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Language Unification and the Fate of Regional Languages in Multiethnic, Multilingual States: Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Micronesia

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1. Linguistic Problems in Multilingual Nations
2. Unification Indonesia through Indonesian
3. Standarization on Papua New Guinea through Tok Pisin
4. The Unification of Micronesia through Japanese, Past and Present

1. LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN MULTILINGUAL NATIONS

Nations throughout the world that support a number of different regional languages often have serious internal language problems that, in the worst case, lead to domestic discord. But on the basis of my own fieldwork, I find that Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Micronesia are cases where, despite multilingualism, language problems have not caused serious political upheavals. In this paper, I would like to consider both historical and current questions relating to how major languages and minor languages interact with each other.

There are those who interpret the idea of national language arising through a unification of languages as a repressive phenomenon. They hold that "a national language is a model that seeks everyone's submission, and submission to it is a sign of allegiance, respect, and loyalty to the nation and its ideology" [TANAKA 1978: 246]. National language in this case presupposes one language for one nation. But the concept of linguistic unity is, like that of standard language, only an ideal. We need to take into account what kind of efforts have been made towards unity in a particular situation and give credit to the linguistic fairness of the policies of those nations that support diverse languages. Cases can be found among present-day nations where a unified single language is not necessarily required. And even though the appearance of linguistic unity may be apparent, there is always room to question whether in reality total linguistic unity has been achieved. This is the point of view I think we should take to the problem.

In India, notorious as a multilingual nation, fourteen languages as well as the classical language Sanskrit are approved for public use and English serves as the administrative language. In Singapore, the native Malay is the national language;

Chinese, Tamil, and English are supported in addition to Malay as business languages; and English is the language of administration—such is the deft compromise that has been adopted. It can be compared to the Swiss policy that makes the German, French, Italian, and the native Rhaeto-Romansch all national languages and designates the three national languages of Germany, France, and Italy as official public languages. Even when languages are established as national or administrative languages, so-called sociolects may arise, as can be seen in the case of English in India, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, and Australia.

2. UNIFICATION OF INDONESIA THROUGH INDONESIAN

Indonesian started out historically as a branch of the Malay family in the narrow sense (*i.e.* Coast Malay) and spread among the islands as a language of trade, but strictly speaking there are currently no native speakers of Indonesian. The forerunner of Indonesian (and Malaysian) used to be called Malay, but now Indonesian and the Coast Malay family, considered to be its parent, are quite distinct. The Coast Malay languages are themselves merely one of several groups of regional vernaculars. There are said to be about 2,300 regional (*i.e.* ethnic) languages in Indonesia, which Indonesian covers like a great steel dome. In fact, these languages and their areal variants (*logat*) are the real languages of Indonesia.

There is no term in Indonesian that means 'dialect' in the pejorative sense of being outside the norm. The word *dialek*, to be sure, exists, but it is a borrowing (from Dutch) and does not express a entrenched concept of local culture. This tolerant attitude does not mean, however, that the structure of Indonesian is firmly established as a national language. Given the reality of multilingualism, Indonesian is subject to phonological, lexical, and grammatical influences from all the regional languages and is undergoing subtle changes even now. An Indonesian linguist, Prof. A. M. Moeliono, has characterized this situation by saying that each ethnic group is "making idealistic demands" upon the Indonesian language [SAKIYAMA 1974: 112]. In every area of life, the language actually used might well be called "pidginized" Indonesian.

The peoples who make up Indonesia thus preserve, even in language, the means to manifest their identities both regionally and nationally, in accord with the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* 'Diversity and Unity' that graces the national emblem. This motto can, in fact, be traced back to the phrase "They (Shivaism and Buddhism) are different yet one" in the poetic compilation *Arjuna Wijaya* (Chapter 27, Verse 2) of Mpu Tantular, poet in the 14th-century Majapahit court. Old Javanese has the value of a classical language for the peoples who make up present-day Indonesia, and is hence quite appropriate for the national motto.

Indonesian is not a language of conquerors, as was Latin in Europe nor is its ascendancy like that of Mandarin in China, which accompanied the expansion of the Han ethnic group in China. Indonesian should probably be compared, at least during the period of its Malay origins, with the *koiné* that developed around the At-

tic dialect of Greek in the pre-Christian era.

Historically speaking, the oldest trace of Malay used in interisland communication (for trade) dates back to 7th century sources, the Kedukan Bukit inscriptions found near Palembang on Sumatra, inscribed in the Pallava script of southern India. Written records thereafter are very rare. The next important piece of evidence, another inscription created after the advent of Islam, is in Arabic letters and is located in the state of Trengganu on the Malay peninsula; it is estimated to date from the beginning of the 14th century. It is only from the 16th century at the earliest, however, that proper records in Arabic script remain; the oldest of these is *The History of the Pasai Kingdom*. This kingdom held sway in the Aceh territory of Sumatra, but its chronicles are written significantly in Malay rather than in Acehnese.

