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One Land, One Nation, One Language: An Analysis of Indonesia's National Language Policy

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Indonesia, virtually alone among post-colonial nations, has been successful at promoting an indigenous language as its national language. The Indonesian language was developed as a national language from the Malay language in what has been seen by some as a daring decision. In truth, it was the only logical choice, and the lack of a major international language playing a role in Indonesia may actually be a detriment. In this study, Indonesia's language situation is compared to that of its neighbors Malaysia and the Philippines.

1. Background and Situation

Indonesia's national language policy has been called a "miraculous success" (Woolard 2000), "a great success" (Bukhari 1996:19) and "perhaps even the most spectacular linguistic phenomenon of our age" (Alisjahbana 1962:1). To assess these claims, it is useful to examine the history and sociohistorical setting of Indonesia's national language planning.

Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation in the world, with an estimated population of nearly 250 million. It consists of over 13,000 islands, stretching along the equator between Southeast Asia and Australia. There are a significant number of distinct ethnic groups, speaking an estimated 600 languages. The size and diversity of Indonesia's population has presented challenges for uniting the nation and developing a national language.

2. Choosing a National Language

There are two basic ingredients to language planning: language choice and language development (Garvin 1974:75). In post-colonial nations, language choice involves choosing a world language as an official language or selecting one of the languages of the nation as an official and national language, or in Kloss's (1968) terms, choosing between an exoglossic language or an endoglossic language.

The need for such a choice in Indonesia became apparent in the first decades of the twentieth century, as a sense of nationalism grew and Indonesians began looking to the future and an end to more than three centuries of Dutch colonial rule. As the Netherlands East Indies, the islands of Indonesia had been arbitrarily united by a colonial power, and there was no history of unity as a nation to help settle the national language question.

During this period, there were three languages which emerged as possible official languages for the new nation which would be created from the Netherlands East Indies: the colonial language, Dutch; the language of the largest ethnic group, Javanese; and the historic

lingua franca of the archipelago, Malay. Each of these languages had certain claims to a special status.

Dutch, as the colonial language, had certain advantages. It was spoken by the educated elite of Indonesia, and, as such, was the language that the future leaders of the nation felt most comfortable speaking and writing. It was a developed and standardized modern language with an extensive literature and texts in all fields of study. It was also the language of the existing legal system and government administration in the Netherlands East Indies. A Dutch educational expert, C.J. Nieuwenhuis, said in 1925 "...we must institute a language which can represent international culture fully as the general medium for social intercourse. In Indonesia this language will have to be Dutch." (Alisjahbana 1976:38)

However, as an international language, Dutch did not have the same stature as other colonial languages such as English and French, and did not possess the same advantages as these languages as a vehicle of international communication. Therefore, in the words of Dardjowidjojo (1998), "Indonesia found it easier to dispel Dutch than India or Malaysia to dispel English."

At the time of Indonesia's independence, the Javanese made up 47.8% of Indonesia's population, were by far the largest ethnic group, and made up a significant proportion of the educated elite. Javanese was a written language with a rich literary tradition. However, there are social registers in Javanese with completely separate lexicons used depending on the age and social class of the person addressed, which makes the language difficult for outsiders to learn. In the 1930s, a Dutch scholar, C.C. Berg, promoted Javanese as the national language (Alisjahbana 1962:1). A modern commentator, Anwar said that, due to their "enormous influence in the sociocultural and political life of Indonesia," if the Javanese "insisted on the official acceptance of their undisputed superior language throughout the country, they would undoubtedly be in a strong position to do so. (1980:2)" However, such attitudes caused the Javanese to attract a "high level of resentment for their perceived dominance in the political and economic domains" (Wright 2004:85) which would have made any effort to promote Javanese as a national language difficult. It is fortunate that these problems were avoided. Anderson observed "It has often been said (mainly by the Javanese of a later day) that the adoption of Indonesian as the national language was a magnanimous concession on the part of the Javanese near majority. (1966)"

