

## The Role and Significance of Law No. 24 / 2009 and its Implications for the Javanese Language: A Case Study in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Calls for more holistic research, especially ones that deal with law and its implications for local languages, have increased in recent years. The present study used narrative research design to investigate the beliefs and experiences of one participant about his role in preserving a local language in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In other words, the purpose of this study was to describe the life of the participant, collect and tell stories about the participant's life, and then write narratives of his experiences by proposing two research questions: (1) how can the possible impacts of Law No.24 / 2009 on Javanese language be managed? and (2) what specific strategies have the potential to result in more effective Javanese language preservation and promotion in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia? The findings revealed that revitalization and development of Javanese language and literature and also provincial government responses to Javanese language and script crisis could be considered as solutions. More specifically, fostering cultural activities with stakeholders in both academic and non-academic domains was the way to prevent the possible negative effects of Law No. 24 / 2009 on Javanese language. It was also observed that initiating an Act could be the best strategy to revitalize Javanese language and script. These findings suggest that Center for Language and the provincial government have an important concern to respect Javanese language and culture.

### INTRODUCTION

Law No. 24 / 2009 on the national flag, language, emblem, and anthem has several main functions and one of them is requiring the use of Indonesian in a wide range of sectors, such as law, diplomacy, business, and education. This leads to the domination of Indonesian in daily practice. More specifically, the Indonesian government attempts to strengthen the position of the national language at an international level. In Article 44 (1), for instance, it is hoped that Indonesian would become more internationally recognized, for example by publishing E- dictionary for ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) languages and developing BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing / Teaching Indonesian to Speakers of Other Languages*).

It seems that Law No. 24 / 2009 provides bigger chances for the national language to be known and used. It is possible, however, that local languages, such as Javanese with a large speaker population, considered as the cornerstone of Javanese culture, is endangered. It is estimated that on average, the total number of speakers of the language has been decreased in the last decades. Currently, Javanese youth and children even are losing their ability to use the language. In other words, Javanese has never been placed as priority

among its young generations. Furthermore, Drake (1989, as cited in Nurani, 2015, p. 5) argues that although 50% of the national population is Javanese people, the largest ethnical groups in Indonesia, 40.5% of them use Javanese in everyday greetings, conversation, or other unique ways for habits.

As this study focuses on Law No.24 / 2009 and its implications for Javanese language, the research questions are as follows: (1) How can the possible impacts of Law No.24 / 2009 on Javanese language be managed? (2) What specific strategies have the potential to result in more effective Javanese language preservation and promotion in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia? This study aims to analyze the attempt of Center for Language and the provincial government of Yogyakarta, Indonesia to overcome possible negative impacts of Law No. 24 / 2009 on Javanese language. This study addresses, therefore, two major issues of significance. The first one is its results will enable the Indonesian society to learn how to preserve their culture and values, especially local languages within their heritage. The second significant issue relates to strategies that best suit Javanese language maintenance in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Yogyakarta has been chosen as a location for conducting research as despite being

part of the Republic of Indonesia, certain autonomies are still given to the monarchy. Among the country's 34 provinces, Yogyakarta is one of the two provinces granted as special region status and the sultanate continues to serve as a cradle of Javanese civilization. In addition, Law No. 13 / 2012 on the special status of Yogyakarta explains the right of this province to develop Javanese culture, including Javanese language and script.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The early studies in Javanese have identified the characteristics of Javanese culture, especially the way members of a community use Javanese, code choice in conversations among the Javanese and between Javanese and non-Javanese migrants in a low income neighborhood and a middle-income neighborhood of Semarang, Central Java. Goebel's study (2005), for instance, showed that symmetrical exchanges were the norm in these two neighborhoods, whereas Nadar (2007) concluded that concealing the feelings, avoiding hurting interlocutors, showing indirectness, and lowering ourselves whenever considered necessary are known as characteristics and reflections of the Javanese culture. Furthermore, how the speakers of Javanese in New Caledonia attempt to save their language in the midst of foreign languages domination, such as French, was scientifically discussed (e.g. Subiyantoro, 2014). The results revealed that linguistic hybridization became one of the characteristics of Javanese language in New Caledonia.

