

LANGUAGE PLANNING FOR MODERNIZATION

Contributions to the Sociology of Language

14

Joshua A. Fishman

Editor

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Language Planning for Modernization

The Case of Indonesian and Malaysian

S. Takdir Alisjahbana

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Foreword

This book intends to give a general survey of the history of the development of the Indonesian and Malaysian language, its multifarious problems as well as its future perspectives. In its writing I have taken advantage of my various articles and essays in the Indonesian/Malaysian as well as in the English language which have been published earlier in Indonesia and abroad. It could not be otherwise than that to a certain extent this book is a rearrangement of my ideas on the Indonesian/Malaysian language, which in many respects deviate from the rather formalistic approach of linguistics of the last decades. In my inaugural speech in Kuala Lumpur on December 22, 1964, 'The failure of modern linguistics in the face of linguistic problems of the twentieth century', I formulated my objections to the linguistic ideas of the various branches of structural linguistics and phonology, which under the pretext of descriptive linguistics attempt to describe and investigate the characteristics and relationship of phonemes of a language as the very nucleus of that language. In this science of language signs the content of the language – be it the communicated meaning of words and sentences or the related cultural concept and way of thought – draws less and less attention from linguists under the pretext that it belongs to psychology, logic, anthropology, etc. This sign linguistics which claims to be an autonomous science becomes entirely formalised like the French school of De Saussure, the school of structural linguistics of Bloomfield, the school of Prague or especially the school of Hjelmslev in Copenhagen. It is refreshing to see that during the last years more and more linguists are interested in the interrelationships between languages and the societies or cultures in which they function, as is testified to by the rise of socio- and ethnolinguistics.

My objection to sociolinguistics or ethnolinguistics is the wrong presupposition from which it derived. It is clear that language is a product

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of society and fulfills the basic function of social communication. But in this sense it does not differ from animal sounds. The very characteristic of language which distinguishes it from animal sounds lies in the fact that it is the expression of the human mind with its thought and evaluating capacities and processes. Viewed from this standpoint, language is inextricably connected with human culture which is the product of the activities of the human mind. On the one hand language is the very basis of culture, and on the other hand it is moulded by the concepts and *Weltanschauung* of its culture. It is clear that the term sociolinguistics has been coined in the Anglosaxon tradition which is not used to conceive culture as the product of the activities of the human mind but instead as the product of the activities of society, as formulated by George H. Mead, A. L. Kroeber, Pitirim A. Sorokin and others.

The term ethnolinguistics which also lately has been often used refers too much to an outdated ethnology which arose when Western men considered all cultures with the exception of their own as primitive so that ethnology meant the science of the culture of primitive man.

In the context of the idealistic Indonesian concept in which culture, *kebudayaan*, *budidaya*, clearly refers to *budi*, the human mind or *Geist*, the term culturo-linguistics is more appropriate. In the broad concept of culture are included not only civilization in the Toynbeean and Spenglerian sense but also primitive cultures, since both are realizations of the same human mind or *Geist* or *budi*.

It is clear that the formalistic approach in linguistic studies and research is doomed to fail in facing the great changes or even the great revolution in our present society and culture. The predominant position of social and cultural change in the determination of language change is obvious. We can even say the language change mirrors only the social and cultural change.

No linguist can really understand the linguistic changes in the new countries of Asia and Africa without understanding the social and especially the cultural changes, i.e., the changes in the value orientation which are the real facts behind these linguistic changes.

In this culture-oriented linguistics the science of linguistics acquires new depth and comprehensiveness because it is not only involved in the great social and cultural transformation of the young countries of Asia and Africa, but it also takes part in the globalizing and universalizing factors in modern society and culture as a result of the speed of transportation and communication and through the widespread international in-

formation via the ubiquitous mass media. It is in this sense that the process of language planning or language engineering must find guidance and direction. The strong globalizing and unifying tendencies of social and cultural life must also find their expression in the converging tendencies of the modern languages. It is not only that modern languages are much nearer to each other than the relationship of languages in any epoch of history because of the growing globalization of societies and the growing unity of the basic concepts of modern secular culture dominated by science, economics and technology. Without the consciousness of the arising world society and culture, linguists in their so-called objectivity are at a loss in the decisions for the growth of their languages.

I hope that, given the scarcity of publications on the Indonesian/Malaysian language, this book will be a contribution. The development of the Indonesian/Malaysian language is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating social, cultural and linguistic phenomena of our age.

It is to be hoped that this cultural approach to the development of the Indonesian/Malaysian language will be useful to the other developing languages in Asia and Africa.

Jakarta, December 1975.

S. Takdir Alisjahbana

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CHAPTER I

The modernization of the languages of the new nations in historical and sociocultural perspective

1. COMPARISON OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES WITH THAT OF THE NEW MODERN ASIAN AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES

The collapse of the all-embracing Christian Empire of the Middle Ages gradually split the countries of Europe into various national units according to geographic and ethnic divisions. Politically these units tended to center around a number of dynastic families. Economically their efforts were directed to a certain degree of autarchic self-sufficiency. The period also witnessed the rise of the towns and the town-dwellers, the bourgeoisie who began to exert great influence on the political, economic and cultural configurations of the new national units.

While in the former all-embracing Christian Empire Latin was the dominating language – i.e., the language of the church, officialdom and official correspondence, of science and education – in the arising national states Latin was gradually replaced by national languages, which became an important factor in the formation and further development of these national states.

Throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these national languages grew increasingly strong, aided by the discovery of the art of printing, the translation of the Bible and the rise of vernacular literatures under the influence of the Renaissance. With the *Aufklärung*, the growth of social movements and the institution of compulsory popular education, accompanied by the circulation of unlimited quantities of reading material, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries finally stabilized these languages.

The unprecedented development of science, technology and economics in Europe after the Renaissance has had the most unexpected consequences for political, economic and, last but not least, social and cultural life

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the world over. The European nations grew powerful and rich and in their restlessness expanded as never before in history. In a rather short span of time they came into contact with all parts of the world as seafarers, explorers and adventurers. They conquered a great part of the newly discovered countries so that at the end of the last century nearly the whole of Asia and Africa was under European domination. The Second World War, however, made an end to this situation. The countries of Asia and Africa regained one by one their independence.

The interesting fact in this liberation is that even after their independence the Asian and African countries still have to adjust themselves to the social and cultural concepts and ideas of the West which are determined by science, technology and economics. Not only are the political institutions of the new states of Asia and Africa, as were those of Japan, China, and Turkey earlier, built along the line of Western thought which is now called modern, but also the schools from primary grades to university, not to speak of banks, factories, etc., are organized and managed on the same modern basis. In spite of many political controversies the social and cultural modernization which started in Europe after the Renaissance had spread to the countries of Asia and Africa.

Since the vocabulary of a language represents the totality of concepts and since the structure of the grammar of a language channels the expression of thoughts, ideas and feelings of a culture and thus mirrors the whole way of life and worldview of its users, there is a dialectical interplay between the modernization of the languages and the modernization of the concepts of thought in Asian and African societies and cultures. The modern concepts which are accepted by the Asian and African mind need adequate expression in their languages, and at the same time the modern grammar and vocabulary mold the Asian and African mind into the framework of modern concepts and ideas.

The modernization of the languages of Asia began in the last century, when contact between the cultures of the West and those of the Asian countries gradually became more intensive.¹ The language of Japan, for example, was during the last century so modernized that very early it conveyed the concepts and ideas of the modern world oriented towards science, economics and technology. Other Asian and African languages much later reached the same or nearly the same level of modernization, while still others are moving steadily in that direction.