



# Problematizing policy: a semantic history of the word ‘policy’ in the Indonesian language

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## ABSTRACT

This article uses acultural materialism approach that combines Williams’ keyword analysis with Sum and Jessop’s cultural political economy to problematize the word ‘policy’ by taking the case of Indonesia. This combination offers away to be more reflective of political discourses, especially their keywords. The examination shows that while the domain of policy has always been political, in the Indonesian context specifically, the term ‘policy’ itself has been politicized. Focusing on the keyword ‘policy’, lexamine the selection, retention, and institutionalization of the word across policy speeches, policy documents, dictionaries, and public debates. I argue that the construction of the word policy as ‘wise’ has been made through the cloak of wisdom in order to build an apolitical image of policy processes. The insights from lexical semantics serve to enhance the debate in the cultural policy domain wherein policy discourse and the ambiguity of language plays a central role.

## KEYWORDS

Policy; semantic history; discursive selectivities; CPE; wisdom; *Bahasa Indonesia*

## Introduction

The current study seeks to contribute to critical policy studies in at least two ways. Firstly, in problematizing policy construction, language, and discourse has been the focus of much critical analysis (Barbieri 2015; Mattheis 2017; Webb 2014); however, none of them has been reflective of the word ‘policy’ itself. This paper seeks to explore alternative approaches to understanding ‘policy’ and to offer insights into the ways in which the word ‘policy’ constructs the social meaning of policy through the case of Indonesia.

Second, this study adds to the growing methodological debates within historical semantics by employing a keyword analysis. The majority of studies in this field has drawn upon a pragmatic conceptual history or known as the Cambridge School led by Quentin Skinner and colleagues which focus on the various functions political discourse could perform – how certain discourse is adopted, adjusted, and altered through political processes. Despite its ground-breaking historical methodology and nuanced interpretation of political discourses, the Cambridge School does not provide any tools to unpack the ‘meanings’ of words. In other words, it focuses on praxis. The cultural materialism

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approach developed by Raymond Williams, on the other hands, focuses on system of meanings or semantics. It provides the tool to examine the meanings of keywords and their material effects within their changing historical contexts which suits the purpose of this study (Makoni and Pennycook 2005). By problematizing the word ‘policy’ in the Indonesian language, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how the creation of meanings in certain keywords is related to wider political, economic, and cultural conditions.

To this end, I build upon Raymond Williams’s (1983) keyword analysis and Jessop and Sum (2016) insights on the approach of cultural political economy to make sense of the word policy. The insights from the linguistic field of lexical semantics do not simply highlight the problems in policy construction, but also serve as a way to enhance the debate in cultural policy domain at large wherein policy discourse and the ambiguity of language plays a central role (Barbieri 2015).

While there are a plethora of works researching on policy discourses and policy language, very few problematizes the word ‘policy’. The fact that little attention has been paid to the questions of literal translation of politically loaded words such as policy, in and outside Indonesia, is hardly surprising (Shore, Wright, and Però 2011; Shore and Wright 1997). Literally translated, the word ‘policy’ is equal to *kebijakan* in the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*), which also means ‘wisdom’. As compared to other languages, such as Malay (*polisi*), Dutch (*politiek*), French (*politique*), Arabic (*Siyasah* – strategy), Bahasa Indonesia takes the ‘wisest’ equivalence. Even in Denmark and Italy, the idea of policy is not semantically differentiated from the term ‘politics’; instead, the word *politik* and *politica* are used, respectively, to cover both. It is seemingly only in Indonesia that, while the domain of policy has always been political, the term ‘policy’ itself has been politicized.

In doing so, I begin by presenting the methodology employed in this paper, that is the co-use of Williams (1983) keyword analysis and Sum and Jessop (2013) Cultural Political Economy approach to examine political discourse. Secondly, before going into the discursive selectivities, I overview the structural contexts, i.e. a brief overview the history of the Indonesian language and its metadiscursive regime. Specifically, I examine the language policing and standardization of *Bahasa Indonesia* during the New Order administration. The third section presents the first step of discursive selectivities by examining the selection of the word *kebijakan*, including its semantic fields. This analysis leads us to explain the retention and institutionalization of the word *kebijakan* to solidify its social meaning in a discursive space. The final section demonstrates the implications of the use of discursive selectivities of the word *kebijakan* and its contribution to critical policy studies.

