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ABSTRACT

Two basic issues underlie problems associated with the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia in the Indonesian primary schools. The first involves language standardization and deciding what form of the language will be taught. The criteria of understanding and communication are involved and such features as pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, syllabification, and grammar have varying degrees of importance with respect to these criteria. The second basic issue is the relationship between the national language and the regional language. Should the national language be taught as a first language or as a second language? If the regional language is quite similar to the national language, the differences between the two might be underestimated or ignored: there is a risk that instruction in the national language may be regarded as merely a process of correcting usage in the regional language. (VM)

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A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT STANDARDIZATION AND THE TEACHING OF BAHASA INDONESIA IN SEKOLAH DASAR (PRIMARY SCHOOLS)

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May I first offer my congratulations to the organising committee for raising the problem of how Indonesian is being taught in the primary schools. Since language is the major tool of communication and thinking as well as being an important tool in socialisation, the teaching of a language of instruction must be done with care.[2] And since Bahasa Indonesia is the language of the schools and the schools are basically charged with the teaching of this language as well as with the improvement of the processes of communication, thinking, and socialisation, the importance of the language teaching process is even more critical. That is, through improving skills in language arts one can expect an improvement in thinking processes and communication processes. The way in which a language is taught may also strongly influence the selfimage of an individual, his relation to his peers and superiors, and eventually his creative process (both his ability to be creative as well as the way in which he is creative). For all of these important reasons, the committee is to be congratulated for having recognised the need to examine the process of teaching Indonesian. Ignoring the process may have considerable unfortunate but avoidable negative results. By focusing on the importance of language arts both in the development and growth of the individual and in his integration into society such negative results may largely be mitigated.

What I have said thus far is that every country must take seriously the teaching of the major language of its schools. It must do so because language serves as a means

of communication between peoples--their thoughts must be clearly expressed so that understanding and not confusion and distrust can result.

Language is an important tool in the creative process, more particularly in the process of thinking scientific thoughts. If the command of a language is not adequate and fully developed, the results of thinking may be deficient and disappointing.[3] Language serves as a means of socialisation and unification, it is through language that we learn to be good members of a society and a nation. If language teaching is inadequate, students will become discouraged and perhaps less than desirable members of their society. For all of these reasons, the language arts are critical and proper attention must be given to them.

Now I must confess that I am not an expert in Bahasa Indonesia, nor an expert in the teaching of Indonesian in the primary schools, I am frankly here to learn about the problems which obtain in the teaching of Indonesian in elementary schools; more particularly I am interested to find out what kind of information is needed in order to begin to solve some of these problems. In this session I would only like to raise some questions about Indonesian and its teaching which seem to me to be important to consider when curricula are prepared, when methodology is established, when textbooks are written, and when teachers are trained.

Some of the problems which educators here face in regard to Indonesian come from the fact that as a national language it is still new and still developing. The schools have played and will continue to play a very important role in the direction that language or at least the formal or "high" style of that language will go.[4] Other of the problems come from the relation of the regional language to Indonesian. The way in which

Indonesian is taught depends on your conception of the relationship between the second language, namely Indonesian, and the mother tongue. We will speak to these two problems this morning. In illustrating the first, I will draw on material which is being collected by myself, Drs. Eddy Masinambow of LIPI and Drs. Harimurti of Universitas Indonesia. In illustrating the second, I will offer an example from what I think is a similar problem which the United States has just begun to face.

The first problem that teachers of Indonesian must face is "what to teach?" I suppose that most of you would respond with "good Indonesian, of course." Or perhaps you would say "correct Indonesian." But what is good Indonesian? Is it the language spoken by educated people--all educated people all the time?[5] Or is it the language spoken by well-known people, such as actors or politicians or radio announcers or government leaders? Do they speak this language in all circumstances or only on ceremonial occasions? Or is it the language of the people of a particular region, city or social class? On the other hand, we could take a different set of criteria. We could ask, is "good Indonesian" that which is written by the newspapers or that written by outstanding literary writers?[6] Or is it that variety of the language which we find represented in the older grammars and dictionaries?[7] Do you feel that all educators would agree that there is a "good Indonesian?" Would all educators all over Indonesia agree that there is a single "good Indonesian?"

Maybe what people mean by "good or correct Indonesian" is that which is used on formal or ceremonial occasions. But then we still need to clarify whether we mean the spoken or the written formal. If the former is meant, we must still ask whose formal language.

And would all people in all regions agree that a particular passage is good formal language? Another question which I will raise later is, even if we can agree on what formal or ceremonial Indonesian is, is this the only kind of language which we want to teach in school?

