabaya. Osob kiwalan cannot be used in Surabaya—Indonesia's second largest city and the capital of East Java. I was told that one would be in danger if caught wearing blue, Malang's colors or using Osob kiwalan at a soccer game in Surabaya.

### **Conclusions**

Osob kiwalan, sometimes considered merely slang, is a place language, *bahasa daerah*, used to create a sense of *akrab* “friendly intimacy”, social equality, and communal solidarity. People may say that Osob kiwalan is *bukan bahasa Indonesia yang baku* “not standard Indonesian” and that it is “mostly used by young children”, but it is a language that is used by many generations and across most social circles of society. This widespread usage is one of the primary reasons not to consider it slang. Osob Kiwalan vocabulary is a language that has been around a long time. Malangese grandmothers and grandfathers can still understand the language that kids speak.

As far as how Osob kiwalan is acquired and perpetuated, speakers learn it either at home or at school. Speakers use the language principally at home, at school among friends, and in the realm of soccer. Thus Osob Kiwalan is an important part for the society and culture of the citizens of the city of Malang. Osob Kiwalan, commonly used with family and friends, creates an *akrab* atmosphere. Although usually considered slang—as any other language in general—Osob kiwalan brings personal, cultural, and historical experiences together displaying the heart of human sociality and experience.

### **Reflections from the Field**

I learned so much from this field experience from the very beginning to the very end. I learned every step of the way, not only from the academic perspective, but also from a general life perspective. It started in Paris, France with me sitting in front of my computer, putting the finishing touches on my Biehl proposal. Already in the francophone world, I was hoping that my summer would be an extension of my

time and so I pressed the send button on an application to study language death and society in the Marquesas, French Polynesia. After months of preparation, I thought the hardest part was over, but indeed I had just entered the rocky road. I received an email a few weeks later explaining that I won the Biehl, I was ecstatic. I was set for French Polynesia. I contacted the group with which I was due to work in French Polynesia, telling them that I was now funded and with what monetary resources. They said that it was not going to be enough and they were expecting me to pay their program. I initially was supposed to work independently alongside their program for guidance without actually participating, but somehow I was information was scrambled and it was no longer possible to work with that group. I did not quite know what to do. I had research funding, but no research project!

I contacted a friend that I know who is a linguist and she let me know that sometimes these sorts of things happen in fieldwork. She helped me contact other researchers and scholars working in French Polynesia. As time passed, it seemed less and less likely that this was going to work out. My goal was to work with Austronesian languages in a country that uses French as the lingua franca. My areal focus in Anthropology is insular Southeast Asia and francophone Oceania. I was really hoping to end up in the francophone world in order to continue to improve my French.

I contacted SIL, Summer Institute of Linguistics, because I had completed courses at one of their summer institutes in Canada a few year ago, so I sort of had a connection there. With their help I was preparing to conduct the same study on the Paici language in New Caledonia. Almost everything was perfect except when my link to the people group returned an email one day explaining that this was not a good time for those over the linguistics program in the area. He suggested I try back in six months to a year. I thought my research opportunities were done.

A week or so later I got an email from the US State Department, explaining that I had won the Critical Languages Scholarship for Indonesia. I was thrilled. I applied the semester before, but assumed that I had not had very much of a chance of getting it. I was exhausted by this point. It was the end of my semester in Paris and now I was having to prepare for another totally different trip.

I ended up applying for my visa for Indonesia while in Paris with only week before having to leave. It was really complicated getting the permission to do this and by the time everything was approved, I had one week left in Paris. I went to the Indonesian embassy and they wanted to return my visa on the same day that I was due to leave Paris for the United States. I explained that this was not possible, because they required my passport and I needed my passport to leave that country. They agreed to return my passport the day before. I was stressed. The embassy was only open from 9:30am-12noon and had anything happened on that day, strikes, protests, or anything similar—which were a real possibility—that would impede me for getting to the office, I was in trouble for returning to the US and for going to Indonesia. I made it and received my passport and returned home.

After spending a few days at home, I was off to Indonesia. While talking with tutors, someone mentioned the word *Ngalam*, Osob kiwalan for Malang—the city in which CLS students were placed. I took an interest here and began research on the topic. Then I realized that I had enough research material for a Biehl. I emailed the committee a new proposal and was approved for work on Osob kiwalan. So the high point of my work was that in the end I was able to do fieldwork in the Austronesian world.

I had an amazing time in Indonesia, learning the language and studying the culture surrounding Osob kiwalan and other aspects of social life. Toward the end of my stay, I encountered my final trouble. I was at a parade for the Malang soccer team, talking with people about Osob kiwalan when all of a sudden I was rushed by ten guys who opened my backpack and stole the first thing they could get their hands on—my laptop. I lost much information including my thesis for my Anthropology major. I knew better than to carry around such devices, but the day I slip up, things get stolen. I seemed too surreal.

I learned much from the proposal writing and the carrying out of research, but I think the most important lessons were perseverance and understanding that research happens in a real world setting, not one that is seemingly detached as academics usually presents itself. I think these were important lessons learned for my edification and amelioration as a future scholar in the social sciences.

## Notes

1. This quotation is from *Malang Tempo Doeloe* [Doea, Djilid, Dukut Imam Widodo et al. Malang Tempo Doeloe. Bayumedia: Malang, 2006.]
2. The Osob kiwalan was coined by Adi Soenaro in [*Soenarno, Adi. Kamus Bahasa Malangan. Bayumedia: Malang, 2011*].
3. Based on data from “Lewis, M. Paul 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (Sixteenth edition). Dallas: SIL International.”
4. Data from lectures at the University of Malang (Universitas Negeri Malang).

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