2.1 The Choice of Malay

The Malay language was the native language of less than 5% of the population at the time of independence. Although the language had relatively few native speakers, it served as a lingua franca in much of the archipelago, and had functioned as such for over a thousand years, and possibly more than two thousand years (Paauw 2003). In contrast to Javanese, Malay was regarded as easy to learn. This impression was facilitated by the diglossic character of the language, in which Low Malay, a variety marked by a lack of the morphology of the literary variety and a simpler syntax and lexicon, was picked up quickly by new speakers. The language had spread as a lingua franca through historical empires in the western part of the archipelago, through trade throughout the archipelago, and as a vehicle for the propagation of the Islamic religion (and later the Christian religion in the eastern islands) to the extent that Dutch navigator Huygen van Linschoten remarked in 1614 that Malay was so prestigious in the Orient that for an educated man to be unfamiliar with it was like an educated Dutchman not knowing French (Wright 2004:84).

The strategic geographical location of the Malay homeland, on both sides of the Straits of Malacca, an important trade route, also contributed to the historical importance of the language as a trade language and lingua franca. Partly because Malay was spread through trade, and chiefly in its Low variety, it was seen to be an egalitarian language. It was used for communication between ethnic groups and even became the native language in some of the trade centers of the eastern islands such as Ambon, Manado and Kupang. To a certain extent, it was seen as what Errington (1998) calls an “un-native” language—“an outgroup language without an outgroup.” Finally, because Malay was the native language of a small group, as well as a group that did not have any power in the society, it was not regarded as a threat to the identity of other ethnic groups, in the way that Javanese might have been seen.

During the Dutch colonial era, the role of Malay increased in importance over time. Initially, the Malay language was only used for the propagation of Christianity and as the medium of instruction in Christian schools. Malay soon began to be used as a language of colonial administration, and in 1865 was designated the second official language of administration (Abas 1987:31).

In the 19th century, the use of Malay, as opposed to Dutch, in education continually changed with different administrations. By the end of the 19th century, a native Malay language press had developed. In 1918, there were 40 indigenous newspapers, mostly in Malay. This figure rose to nearly 200 newspapers in 1925 (Abas 1987:35). Concurrently with this development, an increasing number of Indonesians were educated, with Dutch as the most prestigious language of education. The number of places in Dutch language schools was extremely limited, and these places were filled by the indigenous nobility and elite. In 1908, there was a demand for more Dutch language education (Alisjahbana 1976:37). The majority of Indonesians who received any education at all at this time were educated in Malay, though education in Malay was only available at the primary level. Popular organizations with nationalist aspirations began to form in the early 20th century, and while most of these organizations used Dutch as the language of operations, in 1911 *the Sarekat Islam* (Islamic Association) adopted Malay as its official language. A Malay language publishing house, the *Balai Pustaka*, was formed in 1908.

The First Congress of Indonesian Youth was held in 1926, and the future leaders of Indonesia discussed the national language issue. Although the participants made a case for Malay as the language of an independent Indonesia, they discussed the issue in Dutch. Two years later, at the second congress, not only was Malay the language of the congress, but the new name of the language, Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*) was introduced, and the question of which language would be the national language was settled with no debate. The second congress was where the Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*) was proclaimed, which formed the basis for Indonesian nationalism and gave impetus to the fledgling independence movement. The text of the pledge was as follows:

We, the sons and daughters of Indonesia,
declare that we belong to one nation
Indonesia;
We, the sons and daughters of Indonesia,
declare that we belong to one people,
the Indonesian people;
We, the sons and daughters of Indonesia,

*Kami putra dan putri Indonesia
mengaku bertumpah darah yang satu,
tanah tumpah darah Indonesia.
Kami putra dan putri Indonesia
mengaku berbangsa yang satu,
bangsa Indonesia.
Kami putra dan putri Indonesia*

Vow to uphold the nation's language of unity, Indonesian.¹ *menjunjung tinggi bahasa persatuan, bahasa Indonesia.*

The Youth Pledge gave a new prestige to the Malay language, now called Indonesian, although the young nationalist activists continued to use Dutch in their daily communication (Moeliono 1993:137).

