

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF INDONESIA

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Abstract — Although over 400 languages are spoken in Indonesia, by 1986 60% of the population had some competence in the Indonesian national language, a substantial increase over 1971. Bahasa Indonesia was declared the state language in the 1945 constitution, and reformed spelling was agreed in 1972. It is the sole medium of instruction, except in the first three grades of elementary school in nine regions, where vernaculars may be used transitionally. Thereafter vernaculars are taught as school subjects. Bilingualism, and even multilingualism in Indonesian and one or more vernaculars and/or foreign languages is increasing, and despite the use of Indonesian for official documentary purposes at all levels it does not appear that vernaculars are dying out, although their spheres of use are restricted. Bahasa Indonesia fulfils the four functions: cognitive, instrumental, integrative and cultural, while vernaculars are only integrative and cultural. The curriculum of Indonesian, established centrally, is pragmatic or communicative. It is expressed in a standard syllabus for course books. This approach equally applies to foreign languages, which are introduced at secondary level, although here receptive reading is given more weight than productive skills. A full description of the syllabus organization of the various languages is given. Nonformal language learning also takes place, in the national basic education and literacy programme, which teaches Bahasa Indonesia, and in vocational courses in foreign languages for commerce.

Zusammenfassung — Obwohl in Indonesien über 400 Sprachen gesprochen werden, beherrschten 1980 60% der Bevölkerung die indonesische Nationalsprache, wesentlich mehr als 1971. In der Verfassung von 1945 wurde Bahasa Indonesia zur Staatssprache erklärt, und 1972 einigte man sich auf eine reformierte Schreibweise. Es ist die einzige Unterrichtssprache mit Ausnahme der ersten drei Grundschuljahrgänge in neun Regionen, wo die Muttersprache übergangsweise benutzt werden darf. Danach werden Muttersprachen als Schulfach unterrichtet. Zweisprachigkeit oder sogar Mehrsprachigkeit sind in Indonesien auf dem Vormarsch, ebenso das Beherrschen einer oder mehrerer einheimischer Sprachen und/oder einer Fremdsprache, und obwohl Indonesisch auf allen Ebenen für offizielle dokumentarische Zwecke benutzt wird, scheinen die einheimischen Sprachen trotz ihres begrenzten Anwendungsgebietes nicht auszusterben. Bahasa Indonesia erfüllt die vier Funktionen: kognitiv, instrumental, integrativ und kulturell, während die Dialekte nur integrativ und kulturell sind. Das indonesische Curriculum, zentral festgelegt, ist pragmatisch oder kommunikativ. Es wird in Form eines Standardlehrplans als Grundlage für Lehrbücher genommen. Ähnlich zentral wird der ab Sekundarstufe gelehrt Fremdsprachenunterricht gelenkt, wobei mehr Wert auf rezeptives Lesen als auf produktive Fähigkeiten gelegt wird. Die Organisation der Lehrpläne für die verschiedenen Sprachen wird beschrieben.

Auch das nicht formale Erlernen einer Sprache wird praktiziert, und zwar auf nationaler Grundschulebene und in Literaturprogrammen, die Bahasa Indonesia lehren, sowie in Handelsfremdsprachenkursen.

