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Language, Globalisation, and National Identity : A Study of English-Medium Policy and Practice in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses a study of the withdrawal of English as a medium of instruction in Indonesian schools to examine the role of language in nation-building using the sociological concept of imaginary signification. The main reason for the withdrawal is located in the tension between two main imaginary significations of the nation's identity. The government saw Indonesia in terms of its economic ambitions. Indonesia was to enter the global knowledge economy, and the education system was to provide the human resources to do so. The teachers understood the use of Bahasa Indonesia in the education system as the means to reproduce children into the nation. We argue that the withdrawal of English as the medium of instruction policy was the result of the tension between these two different representations of national identity.

Introduction

This paper explores the deeper causes for the misalignment between policy intentions and the policy implementation by locating that misalignment in the disturbance between two major national *imaginary significations* (Castoriadis, 1987). It draws on a study conducted in Indonesia (Fitriati, 2015) which found that teachers experienced considerable difficulties when implementing that nation's English-medium language policy. Our purpose is to use that finding to explain why support for the English language policy in Indonesia's globalisation strategy did not translate into support at the level of educational practice. We use Castoriadis' *social imaginary signification* (Castoriadis, 1987) as the conceptual tool to explain how quickly a legislated policy can fail when it is out of step with a more powerful imaginary signification. The more powerful signification in the Indonesian case is that of *national identity*.

Charles Taylor refers to a social imaginary signification as "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). We argue that the implementation of the English medium instruction policy by the teachers in the study on which we draw showed that the policy did not tap into common practice, hence it failed to acquire wide-spread legitimacy. It is at the implementation stage that the social imaginaries which bind societies acquire the legitimacy required for policy to become embedded as social practice. We further argue, that a key factor in the implementation failure was that a stronger imaginary signification existed, one which does have widespread legitimacy in everyday practice. This is the understanding of the Indonesian language as the means of communication in that pluralist society, a legitimation given by its role in creating an Indonesian national identity in the post-colonial era.

Section two describes the methodology used in the article and the context of the problem. Section three discusses the emergence of the Indonesian language within the Independence struggle in order to show the integral place of the language in the nation's identity. An account of the establishment and

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withdrawal of the English-medium language policy follows in section four. Section four is an account of the study undertaken in the school. It shows how the teachers attempted to put the policy into practice but were frustrated, not only because their English language competency was inadequate for the task, but because they believed that Bahasa Indonesia should be the language of Indonesian schools.

We conclude by discussing the role of language in national identity to argue that this policy in particular touched two of the nation's key *imaginary significations*, placing them in tension. For Indonesia, these are, on the one hand, its self-representation as a cohesive modern nation with an Indonesian identity. On the other hand, the nation's self-representation as an internationally recognised member of the global economy, a status that brings with it political recognition, promotes an outward looking sense of identity—a representation justifying the English language policy.

Methodology and context

The paper employs a *conceptual methodology* (Lourie & Rata, 2017; McPhail & Lourie, 2017) to conceptualise the explanation we have developed about why the language policy failed at the implementation stage. A conceptual methodology is noted for the use of disciplinary concepts (in the social sciences, these concepts may come from philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, sociology and related disciplines) as the tool used to analyse and explain a phenomenon that is identified and investigated using empirically obtained data. In this article, a study of teachers' attempts to implement Indonesia's English-medium language policy in their classrooms provides the empirical data. *Social imaginary signification* serves our purpose in explaining the phenomenon of policy implementation because the concept contains with it the idea of the connection between how a people represents themselves to themselves (the social imaginary) and the means by which this imaginary is shared (signifiers or language). The explanatory power of the concept is what justifies its use in this paper.

Like all powerful concepts, the same idea contained in *imaginary signifiications* is known in other ways. For example, Bourdieu (1979) uses the term "shared reality" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 79) to refer to the collective consciousness of a social group, one created through a shared means of communication, that is, the national language of the modern pluralist nation (Durkheim, 1912/2001; Rata, 2018). The *imaginary* of the pluralist nation (Anderson, 1983), one which unites historically distinct ethnic groups, is legitimised and strengthened as the shared means of communication is accepted as *our language* in everyday practice. As with other countries in the nation-building project of the twentieth century (Hobsbawm, 1992), the social glue or collective means of self-representation created by a common national language justified the acceptance of Bahasa Indonesia in the post-Independence era.

