

Chinese Language in Indonesia:
Its Position as a Foreign and Heritage Language

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Seen from several major foreign languages offered in courses or schools in Indonesia and the prominent position of Bahasa Indonesia, an interesting point to discuss is the competition of foreign languages in Indonesia among themselves, especially Chinese and English, and their competition with Bahasa Indonesia. The discussion of the position of Chinese as a foreign language and as a heritage language in Indonesia is based on the points mentioned by Crystal (2003: 123)—political, economic, technological, and cultural power—that can affect the position of a foreign in a country.

Key words: Chinese, position, multilingual, foreign language

The Chinese in Indonesia form the majority among the foreign groups—Chinese, Arabs, and Indians (Suryadinata, 2000, p. 39); they are "economically strong, form the commercial middle class of Indonesia and are part of the economic elite" (p. 60). Recent studies based on the census even show that the number between 1.5 and 2 per cent does not only play a significant role in economic, but also social, and cultural fields, if not in the political fields (Suryadinata, 2008, p.1). With the change of policy towards China and the Chinese since Abdurrahman Wahid administration, Chinese language has the opportunity to rise gradually to an important position in Indonesia, despite its suppression during Soeharto's.

In the world, Chinese is seen as one the alternative lingua francas, besides Hindi and Arabic, that can become "a threat to English" (Phillipson, 1999, p. 147), although Crystal (2003) predicts that, with regards to the role of English in the world, there is a great probability that English will have a secured position. If it is seen as a threat in the world, and the fact that it is one of the five official languages of the UN, then it is no doubt that Chinese language should be

counted as a competitor to English in Indonesia. The question is whether it can take the position of "English as the first foreign language" in Indonesia (Dardjowidjojo, 2003, p. 57).

Several possibilities that Crystal (2003, p. 123) lists as the ones that can affect the position of English in a country can be used to see the position of Chinese as a foreign language in Indonesia. Those four possibilities are political, economic, technological, and cultural power. Among these four, the latter two, according to Crystal (2003, p. 86), are far more important: the media—the press, radio, advertising, especially television (2003, p. 91), cinema, popular music, and education. The discussion concerning the position of Chinese is based on the four points mentioned above with a slight emphasis on the latter two.

Business

Crystal (2003, p. 10) says, "It may take a military powerful nation to establish a language, but it takes an economically powerful one to maintain and expand it." China is prepared in both military and economic area. In terms of politics and economy, China should be counted as the emerging super power besides US (Pattiradjawane, 2001, p. 164) as it can be seen in the following quotation.

Dalam berbagai isu dan aktifitas politik dan ekonomi, mulai dari Washington sampai Moskwa, maupun dari Tokyo ke New Delhi, semuanya menunjukkan sebuah Cina yang berbenah diri tidak lagi menjadi sebuah kekuatan yang selama ini dikategorikan sebagai setengah-setengah (*middle power*), tetapi benar-benar sebuah Cina yang memproyeksikan diri menjadi sebuah kekuatan adidaya (*super power*) dalam kurun waktu yang lebih cepat dari perkiraan para pengamat selama ini. (In various political issues and activities, from Washington to Moscow, or from Tokyo to New Delhi, all of them show an improving China, becoming not as what has been so far categorized as a middle power, but a real China that project itself to be a super power at a time faster than what has been predicted so far by observers.)

Pattiradjawane (p. 165) continues with supplying the budget allocated by China to enlarge the military power, which is as much as US\$70 billion. He explains further that even US and Japan are seen as the potential competitors and that Chinese army tests its power, preparing itself to face any potential open conflict. It seems that China is really aware that being a super power cannot be far from enlarging the military power.

In terms of economy, China is the emerging economic superpower (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 183). China has become the world seventh largest economy and third largest trade nation (Yin, 2006). According to Pattiradjawane (2001, p. 167), China enters both bilateral and multilateral cooperation with countries in Asia. It becomes the main trade partner for US, Japan, European and South East Asian countries; if purchasing power parity (comparison of national economy) is used, the economy of China is almost as big as US and bigger than that of Japan (p. 168). In the trade between US and China, the value reaches as much as US\$70 billion, with more profit on Chinese because US' import from China is five times bigger than its export to China (p. 168). In short, China's economy is growing. Furthermore, the growth in trade with other countries also occurs in its trade with Indonesia. "Since the normalization of the diplomatic relationship between China and Indonesia, China has become Indonesia's fourth largest trade partner; the two-way trade volume in 1990 was only US\$1 billion, but in 2004 it increased to US\$13.48 billion and at the end of 2005 it reached up to US\$16 billion" (Yin, 2006).

