PRESCRIPTIVE VERSUS DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS FOR LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE: WHICH INDONESIAN SHOULD NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS LEARN?

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1. Introduction

Since its declaration as a national language in 1928, Indonesian has been increasingly popular among international communities, as it is spoken by more Southeast Asians than any other language in the region and is widely used at least as a dialect in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and Timor Leste. Accordingly, for the past few decades, a large number of students, scholars, and practitioners of non-native speakers from all over the world have been interested in studying Indonesian in Indonesia or in their home countries. While a select few of them are linguists who are interested in the linguistic aspects of Indonesian, the majority of these learners desire to be able to communicate in Indonesian with native speakers of Indonesian. These students should be differentiated from Indonesian native speakers who have to take Indonesian classes in their educational institutions which compel the students to be able to use the "correct" and "formal" Indonesian. Consequently, these two different groups of students necessitate different materials, teaching methods, and perhaps also instructors. The views and goals of language learning and teaching not only affect the choice of methods and materials but also, at least in part, is determined by whether the instructors and material developers have a prescriptive or descriptive linguistic views of a the target language. These views play significant roles in the effort of maintaining Indonesian as a standard national language.

The purpose of this paper is first to answer the question of which Indonesian should be taught to non-native speakers learning Indonesian. Secondly, in so doing, I will briefly discuss how the prescriptive and descriptive linguistic view of Indonesian will determine which teaching methods to be employed, which materials should be used, and which Indonesian should be taught. Finally, in this brief paper, I will present some possible ramifications of prescriptive versus descriptive views of language in the maintenance of Indonesian as a national language.

This discussion in this hastily written paper is mostly based on library research and personal communication as well as observations and examination of Indonesian spoken by native and non-native speakers learning Indonesian in Indonesia. In addition, I have been examining various Indonesian textbooks used in various institutions that teach Indonesian to native as well as non-native speakers.

2. Language Teaching for Native versus Non-Native Speakers

Indonesian students at any level (K-12 and universities) are obliged to take Indonesian courses in their institutional educations, usually using text books designed to emphasize grammatical correctness and the use of Indonesian in formal settings. Not surprisingly, traditional grammar-based teaching methods are still widely employed. Although in recent years many communicative approaches have been utilized, the majority of Indonesian instructors still emphasize the grammatical correctness of language use more than the fluency, effectiveness, and socio-cultural appropriateness of communication. This is fittingly so, because the students are the native speakers of the language, who already speak Indonesian in their communities, and the majority of instructors believe that all they have to do is to make the students abide to the rules prescribed by grammar books, the dictionary (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia) and grammar experts, especially those stipulated by BPPB (Center for Language Development) (Alwi, Dardjowidjojo and Moeliono,1993).

A Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) practiced in this language teaching may not materialize in creative class activities, since they are limited to teaching formal Indonesian which yearn examples of and practice in formal situations. The students are taught to be prepared to take the tests and exams which require them to master knowledge of grammar rules and vocabularies, while performance is mostly limited to formal writings.

This is obviously different from the teaching of Indonesian to non-native speakers at many institutions in Indonesia and abroad. With the purpose of enabling the students to communicate in Indonesian, the majority of instructors are more concerned about equipping the students with

communicative skills more than grammatical knowledge, i.e. the students being able to use the language to accomplish different tasks. It is true that many Indonesian instructors still teach in a way that demands their foreign language learners to focus on using Indonesian grammatically, teaching them linguistics rules based on grammar books, and spending most of their class time producing grammatical and correct but artificial sentences. These instructors are so concerned about the grammaticality of the students' utterances, that they neglect the importance of the students' creativity in using the language contextually and that they ignore the real language that native speakers use in their communities, because it is considered colloquial (Littlewood, 1981).

However, the trend in the past few decades shows that the majority of foreign language instructors are applying communicative approaches using materials that support CLT, including authentic materials. This approach emphasizes students' interaction in class, using role plays, information gaps, simulation and real life conversations with native speakers. This method also emphasizes learner-centered class activities, where the students are required to creatively produce sentences in a communicative contexts which will enable them to communicate in Indonesian communities just like native Indonesian speakers do (Richards, 2001).