The usefulness of a conceptual methodological is not confined to the power of disciplinary concepts. It also enables us to connect the explanation to the problem we wish to explain. Often the problem is identified empirically as was the case with the English medium policy failure in Indonesian classrooms although we are aware that a problem may be identified though philosophical inquiry only (Rata, 2012). Unlike interpretivist methodologies where the explanation is drawn from the empirically obtained data, a conceptual methodology recognises that it is not possible to generalise from the particular experience (McPhail & Lourie, 2017). Concepts, on the other hand, allow for the particular (in our case, the teachers' implementation of a policy) to illustrate an argument. Kant, [1781], 1993 is one of many philosophers in a tradition from Parmenides and Zeno to Descartes (Lindberg, 1992) who recognised the limitations of explaining from the particular rather than drawing from the idea and applying to the particular instance. Kant, [1781], 1993 noted that a "concept will not let itself be limited to experience, because it deals with a cognition . . . of which the empirical is only one part; no actual experience is fully sufficient for it, but every experience belongs to it" (p. 394).

How do we connect the conceptually-derived explanation to the empirically identified problem given that there is no exact correspondence between the idea and experience (Rata, 2012)? According to Nola (2001) a "degree of fit" (p. 429) is all we can hope for in making the argument that the chosen concept(s) does in fact provide a logical explanation of the problem or phenomenon. In seeking to

justify the connnection we make between imaginary significations and the English-medium policy we have adapted Taylor's (2004) idea of "widespread legitimacy" as the methodological device to connect the "imaginary signification" (p. 23) concept to the data taken from the study. This enables us to ask; What language policy has sufficient social legitimacy to enable it to be embedded in practice? Our argument is the response to that question. We claim that Bahasa Indonesia, despite being a relatively recent national language, does have legitimacy as the nation's imaginary signifier. In contrast, English, despite being promoted as necessary for Indonesia's global economic strategy, has not acquired sufficient legitimacy in the minds of the people for it to accepted as a medium of instruction in schools. When comparing the two significations we also argue that the dominance of the former in its role as the collective means of a society's self-representation contributed to problems with the latter.

The empirical study which Fitriati (2015) undertook for a doctoral dissertation investigated how secondary school teachers coped with the legislated requirement that they teach their respective subjects, Mathematics and Science, in English. The Indonesian government had introduced the English language policy for public schools in 2006. Teachers were to develop their students' English language skills through English-medium instruction in Mathematics and Science subjects (*Permendiknas, 2009*) and to promote habitual English use inside the school (*Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Menengah* Ministry of National Education (MONE), 2011). However, the decree of *Mahkamah Konstitusi*/the Indonesian Constitutional Court, in 2013, revoked the policy (Sumintono, 2013) after eight years. This requires explanation especially given the supportive context of a growing commitment by South-East Asian governments to English language policies as part of the region's economic strategy. We problemicise that withdrawal.

Context of the problem

Indonesia is not alone in the experience of top-down English language educational policy (Hadisantosa, 2010; Hamied, 2012; Margana, 2013; Mariati & Mariati, 2007). A number of ASEAN countries, including Malaysia (Tan, 2011; Tan & Lan, 2011), Thailand (Bax, 2010), South Korea (Byun, 2010; Lee, 2010), and the Philippines (Martin, 2011) are attempting to fast-track their entrance into the global economy. The status of English as the *lingua franca* (Pan & Block, 2011) exerts pressure on governments to provide education in English as a language of instruction and communication; that is, a language that can be used, rather than as one of a number of languages offered to students as a subject for study. This pressure is in tension with the commitment to national languages in education.

We use the Indonesian study to illustrate how teachers responded to government initiatives to encourage the use of English as a medium of instruction (henceforth, EMI) in public schools and in higher education institutions. This description leads to a discussion of the role of language in nation-building, specifically as the means by which the imaginary significations of a modern nation-state are created (Anderson, 1983). We are able to ask, what happens to the associated policies and practices when one signification does not acquire widespread legitimacy?

The impetus for the policy initiative, and for its subsequent failure can be traced to the influence of geopolitical forces on nation-state policy, and in the case we refer to, on education policy specifically. These forces, which enable the acceptance of the neoliberal market ideology of an aggressive global capitalism by independent nation-states (Piketty, 2014), are played out in developing countries with rapidly expanding middle classes. In Indonesia, "middle class affluent consumers (MACs) represent about 30% of the population, or 74 million people. About 8 million to 9 million people currently enter the MAC segment each year, and by 2020, this group will reach a total of 141 million people, or 53% of the population" (Rastogi et al., 2013, p. 6). These well-educated professionals in Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries support their various governments' moves into the global economy. With those moves come a degree of acceptance of the English language (Pan & Block, 2011), or a *growing legitimacy* to use Taylor's term (Taylor, 2004).