Résumé — Bien que 400 langues soient parlées en Indonésie, 60% de la population maîtrisaient la langue nationale indonésienne en 1980, ce qui représente une augmentation substantielle par rapport à 1971. Le bahasa indonesia a été déclaré langue de l'état par la constitution de 1945, et une réforme de l'orthographe a été adoptée en 1972. C'est le seul médium d'instruction, excepté dans les trois premières classes de l'école élémentaire de neuf régions, où les langues vernaculaires peuvent être utilisées pour marquer la transition. Après cela celles-ci deviennent des matières d'étude. Le bilinguisme, voire même le multilinguisme en indonésien avec une ou plusieurs langues vernaculaires et/ou étrangères, prend de plus en plus d'importance, et, malgré l'emploi de l'indonésien à tous les niveaux dans les documents officiels, il ne semble pas que les langues vernaculaires soient en voie de disparition, bien que leurs sphères d'utilisation soient restreintes. Le bahasa indonesia remplit les fonctions cognitive, instrumentale, assimilatrice et culturelle, tandis que les langues vernaculaires ne remplissent que ces deux dernières. Le curriculum d'enseignement de l'indonésien est conçu centralement, il est pragmatique ou communicatif. Ses lignes directrices sont spécifiées dans un programme et dans un guide. On procède de la même manière pour les langues étrangères, qui sont introduites dans le secondaire, bien qu'on accorde ici plus d'importance à la lecture réceptive qu'aux compétences pratiques. L'organisation du programme d'enseignement des différentes langues est présentée en détail. Un enseignement non formel des langues est également proposé dans l'éducation de base nationale et par le programme d'alphabétisation, qui enseigne le bahasa indonesia, ainsi que dans les cours de langues étrangères dispensés dans le cadre de l'enseignement professionnel commercial.

The Languages of Indonesia

Indonesia is an archipelago which consists of about 13,000 islands, only a few of which are uninhabited. This geography accounts for the fact that the country and the nation are made up of a plurality of ethnic groups, cultures, and languages, resulting in a wide variety of arts, crafts and architecture.

The people of Indonesia, at present more than 170 million, speak a large number of languages. However one may define "language" (as against "dialect"), it seems safe to say that there are over 400 languages in Indonesia. The National Language Institute, the institutional predecessor of the present National Center for Language Development in Jakarta, issued the latest linguistic map of Indonesia in 1972, in which the number of languages was given as 418. The greatest difference with other estimates is in the province of Irian Jaya, which linguistically is still a largely unmapped area. For example, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Barr

and Barr 1978) listed 569 languages in Irian Jaya alone; the figure given by the National Language Institute in 1972 for this area is 128.

The great diversity in languages (and cultures) is reflected in the nation's motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (i.e., Unity in Diversity). However, in spite of this multilingualism, there is also a degree of homogeneity in that more than ninety per cent of the languages belong to the Indonesian branch of the Austronesian language family. These languages are not all the same in size. The number of speakers of a language ranges from a few hundred people (in Irian Jaya) to about 80 million (Javanese), nor are they the same in sociocultural importance. However, they are all used for the same common communicative and personal functions of a language, and they are equal in the eyes of the law, with the exception of Indonesian, which is the national language and the only official language in the country.

The languages spoken in Indonesia fall into three classes: (1) Indonesian or *Bahasa Indonesia*; (2) local or regional languages, here called “vernaculars”; and (3) foreign languages. The proportion of the number of speakers can be seen from the breakdown of the speakers in the 1971 census, namely 40.8%, 59%, and 0.2% speakers of Indonesian, Vernacular, and Foreign Languages respectively. The figure for the vernaculars shows the percentage of those who speak a vernacular but do *not* speak Indonesian; they may or may not speak a foreign language. The figure for foreign languages represents the number of speakers who speak a foreign language but *not* Indonesian or a vernacular.

印尼语的三个不同的阶级

The Indonesian Language

In the 1980 census, there is mention only of “people using Indonesian at home” and of “those who do not use Indonesian at home”. However, out of those not using Indonesian as a home language, over 72 million out of the 146 million population can speak Indonesian, so that the number of people who are able to speak Indonesian is a little over 90 million, which amounts to 61 per cent of the population. Although no information is available on the level of competence in Indonesian of those speakers, the 1980 figure gives an increase of more than 20 per cent from the 40.8 in the 1971 census. In the next few months, Indonesia will be conducting the 1990 population census. It will be interesting to find any changes in the linguistic situation of the country.

At the time of the Youth Pledge on 28 October 1928, the number of “native speakers” of Indonesian (then called Malay) in Indonesia was very small; a generous estimate would not put it at more than 500,000 in the coastal areas of East and Central Sumatra, in urban centers, and in major

ports throughout Indonesia. Since Independence, the number has been increasing rapidly, and there are now more than 17 million who can legitimately be called “native speakers” of Bahasa Indonesia. The number will keep increasing, especially in urban centers and towns as mentioned above, through school education, through the increased geographical mobility caused by the centralized civil and military service, and through the increasing number of interethnic/interlingual marriages.