Then again what people mean by good Indonesian might be "standard Indonesian." Before pursuing this possibility we might consider what is meant by standard language. It often means that there are certain norms which, at any one point in time, are unchallenged as to their overall correctness. These norms often arise in response to a desire for a more common communication framework. The norms are available for use whenever the appropriate situation arises, such as those which are considered formal or ceremonial by a given group of speakers.[8]

Returning to the Indonesian situation, we need to clarify what people in this country mean by standard Indonesian. Does it mean standard pronunciation? That is, do people in most regions of Indonesia agree that a particular way of pronouncing the language is appropriate in specified circumstances--say in public or on the radio or at parties at the palace? Such a situation does obtain in Germany. That is, there is one set of understandings about how to pronounce German despite recognised regional differences. There is one standard way of pronouncing what is called "High German." It is noteworthy that what the Swiss call "High German" does not refer to the same set of norms which obtain in Germany; yet interestingly enough they continue to label their norm as "High German", too.

It is worth asking whether a standard pronunciation is really essential for effective communication. In the United States we have not had a standard pronunciation up to now (although we do have some strong ideas about substandard pronunciation!). I think we may be headed for a standard due to the wide-spread dissemination of particular

linguistic variety by mass communications but this has not been deliberately enforced by the school system. How should we go about answering the question as to whether you need a standard pronunciation or not? First of all, you might ask, is there a standard or not? If not, should the schools try to define and promote such a standard? One of the functions of a standard pronunciation is to prevent misunderstanding. Another is to identify a person as being educated or as belonging to particular social class. (The RP dialect of England is a classic example of this function.) It is up to the educational system to decide which of the several functions which a standard pronunciation may serve is important in their particular situation. Certainly, of high priority must be that of communication and understanding. Indonesian educators must consider the extent to which the present varieties of Indonesian impede communication. If these varieties do not impede communication, educators may perhaps not want to spend their time and effort at this point in time on this particular problem.

Does standard Indonesian refer to spelling and punctuation and syllabification? Here I would suggest that standardisation appears to be quite useful. That is, since writing is a convention which is largely learned in school and since it is important in the communication function, it is convenient to have one system. Indeed, lack of attention to punctuation may lead to misunderstanding or at least delay comprehension. I myself have considerable difficulty at times reading The Djakarta Times because the printer does not divide English syllables in the standard way. And in addition he does not put a hyphen to indicate that the rest of the word is on the next line. I must often read an entire sentence over to see what is meant; an unfortunate waste of time. I understand from my colleagues here that little attention is paid to syllabification and punctuation

in many Indonesian newspapers. Now the reason for paying attention is not to be pedantic, but rather to enhance communication. Of course, there will always be some variation in spelling but the schools should try to use that system which promotes communication and best reflects the modern language.

I should not leave this point without noting that although the value of a standard spelling and punctuation for communication seems high, it may not always be simple to achieve. Spelling reforms often arouse sentiments of group identification or may serve as sounding board for expressing political views. In such cases, effecting a change or reform may prove quite difficult and the decision to promote such a change should be based upon a comparison of the degree of misunderstanding extant against the costs of effecting such a change (cf. Rubin and Wahjono, in preparation). Should the schools promote standard grammar? In speaking of grammar, we are speaking basically about two kinds of rules--rules of word formation and rules regulating the relation of words to each other.[9] In trying to decide about the role of the schools here, I would first ask whether there are standard rules of word formation--rules such as may apply to affixation (or derivation) or to inflection (or reduplication).[10] Secondly, I would ask whether these rules are used for standard written or for standard spoken Indonesian.[11] Thirdly, I would ask what the basis of agreement on these rules is. Are they found in old but still revered grammar books or is there common agreement in usage or do people look to certain scholars for their norm? If there is no common agreement on what the standard grammar should be, should the educators attempt to promote one set of rules over another? Again, it seems useful to bring our criteria of communication and understanding to bear. Some variation in word formation probably will not impede communication[12] but if every group has its own system then

such variation may well impede communication. In considering the rules regulating the relation of words to each other, often called syntax, it seems that cues from other items in the sentence are not as helpful as in word formation. Additionally, since the number of syntactic rules is much more limited, it would appear that if there is much confusion in syntax, communication can readily be hindered. Thus, a standard syntax needs to have a high priority in language arts materials.