They are also the class that benefitted from the rising nationalism which accompanied the various independence movements in South-East Asia. For Indonesia, it is a nationalism that places Bahasa Indonesia as the *imaginary signification* at the centre of its identity giving it widespread legitimacy as the language of modern Indonesia. "The commitment to Bahasa Indonesia as the proposed national language is found in the Indonesian Youth Pledge (in Bahasa Indonesia: Sumpah Pemuda). This was a declaration made during the pre-independence period by young Indonesian nationalists at the Second Youth Congress on the 28th October 1928. They proclaimed the three ideals of one motherland, one nation, and one language." It is possible that the tension between globalisation and nationalism which is played out in the Bahasa Indonesia-English language tension explored in this paper echoes the same tension illustrated by Brexit nationalism and by that seen in the United States and some European nations. The response of nationalist movements to globalisation is the expression of two competing significations about how people understand themselves (the *imaginary*).

Prior to the turn of this century, developing countries in South-East Asia, including Indonesia, were a source of cheap labour for global corporations. However in the last two decades, such countries are acquiring a new position on the world economy, mainly through the growing influence of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional bloc. The region is shifting from providing cheap labour for global corporations to providing a huge, middle-class consumer base. One of the observable effects of this expansive economic development can be seen in higher education policy. Universities are looking outward to the world, seeking world class university status in the global higher education market (Sakhiyya, 2018). The English language is a crucial part of this globalising strategy, not only for the higher education *business* (Shore & Wright, 2017) but for the economy more broadly.

The governments of these expanding South-East Asian nations justify the inclusion of English in their respective education systems by claiming that they are preparing young people for a globalised future (Hadisantosa, 2010; Permendiknas, 2009). And yet there is ambiguity in this position. On the one hand, they face outwards using assertive internationalisation strategies (Sakhiyya, 2018). On the other hand, the nationalism which benefits from that assertion is not only about the economy. It is about the nation's cultural identity, its main *imaginary signification*, one created in large part by a unifying language.

Guibernau and Rex explain how the nation-state, once created "actively promote(s) the cultural homogenisation of its members" (Guibernau & Rex, 1997, pp. 4–5). The emergence of the Indonesian language from its Malay history, a process we describe below, can be understood in terms of this homogenisation imperative. Indeed the cultural identity (the *national imaginary*) that is Indonesia is centred on the Indonesian language. The study indicated that, while there was no opposition from the teachers to the English language *per se*, there was concern that, by using English as the medium of instruction, Indonesian identity would be negatively affected. A teacher in the study captures this idea saying: "Why should we put ourselves out while we can use our own language" and "I think each language has its own place" (Fitriati, 2015, p. 61).

Language and national identity

The Indonesian language comes from the struggle against Dutch colonisation which led to the estabishment of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945. In 1908, Budi Utomo, the first Indonesian nationalist organisation, promoted Malay as the national language in order to provide a counter to Dutch language policy. Its transformation into *Indonesian* occurred in 1928, in the manifesto of the Youth of Indonesia. *Sumpah Pemuda* (The Oath of The Young People) "pledged the willingness of every Indonesian to be unified in one nation, one earth, and one language: Indonesia" (Hallen, 1999). The word *Malay* was replaced by *Bahasa Indonesia* as the name of the language and the first Indonesia Language Congress was held in 1938. With the Japanese occupation in 1942 Indonesians were taught Japanese in all schools, a practice which served to reinforce the growing identification of the people to Indonesian as their language. Hallen (1999) notes that it was the Japanese who, in 1942 as a pragmatic response to the reality of language use, established the first Commission for the Indonesian Language.

The Commission was to make decisions about vocabulary and write a common grammar. In 1945, Indonesian was declared the official language. The various indigenous local languages, include Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Maduranese, Baso Minang and many more continue to be used in homes and communities but, for the first time, there is a national language that represents the self-representation of Indonesia as a nation.