## Methodology

Theoretically, this study belongs to the field of cultural materialism, especially historical semantics that explores ‘vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social

conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical' (Williams 1983, 23). Williams recognized the importance of studying words in their socio-political context, and he defined keyword analysis as:

This is not a neutral review of meanings. It is an exploration of the vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical – subject to change as well as to continuity. (Williams 1983, 24)

Williams' concern on the development of 'keywords', or 'words that played a key role in the semantics of modern society', is relevant to Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach (N.-L. Sum and Jessop 2013, 117). 'Discursive selectivity' is one mechanism in CPE that operationalizes this keyword analysis by focusing on certain discourses and their associated practices. The selection of the word *kebijakan* to contain the meaning of policy has highlighted this discursive selectivity that involves more than arbitrariness of signifiers restricted to a linguistic or symbolic area. By drawing on the insights of CPE, 'the selection, retention, and institutionalisation of discourses' (N. L. Sum 2015, 212) is central to connecting the semiotic resources and extra-semiotic contexts. Within this framework, while all construals are of equal signification, only some construals, such as the word *kebijakan*, get selected and retained as the basis for constituting, institutionalizing, and reproducing social relations, in this case the social meanings of policy.

To further operationalize the examination of the discursive selectivities of the word policy or its selection, retention, and institutionalization across various different genres of discourses, Sum, and Jessop recommends the use of 'genre chains' offered by Fairclough (2003). Genre chains link different genres of discourse together and thus enable this research to look at the contested nature of the meanings of policy and their articulation between policy speeches, policy documents, dictionaries, and public debates. In this study, the genre chains under analysis are policy document archives (1950s – 1970s), relevant inputs in the early Bahasa Indonesia dictionaries (1900s – 2004), and policy speeches of the two Presidents of the Republic of Indonesia as they are the key resources of policy articulation. The archives of policy documents are useful in tracing the changing semiosis, their meanings, and changing structural-political contexts. This study also consults with early related dictionaries ranging from both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries in Bahasa Indonesia, Malay, Javanese, Dutch, and English published in 1901, 1916, 1920, 1953, 1970, 1982, 1988, and 2004. These dictionaries record the selection and retention of word policies, their changing meanings, and semantic fields. Whereas policy speeches made by the first two presidents offer not only government decisions and responses but also institutionalization and control in the formulation of policy. Soekarno and Soeharto were the first two Presidents of the Republic of Indonesia. Soekarno (1945–1966) was the first president constructing Indonesia after Independence, Soeharto (1966–1998) succeeded Soekarno administration where key language standardization occurred. In addition to this data, a brief history of Indonesia, and the standardization of *Bahasa Indonesia* is presented as the structural contexts that regulates the discursive selectivities.

The data analysis starts with a textual analysis of genre chains of 'kebijakan' and its semantic fields in those documents or speeches to identify the changing and contested notion of policy. The semantic findings are then connected to a broader case of selection,

retention, and institutionalization of the social meanings of policy and are discussed in the section below. The data and analysis credibility is not grounded on traditional criteria such as number of frequency or occurrence, but instead on methodological integrity, insightfulness, and authenticity of the findings to advance the debate in the field of critical policy studies.

### **Structural contexts: historical accounts of Indonesia and *Bahasa Indonesia***

Bahasa Indonesia is a language that was born along with the development of Indonesia as a nation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Avonious 2014). The language was developed from predominantly Malay and Javanese, as well as other foreign languages such as Dutch, Arabic, and English. In the 1920s, only 5% of the population spoke Malay as their mother tongue, and now almost every Indonesian speaks Bahasa Indonesia. There are at least three main reasons for this rapid development, i.e. the Dutch policy, the nationalist independent movement, and language standardization. Unlike British and French colonial language policies, the Dutch colonial government restricted the native population from accessing the Dutch as it would reduce their authority and power. Both the Dutch and Japanese colonial government saw Bahasa Indonesia as a useful tool to govern an ethno-linguistically complex territory (Avonious 2014). For the anti-colonial intelligentsia, Bahasa Indonesia was a powerful instrument to endorse the anti-colonial nationalist agenda and build a new nation called Indonesia (Anderson 2006; Avonious 2014). Print media played a central role in channeling Bahasa Indonesia as a lingua franca capable of gluing 400 distinct ethnic languages across the archipelago in 1920s. The language was declared as the national language in the 1928 Youth Pledge.