Finally, what about the standardisation of vocabulary? Here I would ask what kind of vocabulary--the language used in the kitchen or in daily use? Or the vocabulary used for teaching technical concepts? I doubt that schools would find it worth the cost of trying to control the daily language of its students. Additionally, one might wonder what the benefits to be gained from such an effort might be. On the other hand, it would seem to be worth the effort to standardise technical terminology since exactness is necessary in this type of communication and regionalisms may impede the spread of information.

I have raised a lot of questions about "what to teach in the schools." May I suggest some strategies about how to go about answering these questions. First of all you need to know the extent of standardisation which currently exists in the country. Secondly, you need to decide whether you want and need a standard pronunciation, spelling, grammar, terminology. Then you need to decide which of these is most urgent ; which of these is most worth spending your time and energy on. In order to achieve a standard in the area of language you decide is important, it would be useful to create standard reference works, such as a standard pronouncing dictionary, a standard dictionary (which indicates spelling, pronunciation, syllabification), a standard reference grammar or a standard style manual. Finally, textbooks should be produced, written in accordance with the above standards for the level needed.

Two cautions occur to me. First of all, since language is always changing, having once achieved a standard or having set a standard does not mean that this is fixed for once and for all. Standardisation and norms of good usage will probably change through time and changes in what is taught must adjust to these problems. In many standard language communities, it is common to have administrative routines which keep up with the changing standard--by recording, in some cases creating, and disseminating the changes.[13] A second caution which I think needs a great deal of attention is the following: although I have been talking about the areas in which a standard might be useful and this might include several kinds of social situations, I would not recommend that the schools stick to the standard as the only kind of language permissible or correct. In general, the standard can be seen to be used in the more formal kinds of activities. If we are to encourage full development of creative potential, I would suggest that students be made aware of the many stylistic possibilities and made aware of when they are appropriately used. I would venture to say that too great emphasis on one style may hamper creativity.

The second question which I have raised today is how to teach Indonesian. I suggested earlier that this depended in part on how one saw the relation of the regional languages to Indonesian. In discussing methodology, the first question I would ask is whether the language is a first language or a second for its users. If it is a first language, one technique may be used; whereas, if it is a second, a different technique might be required. It seems to me that this is a problem in Indonesia just because most people correctly feel that the languages of Indonesia are quite closely related, and are aware that it does not take a lot of time to begin to understand Indonesian if one's first language is a regional one. All of this is quite true. But the problem still remains

as to how to help students gain good control of the national language.

Sometimes people can be fooled by similarities into thinking that there are few or no difficulties to be faced or cooled as to what the nature of these difficulties are. For years we assumed that lower-class black Americans were speaking sub-standard or bad English. As a result the method of teaching them was to: (1) speak "good" English to them--assuming they understood and (2) bawl them out as long as they continued to use their own variety of English--especially by indicating that they were very stupid not to learn standard English. The result of this process was very expensive both in human time and energy. Blacks often did not learn standard English until about the 8th or 9th grade. In addition, the negative sanctions which they received only reinforced the negative image which Negro students had of themselves. That is, the technique of teaching language only helped to increase the inferiority complex of the Negroes. The point I want to make here is that people can be fooled by linguistic similarities, thus their teaching methods may not be appropriate to enhancing learning: indeed they may have a negative effect on the student's image of himself.

In the case of the Negroes, although their vocabulary is often similar, the underlying grammar rules are different. Thus when a black speaker says "I he sick" this is judged by white standard English speakers to be bad English. When a white speaker so judges this utterance, he has indicated two areas of misjudgment or ignorance. First of all, he has shown that he does not know that the word "be" has a different function in Negro speech than in standard English. He has linguistically misjudged the utterance. Secondly, with this single linguistic scale, he then infers some socially meaningful intent on the part of the "sub-standard"

speaker. The person making a judgment of bad English, infers that the sub-standard speaker wanted to speak standard English but just could not do so--he did not quite make the system. This is again a faulty judgment, this time of a social nature. When the techniques of teaching standard English are based on this kind of judgment, the results are both poor language teaching methods as well as negative psychological results.

Now returning to the Indonesian teaching situation, while in Indonesia the social judgment made in regard to poor Indonesian speech may not be as strong as in the Negro case, the linguistic judgment may still obtain. That is, because of the similarities between the regional language and Indonesian, the differences may be ignored or underestimated. The teaching techniques may never focus on the differences and use positive reinforcement of these rules. Instead by assuming great similarity, teachers may use only negative sanctions: "Don't use such and such." This negative approach is a wasteful, time-consuming process. It may create psychological complexes and does not reinforce good habits but rather punishes bad ones. An additional error may be to assume that the only difference between the regional languages and Indonesian is that of vocabulary and/or pronunciation. Thus, the structural differences Indonesian has when compared with regional languages may never be clarified, taught and reinforced.[14] Our point here is that the linguistic relationship between the regional languages and the national language must be clarified so that proper teaching techniques can be employed instead of merely corrective ones.

