



The Position of English in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT (10 pt)

In terms of language politics, the position of English in Indonesia is not as important as in other countries, it is even seen as very weak. In-Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the National Flag, Language, and Emblem, as well as the National Anthem, the status of the English language is not stated at all. In this Law, it is stated that the official means of communication in the government and private work environment is Indonesian and the language of instruction for education, except for special purposes, is Indonesian. English positions in the world can be categorized into three include English as First Language, English as Second Language, English as Foreign Language. The position of English in Indonesia is very important because it is included in the elementary to university curriculum and the stipulation of TOEFL as a requirement for entry and graduation in a number of universities. Actually, English is still treated as a branch of science like other subjects and as a foreign language, rather than as a means of communication. In this context, English in Indonesia is not as a second language or English as a Second Language (ESL) but as a foreign language or English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

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1. Introduction

With increasing interdependence between countries around the world, English is no longer only the language of countries where English is used as a first language, namely the United States, England, Australia, and parts of Canada, but is also the language of the whole world. countries in the world in its position as a global lingua franca.

In Malaysia, English has considered a very important language even though the national language of the country is Malay. Malay is a unifying language while English is a language that serves to gain an international competitive advantage. In Malaysia's 2020 Vision, Malaysia is projected as a developed country that is characterized by the English proficiency of Malaysian citizens.

In Singapore, English is seen as the language that makes Singapore one of the world's cosmopolitan business leaders. Because of the importance of English, since elementary school, the Singapore government has implemented a bilingual education system by establishing English as the first language alongside one of the other official languages (Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay).

In Thailand, the government realizes that as the population's English proficiency increases, the country's competitiveness and the international role will increase. To improve the ability of the Thai people to speak English, this language is taught from the elementary level and is added with a strategic program to strengthen the English language to accelerate the progress of the nation.

The position of English is very important and urgent to become a global player. However, the role of English in Indonesia is not that urgent. Although English in Indonesia has been increasingly intensively and extensively studied and English language proficiency is used as a requirement for acceptance and completion of master's and doctoral programs at several universities as well as a condition for applying for work in several companies, English is not widely used and the number of Indonesians who can afford it English is still very low. This means that the use of English in Indonesia is still limited to certain events and circles and tends to be only an administrative requirement.

At the university level, for example, the use of English is limited to the teaching-learning process in the English department. As a result, the mastery of English at the university is very low so when a seminar or workshop is held involving speakers who use English, translation must be carried out.

Supposedly, for a university environment in this internet and digital era, there is no need for translation. If the problem cannot be solved, the government's hope that all universities, including universities in Indonesia, go international, is just wishful thinking looking up at the sky. Universities whose lecturers do not master English will not be able to conduct international cooperation and publish scientific papers in international journals.

Why most universities in Indonesia do not have an international affairs office as in universities abroad, including in neighboring countries, is because of the low level of mastery of the English language. In the field of writing scientific papers for publication in international journals indexed by Scopus, Elsevier, Thomson Reuters, or content, Indonesia is still lagging behind neighboring countries.

According to the Scimago Journal Ranking, Indonesia is below Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq in the publication of scientific papers, although the number of universities and the population of Indonesia is much larger than the number of universities and residents in these countries. One of the causes of this problem is the low mastery of scientific English which is absolutely owned by every writer.

To increase the volume and quality of international scientific publications which are now listed as one of the agendas of the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, the Indonesian government and a number of leading universities in Indonesia continue to encourage

each lecturer to publish their scientific works in international journals by providing incentives of tens of millions of rupiah for one publication.

However, in order to achieve this goal, the strategy for mastering English for the purpose of writing scientific papers must be an integrated part of the agenda of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. Without a sustainable writing practice in English that demands very strict grammatical, vocabulary, coherence, and cohesion competencies, it will not be possible to write an international standard scientific paper.

Although one of the criteria for international journals is the use of one of the United Nations languages, namely, English, French, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian, almost all reputable international journals use English as a consequence of the widespread use of English throughout the world. Therefore, learning foreign languages in Indonesia must be focused on learning English.

For the record, to go international and be ranked as a world-class university, a university must meet a number of international standards, including internationally qualified scientific works, international cooperation, and the involvement of students and lecturers in academic and research activities at an international level which cannot be separated from language proficiency.

English Position in Indonesia

Literally, the position of English in Indonesia is very important because it is included in the elementary to university curriculum and the TOEFL is stipulated as a requirement for entry and graduation in a number of universities. But actually, English is still treated as a branch of science like other subjects and as a foreign language, rather than as a means of communication. In this context, English in Indonesia is not as a second language or English as a Second Language (ESL) but as a foreign language or English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

English is already the official language of instruction in 42 countries in the world and is a very popular language studied worldwide by 1.5 billion people and ranks first out of 7 languages in the world besides French, Mandarin, Spanish, German, Italian and Japanese of 839 languages used by 60 countries in the world (Figure 1), so English is now the most influential international language of instruction out of 10 languages in the world.