Despite the nationalist spirit, in its further development, *Bahasa Indonesia* reflects more political than linguistic reality (Anderson 2006; Heryanto 1995; Phillips 1973). In the 1950s, it was spoken only by a limited group of people significantly for its future, these were the elites and the educated young nationalists. These elites comprised the *priyayi* (the very few indigenous elites who received Dutch education), and the *pamong-pradja* (literate man who held administrative position during the Dutch colonial government) (Anderson 1966). The rest of the populace spoke 400 different vernacular languages. It was the New Order government under Suharto administration in 1970s who engineered the vast systematic proliferation of the language (Anderson 2006; Heryanto 1995; Hooker 1993; Widjojo and Noorsalim 2004). Ariel Heryanto describes the political construction of *Bahasa Indonesia*:

Bahasa Indonesia is a product of language planning, engineering, and Development programs *par excellence*. It does not evolve from communal activities in the ordinary lives of its speakers. It has not been a mother tongue to anyone. Speakers of Bahasa Indonesia learn it from authorised institutions and professionals as a language that their mothers do not speak. (Heryanto 1995, 5)

Similar cases happened in other countries, such as France and Italy. Prior to the French revolution in 1789, there were approximately 75 vernacular minority languages in France besides French, and French were only spoken by 10% of the population (Wright 2004). In the name of nationalism and the revolution to change 'Peasants into Frenchmen' (Weber 1976), those languages were banned and linked to anti-revolutionary factions, while French

was made as the single national language. The process of Italian unification also involved such linguistic strategy (Restaneo 2017). Massimo d’Azeglio, a Piedmontese-Italian statement, even stated ‘we have made Italy, now we must make Italians’ (Hom 2013). The assumption underpinning this monolingualism (one language for uniting the nation) is that a single language can build the cohesion of a nation and therefore establish a desired national identity (Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias 2020).

The New Order government took a similar strategy to that of France and Italy by engineering the proliferation of *Bahasa Indonesia* through language policing and standardization. As defined by Tollefson (2011, 371), language policing is ‘any conscious effort aimed at changing the linguistic behaviour of a speech community’. This definition describes perfectly the linguistic project commenced in the early 1970s when the nation was still forming. The regulatory body that ran the project was the Language Center (*Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa* – literally translated as the Center for Supervision and Development of Language). The development of Bahasa Indonesia was integrally associated with the Development agenda of the New Order (; ; Heryanto 1995). President Suharto, the President of the New Order administration, emphasized in his Independence Day speech:

Language standardisation educates its users to use the language orderly. Correct and orderly language reflects a way of thinking, attitudes, and behaviour which are also *correct and orderly*. And this orderliness is the main key for the success of the creation and Development of the nation. (1972 - my italics)

I agree that while language is an instrument of social cohesion, it also serves as an instrument of nation-building (Sakhiyya and Martin-Anatias 2020). Nevertheless, the emphasis on the ‘correct and orderly’ usage of Bahasa Indonesia suggests an attempt at control. Widjojo and Noorsalim argue that controlling language use is a way to dominate the consciousness of the masses in terms of their thinking, attitudes, and behavior (Widjojo and Noorsalim 2004). As Suharto explained in his speech that ‘correct and orderly language reflects . . . behaviour which are also correct and orderly’. Not only does the language standardization regulate the language use, it also determines the meaning of each word that constituted consciousness and thoughts. The statutory law that endorses the standardization attempt is the Decree of the People’s Consultative Assembly Number 11/MPR/1983, affirming that *Bahasa Indonesia* must be created, developed, and used *appropriately* and *correctly*. The emphasis on the ‘appropriate and correct’ usage is not for esthetic reason, rather ‘as a means to the establishment of a desired cultural regime’ (Hooker 1993).

Appropriate and correct usage was ensured through a policing process via educational institutions and media, i.e. radio, television, information networks (Anderson 1966, 2006; Hooker 1993). This language policing was realized into several programs, one of which was standardizing grammar, spelling, and technical terminology (or simply, naming). For example, some words were banned by associating them with negative connotations and substituted with more ‘neutral’ words, such as *buruh* (labor) was substituted with *karyawan* (staff/employee) and ‘the proletariat’ (*proletar*) was replaced by ‘the poor’ (*miskin*) (Farid 2005). Some words frequently heard in the Old Order were even eliminated, such as *antek-antek kapitalis imperialis* (capitalist imperialist agents),

*revolusi* (revolution), and *Nasakom* (National-Religious-Communism) and replaced with *Pembangunan* (Development), *anti pembangunan* (anti-development), and *stabilitas nasional* (national stability) (Widjojo and Noorsalim 2004).

Unlike Sukarno,<sup>1</sup> Suharto was not an orator who won the hearts of the mass and mobilized them through speeches (Hooker 1993; White 2005). This does not mean that I romanticize Sukarno, while demonizing Suharto (Peacock 2011). My concern is on their use of the language and the discursive strategies they undertook for political gains. Although Suharto himself was not a good speaker of Indonesian,<sup>2</sup> he was well aware that the relatively infant *Bahasa Indonesia* can be re-crafted to suit his political goals and consistent enough in endorsing the language policy so that it supported his Development agenda.<sup>3</sup> He paid much attention to the use of its national language. Word coining and naming practices were taken very seriously by the regime as part of the wider language strategy, which saw language as an instrument in creating the cultural order required for the development agenda (Widjojo and Noorsalim 2004).