Seen from the strength of China's economy, undoubtedly Chinese language has the chance to be as important as English. In shopping centers where Chinese merchants work, bargaining of prices are done partially in Chinese. It is also one of the requirements in job vacancy besides English In Indonesia. Seen from these two examples, Chinese language plays an important role in business.

Education

Chinese has also entered school curriculum and Chinese courses are flourishing. Now that learning Chinese is not prohibited by the government, Chinese courses are everywhere as Budianta (2007, has p. 69) says "Chinese language courses in Indonesia are now flourishing as people realize the configuration of economic powers from the West to China." The Chinese do not really have problems financially to send their children to learn Chinese in Chinese courses as well as to learn English in English courses because "economically,... the majority is middle class" (Suryadinata, 2008, p.2). Now, besides English, Chinese is also one of the subjects learnt at schools, at least private schools.

Regarding the ability of speaking Chinese, the majority of Chinese children, even among the *totok*, have gradually lost active command of the Chinese language, because "since 1965 coup all ethnic Chinese children, regardless of their nationality, have had to go to Indonesian national schools" (Suryadinata, 2000, p. 62). "*Totok* children have been *peranakanized*. (Suryadinata, 2008, p. 2). In the past "culturally, the Chinese were divided into locally born, Indonesian-speaking *peranakans* and the foreign born Chinese speaking *totoks*, but nowadays the absolute majority is either the *peranakans* or *peranakanized totok*." The *peranakanized totok* are those who still speak Chinese dialects, and also Indonesian (Suryadinata, 2008, p. 4). For the Chinese Indonesians, especially for the *peranakanized totok*, learning Chinese is more related to identity. In this group of people, Chinese must be learnt because it is a heritage language.

If in general Indonesian people's motivation of learning English is instrumental (Phillipson, 1993, p. 162; Dardjowidjojo, 2003, p. 50), the people's instrumental motivation in learning of Chinese, in my opinion, is not that big as the learning of English, although it is increasing a lot. The Chinese Indonesians recognize that to live in Indonesia, they need to adapt

to the Indonesian situation”; Chinese Indonesians themselves have been attracted to the English language. (Suryadinata, 2008, p.5). If for the peranakanized *totok*, learning Chinese is more related to identity, for the peranakans, learning Chinese is more instrumental.

Technology and Pop Culture: invasion of English and Chinese into Indonesian

In terms of broadcasting and TV programs, and newspapers, nowadays besides English news programs and newspapers, there are also news programs and newspapers in Chinese, such as Metro TV and *Guoji Ribao* and six other dailies(Suryadinata, 2008, p.3). In terms of cinemas, actors and actresses, those of Americans and of Hong Kong, are not strange to Indonesian people. Hong Kong martial arts films are on Indonesian TV channels and cinemas. Hong Kong actors like Jacky Chan and Jet Li and actresses like Gong Li and Michelle Yeoh are in Hollywood films. However, in terms of popular culture, English language has been invading Indonesian in a much larger way than Chinese.

First, technological terms are certainly absorbed from English and not Chinese. The development of technology means the birth of new concepts and new words. Since the development in technology is associated with the West, and the technology is new to Indonesia, it means that Indonesian language does not have the words needed to convey the concept. Then new English words will enter Indonesian vocabulary, for example words related to computers. Although lots of English vocabulary are absorbed into Indonesian vocabulary, the language is still Indonesian, just like French permeated English vocabulary, the language is still English (Baugh and Cable, p. 179). Chinese brands have entered Indonesia, and only the names of the brands have entered the Indonesian vocabulary, for example Huawei etc.

Another area that is influenced by English is Indonesian films. One film that can be mentioned is *Eiffel, I'm in love*. An example of a title of an Indonesian *sinetron* (soap opera) is *Love in Paris*. Although the dialogue in the film is in Bahasa Indonesia, the title is in English. Although the stories are related to France, the titles use English.

Film titles in Chinese, on the other hand, are not used in that way. The film title *Ca-bau-kan* (2003), for example, is used because it is the story of a Chinese mistress.

Ca-bau-kan sendiri adalah [Bahasa Hokkian](#) yang berarti "perempuan", yang saat zaman kolonial diasosiasikan dengan pelacur, gundik, atau perempuan simpanan orang [Tionghoa](#). Pada zaman kolonial Hindia-Belanda, banyak *Ca-bau-kan* yang sebelumnya bekerja sebagai [wanita penghibur](#) sebelum diambil sebagai [selir](#) oleh orang Tionghoa. (*Ca-bau-kan* itself is from Hokkian dialect which means "woman", in the Dutch colonial period the word is associated with prostitutes, mistress, or the other woman of the Chinese men. At that time a lot of *Ca-bau-kan* worked as prostitutes before living as the Chinese mistresses. (<http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ca-bau-kan>)

The film title *Xia Aimei* (2012) is also about a Chinese girl.

