

Language education policy at schools in the era of Southeast Asian economic community integration

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Abstract

Aim: The type of research into how the integration of the Southeast Asian Economic Community has influenced language education policy implementation. The students and teachers of Central Sulawesi Province, Eastern Indonesia, were surveyed. The government mandates instruction in both English and Bahasa Indonesia, the national language, and other local languages.

Method: Three primary methods were used in the researcher's qualitative methodology. The three main methods are in-person interviews, in-depth observations, and thorough records. English language learning and study are on the rise, as evidenced by the study's findings.

Findings: The majority of participants in the integration of the Southeast Asian Economic Community think that English should develop into a functional language of communication. Many people in Southeast Asian countries speak Malay, so that language is often suggested as a possible replacement for Lingua Franca. Foreigners coming to Indonesia on business must learn the language spoken there to communicate effectively with locals and be accepted into local society. Kids must learn to speak the language they were raised in at school.

Implications/Novel Contribution: Policy decisions about how languages are taught should have positive consequences for students preparing for Southeast Asian Economic Integration.

Keywords: Language Education, Language Policy, Curriculum, Learning, School

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's policy on language education encompasses three pillars: promoting Bahasa Indonesia as the national language and teaching foreign languages and English as a global language.

Malay is the native tongue of some Southeast Asian countries, while in others, like Indonesia, English is a second or even a third language. Though many people in Southeast Asia do not speak English as a first language, others do not speak Malay as a second language either. Several authorities have argued that English and Malay are crucial for communication between Southeast Asian countries.

Efforts to increase language instruction in Indonesian schools have gained traction since the country adopted a policy promoting the regional economic integration of the Southeast Asian Economic Community in 2015. Language education in schools enjoys widespread support from the Indonesian government and other relevant stakeholders. The research was carried out in elementary and junior high institutions in Central Sulawesi Province. As novice language learners of the future, students at these school levels are of a particular school to the researcher because they need to be equipped with strong language skills as early as possible to thrive in the Era of Southeast Asian Economic Community Integration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Education in Southeast Asian Perspectives

Multilingualism has become a common issue in many parts of the world including developed and developing countries (Abdullah, Laily Ramli, & Rafek, 2017; Kelly, 2015; Marhum, 2009; Taher, Shrestha, Rahman, & Khalid,

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2016). In this context, multilingualism is associated with local languages, national languages and international language (Baldauf & Luke, 1990; Hilao, 2016; Marhum, 2013; Pradhan, 2016).

On the one hand, the government and the local communities in all countries are challenged to manage multilingualism by introducing a language policy for multilingualism (Marhum, 2013, 2015; Rappa & Wee, 2006; Sutthipornphalangkoon, 2016). On the other hand, the education sector needs to provide significant resources for the development and promotion of multilingualism. The incorporation of multilingual teaching into the school curriculum needs to have positive implications for the development and promotion of local, national and global language education particularly in the era of Southeast Asian Economic Community (Marhum, 2015; Nagai, 1997; Rosmawaty, 2013).

Local Languages in the Current Perspectives

Taha (2000) suggested that the status and function of local languages in Indonesia in the current situation were based on several factors.

1. The explanation of Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution stated that in the areas where local languages are actively spoken, the local people maintain and develop their local languages.
2. There were several functions of local languages: a symbol of local pride, local identity, and as a lingua franca of local family and community.
3. The 1993 Guidelines of State Policy (GBHN), Number 3 f, stipulated that the maintenance of local language should be sustained in order to develop and enrich Bahasa Indonesia vocabulary and Indonesian cultural diversity.
4. One of the agreements of the fourth Indonesian Language Congress in 1993, particularly in the area of local language and literature, was that the local languages in certain areas could be taught to the student speakers without hampering the teaching of Indonesian language and literature. For that reason, curricula, textbooks of teaching and learning methodology and other infrastructure to support local language education should be developed (Kelly, 2015; Mahsun, 2000).

Bahasa Indonesia as A National Language

The Ministry of Domestic Affairs issued a Decree No.20/1991 on 28 October 1991. The decree was forwarded to all governors, Bupati (Head of District) and mayors across Indonesia. It aims at promoting Bahasa Indonesia for the sake of national unity (Abas, 1987; Alwasilah, 1997). Another decree was issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture Decree No. 1/U/1992 on the promotion of Bahasa Indonesia for the strengthening of national unity. Furthermore, the local government of Jakarta issued a Local Government Regulation No.1/1992 on the use of Bahasa Indonesia on sign posts, banners and advertisements in DKI Jakarta Province.