The Dutch colonial administration saw the growing nationalism as a threat, and reacted by removing Malay as a regular subject from schools in Java in 1930, and throughout Indonesia in 1932 (Moeliono 1993:130). This move was strongly opposed by the indigenous press (Moeliono 1986:26). The Dutch scholar M.G. Emeis wrote that Malay was “not a language of the people and never will become one. It is an acquired language, the product of study and practice.” (Anwar 1980:4).

The position of Indonesian in the nationalist movement was further solidified when the first language congress for Indonesian was held in 1938. This congress marked the start of formal language planning activities for the development of the Indonesian language.

2.2 The Japanese Occupation

In 1942, the Japanese invaded and occupied Indonesia, an event which Alisjahbana (1962:2) has referred to as the most decisive moment in the development of Indonesian. The Japanese immediately forbade the use of Dutch for any purpose. Their ultimate goal was to institute Japanese as the language of administration and education, but this was not realistic in the short term. The immediate effect was that Indonesian became the sole language of education, administration, and the mass media. Prior to the Japanese occupation, all texts used at the high school and university level were in Dutch. These Dutch texts were promptly translated into Indonesian and new terminology was developed. The language office under the Japanese was headed by S. Takdir Alisjahbana, a noted Indonesian linguist and writer. As Alisjahbana himself noted, under the Japanese, Indonesian “suddenly began to grow at a tremendous pace... a forced growth, designed to enable it to exercise the functions of a mature modern language in the shortest possible time.” (Alisjahbana 1974:400). The Language Office coined 7000 new terms during the period of Japanese occupation (Alisjahbana 1962:29).

2.3 A New Nation: Indonesia

When Indonesian independence was proclaimed on August 17, 1945, after the surrender of the Japanese at the end of World War II, Indonesian was designated the sole national language of the new nation.

The choice of Malay as the new nation's national and official language was in many ways inevitable, and not, as Dardjowidjojo (1998:36) says, a “perhaps daring choice.” Lowenburg gives the following reasons why Indonesian was accepted so readily as a national language: “its central role as a vehicle and symbol of the movement for political independence, its ethnically neutral status in not being the first language of any prominent ethnic group, and the freedom it provides from encoding in all utterances distinctions in rank and status. (1990:114)” Errington adds that the “very un-nativeness [of Malay] has been the key to the success of Indonesian language development. (1998:51)”

¹ The English translation is from Reksodiuro and Sunagio (1974:69)

2.4 The Role of the Vernacular Languages

The position of vernacular languages in Indonesian society is protected by the Indonesian constitution, which states that Indonesian is the national language and that the vernaculars are guaranteed their right to existence and development. The vernaculars appear to be maintaining their position in society, although their domains of use are restricted (Nababan 1991:115), and the rapid spread of Indonesian has not been viewed as a threat to the maintenance of the vernaculars (Nababan 1985:17). In one interesting development, the influence on the national language by the Javanese language has been lamented, as the egalitarian nature of the Indonesian language has been challenged by the development of formalized levels of speech reminiscent of Javanese “social dialects.” This process has been called “kromosation” after the most formal level of Javanese speech, *kromo* (Alisjahbana 1977:122). The vernaculars have had an influence on the development of Indonesian from the start. The nationalist writers who were instrumental in the initial development of Indonesian were mostly of Minangkabau ethnicity, and that language (closely related to Malay) had a strong influence on Indonesian in its early years. Since independence, the major influences have been Javanese, Sundanese and the speech of the capital city, Jakarta (Rubin 1977b:174).