Besides film, one Indonesian *sinetron* where Meriam Belina is one of the actresses in the film, uses fillers like "you know" and mixes English words in her Indonesian sentences. Another one is one episode in *Alisa*. The character who is a new rich person always uses code mixing, mixing English words within her Indonesian sentences. In another *sinetron* a character who is a villager, a girl friend of *Kabayan* (a character in Sundanese folklore) also does similar code mixing, because she wants to have the image of a modern upper class girl. English is portrayed as something that gives a new identity, modernity, and is associated with upper class society.

Chinese sounds, words, or expressions in Indonesian films or *sinetrons* are used to indicate that the characters in those films and *sinetrons* are Chinese. The words like "lu" (you), "gua" (I) or /r/ sound becomes /l/ or "bok gitu" (don't be like that) are used to describe something "Chinese". It is used to give a Chinese label to a certain character.

Besides films, songs are also influenced by English. English words have also sneaked into Indonesian popular songs, for examples these two songs. One is composed by Melly Goeslaw, which has "I'm sorry. Good bye" in the middle of the song or codemixing by ST12 group band in the song "*Cari Pacar Lagi*" (looking for a new girlfriend)

Cintaku, cintaku padamu tak besar seperti dulu (My love, my love to you is not as intense as usual)
Temuku begitu, menilai cintaku, begitu rendah di matamu (In my opinion, you don't appreciate my love for you)
Sayangku, sayangku padamu (my love for you)
Tak indah seperti dulu (is not as beautiful as before)
Maumu begini maumu begitu (we always want things differently)
Tak pernah engkau hargai aku (you never appreciate me)
Ooh I am sorry, ku tak kan love you lagi (I am sorry I do not love you anymore)
Kupeluk, memeluk dirimu tak hangat seperti dulu (My hug is not as warm as before)
Kujadi selingkuh karna kau selingkuh (I have another girl, because you have another man)
Biar sama-sama kita selingkuh (Both of us have another person)
Ooh I am sorry, ku tak kan love you lagi (I am sorry I do not love you anymore)
Biar kuputuskan saja (We broke up)
Kutak mau hatiku terluka (Because I don't want my heart hurt)
Lebih baik kucukupkan saja (It's enough)
Kutak mau batinku tersiksa (I don't want my heart hurt)
Jangan kau selalu merasa (Don't feel)
Wanita bukan dirimu saja (You are the only woman)
Lebih baik kuputuskan saja (It's enough)
Cari pacar lagi (I look for a new girl)

The mixing is longer in the following song by Cinta Laura's Oh Baby

Kau bikin pusing tujuh keliling (you give me a headache)
Buat aku mabuk kepayang (You make me in love)
Gayamu cool dan seksi (You are cool and sexy)
Mentok aku kepada kamu (Only you)
Jadi semakin aku cinta (I love you more)

Kau sihir aku yang sedang kosong (You enchant me who has no boyfriend)
Di saat aku butuh cinta (When I need love)
Mantra-mantra dahsyatmu (your words of love)
Menarik aku yang sendiri (Attract me who is single)
Memang lagi putus cinta (I broke up)

Katakan kau sungguh-sungguh (Tell me that you are serious)

Hanya ada ku di dalam hatimu (Only you in my heart)
Katakan-katakan kau cinta aku (Tell me that you love me)
Untuk selamanya kau jadi milikku (Forever you are mine)

I don't wanna lose you
Yes I wanna hold you
I don't wanna make you
Make you sad and make you cry

Oh baby baby baby (baby baby)
Oh baby baby baby (hu wuoo uoo uoo)
Oh baby baby baby (my baby)
Oh baby baby baby (baby oh yeeah)

In this song the code mixing is longer, not only words, but the whole stanza is in English. These two songs are not the only ones; there are other songs and composers that use code mixing in their songs.

As far as I know, no Indonesian songs have Chinese words in them, like “wo ai ni” in the middle of the Indonesian song. There are songs that have other foreign words, like Aishiteru (from Japanese “I love you” by Zivilia band or Sarangheyo (from Korean “I love you”) by Sule featuring Eru.