Indigenous languages which are given official priority in particular countries by the government concerned can be defined as national languages (Gonzalez, Halim, Palakornkul, & Noss, 1984; Grimes, 1992; Richard, 1999). For example, in Southeast Asian countries the national languages are Bahasa Indonesia in Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia, and Thai in Thailand. Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia, Malay and the Tagalog language of Philippines belong to the same family (Kimura, 2013; Marhum, 2013; Rappa & Wee, 2006).

The Role of English in The Global and Regional Context

English is the first foreign language being taught in Indonesia. It is based on the Regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture No. 096/1967 (Alwasilah, 1997; Marhum, 2009, 2016) regulating the status and function of English. It has been used as the first foreign language in Indonesia since 1955.

Gonzalez et al. (1984) argued that English has some official functions in Indonesia: (1) Means of communication among Nations (2) means of development supporter of Indonesian language to become modern language, and (3) means of science and technology transfer for national development.

English has several functions in the globalization era. First, many nations all over the world have a growing rate of interdependence (Alwasilah, 1997; Crystal, 2012; Pennycook, 2017). International relations are not limited to the economic and political area, but also operate in many other aspects of life (Khamkhien, 2010; Gilmour, Klieve, & Li, 2018; Tupas, 2018). Their functions include the establishment of close relations with other nations and the

implementation of foreign policy based on the Regulation of the Ministry of Education, NO 096/1967. Thus, in general, foreign languages function as a means of global communication in all aspects of life. Damar, Gürsoy, and Korkmaz (2013), Argue that Children should be taught English since Primary School, the early the better.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach with the main instruments of data collection are an in-depth interview, documentation and observation. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews which involved six stakeholders of informen and they are research stakeholders who came from different backgrounds.

There were sixinformen who were interviewed in this research. They weretwo informen from educational setting with the codes (ES01 and ES02), two informen from government (Departmen of Education and Provincial Language Center) with the codes (GN03 and GN04) and twoinformen from community leaders with the codes (CL05 and CL06).

In order to collect data from informen, the researchers implemented the snowball technique. The researchers interview only knowledgeable and trustworthy interviewees.

Data Analysis Techniques

Based on the data analysis chosen, I used the technique of data analysis that involved the analysis of data as recommended in Miles and Huberman (1984) and Keeves and Sowden (1997). In terms of data analysis in this study, it is crucial to consider such procedures as data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification, summarizing and integrating findings.