2.5 Indonesian as a Unifying Language

One of the most important factors in the acceptance of Indonesian as a national language was its function as a language of unity, giving Indonesians a sense of identity and enlisting them in the process of building a new nation. The role of the Indonesian language has been inextricably linked with national development. In former president Suharto's independence day speech in 1972, he said “To own a national language entails the love for the national language... Cultivation of our national language... is moreover a part of our national building.” (Kentjono 1986:294)

The potential danger of ethnic divisions and conflicts occurring in such a large and diverse nation made it essential to bring the nation together through a shared sense of nationhood, and the Indonesian language was both the symbol and the vehicle of that unity. Alisjahbana put it this way: “the more [the Indonesian people] learned to express themselves in Indonesian, the more conscious they became of the ties which linked them.” (Alisjahbana 1962:29). It was this sense of unity which was continuously nurtured by Indonesia's first two presidents, Soekarno and Suharto, over the first 53 years of Indonesia's independence. Over time, the sense of national unity grew stronger. In 1980, Anwar posited that “National unity has never been stronger than it is now.” (Anwar 1980:181) Even after the political and economic turbulence since 1998, Wright (2004:92) reports that the unity of Indonesia is still supported by most Indonesians.

Indonesian has had a dual function in Indonesian society, as it is the language of national identity, and also the language of education, literacy, modernization and social mobility (Wright 2004:88).

In 1948, the *Balai Bahasa* (Language Center) was set up to develop the national language and the vernaculars. This office became the *Lembaga Bahasa dan Budaya* (Institute of Language and Culture) in 1952 (Abas 1987:47). In its first 15 years, the *Komisi Istilah* (Committee on Terminology) of the institute coined 321,710 new terms (Alisjahbana 1976:25).

2.6 Education and Literacy

The most important factor in the spread of Indonesian as a national language was the development of Indonesia's educational system and literacy. In 1930, under the Dutch colonial administration, only 30.8% of the population over age 10 was literate (Moeliono 1993: 129). By 1996, after 51 years of independence, 87.26% of the population was literate in Indonesian (Bukhari 1996:28).² This dramatic growth in literacy can be attributed to the increasing availability of primary education throughout the nation, and a higher percentage of the school-age population attending school. Indonesian is the language of instruction from primary school through university throughout the nation, although vernacular languages are optionally allowed in the first three years of primary school in nine regions of the country (Nababan 1991:115). The focus on providing education throughout the nation and encouraging school-age children to attend school through high school has had a tremendous effect on literacy and knowledge of and use of the national language.

The situation at the university level is not quite as positive. An insufficient number of university-level texts have been translated into Indonesian, and most university texts used continue to be in English and Dutch, even now, more than 60 years after independence. As Alisjahbana (1977:117) comments, "A still greater handicap of the Indonesian language as the modern and official national language of the country is that so few books have been published in the decades after independence, especially those books which represent the basic characteristics of modern cultural values, i.e. science, economics, and technology. It is especially this lack of a sufficient number of books dealing with these matters which contributes to the deterioration of academic and intellectual life in Indonesia at the present... [this lack] will prove detrimental to the progress of the Indonesian people in the modern world."

The mass media in Indonesia have also been an effective vehicle for promoting knowledge and use of Indonesian. From the initial programming, which began in 1964, until 1988, all television programming was in the Indonesian language. The vast majority of radio programming, newspapers and magazines are in Indonesian, with a small portion in the vernaculars and a few periodicals in English. The increasing exposure of the elite to English, through television programming and the print media, however, has led to a backlash. The Indonesian Department of Education and Culture has drafted a law which would ban the use of written foreign languages in public, including business names, advertisements, and the print and electronic media (Ward 2006). In another effort to protect Indonesian and Indonesians from the influence of foreign language and culture, a new rule from the Department of Manpower and Transmigration decrees that foreign workers will have to pass a language test in Indonesian in order to get work permits. (Ward 2006). Other regulations are under consideration which would limit foreign media broadcasts and retransmissions in Indonesia.

2.7 Diglossia and Urbanization

The diglossic nature of Indonesian, which was an important ingredient in the spread of Malay as a lingua franca, has led to a widening rift in society, as elite Indonesians use the High in an increasing number of domains, displacing domains traditionally served by the Low, and causing the High to become the language of the elite (Wright 2004:90).

² The language of literacy is not given for the 1930 figure. It is assumed that this figure included those literate in Dutch or Malay. For the 1996 figure, no age limit (i.e., over age 10) is given.