Indonesian (i.e., *Bahasa Indonesia*) was declared the “state language” by the 1945 Constitution, Chapter XV, Article 36. As the state language, it serves as the national language and the only official language in Indonesia. It has a standard variety which can be defined as the variety that is generally used in the public school system. The National Center for Language Development of the Ministry of Education and Culture prefers a negatively formulated definition, which is “the variety that is free from strong regionalisms and localisms”. The spelling standardization was achieved by the official adoption of the Reformed Spelling on August 16, 1972. Efforts to further standardize the language, especially its scientific terminology, have been vigorously pursued by the National Center for Language Development and are now nearing completion.

There are of course regional and local varieties of Indonesian, but they are usually mutually intelligible, the major difference being in pronunciation. The public school system, the civil service, a centralized military organization, the mass media (newspapers, radio and TV), together with the increasing level of geographical mobility of the population, have worked towards minimizing differences between the regional varieties, which factors, as mentioned above, have also worked towards raising the number of native speakers of the language.

The Vernacular Languages 地方语言

As mentioned above, the regional languages (*Bahasa Daerah*) are here called vernaculars. The majority of the population (more than 88 per cent) speak one of the vernaculars as a first (= home) language, learning Indonesian later on, formally in primary school or informally from the community. In addition to this, there are a small number of immigrant languages in the country. A sizable but decreasing number of Indonesians of Chinese ancestry speak one of the Chinese languages (or what they call “dialects”), in particular Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese. In North Sumatra, a small number of people, brought there from India by the Dutch around the beginning of the 20th century to work in the plantations, speak Tamil.

The vernaculars are used for intra-group purposes, while Indonesian is

generally used for inter-group communication. Although the only official language is Indonesian, on the village level a great deal of official business, administrative and judicial, has still to be transacted in the local vernacular, because of the inability of many villagers to understand or speak Indonesian. However, the official report is always written in Indonesian. It is envisaged that a gradual increase in the use of Indonesian on this level will take place when the younger people who have gone through the national educational system start replacing their elders on the village councils.

The 1976 Seminar on Vernacular Languages in Yogyakarta made the observation that both the major and minor vernaculars had shown a marked tendency towards diminishing prestige, and that some of the minor vernaculars were running the danger of dying out. However, from experience to date, it does not seem likely that the vernaculars, except perhaps those with only a handful of speakers, will ever die out; even in the case of these small vernaculars, only when the speakers abandon their traditional habitat and disperse. In fact, the Constitution (Explication of Chapter XV, Article 36) guarantees the preservation of “those vernaculars that are properly maintained by their speakers”. In addition, there has also been no public effort to discourage people from using any of the vernaculars.

地方语言的消失

Foreign Languages

Foreign languages are used in Indonesia for international communication: in diplomacy, business contacts, and cultural exchanges. In addition to this, the function of foreign languages is as a “library language”, because most of the books and scientific materials, including reference materials, in the libraries are still in these languages, especially in English. It has been estimated that about 80 per cent of the books in a university library are in English. It is therefore no surprise that foreign languages are taught in the secondary schools, not only to provide a different cultural experience to the students, but also for the practical purpose of preparing them for possible use of these languages in universities and other tertiary education as well as at job-oriented colleges or courses.

Before Independence in 1945, Indonesia was already familiar with the colonial/Dutch tradition of teaching foreign languages in secondary schools. In the Netherlands before World War II, it was customary to teach the three neighboring foreign languages: German, French and English. This system was applied to the Dutch-medium secondary schools in Indonesia. At Independence in 1945, the Government decided to include only English as a compulsory subject in junior and senior secondary schools. Four other foreign languages were offered in the senior

殖民历史对于
外国语言的影
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