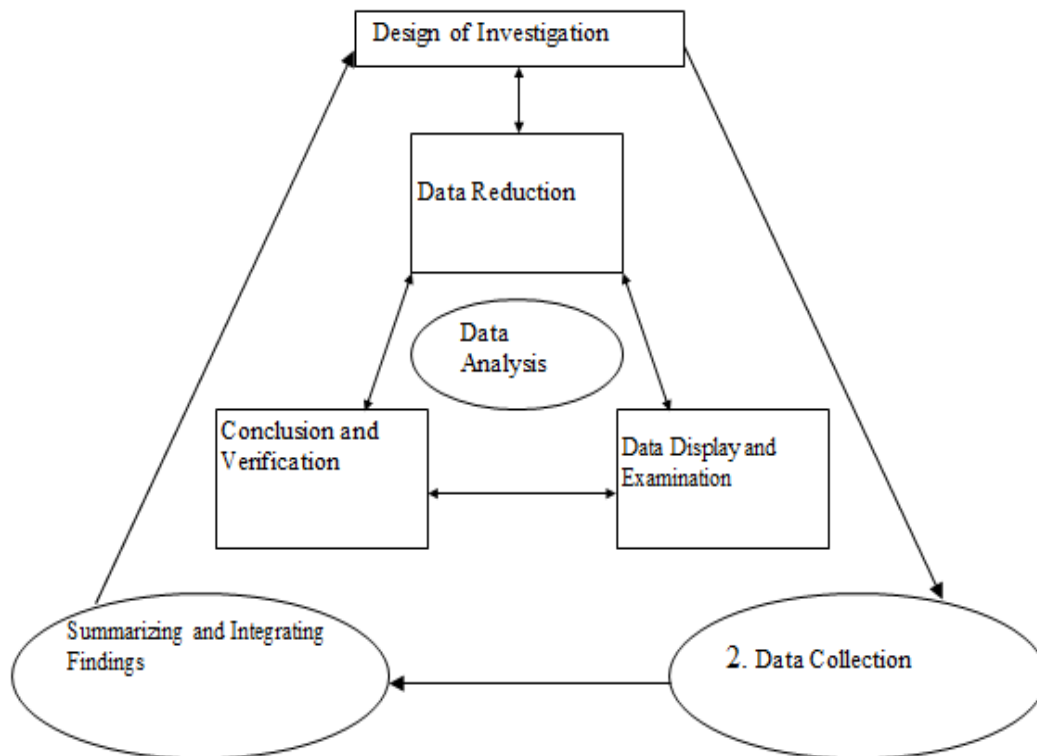


Figure 1. Model Data Analisis Interaktif
Source: Keeves and Sowden (1997)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will deal with discussions and findings of the research which have implications of language education for the anticipation of Southeast Asian Economic Community integration Policy. English and other related languages become important means of communication in the Era of Southeast Asian Nation Integration.

The teaching of English at Primary schools and Lower Secondary Schools in Central Sulawesi are to provide the students with language skills and knowledge. If the students continue their schooling to the higher level, it is expected that they will not find more difficulties particularly when it comes to issues in the English Language Class. The students are also expected to be able to communicate with people from other foreign countries with at least the use of simple and communicative sentences and it should be acceptable. As stated by an informant from a leading Lower Secondary School in Palu:

It is important for the primary school students to learn English though it was only incorporated into the local content curriculum. When young children learn English from Primary School, they will have more opportunities to develop their language skills from early childhood. Thus, when they continue their schooling to the Lower Secondary Schools, they will be ready with the English language class (Informant ES, 01).

Damar et al. (2013) state, Teachers trainers who argued that Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) should start in primary school reported that children of primary school ages would be more successful academically than pre-school children. He further elaborates that children at these ages are luckier in terms of native like accent and pronunciation.

In Central Sulawesi, the teaching of English at Primary school level has been conducted through the implementation of local curriculum content. It means that the content of English language teaching in the primary school level is designed by the local Department of Education and Local Primary schools and involved several curriculum planners and Senior English Teachers. Yet, many primary schools still rely much on books and other related teaching and learning resources from Jakarta.

In the document of Ministry of Education Republic of Indonesia, Ministry of Education Policy has stipulated that in the Government Regulation Depdikbud RI No. 0487/4/1992, Chapter VIII, stipulated that Primary Schools are allowed to add more school subjects into the curriculum and they must be relevant.

Informant GN 03 suggests: it is also recommended in the Decree of Ministry of Education Republic of Indonesia No. 060/U/1993 issued in 25 February 1993 on opportunities of incorporating English subject into the local curriculum content at Primary Schools and beginning from Year four.

Furthermore it is also supported by the studies of Marhum (2013) on Emerging Language Education in Indonesia and Alwasilah (1997) on Language Politics and Education in Indonesia.

However, the Teaching of English to Primary schools encountered several problems particularly schools located in the rural areas. The common problems they encountered are the lack of professional English teachers, limited teaching resources such as books, audio-visual and other related teaching learning facility problems.

SMP AlAzhar (Lower Secondary School) Palu implements language education policy at school. Students are encouraged to use English during the school period. The language education policy has inspired students to form a habit of using English more frequently. The school has introduced English Day Agenda in which during English Day School, all teachers and students must use English during the class (Informant ES 01). An other language education policy introduced by SMP Al Azhar is associated with recruitment system. One of the main requirements of School entrance at SMP AlAzhar is that candidates must pass both spoken and written test of English. Furthermore, prospective students should have certificate of English Course. Furthermore, the recruitment of English teachers are also based on the English language proficiency as well.

With the implementation of language education policy, it is expected that school will be able to promote a habit formation of using English. And the outcomes of language education policy implementation of this school has been indicated by the excellent academic performance of the students in general and in particular. The school often won the English competition debate and school Olympic event.

The Indonesian Language is a national language and it is a compulsory subject at schools in Indonesia. It is taught from year one of Primary School up to university level. It is ironic that over the last two decades many reports from stakeholders that students' academic achievement in Bahasa Indonesia have been relatively lower than their achievement in English language class.

