

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY OBSERVATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Indonesia is a highly multilingual country which houses hundreds of local languages that must also be preserved. Concurrently, the rapid development of English as lingua franca challenges Indonesian language in shaping the nation's identity. This study aims at investigating the current opportunities and challenges in English studies given the current Indonesian language planning and policy. This involves conducting library research upon several types of language policy namely status planning, corpus planning, language-in-education planning, prestige/image planning, and minority language rights. The questions answered through this study are, 1) How do language planning and policy implemented in Indonesia? 2) What are the opportunities and challenges for English studies? In the discussion, the types are covered under the context of Indonesia as a multilingual country. The result shows that multilingualism comes as the challenge as Indonesia is undergoing the process of maintaining its identity by deciding on its unifying 'tool' which is Indonesian language, while the prestige/image that English as lingua franca has may promote the learning for learners, hence serving as opportunity.

Keywords: English learners; language planning; language policy; sociolinguistics

Introduction

With the consideration of Indonesian multilingualism, along with the growth of English as lingua franca, this research is organized in order to observe two points: first, what the language planning and policy in Indonesia currently looks like and second, the direction to which the planning and policy are heading. With these objectives in mind, the observation is done by addressing the following points, respectively: theoretical basis, the importance or significance of language planning in the context of Indonesia as a multilingual country, instances of the practice and reality, and the writer's critical stance on the practice or reality of language planning in Indonesia. The aforementioned set of points are to be discussed under several crucial and intercorrelated concepts in regard to language planning and policy with the consideration of Indonesian context. A recent study done by Gali Alrajafi in (2021) regarding the linguistic status of English in Indonesia suggests that English has been widely used in Indonesia despite its status of being a foreign language. Concurrently, English is also on its process of moving or changing its linguistic status to become "a second language and the language of instruction" (p.9). Within his concluding remarks, Alrajafi stated that "the use and mastery of English for the Indonesian people is not like the fruit of *simalakama*, because language is a medium of communication that must be useful for life, it only needs to be considered when, where, and to whom the language should be spoken" (p.9). While the author could agree with the latter part of the statement, this research reveals that the former part could be found rather questionable due to its downside which would be part of the challenges of English studies in Indonesia. Referring back into the latter part of the statement, he claims that for a language to be useful for our lives, it needs some considerations in terms of the time, place, the interlocutors, and the language itself, which is aligned with the scope and purpose of language planning and policy or also known as LPP. In an attempt to assist the discussion, the

following questions are formulated: 1) How is LPP implemented in Indonesia? 2) What are the opportunities and challenges for English studies with regard to the current LPP?

(Language Planning and Policy)

According to Stemper & King (2017), the area of language planning and policy (LPP) focuses on the explicit and implicit policies that shape the usage of languages, including who speaks them, when and how they are spoken, and the values and rights that are associated with those languages or language variations. As relevant as it is today, the emergence of LPP field started during the World War II with its traces of research concerns three phases: respective socio political, epistemological and strategic concerns, respectively (Ricento, 2000). For this study, LPP is applied within the context language education which is relevant as "LPP researchers often take up the 'what' of language policy as it plays out in education, focusing on policy and planning around language teaching and learning or language in learning and teaching" (Hult & Johnson, 2015).

Method

This research belongs to the library research and is qualitative in nature. In conducting this research, theories and various related studies that have been conducted in various settings in Indonesian schools are gathered and observed as the general base of the status quo of Language Planning and Policy (LPP) in Indonesia and to figure out which states could be considered as opportunities and challenges of English studies in Indonesia as a multicultural country. The scope of this research is set to be limited to be within Java Island only for the sake of time and space. However, the author also acknowledges the impacts that this limitation may bring into the discussion, which are 1) a tendency for generalization and 2) under-representation towards the minority. Therefore, future research covering other areas of Indonesia can hopefully be conducted following this study.