Another feature of Indonesian development since independence which has contributed significantly to the acceptance and spread of the Indonesian language is increasing urbanization. Urban communities, which bring together Indonesians of different ethnic groups in a modern setting, have provided a setting which requires the use of a language of wider communication, a need which is filled by Indonesian. In addition, urban communities have given rise to increasing shift to Indonesian as an L1, as the vernacular languages are abandoned (Nababan 1985:13).

2.8 The success of the National Language Policy

Despite some setbacks in the implementation of the national language, such as in higher education, which have led at least one observer to call it only a “partial success” (Wright 2004:75), the speed with which Indonesian has been accepted as a national language and a symbol of national unity, and the widespread literacy in and knowledge of Indonesian are undeniable. Alisjahbana (1984b:97) states that Indonesian is the fifth most spoken language in the world. Australian scholar Anthony H. Johns (quoted in Anwar 1980:5) says that “The area of thought, experience, and expression that present-day Bahasa Indonesia can serve to communicate with subtlety, grace, and exactness—not to mention pungency if required—is remarkable.” Errington (1998:2) says that “Now Indonesian is a fully viable, universally acknowledged national language.” Abas (1987:3) calls Indonesian “one of the modern world languages” and wonders if it can become a language of wider communication in Southeast Asia to create a regional identity. Moeliono (1994:128) claims that within another generation, the entire nation will be speaking Indonesian.

All of these views reflect a basic truth about the language: no other post-colonial nation has been able to develop and implement a national language with the speed and degree of acceptance which Indonesia has. No other national language in a post-colonial nation is used in as wide a range of domains as Indonesian, a feat made more impressive by the size and ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of Indonesia.

Some observers have reservations about the Indonesian language or its prospects for the future. According to American anthropologist James Peacock, quoted in Anwar (1980:1), “Bahasa Indonesia is a language, peculiarly turgid, humorless, awkward, mechanical, and bereft of emotion or sensuality.” More recently, Wright (2004:83) has said that Indonesia is “an example of the kind of tensions rising within multi-ethnic states between the centripetal efforts of the nation building centre and the centrifugal pressures of independence and autonomy movements.” She mentions the continuing economic crisis, corruption scandals, ethnic tensions, secessionist groups, and the independence of East Timor as factors which have challenged Indonesian cohesion. She (2004:94) says that “where the state has been rejected as authoritarian and/or corrupt, the language with which it is so closely associated could lose some ground.” She adds (2004:92) that “there are signs that Indonesians have ground to a halt on their trajectory towards homogenization and linguistic unification. Indonesian in its iconic role as a symbol of national unity, as facilitator of the national community of communication and as the medium of social mobility may be in retreat.” Finally, she points out (2004:96) that Indonesian “may have reached its apogee and find its domains of use squeezed between the pressures of global English and vernaculars which reconquer some of the areas from which they disappeared during the nation building era.”

It should be noted that all of Wright's reservations are possibilities in the future, yet the predicted decline of Indonesian has not yet begun to occur. It remains to be seen if any of her predictions indeed become reality.

3. The Indonesian Experience Compared to Other Nations of the Region

Dardjowidjojo (1998) compares Indonesia's success in national language planning to the experience in other post-colonial nations such as India, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. He observes that compared to these other nations, "Indonesian is perhaps the only language that has achieved the status of a national language in its true sense (Dardjowidjojo 1998:36)." He points out that English has had a role in post-colonial India and the Philippines due to a fear of ethnic domination by the politically most powerful group (and most numerous, in terms of population). Halim (1971:17) notes that, with regard to the development of national languages in Southeast Asia, "unilateral governmental decisions concerning language usage and standardization without taking into consideration the current linguistic trends in the community are very seldom effective."

To properly compare language policies in Indonesia with other Southeast Asian nations, it is useful to briefly examine the situations in other nations, specifically Malaysia and the Philippines.