The Indonesian language is therefore the result of the Independence movement and the creation of the nation. The teachers interviewed in the study recognised that the education system, especially as a public system, has a wider role in, and for, Indonesian society. This role may be theorised in terms of the purpose of national education systems in modern nation-state building (Ramirez & Boli, 2007). Public education systems became central institutions in the new nation-states of the 19th and 20th centuries as of the nation-building enterprise. This applies to those at the beginning of the era, such as the United States and those in more recent times, such as Indonesia (Hobsbawm, 1992). They were to unify ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups into the one imaginary modern nation (Anderson, 1983).

It is only in a national education system that the *collective representations* (Durkheim, 1912/2001) or *imaginary significations* (Castoriadis, 1987) of a society's symbolic system are reproduced. These terms refer to the way in which a society understands itself; the means of communication which enables normative agreement; its source of cohesive identity; *collective representations* (what Bourdieu describes as "shared reality" [Bourdieu, 1979, p. 79]) that integrate diverse groups into a stable and cohesive society with its own identity. According to Durkheim (1912/2001, as cited in Bourdieu, 1979), the modern symbolic system is "a homogeneous conception of time, space, number and cause which make agreement possible between intelligences" (p. 79). He considered that the collective representations developed and reproduced in the symbolic sphere achieved this purpose because they provided both the "means of communication required for normative agreement and the instruments of thought" required to create this shared reality (as cited in Bourdieu, 1979, p. 79).

In the family and community, older, more traditional languages and practices are often maintained. However at school, all children are taught in the national language. Bahasa Indonesia was developed to serve this purpose, to be the symbolic medium of the new national identity. The English as a medium of instruction policy confronted that language's significance; its *meaning*, and replaced it with a foreign language chosen for its narrower function as an instrument of the economy. By ignoring the primary function of language as the means of symbolic representation (or *imaginary signification*), the balance between the economic and symbolic dimensions was altered (Bernstein, 2000). As one of the teachers said:

> Where are we taking our students to? To what direction? Why do we have to use English? If they continue their study in universities in Indonesia, we do not need to insist teaching in English. If students plan to continue to study abroad, English is a must. But, if they study at universities in Indonesia, our time to study English can be used to study additional content subject. (Fitriati, 2015, p. 63)

The intrusion of something that is not seen to contribute to the nation-building and unifying role is at odds with the implicit understanding of what the education system is for. For the Indonesian government, and for the many other countries that we note in the next section who are also pursuing this policy, the purpose is to be competitve in the global economy. Therefore we argue that the unease, even in some cases hostility, towards using English in this way (although not to the English language *per se*) which was expressed by some of the teachers in the study can be understood in terms of the tension to the balance between the symbolic and the economic. On the one hand, a government looks outward to the global economy. On the other, the teachers look to their role in producing well-educated young people for not only a prosperous nation, but one that has the means to be unified and stable.

Although the study we refer to in the article was conducted in Indonesia, a number of non-English speaking countries are seeking to introduce EMI into their education systems. These countries include Malaysia (Tan, 2011), the Philippines (Martin, 2011), Thailand and South Korea (Bax, 2010). For example, in 2003 a change in language of instruction policy was applied to Mathematics and Science

subjects in Malaysia with the language of instruction switched from Bahasa Malaysia, to English. It was intended to produce a "generation of scientifically and technologically knowledgeable students who are fluent in English and able to contribute to the economic growth and development of the country" (Tan & Lan, 2011, p. 6). Following protests by Chinese schools in Malaysia, a compromise was reached. Science and Mathematics were to be taught in English and Mandarin, not solely in English (Yang & Ishak, 2012). However, even the compromise could not help and the policy was withdrawn in 2008.

A similar initiative launched in the Philippines in 2003 was also suspended (Martin, 2011). In Thailand, the English programme requires that at least two core subjects (out of the total of nine subjects) are taught in English. Significantly, the subjects exclude the Thai language and social studies with aspects related to Thai culture and national identity (Keyuravong 2008, p. 3, as cited in Bax, 2010, p. 11). However, as with the other countries, Thailand is facing various problems related to both teachers who teach the subject of English and those who use English as the medium for teaching other content (Bax, 2010).

The South Korean government's concerns about English language education led to the adoption of a bilingual/immersion approach—*mol-ib* which included the teaching of content subjects such as Maths and Science using English. A small number of schools (up to 10 in the Seoul area, for example) became involved in a *mol-ib* scheme. (Bax, 2010, p. 53) but the policy was withdrawn in the midst of strong public opposition.