Given the importance of language as a political strategy in modern Indonesia, several researchers have studied keywords that are relevant to the New Order administration. Ariel Heryanto (1995) draws attention to the New Order being characterized by its Development (*Pembangunan*) consciousness, rhetoric, and programs. He considers the word *Pembangunan* itself to be the most salient word in creating a cultural consciousness, which 'binds and legitimises certain modes of thought, as well as negating other form of consciousness' (Heryanto 1995, 8). Widjojo and Noorsalim (2004) compare the language used by the state (such as *Pancasila*, national stability, and harmony) with that of university student activists challenging the state. Michael Van Langenberg (1987) analyzes forty (40) keywords used by the state in order to reveal its ideology by highlighting politically charged and frequently occurring words such as 'monoloyalty', 'order', 'legitimacy' and 'stability' as significant keywords. He argues that these keywords reveal a authoritarian state, corporate, and institutionalized.

These studies in particular keywords are useful in understanding certain political regime and revealing the ideologies that inform government policies. They are in line with Makoni and Pennycook (2005) argument that language imposition or linguistic imperialism occurs not in the way that dominant languages are imposed on minority groups, but rather in the ways in which keywords and speech forms are constructed into languages, and particular meaning and definitions of what constitutes language expertise are constructed and imposed.

Although the regime was overthrown in 1998 with those keywords becoming less salient in the contemporary language of state officials, their influence is still felt. Indeed, there is one keyword that remains highly relevant to contemporary Indonesian politics even though it goes unnoticed. The word is *kebijakan* or policy in English.

### **Selection of the keyword**

This section discusses the selection of the word 'kebijakan' and its semantic fields. By carrying out a descriptive analysis of the word 'kebijakan' and its semantic fields, this section demonstrates not only the linguistic roots and lexical construction that builds the word 'kebijakan', but also the fact that the word 'policy' is carefully selected to project certain meanings while disguising others. As Sum and Jessop argue that 'semiotic

resources set limits to what can be imagined, whether in terms of “objects”, possible statements within a discursive formation, or themes that can be articulated within a given semantic field’ (Sum and Jessop 2013, 215).

The word *kebijakan* is the nominalization of the root word *bijak*. The affixes *ke-* and *-an* function to nominalize the adjective *bijak*. Linguistically, *ke-* and *-an* affixes form a noun, which indicates a state or condition that has a connection with the root word in general (Moeliono and Dardjowidjojo 1988; Wieringa 2014). The adjective *bijak* is principally associated with two sets of meanings: (a) clever, intelligent, wise; and (b) fluent, able to speak smoothly and readily. From that root word, *kebijakan* is then defined as: (a) cleverness, intelligence, prudence; and (b) policy (Stevens and Tellings 2004). By this lexical construction then ‘policy’ is attributable to ‘wisdom’.

However, wisdom itself has its own specific term in *Bahasa Indonesia*, which is *kebijaksanaan*. The adjective of *kebijaksanaan* is *bijaksana*. Like *bijak*, *bijaksana* also means wise. With the same *ke-* and *-an* affixes with that of *kebijakan*, the words *kebijaksanaan*, and *kebijakan* share the same meaning. They both mean wisdom, cleverness, and intelligence (Stevens and Tellings 2004). However, unlike *kebijaksanaan* which works in a more universal sense, the term *kebijakan* has a more specific meaning that is policy. Thus, it renders the word operational within the political discourse.

Another word that is anagramic and homophonic to *kebijakan* is *kebajikan*. *Kebajikan* is derived from the root word *bajik*, which means virtuous, beneficial, and salutary. After it is nominalized, it denotes good deeds, kindness, and generosity (Stevens and Tellings 2004). Despite the fact that the word *kebijakan* is used in both political and social space, while *kebajikan* is unlikely to be used in political domain; the anagram can create a potentially shadowed meaning. It is a meaning that shadows different objects or words to shape the intended imaging so that *kebijakan* is associated with *kebajikan*.

