

Indonesia's Ambivalent Language Policy on English: Cause and Effect

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Language policy on English in Indonesia is ambivalent; it is stipulated in laws on education that it is a compulsory subject in all levels of education but belittled in laws on other domains. The ambivalence is due to the fear of hegemonic implication of the extensive use of English resulting in the dichotomy between the functions of English as a global language, Indonesian language, Bahasa Indonesia (BI), a unifying language, and vernaculars as preservers of local cultures building up national culture. Due to it, English teaching instruction objective is vague, resulting in poor English proficiency of Indonesian citizens despite that the language is learned and thought extensively for years. To resolve the problems, Indonesia needs to promote multilingual policy, amend laws that are not in line with the enforcement of English, reinstate English learning and teaching in Primary Schools, and develop a variety of English indigenous to it.

Keywords: *Ambivalent, Bahasa Indonesia, English, language policy, vernaculars*

Introduction

What language is like, how it develops and is acquired, used and treated are mainly determined and directed by language policy and language planning. According to Cooper (1989), language policy and planning is intended to influence the behaviour of the users concerning the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes. In practice, language planning and policy could be dilemmatic as argued by Ngonyani (<http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications>); the dilemma in language policy is universal. On the one hand, there is the need to use local languages in education because they are the most accessible to the people and local relevance. Additionally, using local languages can help people enhancing self-determination and encouraging creativity in

education. On the other hand, every country needs international languages as a window to modern science and technology. Overemphasis on one adversely affects the other.

Such dilemma occurs in Indonesia and is reflected by conflicting attitudes of scholars, lawmakers, and government toward the position of English as global lingua franca (EFL) versus that of BI as national language and vernaculars as ethnic identity expected to uphold national integrity and sovereignty amidst fear of English global domination and threat to Indonesian culture and language.

Due to it, how the three tongues are treated and used interweaves one another, resulting in ambivalent policy bringing about consequences. In practice, the BI position is strong, whereas English spot is weak. The BI becomes the national language, the language of science and technology, language of cultural preservation, and unifying language of multicultural and multilingual people with various ethnic groups. This is because of its predominant legal status where it is enshrined in the Indonesian constitution as well as in acts and government regulations underlain by it. Meanwhile, Indonesian people's English ability currently is uncertain due to the effect of the ambivalent policy.

On the one hand, English is placed in central positions in-laws on education are inconsistent, and is sidelined in those of other domains, on the other hand. It occurs because there is a push and pulls stance between the need of English to pursue international competitiveness and advantages and the fear that English could exert undesirable influences on Indonesian culture and language.

Because of it, the objective of learning English in education is vague, and English has not approached the way it should be and cannot be acquired regardless of intensive efforts. It is believed that although English learner s in Indonesia spend dozens of years, beginning from early age education through university, learning English, they do not achieve English proficiency.

The fact is believed to account for why the number of Indonesians knowing English is much lower, and people's English proficiency is weaker than those of other nations where English is not the first language.

Based on what is put forward, this article encodes the following issues:

- (1) How ambivalent is language policy on English in Indonesian acts and government regulations?
- (2) What sparks the ambivalence?
- (3) What are the effects of the ambivalence?
- (4) What solution can be undertaken to the problematic English position in Indonesia?

This article can be a wake-up call for Indonesian policymakers to accommodate the three languages under the umbrella of multilingual policy preserving national language and local languages while promoting global language, English.

The Ambivalent Language Policy on English in Indonesia

The ambivalent language policy on English in Indonesia results from the absence of clear ideology protecting and promoting local languages, the national language, and global language, English as Lingua Franca (ELF) in the context of multilingualism. Zein (2018) argues that multilingual policy ensures the preservation of the indigenous and heritage languages while adopting ELF.

The consequence of the absence of the policy is mixed messages on the functions and positions of the three tongues in-laws on education and the other spheres.

Following this are two conflicting positions of English in Indonesian acts and government regulations showing the ambivalence. In the education system, the acts and regulations are strong though inconsistent, but in other domains, they are scorned.

Acts and Government Regulations on English in Education

Many laws on English in education have been issued, but they are not consistently implemented. Some of them are implemented, whereas the others are discontinued or scorned. Below are the acts and regulations on education, placing English in essential positions. The acts and regulations that are implemented are as follows.