English language policy in Indonesia

In 2006, the Indonesian MONE published a new educational policy for secondary schools. Like the policies we note earlier in other South-East Asian nations the policy was designed to include English as the medium of instruction in Science and Mathematics classroom. It was to be achieved by re-designating selected schools as International Standard Schools. (Act of Republic of Indonesia No. 20 Year 2003 on National Education System, Article 50, clause 3). Following the design of the policy, the government nominated hundreds of top public schools to be developed as international schools (Sakhiyya, 2011; Sundusiyah, 2011).

The International Standard Schools were to meet the broad goals of preparing Indonesia for the migration of professionals from Indonesia and also into the country. In this way, Indonesia would become more competitive in the international job market and an attractive destination for foreign-owned companies operating in Indonesia. English plays a major role in the country's economic development (Depdiknas, 2009; Hadisantosa, 2010; Hartoyo, 2009). The tourism industry, in particular, is a major contributor to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by creating foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities for Indonesians. This contribution to employment in particular is not to be understated. Nearly nine percent of Indonesia's total national workforce is employed in the tourism sector (www.indonesia.investments), a sector requiring English language competency (Mahditama, 2012).

Similarly, the education sector in Indonesia views the English language as a tool for the development and dissemination of information and communication technology and science. English competencies are considered essential for students to keep up with the latest developments (Depdiknas, 2009), hence the implementation of the policy in the re-designated public schools named as *Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf International* (or, Pioneer International Standard Schools) (Permendiknas, 2009). The intention was to develop teaching and learning processes that complied with the international standards of developed countries (Ministry of National Education (MONE), 2011; Permendiknas, 2009). In 2006, when the policy was introduced, there were 1,305 Pioneer International Standard Schools in Indonesia; 239 were primary schools. There were 356 junior high schools, 359 senior high schools, and 351 vocational high schools (Sukarelawati, 2012). Students who attended these schools were chosen on the basis of their school enrolment test, including an English language test. As a consequence of this enrolment criterion and the additional resources, the schools are widely regarded as elite schools (Retmono, 2011).

However, there was controversy over the use of English in Mathematics and Science subjects in the Pioneer International Standard Schools—especially over the quality of the English-medium instruction and the lack of bilingual teachers, but most notably because Mathematics and Science teachers with little or no English competency were expected to teach their subjects in that language (Indradno, 2011; Sundusiyah, 2011). In addition, the schools were criticised for reducing the use of the Indonesian language (Retmono, 2011). By 2013, the mounting criticism and the obvious failure of the policy at classroom level led to the decree of *Mahkamah Konstitusi*, the Indonesian Constitutional Court (Sumintono, 2013, January 11). This stipulated that the Pioneer International Standard Schools must return to their original status as regular schools. It required the withdrawal of English-medium instruction from the school. Since then, English is no longer used as the medium of instruction to teach content subjects. It remains a separate subject as it has been since Indonesian Independence in 1945 (Lie, 2007).

The withdrawal of the policy appears a failure. English-medium instruction was promoted throughout the country as an important innovation and something that would contribute significantly towards Indonesia's emergence as a global player (Coleman, 2009). Indeed the government initially promoted the policy in these terms. According to Ministry of National Education (2009, 2011) and DGPSEM (2007a, 2007b) the schools were to provide education with national and international standards that would enable graduates to compete internationally to a level higher than, if not equal to, those in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Government resources were provided to ensure that the policy did work. So why was the policy withdrawn? In the next section we address this question by identifying a misalignment between teachers' attitudes towards the English language and the government's expectations.

The study

The study (Fitriati, 2015) of the English language programme at a public senior high school was undertaken in 2012, one year before the policy was rescinded, so at a time when the problems had become obvious. Ehnographic methods were used to collect the data because, they allow, "the researcher [to rely] on the participants' views as an insider emic perspective and reports them in verbatim quotes, and then synthesizes the data filtering it through the researchers' etic scientific perspective to develop an overall cultural interpretation. This cultural interpretation is a description of the group and themes related to the theoretical concepts being explored in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 92). The collection of the teachers' views in this way has enabled us use these views to illustrate our argument about why the policy was withdrawn.