Another invasion of English can be seen from the name of the fans club of the celebrities. Only three fans club uses Indonesian names or words, such as 'Sahabat' for Peterpan Fans Club, “Djimbas” for Mikha Angelo, and “Setiabudi” for Budi of XO-IX Boyband. The others are English flavored as can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. English-flavoured Fans Club names

Celebrities' names	Fans Club Names	English ending
Fatin Shidqia Lubis	Fatinistic	istic
Syahrini	Princes Syahrini Lover	lover
Vierra	Vierrania	Mania- a very strong interest in something that fills a person's mind or uses up all their time :
Slankers	slankers mania	
Giring Nidji	Nidjiholic	Workaholic
Kimberly Ryder	KIMmunity	Community
Bunga Citra Lestari	BCLicious	Delicious
Agnes Monica	AgNEZious	
Cherry Belle	Twibi & Twi Boy	

The Virgin	VIRGINITY	
Kamasean	Seanatics	Fanatics
Agoy(XO-IX Boy band)	AGOYNATIC	
Nicky (XO-IX Boy band)	SNICKERS (Saya Nicky Lovers)	-er for person, writer, painter
<i>Novita Dewi</i>	Dewinners	
NUDI (Nu Dimension)	DIMENSIONIST not DIMENSIONERS	
Iras (XO-IX Boy band)	IRASADDICT	Addict - a person who cannot stop doing or using something, especially something harmful :
Lee (XO-IX Boy band)	LeeTiNium	Lee-teen- Lithium a chemical element that is a soft , silver-coloured metal
perkumpulan penggemar kiki :)	Q'UNITE	to join together as a group , or to make people join together as a group ; to combine :
Nama fans khusus Hendra	HENDRADIANCE	Radiance - happiness , beauty , or good health that you can see in someone's face :
Nama fans khusus BOBBY	OBBYNYOBLITZ	Blitz - a fast , violent attack on a town , city , etc. , usually with bombs dropped from aircraft
fans dari boyband Indonesia bernama SM*SH (baca: SMASH)	SMASHBLAST	Blast - to explode or destroy something or someone with explosives , or to break through or hit something with a similar , very strong force :

The table above shows how English has invaded Indonesian language in pop culture. Compared with English, Chinese language has not gone that far.

The Language and Language Attitude

Compared to English, Chinese language is not fortunate enough in two points, namely language attitude and the intrinsic factors of the language. Language attitude or attitudes, according to Myers-Scotton (2006, p. 120), are "subjective evaluations of both language varieties and their speakers, whether the attitudes are held by individuals or by groups." The fact that conflicts between the indigenous and Chinese in South East Asia occurs most often in Indonesia (Lestariana W., 2006) show that this group of people is not really liked by the majority and this influence the majority's evaluations to the language. The economic, military, and cultural factor

that can boost its position as a new fast emerging foreign language can be much slowed down by this attitude.

Besides, the intrinsic factors of the Chinese language are also another factor that makes it unable to compete with English. This is related to the history of Bahasa Indonesia. What was later called Bahasa Indonesia for the first time at the second Indonesian Youth Congress (Montolalu and Suryadinata, 2007, p. 41) was the Malay language which was the chosen language according to 1930 census (p. 40); it only had 1.6 per cent speakers and could beat the Javanese language, which reached 47 per cent of speakers (the greatest number in terms of speakers, among Sundanese, Madurese, Batak, Minangkabau, Balinese, Buginese). If the reason given in choosing Malay as the national language, and not Javanese, is because Javanese is a complicated and hierarchical language (2007, p. 39 and Suryadinata, 2000, p. 45), then the writing system—the Chinese characters—and the fact that it is a tonal language will not make Chinese as popular as English in Indonesia. Probably only this small number of Chinese Indonesian people, the peranakanized totoks, which is about two per cent, who ignore the difficulties of learning Chinese, compared to more than ninety per cent who have the opinions that English is easier than Chinese.

Conclusion

Seen from economic and cultural aspects, English and Chinese have the chance to be the first foreign language in Indonesia. However, some obstacles can prevent this from happening. Seen from its strong points in economic and technology, it is undoubted that it has no reason to come in the second place after English. However, to be as strong as English, it still has some obstacles, concerning the political reason. In culture, if it is seen from songs, Chinese has not “invaded” Bahasa Indonesia like English. Second, seen from its linguistic factor—Chinese characters and the fact that Chinese is a tonal language—while Indonesian is not, it is unlikely that Chinese will be as popular as English in the near future, and that means English will still be the first foreign language. As a heritage language, Chinese is needed as the identity, especially for the peranakanized totoks; and probably for the peranakan—both from the Dutch educated

families and from those who tend to assimilate with the indigenous, the reason is more instrumental than identity. Although Chinese will be learnt by more people than before, it cannot compete with English in Indonesia. English will still be a more important foreign language in Indonesia than Chinese. However, English will stay as a foreign language and will not be able to win over Bahasa Indonesia, although it has permeated into films, songs, names of real estate housing, names of shops, cafes, restaurants, etc. and gives a new identity to Indonesians who are able to speak English.

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