

**'Where do Chinese people store their money?':
The Social Construction of an Indonesian Ethnic Stereotype through a Small Story**

Narrative analysis has played a central role in sociolinguistics ever since Labov's (1972) work on the structure, features, and social functions of narrative among inner-city African Americans in Philadelphia. Subsequent research has primarily focused on narratives gathered within sociolinguistic interviews; however, within the past decade, sociolinguistic analyses of narrative have broadened to encompass a more interdisciplinary perspective, approaching narrative as a collaborative activity among conversational participants, and as a means of constructing and maintaining social identities (Ochs and Capps 2001, Georgakopoulou 2007, *inter alia*). The present paper seeks to further the interdisciplinary, discursive turn in the sociolinguistic analysis of narrative by exploring the interactional contingencies of a conversational Indonesian 'small story' (see Georgakopoulou 2007 for discussion of this term), and its role in both propagating and problematizing a common racist stereotype related to ethnic Chinese living in modern Indonesia (see Hoon 2008 for in-depth discussion of ethnic Chinese Indonesians), namely a stereotype equating ethnic Chinese Indonesians as money hoarders. The contribution of this paper is two-fold: (1) it applies contemporary principles of narrative analysis to colloquial Indonesian, a language which has been relatively under-studied in the sociolinguistic literature to date; and (2) it provides a close interactional analysis of the variation in resources that speakers utilize either to maintain or subvert a racially-charged subtext.

The short interactional sequence analyzed in this paper lasts a mere 56 seconds, and takes place within the context of a 45-minute-long naturally-occurring interaction that was digitally recorded as part of a larger corpus of Colloquial Indonesian conversation. Participants in this conversation are 6 women, all of whom are university students living in a boardinghouse in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. During the course of my talk, I will present a close sequential analysis of the entire sequence, following Conversation Analytic principles (cf. Schegloff 2007) related to the analysis of small stories (Georgakopoulou 2007). Because of space constraints, I can present neither the glossed Indonesian narrative nor a complete analysis of it here in this abstract; however, this will be fully presented and explicated in the conference talk itself.

To summarize briefly: one of the six participants, S, is ethnically Chinese; another participant, D, asks S a question, seemingly out of the blue, as to where Chinese people generally store their money. The ensuing interaction consists of the remaining participants seeking either to distance themselves from the question, to efface the loaded nature of the question, or to justify D's entitlement to ask such a question based on a small story about a scene that D and two others (not including S) had witnessed the previous evening involving a Chinese person paying for food at a local restaurant in a manner that struck the women as strange. Varying interactional resources employed by the conversationalists include: the use of minimal responses, laughter, and silence; an attempt to normalize the actions of the protagonist in the small story; and an attempt to generalize the protagonists actions to other (non-Chinese) people. On the one hand, the prior text of the previous evening's observation is recontextualized and repurposed by each of the participants as they co-construct the small story; but on the other hand, this happens within the broader societal subtext of Chinese ethnic stereotypes in Indonesia. Participants responses and contributions vary, in terms of the amount of alignment or disalignment to the main teller's goal, and the affiliation or disaffiliation with the ethnic stereotype evoked by the telling of the small story.

In sum, this paper provides a close analysis of a Colloquial Indonesian conversational narrative, demonstrates how ethnic stereotypes are constructed through narrative and interaction, and illustrates the varying interactional strategies used by co-tellers to either maintain or problematize such stereotypes.

References

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Indonesian is a variety of Malay, and the official language of the country of Indonesia—the fourth-most populated country in the world. Nearly 300 local languages and numerous other varieties of Malay are also spoken in Indonesia, generally existing in a diglossic relationship with formal and colloquial Indonesian. The narrative analyzed in this talk comes from a corpus of colloquial Indonesian recorded in and around the city of Yogyakarta in Central Java. This is a spoken variety that has been emerging especially in urban areas among younger speakers, as people from diverse linguistic backgrounds interact with one another. It diverges from the national standard in terms of key phonological and morphosyntactic features and has only recently begun to be described in the literature.