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Beyond Linguistic Documentation: Between the National Language and Local Languages in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the politics of national language policy, especially in Indonesia and the effects of the policy toward the continuity of language diversity in Indonesia. Firstly, a short review of studies in endangered languages is presented in order to fit this discussion in appropriate place in the literature. To get more specific, the Indonesian language policy and its influence toward the country's linguistic diversity is reviewed which is followed by the description of the media's influence upon the threat posed to the marginal local languages. After this point, Indonesian linguists' work will be reviewed in relation to their own status as members of different communities of practice. At the end, recommendations for improving the future linguistic works are suggested in light of language documentation, preservation, and maintenance.

I. INTRODUCTION

The notion of dying languages is not new in linguistics. Some earlier publications (such as Dressler & Wodak-Leodolte (eds.) 1977; Dorian, 1973, 1978, & 1981) had long time ago suggested that the awareness of the loss of humanity because of the disappearing of humans' languages was a real issue. However, as suggested by David Crystal (2000), the global awareness of the disappearing world's languages may have started in 1992 when International Linguistic Congress in Quebec, Canada, released a sort of warning and called out for such global organization as UNESCO to organize serious efforts and supports dedicated to the endangered language documentation programs. Special focus of the program must be aimed at the less studied, or even unstudied endangered languages of the world (Crystals, 2003, p.vii). Since that time, a wave of documentary linguistics studies and researches (e.g. Krauss, 1992; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998; Dobrin, 2008; Harrison, Rood, & Dwyer, 2008; Coluzzi, 2010) have been appearing and enriching linguistic corpus and literatures. The documentary reports about the endangered languages from various part of the world keep coming in by the support of strong funding from globally established institutions such as UNESCO or Max Planc Institute.

Moreover, the methodological approach toward language documentation has also undergone significant changes from the linguistic activity of 'field work' into the more sophisticated term of 'documentary linguistics' operations (Harrison, Rood, & Dwyer, 2008, p.2). In the past, the insufficiency of documentary media seems to have been one of the greatest barriers for linguists to undertake the field work and document the less known language. Such discouraging factor in the field of linguistic documentary proceeded until approximately the past fifteen years when the fast-growing development of digital technology of information and communication has made linguistic documentation swifter, more authentic, archive-friendly. Accordingly, documentation has become incredibly easy and excitingly experimental (Woodbury, 2003).

Nevertheless, improvement on the language documenting methods has also brought the criticism on the way linguists do the documentation. Language documentation is the recording and archiving effort which should be differentiated

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from describing endeavour (Himmelman, 1998). Therefore, descriptive linguists who will commit field work may have to understand that their two-phased work, documenting first and describing later, can be more contributing to the preservation of the world's language diversity rather than go to the field and come back home with only their description of the language being researched on. If they can focus firstly with the documentation, the result of their documentation can be kept away from the notion of bias. If they apply the appropriate methods of language documentation, their description may serve as the first linguistic description of the given endangered language which can be validated by further studies on similar data they have gathered.

Languages and Endangered Languages in Indonesia

To focus the discussion more specifically on the endangered languages in Indonesia, as Newman (1998) marked in his introspective article on the hopeless cause or the endangered language, a Wikipedia article on endangered language informs general readers that languages in Indonesia, despite having tens of thousands of speakers, are threatened to extinct more potentially than Andamanese languages with only hundreds of speakers in the Andaman Island. As an Indonesian speaker, I have been so far proud of the language diversity in our country without realising that such diversity is actually at the highest stake in every coming day. Through the media, Indonesian government seems to also be ignorant on this issue and still uphold the slogan of Indonesian multicultural community and language diversity. In fact, on every day basis, the statistics of social problems tend to climb up which mark the intensifying social tension in Indonesian society. In addition to the inconsistent law enforcement, language choice and language policy may also have become one of the reasons for the growing social trouble in Indonesia.

Among 743 languages (Lewis, 2009) in Indonesia, there are only 13 major languages whose number of speakers is over one million. The languages are Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Madura, Bugis, Makassar, Batak, Melayu, Aceh, Lampung, Rejang (Bengkulu), Sasak, dan Balinese. Thus, 90 % of the Ethnoloque's version of 743 languages or the Indonesian language centre's version of 442 languages (cf. Pusat Bahasa, 2009) in Indonesia is predicted to disappear in the next century. These endangered languages are

dominantly the languages of the people living far away from the centre of development. For example, the languages of Papua in Irian Jaya are among the most endangered. Therefore, a strong relation between governments' lacks of true political will in improving the economy and the life of a community in remote areas and the accelerated death of the community's language has become more evident.