The three words *kebijakan*, *kebijaksanaan*, and *kebajikan* appear different but have important similarities. The three of them sound similar and signify wisdom, kindness, and goodness. However, it is only *kebijakan* which retains specific meaning of policy. This curious word *kebijakan* even has dual meanings, uniting wisdom and policy. This dualism suggests that policy is equal to wisdom. It encourages the idea that policy would be accepted as a universal truth, as a ‘wisdom’. The symbolic representation that ‘policy’ equals to ‘wisdom’ implies an apolitical position: Who can be against wisdom or kindness? Given the history of the complex duality of *kebijakan*, the question of how this new meaning of ‘wisdom’ associated with ‘policy’ emerged requires a historical investigation of the word.

There is little known about the earlier usage and coining of the word ‘*kebijakan*’. In its birth and development, the Indonesian language was highly influenced by Malay, Javanese, Dutch, Arabic, and other foreign languages, either they are translated or transliterated. Dictionaries across periods have confirmed that *kebijakan* is not a transliteration, it is rather a translation.

In the early 1900s, the word *kebijakan* was not available in the dictionaries. The old dictionaries of Malay do not mention the nominalized word *kebijakan* (Shellabear 1916; Wilkinson 1901) but do contain the root word *bijak*. In the Malay dictionaries, ‘policy’ is instead rendered as *peraturan* or regulation. Javanese dictionaries do not have the word

‘policy’. Instead, they define the word *wicaksana*, which is then adopted as *bijaksana* in *Bahasa, Indonesia*. This means clever, smart, and sagacious (Egner 1920; Zoetmulder and Robson 1982).

The inclusion of ‘politics’ and ‘wisdom’ in the word ‘policy’ has a long history. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, policy was commonly referred to in the English language as ‘political sagacity’ (Wedel et al. 2005). The terms ‘politics’ and ‘political strategies’ appeared some centuries later. This was reflected in Sukarno’s use of the terms through his speeches after Indonesia gained its independence in 1945. That Sukarno, who spoke both Dutch and English fluently, might have learnt the term ‘political sagacity’ is suggested by his use of the phrase in one of his speeches:

Sekarang ini perkataan peaceful itu dipakai sebagai satu perkataan apa itu, political wisdom, political sagacity, satu kebidjaksanaan politik . . . Nah, nanti dulu, ini selalu bilang peaceful, peaceful, peaceful, peaceful, damai-damai, damai. Banjak sekali politici-politici, kepala-kepala Negara, perdana-perdana menteri daripada puluhan Negara selalu peaceful, please, peaceful, please, peaceful, please, peaceful. Lho kok gampang! Nah memang gampang mengutjapkan perkataan peaceful, memang gampang, dan memang . . . wah dianggap sebagai political wisdom, wisdom jaitu kebidjaksanaan, political sagacity. Sagacity artinja, jaitu kebidjaksanaan tinggi. Gampang bitjara peaceful, peaceful . . . Semuanja mau di peaceful, peaceful, peacefulkan, tidak bisa, tidak bisa, there can be no peaceful coexistence between imperialism and the colonized peoples and countries.<sup>4</sup>

Now the word peaceful is used as a political wisdom, political sagacity, a *kebidjaksanaan politik* . . . Wait, wait a second, they always say peaceful, peaceful, peaceful, peaceful, peace-peace, peace. There are so many politicians, heads of nation, Prime Ministers from many countries always say peaceful, please, peaceful, please, peaceful, please, peaceful. Do they think it’s easy! It is easy to say the word peaceful, it is easy, and it is . . . and it is considered as political wisdom, *kebijaksanaan* means wisdom, political sagacity. Sagacity means great wisdom. It is easy to say peaceful, peaceful . . . everything should be peaceful, peaceful and peaceful-ised, it can’t be, it can’t be, there can be no peaceful coexistence between imperialism and the colonized peoples and countries (The Speech of President Sukarno, 28 December 1964).<sup>5</sup>

In the speech, Sukarno criticized the discourse of ‘political wisdom’ and ‘political sagacity’ used by the politicians from the imperial countries in the 1960s in order to tame the colonized countries and to avoid frontal confrontation. He defined ‘political wisdom’ and ‘political sagacity’ as *kebijaksanaan politik* and *kebijaksanaan tinggi politik* (great wisdom of politics). Sukarno was well aware that the word wisdom and sagacity was employed as a euphemism for colonialism and global politics, and therefore they did not actually mean wise and sagacious, because ‘there can be no peaceful coexistence between imperialism and the colonized peoples and countries’.

Before 1970s, policy was rendered as *politik* (politics), *siasat* (strategy), and *kebijaksanaan* (wisdom) (Pino and Wittermans 1953; Wojowasito, Poerwadarminta, and Gastra 1970). During Sukarno’s administration (1945–1966), the word *kebijaksanaan* appeared very rarely in the policy documents. After scrutinizing the available digitized policy documents for that period, the word *kebijaksanaan* appeared in the Decree of the People’s Consultative Assembly No. II/MPRS/1960. The line is quoted in the following.