Figure 1. English is the official language of instruction for 42 countries in the world

In terms of language politics, the position of English in Indonesia is not as important as in other countries, it is even seen as very weak. In Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the National Flag, Language, and Emblem, as well as the National Anthem, the status of the English language is not stated at all. In this Law, it is stated that the official means of communication in the government and private work environment is Indonesian and the language of instruction for education, except for special purposes, is Indonesian.

Ideally, so that English can become ESL, the law should contain articles that open up space for the wider use of English, such as in neighboring countries. Although theoretically, the position of English in Indonesia is the same as in Korea, Japan, Iran, and Thailand, namely EFL, Indonesian people's mastery of English is still far below that of people in those countries. One indicator is that the number of international publications written by Indonesians in indexed journals of the world's top rankings is much smaller than the number written by people from these countries and the English proficiency of academics in these countries is far better than the ability of academics in these countries. English-speaking academics in Indonesia.

In addition to these conditions, language politics in Indonesia also places English in a weaker position with the abolition of English subjects from the 2013 elementary school curriculum and the reduced time allocation for English lessons at the high school level, which was implemented in 2014. This policy contrasts with the policy languages in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Korea, Japan, India, and other countries in the world that require English to be studied from elementary to university. Even in Singapore, from an early age, English is used as the official language in the teaching and learning process.

The steps taken by the Indonesian government to eliminate English lessons from the elementary school curriculum and reduce the time allocated for these lessons to the senior high school curriculum on the grounds that English lessons have weakened the achievement of Indonesian students and students in Indonesian language lessons are wrong and a step backward.

Penfield (1959) in his hypothesis, Critical Period Hypothesis, suggests that the most appropriate age to learn a foreign language is the first ten years because that is when the human brain reaches plasticity or flexibility. At puberty, the human brain will lose its elasticity and flexibility which makes learning a foreign language more difficult.

On that basis, language politics that eliminate English from the elementary school curriculum will hinder the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education's goal of encouraging universities to produce scientific papers of international caliber and urging universities to go international. English skills, especially in writing scientific papers, cannot be achieved in a short time but in a long time through a process of liking to use English, training through trial and error, habituation to the process of submitting writings for publication which will inevitably be colored with rejections. rejection and revision. Such a process, of course, has to be started from elementary school.

Another language policy that limits the use of English in Indonesia is the restriction on the use of English in broadcasting as stated in Law no. 32 on Broadcasting. In this law, it is stated that a foreign language can only be used as the language of instruction in accordance with the needs of a broadcast program, in contrast to Malaysia and other countries where there are many broadcasts that are entirely in English.

English Becomes the Lingua Franca and Position of Indonesian People's Ability

The use of English in the world is divided into three circles (Figure 1). First, the inner circle shows countries, such as England and the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand using English as their native language. Second, the outer circle shows countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, and the Philippines use a second language. Third, the expanding circle shows that countries such as China, Russia, and ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, use English as a foreign language.

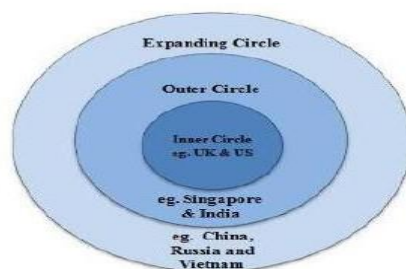


Figure 7. Three circles of English-speaking countries

Each country in ASEAN has its own language of instruction, but more people in the ASEAN region have switched to using English and Mandarin (Figure 6). Since 2009 English has become the de facto lingua franca of ASEAN countries and no country has objected to this fact. The role of English was once again emphasized at the 13th ASEAN Summit held in Singapore on 20 November 2007.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Foreign Language

A foreign language is a language not spoken by people living in a particular place: for example, Indonesian is considered a foreign language in Australia. A foreign language is also a language not spoken in a person's homeland/country of origin, for example; An Indonesian speaker living in Australia may say that English is a foreign language to itself. Foreign Languages are languages other than Indonesian and regional languages (Article 1 Number 6 of Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning Flags, Languages, and Coats of Arms, as well as the National Anthem). English in Indonesia is generally taught as a foreign language. The term 'foreign language' in the field of language teaching is different from 'second language'. A foreign language is a language that is not used as a means of communication in a particular country where it is taught. While a second language is a language that is not the main language but becomes one of the languages spoken in general in a country.

2.2 Expanding Circle

The Expanding Circle refers to the territories where English is learned as a foreign language. The territories do not have a history of colonization by members of the Inner Circle and institutional or social roles. English is taught as a 'foreign' language as the most useful vehicle of international communication (White, 1997). The countries in the Expanding Circle include China, Japan, Greece, and Poland (Crșytal, 1997). The English used in the Expanding Circle is regarded as 'norm dependent'. Countries that use English for various purposes but do not make it the dominant language in everyday communication like Indonesia is one of the countries in the Expanding Circle.

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