This is likely to be similar to the case of *Tok* Ples creole in Apakibur village (Dobrin, 2008) in the sense that the community's local language maintenance seems to be strongly dependent on the availability of economic incentive from the superior community. This study confirms Grenoble & Whaley's argument (1998, p.24) that subjective attitudes of a marginal speech community toward their language and the language of others, e.g. language of the more economically and politically superior communities, have become prominent signs of the coming language shift, which will later result in the loss of marginal language. In Indonesia, maintaining local languages have apparently become less valuable in economic terms because there seems to be no significant economic feedback from the government to either their language maintenance program or even their local economics. Additionally, despite similar consequence, becoming a fluent speaker of the national language is considered to be prestigious and at least elevate their social status among the other members of the community (Gunarwan, 2005). Then, another factor threatening local languages is the politics of the national language.

II. DISCUSSION

The Influences of National Language Policy to the Dying Local Languages

Since the Youth Oath in 1928, Indonesian language, a lingua franca and modified version of Malay, has been agreed to be used as the national language of Indonesia. This agreement is meant political (Anwar, 1980) and had been successful in uniting various elements and speech communities in Indonesia to struggle for achieving the independence. The adoption of this national language has become a proof of the successful effort of institutionalizing a mixed language in a national language policy. Specifically designed to maintaining the Indonesian language, a language centre is established and a perfected spelling system of Indonesian language has been made. This

perfected spelling system indeed includes over 80 percent of words from regional languages. Yet, the great proportion of the words borrowed comes from the 13 dominant languages. From this linguistic discrimination point, a threat to minor languages begin to appear. Nevertheless, the language centre played significant role in affirming the national language policy and this effort has also given rise to successful widespread of literacy programs of Indonesian language. This national language seems to also boost the sense of nationalism. This can be verified by the positive sentiments of Indonesian citizens when listening to the Indonesian anthem in the events like sport match. If Indonesians does not listen to the song in the same language, such nationalism may not be so strong as they feel at that time of listening the anthem.

Positively, such linguistic modernity has brought Indonesia back to its own feet and began a new free life in the international level too. The excitement of meeting brothers from other regions of the archipelago who can speak the same language and with whom mutual engagement can result in economic or discursive incentive has given a profound effect and change the attitude of Indonesian toward their own regional and local languages especially when they return home. Such natural inclination is reasonable and undeniably attractive to every human being. They can decide that shifting their discursive practice from indigenous into a more nationally acceptable practice is much more preferable and advantageous. This has been the first sign of their local language's extinction.

Despite its political triumphant, the national language policy of setting up a dominant language to become the only national language in a country has a real negative devastating effect for linguistic diversity in the country as evidenced in many other countries in the world (see Sall, 2009, Hinton, 2010). Due to the definite social prestige and economic benefit, citizens naturally and gradually abandon their local languages and determine to be more fluent in their national language. Similar tendency also happens in Indonesia. This tendency creates friction between the marginal communities of local languages and the major speakers of Indonesian as the first language (Gunarwan, 2005; Haenen, 2002).

The more obvious symptom of the local languages' death in Indonesia is the widespread shift of language used at home by parents to their children. It becomes more common for Indonesian

parents to speak to their young children even though their mother tongue is not Indonesian. There is also a sense of pride when a family communicate in Indonesian. However, the Indonesian here is not the formal dialect but the more casual style of Indonesian language, commonly called as the Jakarta dialect. The dialect is a code mixing between Indonesian and Jakarta local dialect. Many borrowed words, phonemic stress and intonation are taken into the dialect and makes it more 'stylish'. At first, when a family speaks the dialect, it can be really funny but, in the end, such dialect coordinates well with the national media and seems to portray the real characteristic of becoming an Indonesian. This Jakarta dialect like any other regional dialect has also given a sense of intimacy and social closeness even within members of the different speech communities (Goebel, 2002, p.482) while the formal Indonesian style seems to suggest a social distance. This trend is also expected from the side of foreign students learning in Indonesia. When a foreign student can speak in the more Jakarta Indonesian in addition to standard Indonesian, they may be more warmly welcome and get treatment as an insider. Such phenomena of widespread of the non-standard dominant dialect of Indonesian have also been evidence by the role of entertaining programs in the media. The elaboration of media's influence will follow.

Media Globalization as the Major Threat to Endangered Languages

Prior to the 1998 reform, Indonesian mass media was controlled strictly by the government's Departemen Penerangan (Former of Department of Information). The control was manifested in form of regular program of Indonesian language on TV and a special column for Indonesian language in newspapers. In 1991, a strict regulation was applied in the use of business naming and labelling where merchants who used foreign language words would be fined and forced to change it with Indonesian label. However, manuals in some imported electronic items were still mostly untranslated into Indonesian and got no legal implication. As in TV commercials, many Javanese words were borrowed for naming governmental buildings, streets, and equivalents of the new foreign items. In fact, these equivalents were not entirely equivalent to the concept but seemed to be used more frequently for political reason.