In Chapter 18 of his *Voyage to the East* (1596), the Dutchman Van Linshouten stated that a refined language called Malayo (Malay) was in use throughout the East in the same way that French was in Europe. This shows that Malay had secured a strong foothold as the common language of the Malay world for a long period of time through an almost exclusively oral tradition. The fact that the Indonesian Youth Conference passed a resolution making Indonesian "the sole language of the Indonesian people" in 1928—during the period of Dutch rule—attests to the strength of the oral tradition and the general consensus that it was a standard language.

But we must not ignore the role played by the Moslem schools for young men (*pondok* or, in Javanese, *pasantren*), of which there are said to have been tens of thousands in Java alone, in the promulgation of Indonesian as a standard language. The ideals of these schools, which resembled Japanese *terakoya* in character, would be carried over into the democratic Taman Siswa School created after 1922.

Looking back on the period of Japanese occupation of Indonesia, many Indonesian intellectuals acknowledge that, despite the many negative aspects of Japanese policy, one redeeming feature was the way in which Dutch was replaced by Indonesian as the common language from August 1941 onward. The ability to use Indonesian, which had already existed latently, blossomed all over Indonesia as soon as it was made the common language [ALISJAHBANA n.d.: 191–192]. The reason for the Japanese policy, however, was that the military thought its intelligence gathering would be more successful if the occupiers adopted Indonesian instead of forcing the occupied peoples to learn Japanese. Furthermore, although Indonesian rose to prominence briefly under the Japanese, its ascent was marred by the introduction of loanwords from Japanese related to military affairs; these remain in the vocabulary of present-day Indonesian, accounting for more than half of the approximately 100 words of Japanese origin that turn up in textbooks and literary writings.[1] The majority of such vocabulary will probably be abandoned

1) *Bagero* (or *bagerok*) comes from Japanese *bakayarō* 'stupid ass' and is often an expletive. It thus has something in common with Tok Pisin *raus* 'beat it! scram!', which comes from German *heraus!* 'get out'. Both expressions are shameful relics of the arrogance of colonial administrators. For details, see Satō [1981: 20].

eventually, but the latest edition of the Indonesian dictionary *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (1988) still lists such words as *takeyari* 'bamboo spear' and *jibaku* 'suicidal explosion', out-of-place relics, divorced from Japanese culture, that survive in the Indonesian world. Of particular interest is the verb *ber-jibaku*, a productive Indonesian formation, that has taken on the new meaning 'to behave resolutely, sacrificing oneself'.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that, after Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945, there was no significant dissent over whether Indonesian or Javanese ought to become the national standard even though the latter was the language of the Javanese who had earlier ruled the great kingdom of Majapahit. The culture based on the language of this kindgom was the most refined of any of the region's languages, enjoyed a long written tradition, and boasted the largest population of speakers in Indonesia. In the 1920s, Ki Hajar Dewantoro, the Javanese cultural leader who founded the Taman Siswa School, stated that Malay would better serve as a medium of communication for Indonesia than Javanese, which, due to its honorific expressions, was hard for foreigners to learn. As with the resolution of the Youth Conference, this pronouncement was made during the period of Dutch rule.

There are other languages in Indonesia, such as Sundanese and Batak, that have a cultural depth comparable to Javanese in terms of the number of writings in which they occur and speakers who use them. Yet none of the users of these languages made so bold as to start a nationalist movement based on their language [KHAIDIR 1985: 17–19]. This acquiesence on the part of diverse ethnic groups, which resulted in the adoption of Indonesian as the official public language, spared the nation a linguistic struggle of the kind seen elsewhere. The current Constitution (Article I, Chapter 3, Section 4) declares, "The common language of the Republic shall be Indonesian," but this statement was inserted not so much to prevent a dispute over a language problem [KINDAICHI 1988: 7] as to acknowledge the synthetic, multiethnic nature of the Republic.

As unification through the Indonesian language is being pursued with ever increasing vigor, there have been more voices warning that government policies do not adequately protect or nurture the regional languages that provide much of the support for national culture "from below," so to speak. Even in children's literature, translation and conversion to visual media of foreign materials is far in advance of publication and preparation for mass media of folk tales told originally in one of Indonesia's regional languages.[2] Still one gets the impression that, at least with better represented languages such as Javanese and Sundanese, a fair number of publications of popular material is available in the regional cities. Also, there is

2) The Section for Examination of Regional Culture in the Office of Historical and Traditional Values of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has the duty of recording and publishing oral folk traditions, and issued about 2,000 items in Indonesian from 1976 through 1988. With few exceptions, however, these items are not available on the commercial market. See Ajip Rosidi [1988].

general agreement on the necessity of bilingualism; bilingualism is viewed positively and the use of regional languages and Indonesian side by side in elementary schools is regarded as desirable [ALWASILAH 1986: 161–163].