Firstly, *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Nomor 19/2005 Pasal 70 Ayat 3 -5* (Minister of National Education Regulation Number 19/2005 on national education standard Section 70, Verse 3 through 5) states that English is to be examined in the national examination. Secondly, *Peraturan Mendikbud Nomor 96/1967* (Decree of Minister of Education and Culture Number 96/1967) establishes English as the first foreign language in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, the policies that are discontinued or scorned are as follows. Firstly, Government Regulation Number 28/1990, Section 14, Verse 2 m as the guideline to the implementation of Act Number 2/1989 on National Education System, Section 39, Verse 3 m obligating instruction of English in Primary Schools and Secondary Schools was neglected following the introduction of Curriculum 2013 which is now effective. In the new curriculum, English is no longer obligatory subject for Primary School and time allotment for the subject in Junior High School, and Senior High School is reduced.

According to Panggabean (2015), why English is abolished is due to the assumptions that it is too hard for Primary School pupils and in High School, it hampers the students' achievement in BI as the national language. Secondly, Regulation of Minister of National Education Number 79/ 2009 Verse 5 setting English as a language of instruction in international standard Secondary School established under Minister of National Education Regulation Number 78/2009 to enable the graduates to attain international competitiveness and pursue international job vacancies. The program was discontinued following an assumption that it created small elite groups of students and a petition to Constitutional Court from a group of parents who argued that the English-medium in international standard schools was unconstitutional. Thirdly, The discretion of Minister for Higher Education instructing the implementation of the bilingual curriculum in universities nationwide to encourage English fluency among all students and teaching staff in order for them to communicate in English and use it in all academic references, The Jakarta Post (2015). The discretion is neglected and has never been implemented up to the present.

The above inconsistency is linked with the of lack of strong ideology and attitude in promoting multilingualism where English functions as a global language due to the fear that English is a threat to the maintenance of BI and local languages as will be discussed later. Liddicoat (2017) argues that ideology and attitude resulted from it directs language policy whether to promote or constrain multilingualism. The ambivalent ideology on how to treat the three complementary languages constrains multilingual policy and needs to be eliminated to avert vague laws.

Despite the inconsistency of law on English in education, English function is deemed important, particularly when compared to that of in-laws on other domains and people think that it is worth acquiring. There is awareness among Indonesian people that English must be learned to succeed in education. In early age education, people kick off learning English and continue learning it in Primary School, Secondary School, and university.

In Primary School and Secondary School curriculum, prior to Curriculum 2013, English alongside BI were treated as the most important subjects, for they were taught with equal long time allotment, four times a week each of which occurred 45 minutes. At university, students are obligated to take a two-hour credit English subject in one or two semesters regardless of what they major in. In addition, one of the subjects in admission test to state-run universities highly desired by school graduates is English, and one of the requirements of admission to postgraduate study is English proficiency, 450 to 500 score on TOEFL. Being prompted by how crucial English is to succeed in education, students keep striving to learn it by joining private English centres.

Theoretically, the English position in Indonesian education is vital. The position perhaps is as

important as those of in the countries where English is not the first language such as Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, and India. But practically, the proficiency of people in those countries is better than that of in Indonesia. Kanapaka (2016) makes the rank of English proficiency of some Asian countries based on who would be better at speaking English which could be understood by the Western audience or most random audience as follows. 1. Philippine, 2. Singapore, 3. Malaysia, 4. India, 5. Hong Kong, and 6. Indonesia.

Acts and Government Regulations on English in Other Domains

Unlike in the education system, in other domains, the English position is scorned. In Indonesian constitution, there is no mention of English nor is it in the two most recently enacted acts on language use, Act Number 249/2009 on Flag, Language, National Symbol, and National Anthem and Act Number 32/2002 on Broadcasting.