The teaching of Bahasa Indonesia to students of Primary schools and lower secondary schools are aimed at anticipating the Southeast Asian Economic Community Era. As suggested by Informant CL06: At the same time, teachers and parents inspire their children to have positive attitudes towards bahasa Indonesia as a National

Language. The young learners should also be expected to become leaders and successful business leaders in the future. Thus, they should become good users of Bahasa Indonesia from early age and to anticipate the Era of Southeast Asian Nation Integration (Abas, 1987; Alwasilah, 1997; Marhum, 2009, 2017).

Furthermore, students should take pride in learning Bahasa Indonesia at schools. So, far it also sounds ironic that English has become much more favourite language subject than Bahasa Indonesia at schools. Students need to learn English to prepare themselves in order to anticipate the Era of Southeast Asian Economic Community Era. Yet, they should also be more proud to learn their national language as a formal means of communication. By taking pride in learning Bahasa Indonesia, they will participate in promoting their national language to the people of foreign countries who visit Indonesia and run their business.

Article 44 of Law No 24/2009 on Flag, Language, State emblem and National Anthem stipulated in the following Articles (1) Government supports the status of Bahasa Indonesia to be an International Language gradually, systematically and Sustainably and then followed by article (2) the Promotion of Bahasa Indonesia to be an International Language as mentioned in article (1) Should be coordinated with the National language Centre.

The teaching of Bahasa Indonesia to Foreign speakers should also become one of priorities in language education programs in Central Sulawesi in addition to the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia to the local students of Primary Schools and students of Lower secondary level. Informan CL05 state that: In the future, people from some Southeast Asian countries will visit Palu City of Central Sulawesi and might live and run their business. Then they might bring their family as well. Their children will be sent to local primary schools or Lower secondary schools and are supposed to learn Bahasa Indonesia too.

This is also in line with Abas studies in 1987 on Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying language and Alwasila studies in 1997 on Language Politics and Education in Indonesia. Further more, Marhum (2009) state that students need to learn bahasa Indonesia at school in order to promote their national language and keep developing and maintaining it as well.

There are more than six hundred local languages in Indonesia and most are found in the Eastern parts of Indonesia. The Status and functions of local languages in Indonesia are as one of national cultural elements in Indonesia. It is protected by Constitution 1945, Article 36 Chapter XV.

One function of local languages in Indonesia is to support Bahasa Indonesia as a National language and it was enacted on Constitution 1945, Article 32 (Verse 2) which is stated that Local languages are respected and maintained by state as National Cultural Heritage of Indonesia.

Some Indonesian words originally derive from local languages. In certain areas of Indonesia local languages are dominant. Thus the local governments are allowed to use local languages as means of communication.

Informan GN 04, state that:Based on the Government Law No. 24/2009 Article 41 and 42 on the Management of Local Languages and Local Literary Works, the Local Governments are allowed to manage local languages and local literary work and must coordinate with the Central Government as a National Language Policy Makers.

Marhum (2016) suggests that even though local language and local literary work have been incorporated into the school curriculum, explicit and effective language policy should be made and promoted since the local language so far seems to be a marginalized and least popular within formal educational settings compared to English and Bahasa Indonesia. The speakers of Bahasa Kaili (Local Language) is found in Palu, the Capital City of Central Sulawesi Province and in a few surrounding districts. Bahasa Kaili is considered to be one of the dominant local languages of Central Sulawesi and it has been recently taught as a school subject of Primary Schools and offered to students of year one to year six.

According to the Local Government Regulation (PERDA) No.2/2011 in relation to the Local language Maintenance and Development Program, it is recommended that the local Government with the stakeholders should participate in maintaining and developing local languages and culture. This local government regulation supports the local language teaching policy at schools.

The aims of teaching local languages at schools in Central Sulawesi are in order to maintain local languages, to inspire the students to have positive attitudes towards their local languages, to promote local language as proud

cultural identity. The teaching of local languages at Primary schools is focused on the teaching of vocabulary that is commonly used in daily life. Students are taught word class such as Noun, Verbs and Adjectives.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, Language education policy is expected to have good implication for the students in order to anticipate Southeast Asian Economic Integration.

Schools must prepare young language learners with good language skills in order that they will have self-confidence to face the Southeast Asian Economic Community Integration in the future.

The Curriculum content of language teaching should be relevant to the current situation. Language in use and language for special purposes with simple teaching materials should be incorporated into the school curriculum. The language teaching and learning should be active and joyful.

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