Menyelenggarakan kebijaksanaan dan sistem pendidikan nasional yang tertuju ke arah pembentukan tenaga-tenaga ahli dalam pembangunan sesuai dengan syarat-syarat manusia Sosialis Indonesia, yang berwatak luhur. (Bab II, pasal 2 ayat 5, TAP MPRS No. II/MPRS/1960)



Implementing policies and national education system which are directed to shape experienced manpower in development according to the requirement of the Indonesian Socialist people who are noble. (Chapter II, article 2 verse 5, the Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly No. II/MPRS/1960)

What was used more frequently to contain the meaning of 'policy' during the period of President Sukarno's leadership was *amanat* (or sometimes pronounced as '*amanah*') and *manifesto*. For instance, the use of these terms are *amanat presiden* (the President's mandate) and *manifesto politik* (political manifesto). *Amanat* is derived from the Arabic language. Its closest equivalent in English is 'mandate', although Bahasa Indonesia also has the word '*mandat*' as a direct translation from 'mandate'. '*Amanat*' or 'mandate' have a particular Indonesian feel, which means 'God-given responsibility' (Wijaya Mulya and Sakhyya 2020, 1). This word is still used until today and has a shift of meaning. It refers to something that comes from the government whether an official policy is attached to the statement. Its meaning widens into something beyond policy. Concerning the second term 'manifesto', Sukarno might learn it from his readings. This word is especially that of Marx's work, i.e. Communist Manifesto. This word manifesto is archaic now. It might be due to the language standardization and neutralization during the Suharto administration.

Throughout the Suharto administration, the word *kebijaksanaan* also appeared in the policy documents. For example, it appeared twice in the Decree No.33/MPRS/1967 when President Suharto stepped into the Presidency. This Decree No.33/MPRS/1967 annulled Sukarno's leadership and thus enabled Suharto to be inaugurated as the new president. The word *kebijaksanaan* was used twice throughout the document:

Presiden Sukarno telah melakukan kebijaksanaan yang secara tidak langsung menguntungkan G-30-S/PKI dan melindungi tokoh-tokoh G-30-S/PKI. (TAP MPRS No.33/MPRS/1967 hal. 2)

President Sukarno run policies which indirectly benefited the Communist attempted coup and protected the Communist figures (the Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly No.33/MPRS/1967 page 2)

It was President Suharto who introduced the word *kebijaksanaan* by using it throughout his 32 years of military rule frequently to refer to 'policy'. For example, he named his economic policies by combining the word *kebijaksanaan* with the issuing time, such as *Kebijaksanaan Oktober 1966* (the 1966 October Policy), *Kebijaksanaan Juli 1968* (the 1968 July Policy), and *Kebijaksanaan April 1970* (the 1970 April Policy) (Suroso 1997).

### **Retention and institutionalization of *Kebijakan***

This section deals with how the established meaning is retained and institutionalized through top-down and centralized language standardization. In 1988, the Language Center launched the first official monolingual dictionary of *Bahasa Indonesia*. Entitled *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI – The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), its purpose was to refine and standardize words for the national language. Its program of *Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan* (the Perfected Spelling) defined the word *kebijakan* as (a) cleverness, intelligence, prudence; and (b) policy, principle, target, and guideline to achieve goals (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa 1988). This is the first time when the word *kebijakan* was standardized and solidified as policy. The

KBBI dictionary is authoritative with respect to standardizing and defining the meaning of each Indonesian word. It is updated and revised every year until today. However, the term *kebijakan* remains unchanged and it has been used ubiquitously to refer to policy.

Almost all kinds of policies at any level are called *kebijakan* nowadays, as it is the formal and standard term to use. For instance, in responding to the pandemic, the government issued several mobility restriction policies. The first policy was the large-scale social restriction (PSBB – Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar); then, followed by PSBB transition, lockdown, and then the latest one was the emergency public activity restriction (PPKM – Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat). While those policies aim to restrict mobility, the changing terms of the policies potentially create public confusion.