3.1 The Experience of Malaysia

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society of a very different sort from that found in Indonesia. While Indonesia, for the most part, consists of ethnic groups speaking related Austronesian languages, and sharing similar cultures and traditions, Malaysia is truly a pluralistic society, with a population, at independence in 1957, consisting of an estimated 35% Chinese, 46% Malay and other indigenous (primarily in the East Malaysian states on the island of Borneo), and 10% Indian, with a corresponding variety of native languages. When Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the Malays, although they only accounted for a little more than a third of the population, were given control of political power in the nation, in recognition of their position as the primary indigenous group in the nation. The National Language Act of 1957 recognized Malay as the national language in West Malaysia (the states in East Malaysia followed suit in the 1970s and 1980s), with English, the colonial language, as the official language in the legal sector. There were four "streams" of education, with schools operated in English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil as the medium of instruction. English and Malay functioned as lingua francas, along with pidginized varieties of Malay.

The objectives of Malaysia's national language policy were to create a national identity and to facilitate national integration through the use of the Malay language. A rapid attempt to develop and standardize the Malay language and to create texts which could be used in the schools was undertaken, with the result that textbooks were written and 70,000 new terms were created by 1967 (Alisjahbana 1976:47). In 1970, Malay replaced English as the medium of instruction in the English-medium schools, and by 1978, all secondary education was in Malay. In 1982, Malay became the sole medium of instruction in the universities (Watson 1983:142).

Although education in Malay (renamed "*Bahasa Malaysia*" or "Malaysian language") was universally implemented, there remained a great deal of resistance from non-Malays toward using the language. There remained a persistent identification of the Malay language with the

Malay ethnic group, and non-Malays saw using Malay as losing their cultural identity. Asmah (1985:22) said “though the national language is the language of the nation and hence everyone should feel it is his language, time has shown that this idea has not really pervaded the Malaysian society, particularly the non-bumiputras [non-indigenous peoples, i.e., the Chinese and Indians]. Asmah (1985:22) provides the following illustrative example from the scholar Tan Chee Beng: “two Chinese of different dialect groups would rather communicate in English or break off contact altogether than speak in Malay which both can use.”

In 1993, as a reaction to a perceived decline in English language proficiency and in the interest of developing skills in science and technology, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohammed, announced that Malaysia would allow English to once again be used as a language of instruction in the universities (Dardjowidjojo 1998:37). English had never disappeared as an important language in society, and Mahathir's announcement reaffirmed the role of English in Malaysian society. Malaysians are reluctant to lose English as a language in society, in view of its role as a language of inter-ethnic communication, and the opportunities it presents to Malaysians to take part in the international community.

3.2 The Experience of the Philippines

The Philippines, in the years before it gained its independence, chose Tagalog as its national language in 1937. At that time, a continuing role for English was also envisioned (Sibayan 1994:223-224). The Philippines were a colony of the United States from 1898 until the Japanese occupation during World War II, and briefly after the war as well. Tagalog is the native language of 21% of the population (more than any other native language in the Philippines), including the areas around the seat of political power in Manila. After independence, opposition to Tagalog by speakers of other languages began to build (Constantino 1981:30), particularly in the areas speaking Cebuano and Hiligaynon, which are also Austronesian languages of the Philippine group. English has maintained a role in education (alongside Tagalog) as well as functioning as the primary language of government and the mass media (far more newspapers are published in English than Tagalog). In the schools, vernaculars are used for the first three years of primary education, after which the social sciences are taught in Tagalog and science and mathematics are taught in English. English is also the language of international communication and gives Filipinos access to international scientific and technical knowledge (Sibayan 1994:236).

Sibayan (1994:221) identifies three topics of Filipino language planning: 1) maintaining English to partake of the world's knowledge, 2) making Tagalog the language of unity and identity and developing the Tagalog language, and 3) preserving the vernacular languages of the Philippines.

In 1971, opposition to Tagalog at the Constitutional Convention led to the removal of the language as the national language, although it has continued to function in this role, a move which Sibayan (1994:251) attributes to “jealousy of the advantages that [speakers of other languages] feel are given to Tagalog speakers.” There was a call for a new language to be called “Filipino” which would be a fusion of all the languages of the Philippines. This eventually was interpreted as an “enriched” Tagalog (Smolicz and Nical 1997:340). In response, the governor of Cebu “declared his full support for Filipino, provided this label referred to Cebuano.” (Smolicz and Nical 1997:341).