The school was located in a large city in Central Java with a predominantly Javanese population. The researcher shadowed five teachers of Geography, Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in their classrooms over two months. Each of the five had a bachelor degree majoring in the respective content subjects. They had studied English as a compulsory subject at high school and at university where English was taught only in one to two semesters. Significantly, none of the teachers had experienced special training in English-medium instruction at university. After the school where they worked was designated a Pioneer International Standard School in the academic year of 2009-10, both the Maths and Science teachers were directed by school executives to take short English professional development courses. These were conducted either by local government officials or the school.

Data were collected in a variety of ways and were extensive. Collection included whole-school observations, participatory observation where the researcher sat in the classroom for lengthy periods, field notes, in-depth interviews, reviewing school documents, and audio-video recordings of class-room activities. In addition, informal conversations were held during and after the school hours. These multiple sources of data collection meant that the researcher had the opportunity to immerse herself in the school and to conduct whole-school observations and classroom observations that enriched the interviews with the teachers (Palmer, 2011, p. 109).

These interviews were a revealing source of material about the English language policy. Each teacher was interviewed several times and the discussions were in-depth and free-ranging. The teachers were encouraged to speak freely and all were happy to do so. They spoke about their family's background, friends, and social networks before turning to describe the languages they used in their daily and teaching lives. They describes how they used Javanese, Indonesian, and English in daily interactions, any connection with English communities of practice, and broader professional matters concerning their teaching goals and education in general. However the main topic of each interview was their experiences in teaching their content subject using English. The researcher asked about their perceptions, opinions, views, feelings, and attitudes toward English-medium instruction in their classes and to using English the school more widely. They were asked in English first to test their level of understanding and communication in the language. Significantly, all five teachers preferred using either Indonesian or Javanese. This gave them the freedom to explore the nuances and ambiguities that arise when people speak of their experiences. The findings are categorised according to: classroom practice, the teacher, and cultural identity.

Classroom practice

One finding was the frequency of code-switching practices, rather than the use of English only. The teachers alternated between Indonesian and English throughout the lesson to encourage students to focus on the content and to be more responsive by asking questions and contributing ideas. The Maths and Geography teachers said that including Indonesian helped their students understand what was being said.

> Perhaps not all students will understand my explanation if I speak in English all the time. So, I have to do like that, translating. I used to mixing, Indonesian mixed with English. They want me not to use much English in my lesson. (Fitriati, 2015, p. 78)

The teachers frequently translated the English they used. An example from a Biology class where the students were learning about the skeleton showed how the need to translate scientific terms had the effect of reducing a lesson to a translation class where terms were constantly repeated rather than it being a lesson about biological concepts and content.

The teachers frequently switched from English into Indonesian to save face when their linguistic competence failed them. The Biology teacher said that his limited English meant that he used it only to introduce students to Biology terms and to greet students and check the roll. The Maths teacher said that she did not dare to say some numbers in English because she was not sure how to pronounce them. The ICT teacher did not use English at all, not a single word, saying his vocabulary and grammar were not good enough. He spoke of "not having the nerve" (Fitriati, 2015, p. 56) to teach in English adding that he felt both hesitant and frightened. However, he did ask his students to speak in English when presenting their group discussion work, and interestingly, they did.

The researcher observed four students presenting their group discussion with PowerPoint presentations in English. They even answered their friends' questions in English. Despite some grammatical mistakes and inappropriate word choice, this group's effort to speak in English was commendable, given the difficult nature of the topic *wireless and wireline*. Why did they use English when their teacher did not? Perhaps they were motivated by a mixture of their teacher's encouragement and by the extra marks for those who used either spoken or written English. The fact that the students prepared their slides prior to class also helped. A similar negotiation between teacher and students occurred in the Chemistry class. Initially the students were required to use English. However the teachers allowed them to speak in Indonesian to present the results of their group discussion. The students had not prepared them previously so these involved stuttering and stumbling. The teacher was aware of the anxiety this created, hence her decision to allow the students to use Indonesian. This teacher, like the others, were more concerned with their students' understanding of the lesson content and of maintaining their motivation. Using English was secondary to these pedagogical priorities.

What the researcher found was that these were normal subject lessons in Indonesian with the annoying imposition of English foisted on the teachers from outside.