Nevertheless, despite consistent patterns on the translation of policy into *kebijakan* or *kebijaksanaan* in Bahasa Indonesia, there is outlier. During the colonial period when the Dutch Indies (the then Indonesia) was governed by the Dutch colonial government, there was a very popular policy called *Ethische Politiek* or translated as ‘Ethical Policy’ in English. It comprised of three main programs, i.e. irrigation, emigration, and education. The policy, however, was actually not a ‘gift’ from the colonial government. It was the result of a long struggle by the ethical and association groups in the Netherlands, in response to the conservative colonial politics implemented in Indonesia. By ‘ethical’ the Dutch meant human rights ideals. These ethical ideas started to emerge in 1899 and were promoted by a liberal Dutch lawyer and statesman, Conrad Theodor van Deventer. He published an article entitled ‘*Een eereschuld*’ (A Debt of Honor) in the Dutch journal *De Gids* arguing that the colonial government had a moral responsibility to repay the wealth that the Netherlands had extorted from the Indies (Van Deventer 1899). This was in contrast with the previous official policy that saw the Indies as a ‘region for profit making’ or *wingewest* (Hurgroenje 1915). The interesting part is the translation of this Ethical Policy into Bahasa Indonesia as it is rendered as *Politik Etis*, not *Kebijakan Etis*. The word *politiek* or policy in this context was rendered as *politik* in Indonesian (or politics), not *kebijakan* or *kebijaksanaan* by the nationalist intelligentsia in the colonial period. Even until today, every Indonesian learns *Politik Etis* or Ethical Politics in history lessons and textbooks. This outlier strengthens the argument that the translation of the word ‘policy’ has been indeed political depending on who chooses the meanings and why.

## Policy and the cloak of wisdom

The discursive selectivities of the word *kebijakan* serves to mask the political processes in policy making and represents it to be apolitical. This is despite the fact that political reality exists beyond language. The apolitical mask is central in establishing stability and avoiding criticism toward the New Order’s interests and policies. This is because the New Order military government was concerned with stability as a form of control (Heryanto 2005). The cultural (language) order was one of its strategies. Heryanto criticizes *Bahasa Indonesia* as a ‘language [that] is not a transparency through which we can recognise, describe, or name that piece of “reality”’ (Heryanto 1995, 1). Or in Williams’ words, language is not a reflection of reality, rather, it is constitutive of reality (Williams 1983). This means that *Bahasa Indonesia*, which is shaped by institutional control, in part

shapes how we understand the world and deal with it, particularly with the meaning and reality of ‘policy’. In other words, the discursive selectivities of policy have never been natural and neutral, not least because they deal with politics.

The meanings of the word ‘policy’ and its semantic changes can be comprehensively understood not only by referring to the dictionaries, but also by answering the questions: Who is choosing what meaning and why? In Williams’ theory, the meaning of a word is not derived from the action or object it denotes, but from the historical context of discourse where it is used (Williams 1983). The cultural move made by the New Order government in defining and redefining the word *kebijakan* is ‘bound to deceive, unless one is critically aware of the language that shapes the defining or redefining process’ (Heryanto 1995, 1). The defining and redefining process is evident from the way that at one historical moment ‘policy’ was rendered as politics. At other moments, it carried contradictory meanings, and now the meaning is sublimated into wisdom. In particular, with the word ‘policy’, these semantic changes reverberate what Wedel *et al.* have emphasized:

The word policy is a concept laden with often quite contradictory meanings; it is a word that can be coded and decoded to convey the very ambiguous messages. (Wedel *et al.* 2005, 36)

This lexical construction of *kebijakan*, which was institutionalized in the language standardization of the 1970s-1980s, massages the language so that it is seen as ‘wise’. But, whose wisdom?

Shore and Wright (1997, 3) in their *Anthropology of Policy* argue that policy contains ‘linguistic devices that cloak policy with the symbols and trappings of political legitimacy’. What is interesting about the Indonesian experience is that not only is the cloak of ‘policy’ ‘wisdom’, but also the linguistic device is wisdom. Such a linguistic strategy might be a form of ‘trappings of political legitimacy’ which fundamentally determines how policies are perceived, whose ‘wisdom’ matters, and how they are executed.

Moutsios (2018) traces the separation of politics and democracy from policy in the emergence of representative government. He argues that ‘representative “democracy” broke with politics, in the Greek sense, and instituted policymaking, a hierarchical and instrumental process of decisions taken by professional politicians, authorised experts and bureaucratic mechanism’ (Moutsios 2018, 69). In this argument, everyone is excluded from genuine political involvement except the politicians and government elites themselves. This means that it is the politicians and government elites’ wisdom who deal with policymaking and policy construction.

It is no coincidence that the selection of the term *kebijakan* has been at the center of the development of *Bahasa Indonesia*. I argue that this word selection serves at least two functions: as a symbolic control and a euphemism in public discourse.