The draft underlying Act Number 249/2009 in its deliberation before its passage even encompassed ban of using English in public places. Following this are verses that are not in favour of the extensive use of English. Act Number 249/2009 Verse 29 states, BI must be used as the language of instruction in national education. In contrast, foreign language, not to mention English specifically, can be used to enable learners to use the foreign language. The statement is perplexing for the obligation to use BI means that foreign language cannot be used or it can be used only in the instruction of foreign language subject. The verse limits the use of English and contradicts its existence in-laws on education. Verse 32 states that BI must be used in the national or international forum held in Indonesia. Obligating the use of BI in the national discussion is understandable when it does not take up language and literature issues. Still, it is unacceptable if it is in effect in an international forum where Indonesian participants are expected to learn English. Verse 33 states that BI must be used as a means of formal communication in government and private workplaces, and the workers who are not able to use the language must join training to achieve proficiency.

The obligation to use BI in workplaces restricts the use of English and hampers the habit formation required to acquire languages. Nunan (1999) proposes that language learning is a process of habit formation. Due to the urgency of English as in the area of education, it should be used as the second or additional language in workplaces where workers gather routinely to create the habit of using it. That is much better than learning it in the classroom, particularly in the presence of English native speakers.

Verse 35 states that BI must be used in scientific writing and publication in Indonesia whereas foreign language or vernaculars can be used for specific areas of analysis. The obligation to use BI in the science area contradicts global need to use foreign languages, mainly English, in world-class journals. It is likely related to the fact that Indonesia has

ranked below its neighbouring countries in Scimago Journal Ranking indexing. Verse 36 states, the BI must be used to name building, street, apartment, residence, office, trade centre, trademark, company, educational institution, an organisation founded by and that belongs to Indonesian citizens or legal agency. The ruling does not facilitate English acquisition since one of the most important instruments of learning English bearing English terms the learners are supposed to be used to reading and listening to is banned.

Another act hampering English acquisition is Act Number 32/2002 on Broadcasting. Verse 38 states that foreign language can be used only for specific broadcasting needs. The ruling restricts the use of English on television and in radio broadcasting which can help to acquire the language. Then keep listening to English broadcasting, people would learn vocabulary, pronunciation, and entertaining without formal instruction in the classroom just the way people in the countries where English is not the first language do.

Based on the position of English in-laws, it can be inferred that the rules on education and the other areas contradict one another. On the one hand, theoretically, the laws on education support the central role of EFL, and those of on language and broadcasting restrict English use due to fear of the threat of English on Indonesian culture and language, on the other hand. From the lens of linguistic rights, the restriction to use English and vernaculars fails to promote the principles of multilingualism protecting the individual and collective right to choose language or languages for communication both within the private and the public spheres. Linguistic rights, according to Linguistic Rights, in (<http://minorityrights.org/law-and-legal-cases/linguistic-rights/>) include the right to speak one's language in legal, administrative and judicial acts, the right to receive education in one's language, and the right for media to be broadcast in one's language.

In conjunction with an attempt to achieve ELF in a multilingual setting, laws restricting English use should be amended to facilitate extensive use of it by giving noticeable freedom to people to use it. Meanwhile, to uphold people's rights to use vernaculars, it is crucial to establish tolerance policy which according to Johnson (2013) is characterised by the absence of state intervention in the linguistic life of language minority. The tolerance policy is in line with Kloss (1977), suggesting that people are free to use their first languages at home and public, as well as in private cultural and economic organisations.

The Cause of the Ambivalent Policy: English Vis-À-Vis BI and Vernaculars

The fear of Indonesian lawmakers, government, and scholars of the hegemonic impact of English on the BI and Indonesian identity amid the endangerment of vernaculars accounts for the ambivalent policy on English. English indeed poses a threat to BI, and the vernaculars are endangered. Still, despite the fact, the three tongues can coexist if Indonesia has the ideology

to promote multilingual policy meaning that it is not essential to defend BI and vernaculars at the expense of English required to pursue global competitiveness.

Following this is the discussion on the existence of English, BI, and vernaculars in Indonesia along with arguments intended to offer the solution to the ambivalence. Kachru (1997) mentions, there are ideological issues concerning English presence in Asia; its colonial construct, its ideological impact, and its hegemonic implications for the Asian cultures. These questions, according to him, indeed bring forth a string of issues related to Westernisation, the creation of conflicting identities, and the types of hegemonies.

