STANDARDIZATION AS A DILEMNATIC POLICY

by Suatmo Pantja Putra

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ABSTRACT

Standard language is generally regarded as language well establishe by usage in the speech and writing of educated people. As a product of schooling, this learnt language has, in may societies, come to assume a special place and is looked upon as an authoritative model of correctness and quality and, at its best, perfection. In language conscious speech communities, standard language also serves as a reliable measure of language profeciency which is made use of by people in administrative or educational authority. Language planners and prcatitioners in particular are charged with the responsibility of upholding this language in its purest forms. Meanwhile, the learning and teaching of standard language have become accepted as an integral part of every national or state-level educational system's long-term obligations. This paper presents the discussion on the innappropriateness of the use of them 'standard' instead of "standardized" language. It also suggests that planning for language policy within a particular situation inevitably demands taking into account not only multiple social factors and goverment goals, but also the ways in which these conditions affect language and literary acquisition across segments of the population, otherwise it can be a dilemnatic and problematic policy.

Keywords*: dilemma, language policy, standardization.*

Most traditionally and endemically, language spread is caused and accompanied by population spread. Chinese spoken is in Indonesia because groups of Chinese-speaking immigrants have settled in the country. Portuguese is spoken in East Timor beacause Portuguese-speaking colonialist once settled there.

However, language spread may also reflect the spread of ideas without much population movement. This explains how, centuries after the fall of Rome, Latin became the language of learning throughout western and northen Europe fore more than a thousand years. There are analogies in the spread of Arabic as

the vehicle of Islam as distinct from it spread as the language of Arabic ethnic. There are also analogies today in the spread of scientific information, computer technology, and indeed pop music, through the medium of English. It also happens with the spread of English in the conduct of multinational business in firms like Philips or Coca-Cola.

In the same time, language spread may also reflect the political domination with sufficient movement to sustain an administrative system and power structure. In ancient times, this was the model used by Greek and Roman Empire to spread the administrative languages. It is also the pattern for the spread of English in many parts of the British Empire just like in Hongkong before 1997. This model might be what many Timorese had thought concerning the spread of Indonesia before their independence had thought.

When the language tends to spread so rapidly due to the modern technology, much has been discussed about the necessity of having a standard variety for a particular language. There has then appeared a great deal of the emergence of a particular variety to be the standard for a multidialectal language comunity. In what is now Indonesia, for example, the standard language called Bahasa Indonesia Baku emerged from the regional variety of Malay as a 'uniting' language. The appearance of new standard languages in this world seems to be the common process. In Europe, for instance, between 1800 and 1940, no fewer than three dozen new standard languages were recognized resulting from the growth of nationalist movements that in turn resulted in such 'new' polities as Finland, Romania, and Czech.

In the practices of the making of the so-called standard language, it is implied that a conscious planning in the selection of a language variety to be the standard language for the community concerned. Omar (1991) suggested that there are two kinds of the emergence of a standard language. First, it appears as an incidental language which means that there is a single local variety which is taken to be the norm or the standard form of communication by the language community concerned. What happens here is that the language becomes the model of correct and prestigious usage without so much discussion or asking for a consensus from speakers. The propulsion, as it were, of this particular dialect is made possible by situations existing or events occuring in the life of the community concerned such as the presence of a traditional rulling power, political, and administrative centralization, the rise of modern education and an intelligentsia, and the rise of the written language and the language of mass media. Second, it appears as a planned choice that is the process of selection which entails at least a formal body that determines the choice. Planned choice may also apply to the choice of a whole variety to be the standard language.

In the two kinds of the emergence process, one can notice that the making of a standard language is a consciously planned policy. Although generally regarded as measurably superior to the other varieties (dialects or registers) in many important domains of language use, a standard language cannot claim any inherently superior value regardless of who use it with whom, where, when or why. Used in an inappropriate mode, tenor or genres it too may in fact not only cause failures of communication but may on occasions do considerable damage to human relationships. Sledd (1988) finds enough evidence that the debate over the

nature of a standard language should be recognized as inherently political. He questions the widely supported thesis that standard written English is "classless, unchanging, independent of speech, and transdialectal". As he perceives it, standard language is "the dialect of dominance", the English used by the powerful and although in the end he has to resign himself to an acceptance of the fact that "for the sake of communication in society as it exists, teachers must teach real standard English". Sledd (1985) considers it "merely barbarous to say that people, who, through no fault of their own, hare had no chance or even no desire to learn the grapholect, will be forever denied economic opporunity and social acceptance". For all its barely realized potential and power as a strong ally of universal literacy and successful communication, standard language is thus equally capable of being used to perpetuate, very often aggravate, the patently destructive socio-economic disparaties. It is illogical to say that standard language is used to defend privileges or perpetuate wrongs only in the developed countries of the west. Their use to serve many socially divisive and economically exploitative ends appears in fact to be both commoner and more consequential in many parts of the developing world. For those possesing a standard language, he has gained power and he may use it as much for evil as for good within and across the nationstates in most corners of the world. In this way, this paper suggests to use thet term standardized language as the appropriate one since it does not pretend as if it all happens as naturally as possible when a variety becomes a standard language.