Firstly, the cloak of wisdom serves as a symbolic control. As Bernstein (1990) argues, it is ‘the means whereby consciousness is given specialised form and distributed through forms of communication which relay a given distribution of power and dominant cultural categories’. It ‘translates power relations into discourse and discourse into power relations’ (Bernstein 1990, 134). It is interesting to observe how the speakers of *Bahasa Indonesia* deal with and internalize the word *kebijakan*. It creates a certain discourse about ‘policy’ and power relation between the policy-makers and their end-users. A general corollary to this established meaning is that it unconsciously names

those who obey the disciplinary rules as wise and shames those who breach the law as unwise. The way we perceive and conceive policies is embedded symbolically within the construction and institutionalization of the word.

Secondly, the word serves as a euphemism in public discourse. This has a serious consequence. Not only does the word project an apolitical character, but also it has no analytical power. It is politically empty. Yet, the term *kebijakan* had a deep impact on the social sciences and was clearly reflected during the New Order administration, the one whose wisdom mattered. For example, political and social sciences scholars of the 1960s studied only the daily politics of parliament, the political parties, and government bureaucracy (Levine 1969). Studies in the social sciences have been carried out as formalities (rather than as seeking critical analysis) and often employed to provide political justification for government policies and projects (Heryanto 2005). In this way, the social sciences not only served as the basis of scholarly confirmation for government policies, but became an integral part of it (Farid 2005).

There were clear institutionalized efforts to execute 'the' wisdom. During the New Order administration, those who criticize *kebijakan* were shamed as unwise, and might well be imprisoned for political crimes (Budiarjo 1974; Fealy 1995; Hansen 1976). Due to this tight control and repression of the academics, the numbers of how many intellectuals (scholars, students, teachers, and researchers) were killed, arrested, or exiled only now become clear (Farid 2005). Critical thinking, critical literacies, and freedom of expression was suppressed (Sakhiyya and Hapsari 2021). Although the New Order regime collapsed in 1998, policy critics are still regarded as those whose interest is in criticizing policies without being able to provide a solution. In contrast, problem solvers are deemed to be wise, be it an instant or surface solution. Such an extreme polarization has divided the world into two with 'wisdom' as the passing judgment: supporters (wise) versus opponents (unwise).

Such an approach to policy assumes that 'there are objective entities out there called policies that are the result of decisions made by some rational authority (e.g. government, committee, management board or chief executive) and which reorganize bureaucratic action to solve particular problems and produced a known (or desired) outcome' (Shore, Wright, and Però 2011, 4). The implication of such a view is that policy studies are carried out to solve problems and make the policy work more smoothly (Dale 1994). It is not an analysis *of* policy, rather, analysis *for* policy (Codd 1988; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Simons, Olssen, and Peters 2009). Often what really happens is that it does not solve 'the problems' that it has fixed, more worryingly, it curtails its ability to solve problems.

## Concluding remark

Theoretically and methodologically, the co-use of Williams' keyword analysis and Sum and Jessop's CPE approach to study policy discourses has opened a new avenue for the reflexive processes of policy problematization within the area of critical policy studies. The insights offered by lexical semantics through keyword analysis complements the lack of operational procedures for discursive selectivities in CPE. By problematizing the word '*kebijakan*', this study contributes to the understanding of how the creation of meanings in certain keywords is related to wider political, economic, and cultural conditions. I have demonstrated that the selection, retention, and institutionalization of the word '*kebijakan*' has served to mask the political processes in policy making and represents it to be apolitical. It does not make any

sense to conceive of the politically driven process called ‘policy’ as apolitical. In the modern and contemporary era, policy is no longer associated with sagacity or wisdom, and political leaders are no longer seen as wise and sagacious. As Indonesia continues to become more democratic (Rosser, Roesad, and Edwin 2005), it is high time to deconstruct the word ‘kebijakan’ by separating the meaning of politics and wisdom within the word. This historical semantic awareness is important to crack open the possibility of alternative meanings central to democratic processes.

## Notes

1. The first President of the Republic of Indonesia (1945–1966). His period is named as the Old Order, this term was given by the New Order President Suharto.
2. According to Sneddon (2003), President Suharto had a particular manner in speaking Indonesian. The most obvious and commented was his excessive use of the suffix – *nya* and the preposition of *daripada*. In addition, his Indonesian pronunciation was also much influenced from his native Javanese. Amazingly, such language manner was followed by other high government officials, and some commentators satirically refer to this style as *Bahasa pejabat* or literally ‘language of officials’.
3. The word Development (*Pembangunan*) which is written with a capital ‘D’ was one of the state ideologies during the New Order era, other than Pancasila (the official state ideology).
4. The speech was transcribed in the old version of Indonesian spelling (before the language standardization).
5. All the translation in the paper are the authors’.

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