Although there are regular calls for an increase in the English content in education, the system in the Philippines has created a relatively stable system, in which most Filipinos are

proficient in three languages (their native tongue, English, and Tagalog), although resistance to Tagalog is still a factor, and it cannot be said that Tagalog is a true language of unity.

3.3 Comparison

In both the Philippines and Malaysia, a major world language, English, has a functional role in education and in society. In both countries, English serves as an inter-ethnic lingua franca, as well as a tool for international communication, giving access to the learning and literature of the world.

By contrast, in Indonesia, English does not have a functional role. English is taught as a foreign language from the fourth grade of primary school through university. However, in the words of Dardjowidjojo (1998:45) "The majority of Indonesians, including many highly educated language scholars, do not master English well enough to absorb scientific materials written in English. Their oral ability is worse." Meanwhile, Dutch has almost vanished entirely. Alisjahbana comments (1984a:54) "Indonesia is now facing difficulties in the development of its universities and learning because not enough reading material is available in the Indonesian language, while the command of English, German, etc. is very low." Elsewhere, he laments (Alisjahbana 1976:117) that this has led to the "hopeless situation of Indonesian higher education." As a result, Rubin (1977a:160) points out that teachers can't follow developments in their field, are unable to communicate with foreign scholars, can't be sent abroad to acquire new knowledge, and students complain that readings in English are too hard.

Alisjahbana (1977:118) offers the most radical solution: "If the Indonesians are not able to make of the Indonesian language a mature modern language in the shortest time possible, it will prove to be an obstacle for the modernization of Indonesian society and culture, and a shift to the English language in Indonesian secondary and higher education might be advisable." Alisjahbana's comment is evidence that, at a certain level, Indonesia feels the absence of a world language in the society, despite the success of the development of the national language.

A government policy established in 1990 which allowed Indonesian students to study in bilingual schools in order to promote English language ability has created a small elite who are proficient in English and have an advantage in the job market. This works against vertical integration and creates resentment. Wright (2004:92) says "the children of the elite group are increasingly differentiated from the rest by their linguistic repertoire." By contrast, "most high school graduates [from state schools] are unable to communicate in English although we have been teaching them for six years." (Soejoto 2000)

4. Language Planning

The role of a world language in society is the chief difference between the linguistic situation in Indonesia and the situations in Malaysia and Singapore, and is a direct result of language planning in each of these nations. Garvin (1974:72) provides a list of properties, functions and attitudes which characterize a standard language and which are factors in language planning. The "symbolic" functions which Garvin mentions include the unifying function, the separatist function, and the prestige function. Garvin defines these as follows: "the standard language serves to unify a larger speech community in spite of dialect differences; it serves to separate it from another language...; it bestows prestige upon the speech community that has been able to develop one." A national language is, according to Garvin, characterized by the unifying and

separatist functions “provided the national language has arisen ‘naturally’ or has been chosen judiciously by the authorities.” To these functions, he adds a function he calls the participatory function, which Garvin (1974:76) defines as “the function of the language to facilitate participation in world-wide cultural developments. In the case of an exoglossic official language, it may well be assumed that this function will be predominant.”

Garvin further says that “In the technological realm the participatory function predominates: a type of higher education is required for which a world language is most practical in terms of the availability of textbooks, instructional personnel, etc.”

Garvin (1974:76) points out that the participatory function can be in conflict with the separatist function and that in the literary realm, the desire to participate in world-wide developments will be secondary to the search for cultural identity.

In the case of Indonesia, the unifying function takes precedence over all others, and has caused Indonesia to reject the participatory function, for the most part, in its efforts to create a cultural identity. To a large extent, this emphasis has been successful, in that it has allowed Indonesia to unite a large and diverse nation and give it a strong identity and a language of wider communication within its borders.³ The lack of a language fulfilling the participatory function has been most evident at the level of higher education, but it could be said that it has also had an effect on Indonesia’s participation in the political and economic developments of the international community as well, and may have been an obstacle to more rapid economic development in Indonesia.