INDONESIA AS A MULTINGUAL COUNTRY

In all parts of the world there are countries with one official language but with numerous other languages, especially in Africa and Asia as a result of colonialization (Grosjean, 1982). The political boundaries rarely reflect linguistic boundaries. On becoming independent, these countries had the problem of choosing an official administrative language (it therefore had to possess a written form and varied and extensive vocabulary) that could serve as a means of communication with neighboring states and as a symbol of nationhood. It is therefore important for them to choose a language that would not favor one ethnic group over another, thus greating unnecessary tensions and a potential cleavage within the young nations. Usually there are two basic types of solution adapted. First, they choose a language spoken by a linguistic group within the country, as in Tanzania with Filipino , which is based on Tagalog, Indonesia with Bahasa Indonesia, and Malaysia with Malay. Second, they choose a language from outside the nation, as in Sierra Leone, Zambia and Ghana with English as the official language or Chad, Gabon, and Senegal with French.

Indonesia is then obviously a multilingual country, many languages are spoken in the country and many people use more than one language there. According to a report by Indonesia language council (LBI), the number of indigenous languages spoken in Indonesia is estimated to be around four hundred eighty four (LBI, 1972), almost half of them can be found in Irian Jaya (now Papua). Therefore, it is not surprising that, even in along the border between two language areas. It has also been a common thing to find that in the cities and towns, many people know three or more indigenous languages, besides one or more foreign languages.

Today, because of geographical mobility so greatly facilitated by modern means of transportation and the concentration of people of many different language backgrounds in the major cities, more and more people are speaking at least two Indonesian languages. Only in remote villages one can find many monolingual people and that only among older people or young children less than 8 years. Nababan (1980) found that the 'two languages' here refer to Indonesian and a vernacular or foreign language.

Under such a multilingual condition, it is supposed to be impertative to establish a standardized language as a national identity. There are two points to be presented in this paper concerning the Indonesiaan standard language and the further effort of making the standard language a fixed and stable means of communication.

THE MAKING OF INDONESIAN STANDARD LANGUAGE

Although many Indonesian scholars have try to give impression that the standardization has happened as 'naturally' as possible, it can be denied that the process is, in fact, a one-sided action. The Indonesia independence has inspired the nation founders as to use the language as a national identity. Thus because of a context where separate states and kingdoms need to unite to form a single power, the nation founders considered that a standard language can be an alternative. The merging of political and administrative unit has, undoubtedly, become a pontent factor in the rise and evolution of a standard language in Indonesia.

The unification of these different political and administrative entities entails a great deal of communication in spoken and written language. It is usually

expected that through this channel, a standard variety for all the units may promote a stronger nationalism. Even seventeen years before independence (1928), the nationalist movement had suggested the necesity of having national language so that the process of the emergence of the standard language had been going on before the independence.

What has been frequently stressed by Indonesian scholars so far is the seemingly comitment among the youth congress contestants of 1928 which indicates that choice for Malay as standard variety was a 'gentleman agreement'. This is image seems to be a general truth for many years since the Independence Day. Many speakers of 'minority' varieties such as Timorese (Tetun), Aceh, and Irian vernaculars seem to be in one spirit of 'proclaiming' Indonesian as the standard language. Yet, when a democratic atmosphere has been opened up, it is becoming more transparent that it may not be the case. When the 'suppresion' becomes intolerable any more, it comes to speak of protest. Some regions such as Aceh, Papua, Lampung have proposed the 'acceptance of vernacular language' as the official language, regardless of the political motive behind it. It may be true that so far the vernacular languages have been given place in education, namely as a subject in the curriculum. The indonesian constitution stipulates that "in the areas with a regional language that is maintained well by the people such as Javanese, Sundanese and others, the language will be respected and maintained also by the state". However, this 'small portion' appears to be insufficient to cure the suppression since in the reality those vernacular languages, especially those of eastern parts, have no bargaining power either economically or politically-in other words, the varieties are inferior to the national standardized language.

THE STABILIZATION OF THE STANDARDIZED LANGUAGE

When the Indonesian language was declared as the national language, no one had predicated the emergence (or existance?) of varieties in the language use with many dialects and registers (Kridalaksana, 1981). Just like what happens with many languages in the world such as English, which Smith (1991) calls "world English" Bahasa Indonesia also undergoes the diversification of fuctions which finally results in other variants. The rapid development of technology is also in favor of the growth of such variants. The influence of many languages besides the vernacular uses has also contributed to the diversification. On one side, such a phenomenon may be positive because it shows that Indonesia language is alive, on the other side, it is often assumed to endanger the national language.