Saddhono & Rohmadi (2014), on the other hand, have emphasized on the use of both Indonesian and Javanese languages in the learning process in primary schools in Surakarta, Central Java. Their investigation revealed that the use of Indonesian at the primary schools was still affected by Javanese as the mother tongue and the daily language of people in Surakarta. Gumilar (2015) was interested in examining the role of the Indonesian government and analyzing the importance of Javanese, Sundanese, and Dayak languages teaching and promotion programs in order to maintain regional languages of the country. His study concluded that the situation vary from region to another due to the differences in character, number of speakers, level of importance in socio-politics and economics advantage of each language are the problems faced by the government in the attempt to revitalize these three regional languages through education sector.

Researchers were also interested in analyzing the history of language policy in Indonesia and its implications for local languages, including Javanese (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014). Their investigation found that the domination of Indonesian endangered Javanese, a local language with over 80 million speakers. On the other hand, Nirmala's study (2015) showed that the use of Javanese cultural words in the local newspapers to represent festivals, rituals, Javanese way of life, social activities, actions, feelings, thoughts, behavior, and experience are considered as a model for language maintenance. In 2016, Abdullah examined local wisdom in the Javanese proverbs used by the Javanese community in ex-residency Surakarta, Central Java. Johari & Nazari (2019) have gone further to state that Javanese language

is not priority for Javanese youth in Malaysia due to social lifestyle and surrounding environment. This study showed that young generations of Javanese migrants in Malaysia believed that their mother tongue is outdated. Thus, participating in culture ceremony and mingling with the older generations are essential for young generations in the attempt to enhance their Javanese language skills, connect with their Javanese roots, and create a sense of pride in their identity.

Drawing from the above discussion, it can be concluded that the previous studies have emphasized more on Javanese language maintenance and ignored issues of Law No. 24 / 2009. This study will, therefore, be able to fill this gap. Analyzing the implications of the law for local languages, especially Javanese, is essential. Direct interview with an expert to interpret possible negative effects and determine strategies to manage such impacts is vital. This phenomenon needs to be framed within a narrative research design to provide thick description, which leads to a valid conclusion.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The primary method adopted to answer the research questions was a narrative research study using semi-structured interview with the Head of Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The interviewee has agreed to be mentioned in this study. According to Elçi and Devran (2017, pp. 38 – 39), the term 'narrative' has a similar meaning with the words 'story' or 'history' and commonly used in qualitative research to collect stories or personal experiences of participants. The stories gathered then could be valuable sources for researchers to understand participants' behavior, actions, and feelings in a more comprehensive context and natural setting. On the other hand, semi-structured interview used in this study refers to a type of interview with no rigid rules, topics and questions prepared by researchers. Such an interview is not controlled by a specific set of detailed questions and its implementation is flexible, depending on how the interviewee responds to the given questions (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 89).

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection included two phases, namely (1) initial interview via email and phone with the Head of Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, obtain informed consent, and schedule for interview; (2) a 60 minute face to face interview to gain and explore information about the possible impacts of Law No. 24 / 2009 on the Javanese language and obtain insights into the most appropriate strategies that need to be applied to the Special Region of Yogyakarta, for managing such impacts. The interview data were digitally recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed through coding and classified based on themes and categories.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from interview with Mr. Pardi Suratno, the Head of Center for Language of the Special Region of

Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which can be categorized in two major themes, namely (1) revitalization and development of Javanese language and literature and (2) provincial government responses to Javanese language and script crisis are described below.

### Revitalization and Development of Javanese Language and Literature

The interviewee explains that Center for Language works with *Badan Pengembangan Bahasa dan Perbukuan* (Ministry of Education and Culture's National Agency for Language Development and Books) and is structured under the Ministry of Education and Culture; a government ministry with one of its roles is organizing the management of culture within the Indonesian government. In Article 42 (1) and (2) of Law No. 24 / 2009, it is explained that provincial government and Center for Language have responsibility to preserve, develop, and revitalize local languages as part of Indonesian cultural heritage. However, the interviewee states:

*Not all provinces have a single local language like Yogyakarta. Another problem is that the number of human resources to preserve and develop local languages is very limited. For example Papua, the largest and easternmost province of Indonesia, is home to many local languages and therefore there is no 'the biggest one'. Consequently, there are no local languages teachers. This is the reason why Center for Language in each province tends to focus more on Indonesian language development rather than on local languages preservation. (Mr. Pardi Suratno, Interview).*