This research adopts sociolinguistics approach as Prashneel Goundar (2017) explains that "language planning and policy (LPP) research falls into the field of sociolinguistics which is a branch of applied linguistics." and he also points out that "... (LPP) is one of the fastest growing subdisciplines of AL" (p. 81). By acknowledging the speed by which this subdiscipline is growing, a continuous effort in order to better explain and critically discuss this topic should be expected and executed.

Findings and Discussion

This section is organized into two sub-sections with the purpose of answering the research questions that have been formulated. The first section discusses the current implementation of LPP in Indonesia under the context of various types of the language policy, some scholars also identify these as the dimensions of language planning. In addition, a brief critical commentary is also provided by the author under each type of language policy to enrich the discussion. Subsequently, the opportunities and challenges from the discovered states are identified and compiled within the second section.

(Status Planning in Indonesia)

Generally speaking, status planning deals with the process of deciding "which language to teach" while can simultaneously be applied into various contexts such as national language and second language (van Els, 2005, p.972). Being multicultural, it is crucial for Indonesia as a country to determine which language(s) to be its unifying medium to support the maintenance of identity and solidarity. Moreover, Lowenburg (1990 as cited by Paauw, 2009) argues that Indonesian is accepted as a national language for "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 utterance's distinctions in rank and status. While the establishment of Indonesian as a national language is for a worthy cause and is done in an institutionalized manner, the practice still faces challenges driven by the strong or vigorous presence of vernaculars, which not in any way negative but is surely carries its own concerns as vernaculars are inevitable for Indonesian multicultural nature. On top of that, the status of English as second or foreign language may be an additional contributing factor to the competitiveness among languages to be the majority.

(Corpus Planning in Indonesia)

According to Baldauf's explanation in Liddicoat's work in 2005, corpus planning is a critical aspect of language planning that pertains to the internal and linguistic parts of a language (p. 993). In the context of diglossic and triglossic Indonesia, corpus planning serves as a means of preserving ethnic languages from extinction, as noted by Ibrahim and Mayani in 2018 (p. 114). For the time being, The Language Development and Fostering Agency (*Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa*) is responsible for implementing this planning, and they have done so successfully and consistently (p. 108). However, it is important to note that this planning has not been fully disseminated and implemented across the nation, which undermines the initial objective of making Indonesian language a unifying force, resulting in a lack of productivity. While this is beneficiary for the preservation of Indonesian language and the other local varieties, the rate is rather different with that of English. A structured and formal attempt at preserving a language could mean less loanwords, instead the equivalence of the respective word in the target language is adopted. This contributes to the slower pace of English's spread in local communities.

(Language-in-Education Planning in Indonesia)

As a part of language policy and planning, *language-in-education* planning takes form as the "outcome of the national language planning" although most often it "constitutes the sole language planning activity" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997;2005). Effective language-in-education planning contributes to various goals related to the learning participants and methodology in language planning and policy in general which is necessary given the background diversity of Indonesian pupils (p. 1041). While the recent curriculum design is continuously being developed, the teaching-learning process is still not fully done to grow the interest and love for the culture (Simanjuntak, 2009, p. 14). In respect to this matter, along with revolutionary curriculum design, developing a critical method for teaching is also suggested to promote a sincere interest among language learners which may improve the quality of the result.

(Prestige / Image Planning Indonesia)

According to Ager (2005), there are three key activities involved in image planning: promoting language, manipulating images to implement language policies, and understanding the motives of language planners (p. 35). Prestige, on the other hand, refers to the attitudes of society members towards a particular language (p. 40). In the context of Indonesia, where the goal is to promote the country's national language as a unifying force that reflects the identity of its people, it is important to not only focus on the teaching and learning process, but also on increasing the prestige of the language. While efforts to promote Indonesian as a source of national pride have been successful thus far, strategic measures must also be taken to enhance its prestige once it has been established as the unifying language. On the other hand, the effort of improving the prestige/image of English in Indonesia may not need to be implored as hard. A study by Sulistyo et al. (2020) on 144 Junior High School students reveals that in learning English as a foreign language, students exhibit positive attitude and have the orientation of the native speakerism issue and the global spread of English (p.38).