Based on the above arguments, the answer to the question of what kind of Indonesian should foreign language learners learn is obvious. With the exception of college students taking Indonesian to fulfill their foreign language requirements, most foreigners learning Indonesian intend to come and visit Indonesia and to do research or conduct business activities. These students are more interested in real language being used in real life situations rather than in grammatically correct but artificial language. They are concerned about being able to communicate well following the socio-cultural norms, and are less interested in gaining linguistic knowledge of Indonesian. They need to practice interacting in as real situation as possible in the way Indonesians do and focus on their interests rather than any other themes imposed on them. CLT, which may be the best methods for foreign language teaching, yearns more authentic materials and contextual communicative practices that demand more creative works from students as well as instructors. This is the case, because CLT teaches the language of the people and not the language of the grammarians or BPPB. If we have to teach the students rules and grammar of a language, it is the grammar and rules that are based on real language commonly used by the majority of the native speakers and not based on what is suggested by the government agents.

The discussion above lead to the clear choice of which language should be taught to non-native speakers, and perhaps also native speakers, that is teaching the students to be able to communicate just like the majority of Indonesian people, so that they are perceived as socially and culturally acceptable speakers of Indonesian in various events, be they formal, colloquial, or informal. This is importance because the students will be perceived and judged based on the native speakers' social attitude toward their speech, more than the correctness of their grammar. The learners usually receive complements for being able to act and speak just like Indonesians more than being able to use the correct grammatical rules based on grammar books.

This is in line with Englebretson's (2010) research which suggests that in everyday Indonesian interaction, it is not the use of the grammatical rules of language which is being judged by the Indonesian communities, but rather the use of pragmatically-loaded, attitudinal discourse particles. According to Englebretson (2010), Indonesian speakers tend to implement socio-cultural attitudes of everyday talks and not grammatical form although the Indonesian language education has been highly prescriptive and there is strong overt governmental pressure to define and regulate Indonesian grammar.

The Indonesian educated native speakers and those learning Indonesian in educational institutions have been used to government agents' habits of controlling the vocabularies and grammar. Interestingly, however, the Indonesian people in general, including high officials and the educated may not follow the formal rules and guidelines imposed on them and many even continue to conventionally come up with their own rules and speech styles. The following are some examples of words introduced by government agents imposed on the people through media, dictionary, grammar books, or school classes:

#	Words/constructions introduced and/or enforced by government agents	Words still commonly used by many Indonesian
1.	*Laman*	*Website*
2.	*Unduh*	*Download*

3.	*Unggah*	*Upload*
4.	*Pebelajar*	*Pembelajar*
5.	*Pemelajaran*	*Pengajaran*
6.	*Perdesaan*	*Pedesaan*
7.	*Permukiman*	*Pemukiman*
8.	*Memenangi*	*Memenangkan*
9.	*Memraktikkan*	*Mempraktekkan*
10.	*Mengubah*	*Merubah*
11.	*Mengepel*	*Mempel*
12.	*Mengecat*	*Mencat*
13.	*Sangkil*	*Efektif*
14.	*Mangkus*	*Efisien*
15.	*Merusak*	*Mengrusak*
16.	*Amblas*	*Ambrol*
17.	*pramuwisma atau tata laksana rumah tangga*	*pembantu rumah tangga*
18.	*Pramusaji*	*Pelayan*
19.	*karyawan kontrak*	*Outsourshing*
20.	*Diperbarui*	*Update*
21.	*pembukaan perdana*	*grand opening*
22.	*undangan terbuka*	*open house*
23.	*Mengambilalih*	*Takeover*
24.	*Menganalisis*	*Menganalisa*
25.	*pergi-pulang*	*pulang-pergi*
26.	*mengakhiri-mengawalkan*	*mengakhiri-memulai*
27.	*suku cadang*	*spare part*
28.	*memindahkan,mencontoh*	*paste, mengcopy*
29.	*sumberdaya, tenaga kerja*	*Manpower*
30.	*nasabah, pelanggan*	*Customer*
31.	*petugas kebersihan*	*cleaning service*