The teachers in the programme were subject specialists, not English language users. The result was to be expected; a mixture of noticeable inaccuracies in grammar, word choice, and pronunciation. Often they were unaware of these errors, or they knew they made errors but did not know when they were correct and when they were not. Several of the teachers said that it was fine for them to make mistakes because they were still learning English, mentioning that the students did seem to understand. However, there are a number of problems with this. In the context of second language acquisition, errors or mistakes in using a foreign language without any corrective feedback are likely to result in the errors becoming fixed by the teacher (Ellis, 2008; Fidler, 2006; Gass & Selinker, 2008). Students might consider the language their teachers used was accurate and adopt this language use, leading to further confusion. The imput into students' language from their teachers' use is their students' language input has a determining function in language acquisition (Ellis, 2008). According to Astika and Wahyana (2010), Indonesian students should be exposed to correct English (p. 19). Inaccurate teacher modelling will lead to incorrect grammar, pronunciation and word choice by the students. The subject teachers in the study did in fact have an important role as language models for their students but were unaware of the significance of this. In addition to the problems specific to language, there are also implications for the subjects being taught. When the teacher uses words incorrectly, the meaning of the concepts being taught is also compromised.

The teachers

Given these problems it is not surprising that the teachers found using English not only difficult and a source of anxiety, but also time-consuming. They all said that teaching in English took double the time as teaching in Indonesian.

According to the Chemistry teacher:

> If I teach in English, it means double working because I must translate into Indonesian to make sure my students understand my explanation. It's faster to explain using Indonesian.

The Maths teacher agreed:

> My students need longer time to understand my explanation if I used English, compared to when I used Indonesian. They did not comprehend a lesson easily when delivered in English. Sometimes they asked me, mam, what is it in Indonesian, so I had to explain it again in Indonesian. It takes longer time and takes my energy.

Repeating the content knowledge firstly in English then in Indonesian took much of the time allocated to the lesson, reducing the time for the actual lesson itself.

The effect of the policy of the teachers' profesional wellbeing was considerable with all those interviewed saying that having to use English-medium instruction made them anxious in relation to their own work and envious of their colleagues who did not need to use English. It reduced their confidence and produced a very real sense of carrying an impossible burden. The burden was two-fold. Not only did they have to learn English themselves but they had to learn how to teach their subjects in this unfamiliar language. It was not surprising that they thought the English-medium policy was unattainable. Two of the older teachers, both highly experienced in their subjects, said it was too late to learn English at their age.

> Students are smarter. They take English private courses after school. And they are still young. They easily learn a foreign language, whereas I have many things to take care of. So, it's difficult for me to learn English.

He added that learning English meant making a considerable "personal sacrifice."

> If I always focus on learning English at all times, my other tasks and responsibility as a teacher, a father, and in my community will be in a mess. English comes to me very late. I am above 50 [years old] now, so when can I study English? I do not have time [to study English].

Not surprisingly, he compared his predicament to that of the teachers who were not required to teach using English:

> Ask the teachers who teach English subject to teach Biology. I am sure they cannot do it. So, what I mean is just teaching as usual. Do not make teachers afraid by asking us to teach in English. Yes, many colleagues are afraid of teaching in English. Many of them got stressed complaining their difficulties and inabilities speaking in English. Students, too. Actually both teachers and students complain.

Language and identity

"*Kita punya bahasa sendiri*" (We have our own language) was the phrase most often used by the teachers when referring to the English language policy.

According to the ICT teacher:

> I think each language has its own place. When teachers go home seeing their families, involved in their societies and communities, they absolutely use the languages spoken by their families and communities.

He clearly meant that English was not a widely used language so he thought it would be strange to use English while others did not use the language. The Biology teacher used similar sentiments, speaking both Indonesian and Javanese: "*Kenapa sih ndadak repot-repot? Wong dengan bahasa kita sendiri saja kita bisa.*" [Why should we put ourselves out while we can use our own language?]. He added:

> Our environment is not supportive because our official and national language is Indonesian and because we are Javanese living in Javanese communities. We speak Javanese too.

All members of the school community spoke Indonesian and Javanese. On a very few occasions they spoke a few words or sentences in English if they were asked in English by those who taught English as a subject. The teacher in the comment immediately above claimed that the Indonesian and Javanese languages had a wider range of vocabulary which could express specific intended meanings which were not possible in his English vocabulary. He said there were no English equivalents available to him with his lack of English proficiency for certain Javanese or Indonesian words, certainly none that enabled him to express nuances and complexities of meaning.

The teachers discussed the matter of language and identity with one noting that using English in teaching could cause trouble because it was not the language of the nation. It did not show his Indonesian identity. Given that "language is an index, symbol and marker of identity" (Baker, 2011, p. 45) this teacher's comment that being an Indonesian meant using the Indonesian language as the symbol of Indonesian national identity made sense for him and for the others.