Then, the question next is "how did this

government's language policy pose a threat to the minority languages?". To find the answer is typically easy. The strong control of the national language policy in the communication and information aspect of life is simply like boosting the power of the one language over the others. Even though regional languages are admitted as the languages of the country as well, they are still second-class languages whose use is much appreciated in informal and internal interaction within a speech community. When coming to a meeting with government officials, members of the community have to use Indonesian language, i.e. the standard version. Using Jakarta Indonesian in a formal situation as such may be stereotypically considered uneducated, uncivilized, or unethical. This action was paradoxical with the cultural statement "dimana bumi dipijak, disitu langit dijunjung" (equivalently translated as "when in Rome, act like a roman") and became a discouragement to the free use of local languages in more formal events even in the region of the language itself. Consequently, all such 'incorrect' use of local languages, the widespread use of formal Indonesian language on TV and media, and the positive attitude toward the most dominant dialect, i.e. Jakarta dialect, have driven the community members to shift their language into either formal Indonesian or Jakarta dialect. When they find it too late for them to shift, the poor Indonesians citizens still force using the dialect on their children in the expectation that their children will get the most benefit of the national language in their future time. This phenomenon is common to most middle-class society in Indonesian cities but not very common to rural communities.

In reverse, after the 1998 reform, language use has been given a total freedom in the media. In light of the acceleration of media globalisation and the widespread use of social media, the use of English as a global language has been undeniable and inevitable. Now, the threat from English language comes not only to the already endangered marginal languages in Indonesia but also to the Indonesian language itself. Adoption and borrowing of foreign words, especially English becomes more common in Indonesian language. In this case, media have become the prominent agent. What troubles a linguist is that the inappropriate act of adoption which is beyond any legal control has been so troublesome and literally ruined the repertoire of Indonesian language itself. This inappropriate borrowing includes unequal

or irrelevant equivalents, adoption of foreign language's syntactic structure (negative transfer), and syntactically incorrect code mixing from the foreign language. Similar tendency of adopting foreign language has also demonstrated even by the former President Soesilo Bambang Yudoyono who became more frequent to do foreign language code mixing in his formal speeches. This action had revoked criticism because it could trigger the legitimate use of foreign language and formally intensify threat to the Indonesian and more tragically the already dying marginal languages of Indonesia.

Understanding the Role of Different Communities of Practice in Rescuing Endangered Languages

From this situation, Indonesian linguists can be trained to provide description to and document any languages they happen to know. Linguists who understand and master English will get the highest privilege because they can upgrade their understanding of the updated methodology in language documentation or documentary. These linguists can then be classified as elites because of their ability to speak the powerful language and therefore aligning themselves with the powerful discursive parties. Even though academic life should be free from such discursive practice, the practice yet existed. Although the linguists with such foreign language skill are patriotic and nationalistic, the treatment they receive was different from those who only master local languages. In this case conflicting discursive practices have taken form.

Despite their marginal position, local linguists have the advantage of having better rapport with local community members. Their access to the key figures who hold traditional manuscripts is wider. This enables them to get a better access in documenting the endangered language. However, the problem does not lie on their easy and wide access but more on their linguistic documenting skills and orientation. To my knowledge, what lacks from the local linguists is the practical application of understanding the difference between documenting and describing. Descriptive analyses and reports have been done more than documentary products. By doing so, the linguists have already jammed, and maybe ruined the documentation effort, which, in turn, will contribute to extra problem in documentary linguistics.

What Indonesian Linguists and Philologists Have Done and Experienced

In relation to less economical feedback received by local language users, similar treatments have also been received by Indonesian descriptive linguists who are enthusiastic to perform documentary linguistics as well as the philologists. Before 2008, Indonesian linguists suffered from having a very low budget from the government to conduct field research. Various kinds of problem ranging from the country's confusing red-tape report mechanism for the small amount of grants given to the linguistic researchers to the lack of economic implication on research for linguistic documentation had discouraged them from making more documentation. In many cases, insufficient financial support presents logistical troubles for the researchers since they have to equip themselves with new and expensive devices that can help them digitally save the documentation. This is also added with the long list of administrative documents demanded to justify the expenses some of which may be inappropriate for such documentary linguistic studies. Since the bureaucratic instruction for financial report is frequently modifiable by the authority but constantly rigid in its implementation on the lower level administration, researchers have no option but to comply and play safe by making 'necessary adjustment' to their financial report so that the grant can be fully received. Otherwise, the report will be rejected and, if the report is overdue, the grant can even be cancelled with a list of option of punishment for the researcher.