The interviewee maintains, however, that local languages preservation and revitalization is very essential. Mr. Pardi Suratno further explains that there is a major challenge faced by Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This organization's capacity for effective Javanese language and literature development and revitalization is constrained by its limited budget allocations from the government. Some activities, therefore, have been organizing on a regular basis, in collaboration with language activists, researchers, and cultural communities. Mr. Pardi Suratno states:

*Conducting research on Javanese language and literature, organizing *tembang macapat* (Javanese traditional song) exhibition, a bimonthly program collaborating with more than 40 communities, developing *Bengkel Sastra Jawa* (Javanese literature workshop) which has been established since 1992, and providing Javanese literary award, can be considered as our endeavor to preserve Javanese culture. (Mr. Pardi Suratno, Interview).*

Indeed, cultural activities initiated by Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta proved that this organization has a substantial concern with Javanese language as a local identity. It is generally agreed that there is a strong correlation between language and identity.

It is mentioned earlier that language preservation, including Javanese, is related to both an academic and a non-academic concern. On the other hand, Article 29 (1) of Law

No. 24 / 2009 states that the use of Indonesian language as a medium of instruction of the national education is compulsory. It means that the domination of the national language in education sector cannot be ignored. Hence, Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta also works with the Association of Javanese Language Teachers to develop the quality of Javanese language teaching, as it is a compulsory subject for students at elementary and secondary education level. The interviewee explains:

*In cooperation with some schools, we initiated Javanese language teaching and learning workshops. Here, we wanted to give teachers a larger space to discuss and broaden their horizons. (Mr. Pardi Suratno, Interview).*

### Provincial Government Responses to Javanese Language and Script Crisis

In relation to legislation, the interviewee states that the right holder is the provincial government, more specifically *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* (Regional House of Representatives). As the interviewee explains:

*Together with Javanese language experts from Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta State University, legal officers, policy makers, and those interested in the process of lawmaking and drafting to study the legislation, we participated in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and workshop series to provide feedback on academic draft of the Javanese language and script revitalization Act, initiated by Yogyakarta Regional House of Representatives. (Mr. Pardi Suratno, Interview).*

In the academic draft itself, it is mentioned that in the attempt to respond to Article 42 of Law No. 24 / 2009, the Special Region of Yogyakarta needs to have a comprehensive law on Javanese language and script protection and development. Furthermore, legislation is essential to ensuring Javanese language and script is protected from further erosion. The academic draft, therefore, became a theoretical framework to provide insight into steps needed to initiate such a kind of legislation (The Academic Draft of Javanese Language and Script Revitalization Act, 2019, p. 9).

More specifically, the academic draft of the Javanese language and Script Act mentions the importance of this local language preservation through education sector and reveals the fact that some schools (elementary and secondary level) in Yogyakarta use both Javanese and Indonesian languages in the teaching and learning process with only one school using Javanese 100 per cent during this local language class, as can be seen in Table 1.

It is hoped, therefore, that the Javanese Language and Script Act would be able to strengthen the position of this local language in education sector and raise students' consciousness and pride towards Javanese cultural values.

### Discussion

The literature review revealed that previous research have identified several topics, such as the use of Javanese amongst members of a community, code choice in their conversation, and the attempt of speakers to save their



**Table 1.** The use of javanese language and script at schools (from the Academic Draft of the Javanese Language and Script Revitalization Act, 2019, p. 51)

No,	School	Language used
1	Taman Muda Elementary School Yogyakarta	Using both Javanese and Indonesian languages in the teaching and learning process
2	Sultan Agung Senior High School Yogyakarta	Using both Javanese and Indonesian languages in the teaching and learning process
3	Sentolo 4 Junior High School	Using both Javanese and Indonesian languages in the teaching and learning process
4	Turi 3 Junior High School	Using both Javanese and Indonesian languages in the teaching and learning process with Javanese language used 100 per cent during this local language class as a compulsory subject
5	Muhammadiyah 1 Senior High School Yogyakarta	Using Indonesian as a medium of instruction. However, there is <i>Javanese Day</i> once a week and it is obligatory for all students and teachers to wear Javanese traditional clothes and communicate using Javanese language
6	Ma'arif Senior High School Yogyakarta	Indonesian is more dominant than Javanese
7	Banguntapan Elementary School	Using both Javanese and Indonesian languages in the teaching and learning process
8	Banguntapan 1 Junior High School	Indonesian is more dominant than Javanese in all subjects