The proposition accounts for English presence in Indonesia sparking dichotomy between the functions of English as the global language, BI as unifying language, and vernaculars as preservers of local cultures. Many scholars, lawmakers, and government officials think that English exerts hegemonic issues and the threat to BI and in return, together with BI, English threatens vernaculars. Coleman (2017) suggests that English poses a severe threat to the status of BI, while at the same time, BI threatens the local languages.

Furthermore, by citing (Bunce et al., 2016a), he argues that because English is increasingly given the role of medium of instruction in schools and universities throughout the world, the educational functions of national, regional, and local languages wither and die and English is fast replacing them. The concern is also conveyed by Kirpatrick (2012), stating that the combination of learning English and BI results in the replacement of local and indigenous languages with English in many school curricula and other domains.

The assumption is logic. In job recruitment, for instance, the one with English proficiency is preferred. Because of it, English corners BI and people deem English as the reflection of prestige. In education and workplaces, in the absence of a multilingual setting, there is no room for vernacular use. Since the language used as a means of communication is BI as instructed by law, vernaculars are cornered. The condition can weaken the spirit of national and local languages maintenance.

The Threat of English to BI

There appears a worry that Indonesian people could change their opinion, attitude, behaviour, etc. into another about the liberal culture of inner-circle countries using it due to extensive and widespread use of English.

The opinion sounds like that of Iran and China. James (1991) says that under Khomeiny power, English is depicted as the cause of demoralisation and failure of Iran people and the similar situation occurs in China where there is a fear of the impact of Western values and

capitalist lifestyle about English. Such fear triggered to move, "*Love Bahasa Indonesia and use good and proper Bahasa Indonesia.*"

Foreign names of public facilities had to be translated into BI, right and proper use of BI training, seminars, and workshops were conducted in schools, universities, and government institutions and BI, proper use program, was televised nationwide regularly. However, like under its succeeding governments, under Suharto's regime called *Orde Baru* 'New Order', English was regarded as an essential subject in schools and universities though it was not reinforced by law. The condition framed as mixed messages from the regime chiefly contributes to the current ambivalent position of English.

Now that President Suharto was toppled by people power in late 1990, BI move stalled. Still, the schizophrenia remains intact, and the ambivalent policy on English does not change up to the present. The fact can be seen in the latest act on language, Act Number 249/2009 on Flag, Language, National Symbol, and National Anthem, Verse 35 where the use of foreign language to name public facilities is banned.

Regarding the hegemonic effect of English on BI, it is true that English has impacted severely BI. Some English words substitute Indonesian words, and English Phrase structure replaces the standard BI Phrase structure. For instance, the word safety (Noun) is used to substitute aman (Adjective) in daily conversation as in *supaya kita* *safety 'for us to be safe.' There are two things to comment on in the speech. Namely, BI term aman 'safe' needs not be replaced by English term, and if English is to be used, the form safe (Adjective) instead of safety (Noun) must be used to form grammatical speech, *supaya kita* safe. Many other Indonesian terms are replaced by English names lately, including *Teknologi Informasi* substituted by /aiti/ referring to IT (Information Technology) and *sedang di jalan* is replaced by otw (on the way).

Regarding grammar, Phrase structure of BI has now been replaced by that of English; for instance, *Toko Bahagia* 'Bahagia Store' of which structure is Head plus Modifier (the grammatical BI Phrase structure) is changed into Bahagia Toko of which structure is Modifier plus Head. This condition is the effect of English Phrase structure, Bahagia Store of which structure is Modifier plus Head.

Despite the fact, the escalation of English use should not be solely blamed for the phenomenon. Naturally, other languages impact living and a dynamic language like BI, and so is English which is affected by other words. Noorquist (2018) says that the transfer of linguistic features via language contact is a social and linguistic phenomenon occurring when speakers of different languages interact with one another. To avert BI from being colonised by English, it should be rigorously standardised, and its learning and teaching strategy, as

well as teachers' quality, should be improved. Besides, BI in-laws, books, and media editorials should be grammatical. When it occurs, BI will remain standard and not vulnerable to the destructive impact of other languages.

Concerning culture, it is true that English culture may exert new values, for cultures keep influencing one another. For instance, political, economic, and social terms such as polling, bicameral, incumbent, money politics, black campaign, electoral threshold, impeachment, cash flow, recovery, budget, and LGBT now widely used contain new values of the culture that may not be entirely compatible with Indonesian culture.