The spelling of both Indonesian and Malaysian in latin letters was standardized in 1972. Until then Indonesia had followed Dutch orthographic practice and Malaysian, that of English. Indonesia had always intended to slough off the spelling system of its old suzerain, but the demands for standardization were even stronger on the Malaysian side. One reason for the joint spelling reform was the prestige of Indonesian as a written language.[3] Second, there is a strong tendency in Malaysia to look to Indonesian grammar for a model of standardization. The diglossia of Malaysian, with its differentiation between standard speech and court language [ASMAH 1982: 104–10], makes the model of Indonesian, where no such distinctions exist, quite appealing.

3. STANDARDIZATION ON PAPUA NEW GUINEA THROUGH TOK PISIN

Let us look at New Guinea for the another example of recent language standardization.

Tok Pisin, which earlier was rather pejoratively called Pidgin English, has more speakers in New Guinea than has English, the official public language, and functions as a common language nearly everywhere despite the existence of several hundred tribal languages. The following figures are a bit old, but it has been reported that about two times more people in Papua New Guinea use Tok Pisin than English; this represents about 45 percent of the population. It is estimated that the number of Tok Pisin speakers has increased more since the statistics were compiled than the number of English speakers [LAYCOCK 1985: 227].

Tok Pisin is still a young language historically speaking. It is a mixed language, a blend of English and various Melanesian tongues that developed naturally among laborers who came together on the sugarcane plantations of Queensland, Australia, in the middle of the 19th century. To native speakers of English, it sounds like their own language garbled. To be sure, the greater part of the vocabulary comprises English loans, but due to the historical conditions and geographical situation of Tok Pisin development, there are also loans from Tolai in New Britain as well as from German and Malay.

The term pidginization often implies that there is one dominant language involved that is somehow basic. In the case of Tok Pisin, however, a new language

3) In the standard spelling, [tʃ], which was <tj> in Indonesian and <ch> in Malaysian, are <c>. For Indonesian, this was in a sense a reversion to Old Javanese, where <c> for [tʃ] was already used in the transliteration of Pallava script into latin letters in the 19th century. (For Malaysian, it was simply a matter of deference to the clerical tradition of Indonesia.) Similar circumstances led to the change of <dj> to <j> in Indonesian for [dʒ] (this sound was already written <j> in Malaysian). See Asmah [1975: 86].

sprang forth among a group of laborers who spoke many different languages, just the reverse of what happened in the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. In the same way, *lingua franca* developed among the tradespeople inhabiting the shores of the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages; unlike Tok Pisin, it perished instead of becoming a powerful folk language, although, according to one theory, it is the ultimate ancestor of all European-derived pidgins and creoles [TODT 1986: 66–71]. Tok Pisin, on the other hand, gained an identity as a tribal language in New Guinea, where it is sometimes called *Wan Tok*.

Four varieties of Tok Pisin can now be distinguished: Tok Masta, which is spoken by Europeans; Bush Pidgin, spoken by mountain peoples; Urban Pidgin, used by the classes who received their education in the cities; and the Rural Pidgin of the plains, which is regarded as standard [MÜLHÄUSLER 1979]. In tribes with an extremely small population, we can expect Tok Pisin to creolize, but elsewhere we find Tok Pisin going through the agony of a second pidginization.

Since 1955, orthography based on latin letters has gradually become more and more firmly established for Tok Pisin. There is now even a weekly newspaper, *Wantok*, published entirely in Tok Pisin in Port Moresby. Having become established as a written language, Tok Pisin is starting to enjoy some prestige as a standard in contrast to the "pidgin English" spoken on other islands such as the Solomons and Vanuatu.

As the examples of Indonesian and Tok Pisin show, a major language capable of holding sway over a number of distinct ethnic groups must maintain certain prescriptive norms, yet for that very reason it always runs the risk of becoming identified as the language of a specific area. In these nations, how to deal with regional languages, as opposed to the authorized standard language, is a serious problem for government administrators. In the case of Indonesian, the state had only to ratify a preexisting consensus on the common language; standardization was, so to speak, a *fait accompli*. Tok Pisin, in contrast, was precluded for a variety of reasons from becoming the national language at the time of New Guinea's independence. Even today, official documents are usually prepared in both in English and Tok Pisin. It is unclear whether Tok Pisin will ever supplant English. Although the language of the former suzerain (Australia) retains some prestige, a new variety of English, called Papua New Guinea English (PNG English), has come into existence and is now the focus of research [SMITH 1978].

