The Threat to Linguistic Diversity from National and Global Languages?  
The Case of Indonesia

Siti Fitriyah  
Siti.Fitriyah@postgrad.Manchester.ac.uk  
S.Fitriyah@unej.ac.id
Who am I?

Fitri
Of Javanese Ethnic Group
Speaking Javanese, Madurese,
Bahasa Indonesia, English
From a small village in Java,
Indonesia
About 240 millions people
17,504 Islands
More than 1300 Ethnic groups
726 Vernacular Languages,
Bahasa Indonesia as the National Language
(Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010)
How can it happen?
(The Case of Indonesia)

This process is neither inevitable nor irreversible
(Unesco, 2009-2014)
Vernacular Languages at Schools

- 1951 – 1956 the language of Instruction of year 1-3
- 1957 – 2013 Local Content (Primary and Secondary Schools)
- 2013 – to date Integrated in Art, Culture, and Crafts Lesson
The increasing significance and popularity of English and other foreign languages

• English as the working language of ASEAN, in which Indonesia is a part of.
• English is one of prominent requirement for employment, career development, and study and academic purposes.
• English as a medium of Instruction at schools
Foreign Language-medium Schools in Indonesia

International School (Private)
Franchise International School (Private)
National Plus School (Private)
International Standard School (Public - now cancelled)
Bahasa Indonesia and English in Media

- TV
- Internet and social media
- Movies
- Magazines, Newspapers
Implications
Language and Social Status

Each language had a social rank. If you spoke Javanese, for example, you were below. If you spoke Indonesian, you were a bit above. If you spoke Dutch, you were at the top.’ (Rachman in Onishi, 2010). And now English has become the new Dutch.’ (Onishi, 2010)

For some Indonesians, as mastery of English has become increasingly tied to social standing, Indonesian has been relegated to second-class status. In extreme cases, people take pride in speaking Indonesian poorly. (Onishi, 2010) “Sometimes the parents even ask the baby sitters not to speak in Indonesian but in English,” (Ariani in Onishi, 2010)
Implications
Language and Prestige

Vernacular language is often seen as having low status, as being ancient, as related to poverty and stupidity. (Darwis, 2011)

‘I feel that in the long run we [in the International Standard School] are more proud to speak English…I feel that gradually our love to our own language will be fading…’ (Dhona, a Science Teacher- Interview November, 2013)
Possible Solutions

- Reintroduction of Vernacular Language as the language of instructions
- Vernacular languages at children books and magazine
- Vernacular languages at festivals
- Vernacular language at media (TV, Newspaper, etc)
- Emphasis on Intercultural Awareness and Intercultural Communication in Bahasa Indonesia and English Lessons
Why we have to preserve Vernacular Languages?

Language diversity is essential to the human heritage. Each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The loss of any language is thus a loss for all humanity.’ (UNESCO, 2013: p1)

Though approximately six thousand languages still exist, many are under threat. There is an imperative need for language documentation, new policy initiatives, and new materials to enhance the vitality of these languages. (UNESCO, 2013: p.1)
Conclusion

The threat to vernacular languages, which is a global phenomenon, is indeed unstoppable and inevitable as the world is becoming ‘smaller and smaller’. However, systematic and serious efforts to preserve them may help the language to survive further.

Other context may be different - Let's learn and share from one another.
Matur Nuwun …
Terimakasih
Thank You 😊

Any Questions?
References


References