However, the fear of the potentially destructive impact of the extensive use of English on BI and Indonesian culture can be resisted by the strength of the position of BI regarding legislation and historical fact. It is enshrined in *Sumpah Pemuda* 'Youth Pledge', a true move of youth stating "One Nation, One Land, and One Language, BI that became a driving force to Indonesian independence. Besides, its status as the national language is stipulated in the Indonesian constitution. The condition is reinforced in acts and government regulations as elaborated earlier.

Moreover, in Act on Flag, Language, State Institution, and National Anthem Number 24/2009 Verse 1, it is stated that the government fosters the function of BI systematically and continually to become the international language. The fact shows that BI is highly upheld both in legislation and in practices meaning that Indonesia needs not to worry about English. For the existence of BI keeps being strong from time to time, it will remain strong even in the era of globalisation where English is used as ELF.

The Endangerment of Vernaculars

All of the 742 Indonesian vernaculars are endangered. Sugiyono (2015) mentions that all languages of the world, including Indonesian vernaculars, one of which is the Javanese language spoken by eighty-four million people, are in the brink of extinction (<http://wawancara.news.viva.co.id/news/read/-semua-bahasa-daerah-terancam-punah>).

Hudson et al. in Tsunoda (2005) classify language endangerment into: a) Strong language (the one that is still the primary language for everybody); b) Sick language (the one that will soon die without serious treatment for children know only a few words); c) Dying language (the one that is no longer learned by children); and d) Dead language (the one that is no longer spoken).

The endangerment levels of Indonesian vernaculars cover all four levels. But due to migration, area connectivity, change of language attitude, and global cultural pressure,

strong language level rapidly changes to sick language level and so forth. Those factors resulting in bilingualism trigger reduction of use, so-called moribund by Crystal (2000) are the main factors of vernacular endangerment.

Migration from villages where local languages are spoken to cities where BI is spoken keeps going on despite government's efforts to minimise the movement. In the cities, the migrants limit the use of their local languages since they have to interact with BI speaking people. Interethnic marriages between the migrants speaking various vernaculars and between them and city citizens accelerate the use of BI to create mutual intelligibility. Consequently, the migrants' children do not know their parents' local languages, meaning that local language use is restricted to migrants' use.

Furthermore, development programs extensively carried out to set connectivity between rural areas and between them and regency capitals as well as the transfer of BI speaking public servants, especially teachers, to rural areas and access to televisions and internet accelerates bilingualism cornering local languages.

The fact followed by the people's conception of the superiority of BI gradually threatens vernaculars. Without a real effort to maintain and revive it, the extinction of the local languages is a matter of time. Woodbury (2012) argues that when a community loses its language, it often loses a great deal of its cultural identity at the same time. If Batak language is extinct, for instance, its local wisdom, cultural practices, and tradition such as wedding party and funeral ceremony functioning as ethnic pride and world tourism attraction as well as highly upheld *marga* 'family name tree' will disappear if the language covering and preserving them is dead. The same thing can happen to other vernaculars and local cultures. Norquist (2017) suggests that, according to the perspective of linguistic imperialism, wherever a big and powerful language such as English appears in a foreign territory, small indigenous languages will die. The linguists' concerns are more or less the same as those of Indonesian people's reflected by a kind of linguistic schizophrenia that vernaculars will be dead, resulting in the disappearance of cultural and linguistic richness. The fear gets greater following the widespread use of English.

To anticipate further death and threat of local languages, the government strengthens their positions in Act Number 249/2009 Section 42 Verse 1 stating that local governments are obliged to develop, maintain, and protect local languages and literary in order for them to continually place their position and function in community life in accordance with the richness of Indonesian culture. The fear and the anticipation are understandable and play a chief role in bringing about the ambivalent policy on English. However, the idea that English imperialism will kill vernaculars is not solely right for it is BI instead of English that tends to replace vernaculars. That over 700 vernaculars are truly endangered is not directly related to

the escalation of English use, and the suggestion that English use is restricted is groundless. Despite that English poses threat to vernaculars, it is not necessary to sideline it for they can coexist in multilingualism.