4. THE UNIFICATION OF MICRONESIA THROUGH JAPANESE, PAST AND PRESENT

Japanese was once used to unite various islands of Micronesia. English has since taken over as the common language, but older people use Japanese as an interisland language and memos at markets and the exchange of simple information written in *kana* script can still be observed. As one of the very few examples of the Japanese language surviving overseas without the support of Japanese people, the

current state of Japanese in Micronesia serves as a reference point when considering future internationalization of Japanese. Japanese on Taiwan, which came under Japanese rule in 1895, provides another such point of reference. Even now Japanese is used there as an interlingua among the aboriginal tribes of the island's mountainous regions.[4)]

Japan occupied the former South Sea Islands in 1914, and a civil administration was set up in Micronesia in 1918; Japanese language education was practiced in the *tōmin gakkō* 'islanders' schools' (later called *kōgakkō* 'public schools') as part of the *tōminka seisaku* 'assimilation policy', which continued in effect for 30 years until the end of the Pacific War (1945). While the use of Japanese was of course encouraged in government offices, there was no official policy for its promotion aside from school education. Asahara Mineo [ASAHARA 1942: 96–97] has described the relevant political history; as for the schools themselves, they practiced a rigid, spartan education [AOYAGI 1977: 48].

Let us consider the impact of Japanese on the lives of Micronesians. On the positive side, Japanese language education provided a common language for those who spoke different languages and came from different islands; it made natives employable in government offices, on Japanese projects, and in Japanese households as well as capable of dealing with Japanese merchants; and it created opportunities for them to absorb modern culture from outside the islands [YANAIHARA 1935: 394–395]. On the minus side, the condition that made employability and a common language (particularly the latter) desirable was the concentration of people from various islands in towns; also, it is generally agreed that Japanese, particularly the written language, provided little observable benefit in terms of disseminating modern culture.

On the other hand, the effect Japanese had on the local languages of Micronesia, particularly at the level of loanwords, was immeasurable. For example, on Palauan there are even some phrases borrowed whole, such as *kangkeister* < *kankei site iru* 'have a (non-sexual) relationship' and *skareter* < *tsukarete iru* 'be tired'. As can be seen in *Ng diak skareter* 'he (*ng*) is not (*diak*) tired', the borrowing is purely lexical and has had no impact on syntax.[5)]

The Germans had already set up a simple latin orthography for Palauan, so the Micronesians found the complex Japanese hard to deal with. Izui Hisanosuke, who did field work on local languages in Micronesia, also observed Japanese lan-

4) Prof. K. Matsuzawa, personal communication. See also Maeda [1989].

5) There is no basic general term for 'sea shell' in Palauan; it is expressed as *bud-el* "(its) hide." *Bud-el* also refers to human skin and tree bark. But *kai* has been borrowed from Japanese and a new folk classification is coming into existence; another general borrowed term is *iasai* ← J. *yasai* 'vegetable'. In Trukese, a number of words like *kacito* ← J. *katsudō* (*shashin*) 'motion picture', all but obsolete in modern Japanese, survive; others have changed meaning, such as *kkumi* 'baseball team' ← J. *kumi* 'school class' and *kookang* 'word shouted into a telephone when a connection is not made' ← J. *kōkan* '(telephone) exchange'. See Sugita [1971: 14–16].

guage education there and stressed the need to separate speech from writing [IZUI 1942: 76–77]. There were also some foresightful proposals (never adopted) to foster the promulgation of Japanese by using the latin alphabet [ASAHARA 1942: 103] or to create a Basic Japanese similar to the Basic English for Foreigners of Ogden and Richards [SEKIGUCHI 1942: 115]. Matsuoka Shizuo, who favored using *kana* for the local languages rather than latin letters, put his theories to the test in a series of research papers on Chamorro (1926), Central Carolinian (1928), Marshallese (1929), and Palauan (1930), but his work had impact neither on policy nor in school materials.

Micronesia is now divided into a number of independent states. The number of people old enough to have been educated in Japanese is steadily dwindling while the number of people educated in English grows. Yet children are still often given Japanese-derived names; Mineko, Yukitaro, and Yosichune are reported, for example, on Truk [SUGITA 1971: 17]. Relationships among the local languages of the various islands are still in a state of flux; none has more than a minority of speakers, but it is quite unlikely that Japanese would ever be chosen as a common language. Recently, however, a segment of the Micronesian population has been taking greater interest in Japanese because their parents use it as a "secret language." And perhaps Japanese will attract more attention in Micronesia as a vehicle for understanding different cultures.

The internationalization of Japanese in the modern age has recently been the subject of considerable debate. What, if any, steps can be taken to facilitate internationalization? Empirical data that might aid in answering that question is hard to come by; the surviving usage of Japanese not only in Micronesia but also in Taiwan and Korea, despite the sad legacy of the past, is therefore of potentially great value. The need to investigate the current state of Japanese in these areas and to research the texts and curricula that were used during the prewar period has never been more urgent.

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