(Minority Language Rights in Indonesia)

Minority Language Rights (MLR) concerns the notion of “whether a minority language should be maintained or whether speakers of a minority language have the right to maintain and use the language in daily basis” (Zakaria, 2016, p.55). The discussion of MLR in Indonesia as a multilingual country is highly anticipated given the idea that the promotion of certain language(s) to become the national/majority language may carry the possibility of its contribution to “the death of one or more minority language” (p.55). While a major step in moving Indonesian to be the national language has been taken, that is not the case with minority languages as it has not changed much since Suharto’s New Order (Arka, 2013, p. 99). Accordingly, in order to maintain Indonesia’s diversity status, the local languages, which in this case is considered to be the minority, must also be conserved and its continuity must be ensured. Although minority languages do not possess as a huge threat for both Indonesian or English to be majority, keeping it alive through a constant use and mastery or life-long dependency may become hindering factors to learn English.

(Opportunities and Challenges)

The purpose of this section is to gather and organize the thoughts on how each language policy impacts Indonesian people differently, how they carry two contradicting functions simultaneously, and how they bring both opportunities and challenges into the English studies in Indonesia. The analysis and summation lie as follows,

Table 1. Opportunities vs Challenges of English Studies in Indonesia

Language Policy	Opportunities	Challenges
Status Planning	English as FL becomes the strongest candidate to be taught in schools	English must compete with the Indonesian language and other local languages. The rate of English coinage is not ideal, or completely replaced by word equivalence.
Corpus Planning	English terms are being coined	
Language-in-Education Planning	Better curriculum design and critical teaching methods can still be developed	-
Prestige/Image Planning	English is considered prestigious and has a positive image	The pride and prestige of Indonesian language is also encouraged
Minority Language Rights (MLR)	Minority Languages are less likely to be pushed to become the majority	ML speakers may still choose to maintain and use their languages daily

The table above reveals that out of 5 language policies covered in the previous section, only LEP that does not present any threat or challenge into English studies in Indonesia. This is possible because English has been and will keep being prioritized given its improving image. Additionally, on condition that Indonesia is aiming at broadening their opportunity on the global scene, English will have a secured spot in Indonesian education curriculum, at least at the basic education level which is also reflected in the opportunity column. However, the author must admit that there are some factors such as education and curriculum that have not been spread evenly in Indonesia that was left out due to the limitation of this research, the finding has a possibility of undergoing some changes in the future.

Furthermore, for the remaining language policies, all the opportunities and challenges share some similar aspects. The opportunities are present because the positive and promising image that comes with learning, using, and mastering English as it opens more doors into other better or global opportunities, be it education or career. On the other hand, the challenges are present due to the competition it has with Indonesian language and other linguistic varieties. The competition itself is applicable for both formally and casually; formally with the official government body that has a mission of preserving the language and is persistent of maintaining the pride of using local languages and casually with the communities that also share similar mission with the said government, as well as have already been accustomed to the varieties they use daily hence hindering their process of adopting a foreign language to become a second or third language. This is prominent in areas in which English has not shown any visible signal of becoming a part of folks' daily life, such as in simple instructions or in public spaces.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that multilingualism comes as a challenge as Indonesia is undergoing the process of maintaining its identity by deciding on its unifying 'tool' which is the Indonesian language. Indonesian language planning and policy are suggested to aim at promoting and looking for the middle ground for the present languages (and language varieties) in order to avoid the death of more languages, especially the local ones that have shaped Indonesia as a nation and its rich cultures. Meanwhile, the prestige/image that English as lingua franca has may promote learning for learners, hence serving as an opportunity. In addition, the rapid development of lingua franca also competes with the fact that Indonesia as a highly multilingual country houses hundreds of local languages that must also be preserved. For the time being, the direction that Indonesian language planning and policy is suggested to aim is promoting and looking for the middle ground for the present languages in order to avoid the death of more languages, especially the local ones that have shaped Indonesia as nation and its rich cultures.

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