The Effects of the Ambivalent Policy

As elaborated earlier, the ambivalent language policy on English reflected by conflicting laws indirectly restricts English use. It further sparks destructive effects as discussed below.

Vague Objective of Learning English

The impact of the ambivalent policy on English is a vague objective of learning inhibiting acquisition. In theory, the goal of English instruction is to attain English competence regarding attitude, comprehension, and skill (Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 59/ 2014). But in practice, the goal is not to attain competence, instead to pass national examination and university admission test. Consequently, the process of instruction concentrates on finishing teaching English curriculum set nationally by the central government for the learners to pass examinations.

Due to the unclear objective, what English skill is for is unclear. The aim of Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL); to measure English proficiency in listening, structure, and reading leading to the ability to engage in activities where English is used in various standards of difficulty, including academic and professional matters, is frequently diverted to other interests; administrative requirements of admission to postgraduate study and job application aside from whether the TOEFL certificates are reliable or bogus. Since TOEFL certificate functions just as an administrative requirement, a lot of institutions run TOEFL-like tests for the public of which universities and worker recruiters recognise certificates. For TOEFL functions merely as a pass, many test-takers pay for scores they desire.

The vague goal of instruction also results in misleading teaching method. In the teaching process, teachers play a dominant role and assign students to understand and memorise rules by ignoring the function of language as a means of communication and restricting time for students to practice English, distracting acquisition.

The condition jeopardises and contradicts how language is naturally acquired via habit formation, as said earlier. When the goal of instruction is vague, teaching is conducted improperly, and English use cannot be habit formation without which acquisition cannot be achieved.

Poor English Ability of Indonesian People

The unclear objective of learning subsequently results in poor English ability. English first in its research finding concerning the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) in 44 countries where English is not the first language, Indonesia is in the 34th ranking in comparison to Malaysia being in the 9th ranking (<http://edukasi.kompas.com/read>). Meanwhile, Marketing Director of the Jakarta-based institution said that the English proficiency of Indonesian people is poor adding that in an international contest, Indonesian contestant had to be disqualified because of poor English command (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/pendidikan/education>).

The poor English proficiency prompts the need for translators when English speaking guests talk in gathering, meeting, negotiation, lecture, and speech. The need for translators is not only for talks in government offices but also at universities where academics are supposed to be proficient in English.

Paauw (2009) points out while citing the negative impact of poor English on the economy, Indonesia's lack of a world language has a negative impact on the quality of higher education. That has possibly an adverse effect economically as well, as many Indonesians are unable to communicate with the world.

The Solution to the Problematic English Position

Amid worry about English, there is a growing awareness of Indonesian people of the urgency of English. Halim (1976) in Lauder (2008), for instance, suggests that English is needed to access a large proportion of English books and other information resources on modern knowledge and technology. Besides, despite the ambivalent policy on English, in general, Indonesian students, as noted before, are aware of the importance of English. With this in mind, English needs to be promoted as the additional language by implementing multilingual policy. English as ELF in world interconnection is inevitable.

Considering the need to protect BI and vernaculars as well as the importance of English, there is no need to contrast between the positions of the three tongues instead develops them in multilingual setting granting preservation of BI and vernaculars while adopting of ELF. Many nations with linguistic diversity, such as Singapore, Malaysia, India, South Africa, Aruba, Luxembourg, etc. implement multilingual policy Lew (2014). Multilingualism is successful in many nations. In Singapore known as the diverse and linguistically heterogeneous nation, for instance, according to Bolton et al. (2014), multilingualism is dynamic.

The multilingual setting where English functions as ELF subsequently promotes English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Multilingual Education (MLE) at universities in nations with linguistic diversity, including those in South-East Asian nations. Since schools and universities are central in promoting language policy, bilingual and multilingual instructions characterised by the implementation of EMI and MLE can be an impetus of societal multilingualism in Indonesia. Multilingual policy in Indonesia is supported by Zein (2018) saying; she argues for a redirection in Indonesian educational system towards multilingual education to ensure the preservation of the indigenous and heritage languages while adopting English as a lingua franca.