In Malaysia, there has been a conflict between the unifying function and the participatory function. Social factors have kept the unifying function of Malay from being fully applied, and have kept Malaysia from being able to abandon the participatory function of English.

A similar situation applies in the Philippines, where resistance to Tagalog has kept the nation from using the national language to build a national identity. In both Malaysia and the Philippines, a national identity has indeed arisen, but does not include the national language as its symbol or vehicle.

Table 1 below shows the role of Garvin’s functions in these three nations.

Table 1

	Indonesia	Malaysia	The Philippines
Unifying function	+	—	—
Separatist function	+	—	—
Prestige function	+	+	+
Participatory function	—	+	+

Table 2 examines the language(s) used in various domains discussed in this paper.

³ Moeliono (1986) claims that Indonesian fulfills the participatory function, since Indonesian serves as a language of wider communication throughout the nation. This would appear to be an application of the concept which misses its primary meaning.

Table 2

	Indonesia	Malaysia	The Philippines
Domestic LWC	I	M, E	T, E
Government	I	M, E	T, E
Education	I	M, E	T, E
Mass Media	I	M, E, C	T, E

I = Indonesian, E = English, M = Malay, C = Chinese, T = Tagalog

5. Conclusion

It can be seen that Indonesia has been successful in implementing its national language policy. This fact can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the choice of Malay as the national language, although it may have been an inevitable choice in view of the historic role of Malay in the archipelago, carried with it certain advantages which had far reaching consequences. Most importantly, Malay was never viewed by the peoples of Indonesia as a threat to their ethnic identity. Since it was not the language of a numerically large group, and was not the language of a group which held political or economic dominance, it was not viewed as a threat to the cultural identity of other ethnic groups. This allowed the new Indonesian language to be used as a vehicle for uniting the diverse peoples of Indonesia, giving them a national identity.

By contrast, in both Malaysia and the Philippines, the language chosen as the national language was seen as a threat by other groups in the society. In Malaysia, the Malay language was identified closely with the Malay people (and, by extension, the religion of Islam), the ethnic group which controlled the political power of the nation, and was felt to be a threat to the ethnic and cultural identity of the Chinese and Indians, who make up nearly half of the nation's population. The existence in Malaysia of a colonial language, English, which was also the world's most important language, meant that these groups could use a third language as a language of wider communication and as a link to the rest of the world. Malay, the national language, has become, for the non-Malays, merely a language of education, and has little other relevance in their lives.

Similarly, in the Philippines, Tagalog, the national language, was also the language of the largest ethnic group (though still only comprising 21% of the population) and the language of the ethnic group which was politically the most powerful. As a result, Tagalog met resistance as a national language. As in Malaysia, the existence of English as an important language in the society gave Filipinos who are not native speakers of Tagalog another language which could be used for inter-ethnic communication, with the added benefit that this language was also the means of communicating with the rest of the world.

Despite the view of some observers (such as Dardjowidjojo 1998:37), it is unlikely that the presence of English in Malaysian and Filipino societies has led to the lack of success of the national language policies in those nations. It is more likely that the resistance of the people to a national language which they perceive is being forced upon them by a dominant ethnic group is the ultimate cause of the lack of success of the national language as a unifying element.

Indonesia's lack of a world language has had a negative effect on the quality of higher education, and has possibly had a negative effect economically as well, as many Indonesians are unable to communicate with the world. The perceived economic advantages that knowledge of English provides in Malaysia and the Philippines are unavailable to most Indonesians.

Indonesia's national language policy has been effective in uniting the nation, creating a strong national identity and promoting education and literacy throughout the nation. The only area in which Indonesia's policy can be seen to have come up short is in terms of the participatory function, in that Indonesia does not have a language which enables it to function effectively in the world. With improved foreign-language education, this shortcoming too can be overcome without any need to sacrifice the impressive achievements of Indonesia's national language policy.

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