32.	*Menyaring*	*Memfilter*
33.	*tempik sorak*	*tepok sorak*
34.	*terdiri atas*	*terdiri dari*
35.	*bermacam-macam*	*berbagai macam*
36.	*Pelbagai*	*Berbagai*
37.	*Pekerja seks komersial (PSK)*	*pelacur, WTS*
38.	*Pialang*	*Makelar*
39.	*Teknik*	*Tehnik*
40.	*kerja lembur*	*kerja overtime*
41.	*Sertipikat*	*Sertifikat*
42.	*Izin*	*Ijin*
43.	*Kualitas*	*kwalitas/kwalitet*
44.	*Karakter*	*Kharakter*
45.	*Objek*	*Obyek*
46.	*Subjek*	*Subyek*
47.	*Sekretaris*	*Sekertaris*
48.	*Pakar*	*Ahli*
49.	*Simpulan*	*Kesimpulan*
50.	*Hakikat*	*Hakekat*
51.	*pramuwisata, pramuwisma*	*guide, pembantu*
52.	*siap saji*	*fast food*

Prescriptive versus Descriptive Linguistic Views and Its Ramification on Indonesian Language Maintenance

Those believe in teaching a foreign language using communicative approaches usually have different views of grammar from the traditionalists who use traditional or grammar-based approaches. The first usually rely on descriptive linguistic theories, while the latter tend to believe in prescriptive linguistics.

In the field of linguistics, there are scholars who focus their studies on the descriptive as well as prescriptive views of grammar. However, many, including in Indonesia, concentrate their attention on finding, creating, criticizing, and modifying grammar rules which supposedly improve the linguistic features and better use of the language, creating morphological rules that supposedly prevent the language from being contaminated by foreign influences. These prescriptive linguists also tend to defy the changes in languages that have taken place naturally and conventionally throughout the history of any language.

To the descriptivists, "grammar" is mostly based on generative grammar where the hypothetical mechanism is embodied in the brain that produces sentences. Thus, descriptive grammarians emphasize the premise that language is an entity having its own rules of changes and development based on its

conventional use by the speakers, which in away is following its own natural destiny. In contrast, to the prescriptivists, including grammarians and even many of the of the educated public, "grammar" is the mechanism embodied in books, linguistic experts, and teachers, that decides the correctness and grammaticality of a language.

While the descriptionists view government-sponsored agents monitoring and imposing the use of correct grammar and vocabularies as annihilating the naturally conventional use of language, the prescriptionists view themselves as agents of Indonesian language maintenance, guarding the language from various ungrammatical local as well as foreign influence, standardizing grammar and vocabularies, and creating rules that maintain the sense of correctness and appropriateness, if not the purity of a language (Daoust,1998). The dominance of government agents that impose rules and grammar on the use Indonesian has made Indonesian a highly planned language. However, despite heavy enforcement on the use of correct Indonesian especially among the educated Indonesian, many Indonesian do not always conform to the rules and suggestions of BPPB (Center for Language Development). This is true since many individual speakers do not manifest overt metalinguistic comments regarding grammar in their everyday interactional discourse. Rather, the forms which receive metalinguistic commentary are discourse particles and other expressions of social status and attitude (Englebrestson, 2010).

Even the educated and high government officials do not always use correct and grammatical Indonesian, and yet their speeches are not viewed negatively by the Indonesian people. See, for example, the following conversation between a journalist (J) and a minister (M) recorded from a TV interview.

J: *Apa bapak betul-betul tidak tahu persoalannya sebelumnya?*
(Don't you really know the problem earlier?)

M: *Lah kalo nanyaknya kayak gitu, saya njawabnya harus gimana?*
(If you put the question in that way, how am I supposed to answer it?)

J*: Bapak kan sudah ketemu dia sebelumnya?*
(Didn't you meet him beforehand?)

M*: Nggak bener itu; itu cuma rumor.*
(That is not true; that is only a rumor)
J: Inaudible

M: *Masa saya harus tahu yang detail-detail gitu. Itu kan urusan mereka yang di lapangan.*
(How come I have to know all the details. That is the responsibility of those on the field)

The minister may not always use formal and correct grammar and, thus, Indonesian grammarians maybe quick to criticize his Indonesian, yet his speech and communication as a whole seemed to have been perceived as socially acceptable by the majority of the Indonesian people.