As stated earlier, Liddicoat (2017) suggests that ideology and attitude resulted from it directs language policy whether to promote or constrain multilingualism. The ideology in favour of multilingualism in Indonesia can be achieved without resistance since the language problem has never triggered social and political tension. The challenge may be in relation to how to teach English to people in rural areas. Multilingualism in Indonesia will constructively respond to Charter of Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) recently signed calling for respect for the region's languages, cultures, and religions while officially nominating English as ASEAN's working language Liddicoat (2017).

To get rid of the handicaps bringing about the poor result of prolonged efforts of acquiring English, the following strategies need considering. Laws disrupting English acquisition should be amended under the multilingual policy. If law amendment cannot be carried out, people are encouraged to acquire English with or without formal discretion. According to Spolsky (2004), not all nations mention language policy in law. In working out language policy on English, it is essential to reach out people in need of English competence for education, work search, and international competitiveness. The system does not necessarily stem from up-bottom schema slightly from bottom-up one as suggested by Lane (2014) that language planning from below is essential.

For English in Indonesia is English as Foreign Language (EFL) and Indonesia is in expanding circle, Indonesian had better pass a bill granting English as Second Language (ESL) status to change English as Foreign Language (EFL) status as well as improving the position of Indonesia from expanding circle to outer circle in terms of how English is treated. In outer-circle countries, English coexists with national languages and support one another in all areas of life because no law restricts English use. Besides, English needs to be legally established as an additional or second language. In this condition, English use is a daily routine, making English proficiency of people there much better than that of Indonesian people's. It is essential that Indonesia be in the position of the outer-circle countries.

Indeed, being in an outer circle or expanding circle has to do with colonial history, and the latter was colonised by non-English speaking people. Consequently, it is not easy for Indonesia to shift from how English is treated in expanding the circle to that of an outer loop. Nevertheless, referring to urgent utilitarian of English, Indonesia has to do every endeavour to pursue it by abolishing all legal constraints.

Meanwhile, English learning and teaching in Primary Schools having been abolished from Curriculum 2013 should be reinstated because learning the second language at an early age is highly recommended. The Critical Period Hypothesis proposed by Penfield et al. (1959) that the optimum age for acquiring another language is in the first ten years of life because it is then that the brain retains its maximum plasticity or flexibility. At around puberty, the brain loses its mobility after which acquiring another language becomes increasingly difficult. In line with the theory, Schmid (2016) suggests that if somebody wants to learn a foreign language and fully master it, he should begin before a certain age. She discovered that our capacity to learn a language diminishes gradually over our lives.

The linguistic phenomenon and the urgency of ELF probably prompt many Asian countries in recent years to lower the starting age for formal English language education from the first year of junior secondary schools to the third year and even first year of elementary schools Alice (2014). Kirpatrick (2012) says that Indonesia is the only country of ASEAN that has not made English a compulsory part of the primary curriculum. With this in mind, Indonesia needs to consider the above theory and the policy of ASEAN countries by reinstating English instruction in Primary School to promote multilingualism.

It is recommended that English is not native to Indonesia be naturalised as it is in some Asian countries; Singapore, India, and Malaysia, and Philippine where people are bilinguals or multilingual using ethnic languages, the national language, and English. Whatever variety of English somebody uses does not matter as far as he can convey his ideas wholly and freely and his counterparts understand him. Singaporeans, Malaysians, and Indians, for instance, use and develop varieties of English of their own, making the majority of people there know English. Referring to it, it is essential that Indonesia develops a variety of English indigenous to it. English having been transplanted to linguistically and culturally heterogeneous Indonesia and naturalised to be part of linguistic repertoire will not evade vernaculars and BI.

Conclusion

Language policy on English in Indonesia is ambivalent as shown by conflicting standings on English in acts and government regulations. The condition results in that in spite of the considerable effort, people cannot acquire English. The ambivalence leading to the improper



approach to English acquisition is due to fear of hegemonic impacts of English on Indonesian nationalism, culture, vernaculars, and BI.

The solutions to the hurdle are off: multilingualism policy needs to be promoted; ambivalent system on English should be ended; laws weakening English position needs to be amended; English function needs to be changed from EFL into English as ESL; English instruction in Primary School needs to be reinstated; and English should be naturalised.



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