I have raised with you today a number of problems--some relating to what to teach in an Indonesian class and some relating to how to teach Indonesian. It is my estimate that the problems of what to teach will

increase as the national language grows to be the major language of science within Indonesia as well as the lingua franca of the nation. Thus, the responsibility for proper teaching will become more and more important. It seems most appropriate that at this point in the development of the country and the language that serious attention be given to what is taught and how it is to be taught.

NOTES

1. This paper was written while the author was conducting research in Indonesia as the Project Coordinator of the Language Planning Processes Project. This cross-national research project is directed by Joshua Fishman and Charles Ferguson, administered by Standford University and funded by Ford Foundation. I am endebted to my colleagues, Björn Jernudd and Anton Moeliono for their stimulating comments in the revision of this paper.
2. Language also serves to convey both social and emotional meaning and as a result of these functions too, it must be taught with care.
3. Although linguistic science has long taught that every child can learn his own language, it also seems true that not all children have equal command of their own language. Householder 1969:999, points out that there is "a dubious claim formerly made by some taxonomists, that all speakers of a given language 'master' it equally, that there are no differences in linguistic skill." It seems clear that one important role which the schools can perform is to help develop linguistic skills so that ideas can be expressed more succintly, more fully and more clearly.
4. For an indication of the relation of the schools to the learning of Indonesian, see Murray Thomas and Winarno Surachmad 1969. For a definition of "high" language, see Ferguson 1959.
5. The assumption that a given individual has a single style has been fully and finally demolished by the recent work of sociolinguists. As well, the assumption that a class of people all share the same set of styles has been demonstrated to be false.

6. The term "good" needs further clarification. When a person says that a given individual writes good Indonesian does he mean that his use of grammar is acceptable or appropriate or does he mean that his style is effective?
7. In other countries, parts of such a variety might be found in style manuals.
8. I am indebted to Björn Jernudd for help in clarifying current usage of the term "standardisation," and for a stimulating discussion of the most useful definition of the term.
9. Of course I am aware that in the current theoretical discussions of linguistics, the term grammar may be defined in many other ways and include many different things. However, for our purposes here it is useful to discuss at least these two aspects of grammar which all would agree the term includes.
10. Many written Indonesian reference works agree on the rules for the application of the nominal formative (peng-, per-, ke-, /± -an/) and the verbal formatives (meng-, ber-, di-, ter-, se- /± -kan, -i/). There is, however, disagreement on the combinations permitted of particular prefixes. An example is whether it is possible to say:
(1) diberhentikan "was/is/will be fired/stopped"
(2) dimengerti "was/is/will be understood"
Both combine two prefixes /di-/ plus /ber-/ or /meng-/ which some feel is not correct. Those who feel these two forms are incorrect use the form dihentikan for the first and dipahami for the second. This grammatical point has not yet been standardised. Another grammatical point, as yet unstandardised is where to attach the suffix -an in the discontinuous morph per- + -an when there is a double stem. The discussion revolves

around whether to say:

pertanggung djawaban "responsibility"

or

pertanggungan djawab

11. For example, standard written Indonesian requires proper application of prefixes and affixes, whereas, standard spoken permits their deletion, e.g.:

Standard written: Anak saja sudah bersekolah.
"My child is already in school."

Standard spoken: Anak saja sudah sekolah.

12. Unless these variations represent important and conflicting values for the groups involved, in which case communication of content may indeed be hindered.

13. Thanks again are due my colleague Björn Jernudd for calling my attention to the fact that standard language communities have bureaucratised the procedures for standardisation.

14. Although I have not made a study of the interference of regional languages on Indonesian, one of my colleagues offered the following example of both lexical and structural interference from Javanese in Indonesian:

The Javanese expression:

Wong wis awan, kok durung mulih.

(the fact that already late, why not yet come home)

"Although it is already late, why hasn't he/she come home yet?" is often translated into Indonesian as:

Orang sudah siang, kok belum pulang.

(people already late, -- not yet come home)

Here the word orang through incorrect analogy with wong which means "people" and can also be used as a conjunction in Javanese is used in Indonesian where the term orang only means "people" and is not used as a conjunction. Correctly stated the Indonesian phrase should be:

Sudah siang, (+ mengapa) belum pulang djuga.

Indonesian does not require the conjunction but Javanese speakers feel that the sentence is somehow empty or shallow without it.

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