See the following examples from sentences that an instructor (I) and textbook writers wanted the students to produce versus the commonly (C) used utterances even in formal situations:

I: Siapakah nama Ibu? (What is your name)

C: Namanya siapa, Bu?

I: Darimanakah anda berasal? (Where do you come from?)

C: Anda asalnya dari mana?

I: Apakah bapak sudah makan? (Have you had lunch/dinner?)

C: Sudah makan, pak?

Although the examples of informal utterances above are more socially acceptable, they are often judged by some language teachers as ungrammatical, and thus unacceptable, suggesting the more formal and yet less commonly used constructions.

Language planning and maintenance in Indonesia does not consider socio-cultural factor which determine which speech are acceptable, but mostly based on grammatical correctness. This is true, since specific investigations of language planning in Indonesia and the policies of BPPB (Center for Language Development) (Abas 1987, Alisjahbana 1976), tend to focus on government policy and language rules at the level of society, with little attention to its effect on individual speakers and their folk beliefs about language.

Efforts to maintain and preserve Indonesian language has been done by controlling the development of its features and usages and by teaching the dos and don'ts, that has occupied much of the grammarians and even professors who focus their works on the accurate rules of language use. This all despite the defiance of the many Indonesian speakers. Perhaps, there should be more awareness that even the correct rules are subjective and that language cannot be preserved, and, thus, cannot be controlled (Muhlhausler, 2001). Grammarians and rule inventors can only try, but in the end they have to accept that when our prescriptive rules are not accepted and practiced, the rules must be abandoned. Similarly, if the majority of the speakers conventionally come up with new linguistic rules, the government agents must acknowledge and accept them as part of the language.

In this fast changing world, languages are changing constantly and governments agents can only do so much to control the linguistic rules and preserve or maintain a language. As Muhlhausler (2001) argues, no one can preserve a language, one can only preserves its ecology. The maintenance of Indonesian as a national language does not depend on the creation of new linguistic rules or invention of new words that have to be taught in educational institutions or enforced through their use in various media, but hinges on several important factors such as the speakers attitude toward their own language and culture (Bradley, 2002). The more Indonesians are proud of their language and culture the more they will conform to the suggestions of using the "correct" roles. If, for example, the Indonesian people's admiration of foreign languages and culture much more than their own language and culture, imposing linguistics rules might not help in maintaining Indonesian as a national language.

3. Conclusion

Since the non-native Indonesian language learners desire to be able to communicate with Indonesian, and since communicative approaches which emphasize the importance of Indonesian communicative competence is of utmost importance, it is necessary to teach the language that the majority of the Indonesian people actually use and not the language prescribed by grammarians and the textbooks. The purpose of Indonesian language teaching is to enable the students to communicate in Indonesian more than merely having the knowledge about Indonesian linguistics. This does not mean that teaching grammar should be abandoned; instead, the kind of grammar to be taught should be the ones that is based on the language that has actually been employed by native speakers in their daily interaction, be it formal or informal.

There is no doubt that there has been tension between prescriptive and descriptive linguists regarding their view of grammar, language teaching, and language maintenance. Although prescriptive linguists often use their authority to create and enforce new rules governing language use, the people may reject the rules imposed on them, and continue to conventionally forms their own rules that determine language changes. Despite the rejection of the people on the imposed grammatical rules that often create confusion, perhaps prescriptive linguists and government agents are still useful for the vastly diverse Indonesian society? Many purists and government agents in different countries succeeded to a degree in maintaining the relative purity of their language. Without the works of the prescriptive linguists and with no grammar books, there would be no formal guidelines in terms of what is believed by many as the formal and standard Indonesian. In addition, borrowing from English and Arabic would be rampant, expediting the fast changing Indonesian that may create confusion to Indonesian language learners.

That's said, the general public should not be blamed for consistently using Indonesian grammar and vocabularies that persistently defy the rules created by prescriptive grammarians. The language centers, educators, and grammarians should in the end accept the changes that are persistently used by the majority of the speakers. It should be recognized that there are two forces that shaped the maintenance of Indonesian as a national language: prescriptionists and descriptionists.

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