The establishment for the correct 'standards' of Bahasa Indonesia is arbitrary. In most cases, the Indonesian users are forced to look at and use the standards through some phases. Joseph (1991) proposed the phases as *elaboration* and *control*. In the elaboration phase, new elements are borrowed into the arising standard from its model. Unlike Greek which provided the model for the standardization of Latin, the Indonesian scholars have provided their own model which is grammatically, phonologically and semantically believed to be correct. Elaboration of Bahasa Indonesia is remedial, to compensate for a perceived incapacity for expression and cosmetic, borrowed even though a native element is available. Elaboration continues to be the order of the day until Bahasa Indonesia is perceived as a sufficiently 'eloquent'.

At this point the balance may shift in the direction of control, the desire to 'regulate' the language by hyerarchizing rival modes of expresion and attempting to suppress those which wind up low on the hierarchy. Control here is usually the domain of teachers, editors, grammarians, language academies and others. It is motivated by, on the one hand, a very rational desire to keep the linguistic system economical (a problem in the wake of elaboration), but on the other hand by a rather unrealistic desire to eliminate language change. To the extent that is succeed in keeping the standard 'pure' of changes taking place naturally in its vernacular dialect base, control leads to the standard eventually becoming a 'classical language', in other words, to its death. In this view, language standardization in Indonesia represents a culture-specific monogenetic process cum ideology that has its origin in the Dutch colonialistic tradition originally rooted in the Greco-Roman cultural tradition.

In the education setting such an effort may invite problems. Education in standard language consists of helping (or forcing) children to develop a sort of monitor for their own native language production, to check for elements of their native dialect which do not correspond to the rules of the standard language. Because of this, adults come to second language learning with monitor already intact. It is reasonable to assume that they set about the task of second-language learning in very much the same way as they went about their standard-language education in their native tounge.

It is in the nature of language standards and standard standard language to stand as a barrier to 'natural' language acquisition, which inevitably brings natural language change. Language standards are that part of standard language which

must be learned, which are unlikely to be acquired. It is precisely because of their difficulty of acquisition – their 'unnaturalness' to this linguistic system – that they are able to function as 'standards' at all. For this reason, the standard Indonesian language is never really fully 'native' to anyone.

The obvious consequence of this condition is a reaction against the standardization, which seems to ignore the complexity of linguistic and sociolinguistic phenomena of the Indonesia society with the variety of culture and ethnic groups. When the policy appears to be somewhat pressure on the nativity of these people. It is imperative to think of the way out, or otherwise, conflicts will becomen the answer.

CONCLUSION

Language policy formation within a multilingual nation depends on historical, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts through which patterns of language use emerge. It is also this complex interplay of historical, cultural, linguistic, and economic factors at both local and national levels which determine conditions for language planning. This paper focuses on the process of emergence of Bahasa Indonesia and the further effort of stabilizing it.

Time has made the Indonesian language almost native to about seventy percent of Indonesia dwelling in twenty-five provinces. At the same time, however, a shared past of unequal partnership, of economic exploitation and political domination, has left behind mixed memories and lingering suspicion. It has mothered a degree of mistrust as much for the Indonesian language as for

those who left it behind as much needed and highly valid educational and administrative resource.

The belief and values by administrators, teachers, and goverment officials are deeply rooted in the political, economic, and social circumstances, which have become a certain myth in this country. For years goverment has focused on both establishing standards for academic excellence and providing uniform and 'equal' educational opportunity. These goals have subsequently included the use of Indonesian language as prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Lembaga Bahasa Indonesia through curricula, textbooks, and examinations and involve expectations for organization, structure, and precision. However, both the standardized system and cultural values of educator and policy-makers not only create disconsonance between goverment intent and local implementation, but also fail to recognize variation in the language and social capital that children bring to the educational setting, as revealed in an unpublished study by Mulyoso et.al (2001) in the elementary education setting. Community norms for language learning involve the ways in which children acquire communicative codes (writing, reading, and speaking in different language) and the attitudes amd values associated with language learning. In addition, children are socialized into parental methods of instruction and learning which may vary vastly among communities and between community and school norms.

This illustrates the need for the goverment to clarify educational goals and adjectives, reevaluate cultural assumptions, and develop currriculum, examinations, and teacher education programs which are consonant with these goals and objectives. The most difficult part of this process is re-evaluation of

traditional values in view of the changed demands of the percent economic situation together with the elimination of the perspective orthodox manner of those involved in language policy and the implementation such as teachers, linguists, and others.

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