language in the midst of other languages domination. The research literature also acknowledged issues of essential variables of effective Javanese language preservation through education sector, such as focusing more on the use of this local language during the teaching and learning process at primary school level, investigating the role of the central government, and examining the importance of local languages teaching and promotion program. These variables are recognized as reliable guides for the local government and schools in the effort to manage Javanese language and script crisis effectively. Another aspect highlighted in the study of the literature was the need for the Indonesian government to pay more attention to local languages planning and policy. It was reported that support from the government is vital in terms of ensuring stakeholders, such as Center for Language in each province that local languages, including Javanese, will be able to survive in the global era.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and beliefs of the Head of Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta about the possible impacts of Law No. 24 / 2009 on the Javanese language and the best strategy to manage this phenomenon. The findings from the interview showed that the interviewee believes that Javanese language and literature revitalization can be used as an essential step to manage the possible impacts of Law No. 24 / 2009. Organizing Javanese cultural activities and workshop series for Javanese teachers in collaboration with stakeholders, for instance, is considered as Center for Language of the Special Region of Yogyakarta's endeavor to revitalize Javanese language. This statement is in line with Costa (2015), who claims that language revitalization is pertaining to the field of language advocacy and both an academic and a non-academic concern. As such, it deserves some attention. Carjuzaa (2017) also argues that providing and supporting ongoing professional development to language teachers is vital.

In addition, the activities mentioned above are not only related to Javanese language and literature revitalization. In

Grenoble's (2018, p. 6) words, "it is a social movement, and brings benefits to society as well as to individuals". Besides, language is a medium for expressing personal values, beliefs, and experience (Alshehri, 2016).

Furthermore, based on the interview, Yogyakarta Regional House of Representatives believes that Law No. 24 / 2009, which strengthens the position of Indonesian in daily practice and education sector, would impact local languages. In Yogyakarta, the teaching and learning process at several schools uses both Javanese and Indonesian or even Indonesian is more dominant than this local language. This phenomenon is considered as a serious challenge, as young people become fluent in the national language and not their local language. The impact would be compounded through the following generations.

Indeed, Yogyakarta Regional House of Representatives has consistently drawn attention to threats against Javanese language and pushed for action to promote and protect the language. Hence, initiating the Javanese language and script revitalization Act is vital. This is in line with multiple research in the context of this study (e.g. Haboud, Howard, Cru, & Freeland, n.d.; Nakata, 2017; the Canadian Bar Association, 2019), who state that protecting and advancing endangered languages is crucial and legal steps need to be taken to solidify their status, as this is the best strategy to manage such a kind of crisis. Here, both legislative and executive branches of government have a role in perpetuating the languages.

## CONCLUSION

It was mentioned earlier that this study is significant in terms of filling the gap in research in the area of Law No. 24 / 2009 and its implications for local languages due to limited literature in this domain in Indonesia. It can be assumed that this topic might not be considered as a crucial problem. In fact, examining the implications of the law for local languages is important in terms of providing insights into specific strategies have the potential to result in more effective local languages preservation and promotion.

This study has presented a general overview of local languages policies and rights in Indonesia with special attention to the case of Javanese language, literature, and script revitalization in Yogyakarta. It is evident that Center for Language has an important concern to respect Javanese language and culture. The phenomena addressed included organizing cultural activities and workshop series through academic and non academic patterns in collaboration with non governmental organizations and the Association of Javanese Language Teachers. Limited budget allocations from the central government is considered as a challenge, as there is a support from the provincial government through Regional House of Representatives. In 2019, within the framework of its activities aimed at supporting Javanese culture protection and development, Regional House of Representatives expressed an interest in receiving from stakeholders, including Center for Language, a preliminary assesment of the legal framework regulating the Javanese language and script protection legislative process.

There is still, however, a profound distance between progressive legislation and successful revitalization. This is based on the fact that local languages revitalization policies and programs are often based on top-down initiatives and it is sometimes difficult to be implemented. Speakers and students' actual needs, therefore, can be investigated in future studies to understand their beliefs about the importance of Javanese language preservation. Generating policies from grassroots is a necessary strategy to complete top-down Javanese language planning and policy. In short, speakers need to be involved and heard, as they are able to be active agents of change.

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