Moreover, in the area of philology, for example, community members who hold the written historical documentation of a threatened language could give researchers difficult times because, unlike foreign academics who can compensate them with a great deal of money (Yurnaldi, 2009), Indonesian local linguists can only provide less or even non-economic support to them in exchange of their assistance in the research and the access they could provide to the historical archives. Accordingly, their treatment toward these two differently funded scholars is surely different. Some document holders even sold their historical archives to foreign researchers who eventually brought the archive to their home country and sometimes use them to make false claim for their culture in the regional and geopolitical areas. Such bilateral disputes of claims frequently occurred between Indonesia and Malaysia (Yaputra and

Mulyana, 2020), which were usually triggered by Malaysia's unilateral actions.

To deal with this economic and political issues, some local linguists took another side job as journalists which then make them capable of gaining more political and social power in their research effort. Common people tend to appreciate journalists much better than just researchers because of their access to media publication. Even though they do not get much financial compensation, the participating community members can at least expect to gain some social upgrade if they read their name mentioned in a newspaper. However, there is also a catch for this action. When doing documentation, a conflict between documenting and the need to publish the finding to public collides. This situation gives a high degree of bias to their effort of field work as warned by Woodbury (2003). Additionally, poor improvement of methodological skills for linguistic documentation and logistic limitation for providing digital archiving system to store the language documents had also pushed Indonesian linguists to be more practical and do more descriptive work thereby setting aside the documentary effort.

What Can be Done Next to Document Indonesia's Endangered Languages

line with Woodbury's In (2003)recommendations, there are several preparatory works to save endangered languages in Indonesia through improved linguistic documentation works. First of all, of course, there must be a change of government's policy and budgetary allocations to the work of linguistic documentation on languages in Indonesia. The government should realize that linguistic and cultural diversity is the machine for tourismindustry. It can and have become an economic source of power for the country. Ecotourism, green tourism, ethno-tourism, and rural-tourism have gained more attention from foreign tourists who are bored with conventional tourism program. Without adequate funding, Indonesia's rich linguistic diversity will soon become history without any possibility for revitalization. Sufficient budgets will allow philologists, for instance, to compete against foreign document hunters in winning the interest of the owners of historical archives work so that our own historical linguistic archives can be kept safe in the country and potential cultural war claims can be prevented or, at least, anticipated.

Second of all, a new campaign for maintaining

cultural heritage and revitalizing local languages must be incorporated with the ethno-tourism programs by involving community members in remote and rural areas in the programs. The community members must be placed as shareholders, not only stakeholder, in the tourism industry. They should realize that language preservation should actually be their best interest which will then automatically help Indonesian linguists do their linguistic documentary works. If the people start receiving economic advantages from maintaining their cultures and using their local languages, the progress of language death for local languages in Indonesia can be slowed down or even stopped thereby giving less time pressure to linguistic documentation works.

Then, there should also be a serious effort of providing a network of digital archiving system the linguists, philologists, and anthropologist can use as an integrated digital archive box that save Indonesian linguistic diversity document or corpus. This task can be conducted through the collaboration among the relevant government institutions such as ministry of communication and information, ministry of education, and Balai Bahasa. This national corpus server can host the documentation for all languages and cultural events in Indonesia which can also be used as the data source for research on many disciplines. Having this state-funded corpus center will give the government effective control and complete access to the linguistic and cultural heritage which in turn can be helpful when making any language related policies for national programs.

Last but not least, more workshops on the linguistic documentation methodology and techniques and more scholarship for future field researchers in documentary linguistics will improve local linguists' researching skill quality and capacity. Language researchers from Balai Bahasa or BRIN can benefit from continuous workshops and courses on linguistic documentation from world experts on documentary linguistics. These courses should provide the language workers with

the current updates and newest information on the world's linguistic documentation works and allow them to improve the quality of their own work with languages in Indonesia. Such capacity building for human resources in the field of language documentation can be so strategic that they can be trained or easily resort to use other freely available digital server if the national corpus system fails to take form. As the result, the documentation works can still be continued despite lacks of logistical support from the government. This capacity building of human resources will be more valuable than any other type of investment the government can perform.

III. CONCLUSION

The issue of dying languages in Indonesia has been real. Now, the younger generation of Indonesian linguists have been familiar with the advanced digital technology of documentation but more training and workshops on linguistic documentary should be programmed to them. Then, a positive sign for the documentary linguistic efforts can be very real in case of Indonesian endangered languages. For this, the work should be done pretty quickly because the number of the languages dying soon is increasing due to the threat pose by the media and the country's freedom of information. Preventing the death of tens or hundreds of marginal languages is not very effective because languages do die out. Even though it is sadly inevitable that some languages will die, they can potentially be revitalized as long as their records and documentation are complete. Therefore, more budgetary allocation should be given on language documentation programs rather than language revitalization. It is more logical to think that having several endangered languages recorded and documented will be more worthwhile than having only one or a few being revitalized and such revitalization may only last for a time being and for a more superficial reason, such as social prestige, rather than for maintaining an ethnic identity and cultural heritage.

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