One of the older, experienced teachers was doubtful about the benefits of English in Indonesia:

> Where are we taking our students to? To what direction? Why do we have to use English? If they continue their study in universities in Indonesia, we do not need to insist teaching in English. If students plan to continue to study abroad, English is a must. But, if they study at universities in Indonesia, our time to study English can be used to study additional subject content.

Other teachers spoke of Indonesian as the country's national language. They saw the school as a state institution and Indonesian as the official and national language. The comment, "We have our own language" or similar phrases were used frequently.

The teachers' comments provided insights into how English was regarded. There was concern expressed that colleagues might regard teachers who spoke English as strange as it seemed inappropriate to use English among people of Indonesian nationality.

> If I initiated to speak English, I might be laughed at. They [my colleagues] would think I was like pretending as if I were an English native speaker and acting as if I were a Westerner [Javanese: halah sok keinggris-inggrisan]. If they don't like, they will talk behind our back. Actually I can ignore them. It doesn't matter they call me acting like Westerners [*keinggris-inggrisan*]. But I don't feel comfortable with such a comment. I should know my position.

> I am glad if I am addressed in English or asked to chat in English [by my colleagues] as long as it is not my own initiative because I am not an English subject teacher.

Halah, sok keinggris-inggrisan (it is like imitating Westerners) is to be avoided, or so this teacher implies. Others too, were concerned that if they practised English they might be considered "different" people. This contributed to their reluctance to practise English. The use of conversational English by mainly young teachers tended to elicit defensiveness from the mainly older teachers who could not speak, or who had limited, English. Negative comments would be made, for example, "*Halah sok keinggris-inggrisan*" (imitating Westerners by speaking English) to teachers who practised English at school, perhaps even seen as boastful. One of the teachers interviewed commented that:

> Sometimes when some teachers spoke English as a kind of practice at school, some colleagues might label them *kemlinthi* [acting up so proudly]. This expression is not directly addressed to teachers who spoke English, but it was said to other teachers. And eventually teachers who spoke English would know that their colleagues have a negative opinion about them because they practised English. This may be part of our culture. We sometimes view someone who has skills beyond ours and uses the skills in everyday practices where not all people can acquire these skills as a person who was *kemlinthi*.

The tendency to criticise, or the fear of criticism, for those who spoke English did have a discouraging effect. A revealing comment from one of the teachers showed that he stopped using English so that he would not appear boastful.

> I myself admitted that I became lack of using English. Because if I insisted on using English, my colleagues would think I am "looking for a face." (Kalau saya bertahan nanti saya dikira nggolek rai [Indonesian mixed with Javanese utterances]).

Nggolek rai is a Javanese idiomatic expression that means expecting other people to compliment you. It has been translated literally in English above as "looking for a face" to capture the idiomatic nuance. The good opinion of his colleagues mattered to this teacher. He did not want his colleagues to label him *nggolek rai*, someone who sought compliments from those in charge.

Conclusion

We have identified two main reasons[1] why the English as a medium of instruction and communication policy was withdrawn. These reasons operate at different levels. The teachers could not implement it for all the reasons we identify in the description of the study above. They did not speak English, the professional development courses were totally inadequate, and they did not believe in the policy the way those who initiated and designed the policy did. However, these problems were at the phenomonal level and are all open to remediation. What is of interest to us is at the deeper level and led to the argument developed in this paper.

Given the commitment of Indonesia (its government and middle-class) to the country's global economic strategy and the importance of English language in this strategy, why was a policy designed to develop English language users withdrawn. The fact that Indonesia is not alone in withdrwing or modifying these suggested that a sociological explanation was required. The explanation could not be found in the empirical material, although the study's findings did enable us to *identify* the problem at a phenomonal level and also enabled us to *illustrate* how the problem was experienced in the teachers' practice.

The sociological concept of *imaginary significations* provided the tool with which to understand the tension between a language's two roles in the ways a society sees itself (its self-representation or *imaginary*) and in the way it shares that collective consciousness, that is, the use of signifers). In Indonesia the balance between two main imaginary significations; those deep self-representations of *who we are*, the collective identity on the one hand and the idea of *who we will be* was out of alignment. The government saw the role of the English language in terms of its economic ambitions. Indonesia was to enter the global economy, specifically the global knowledge economy, and the education system

was to provide the human resources to enable this. The teachers, however, understood the education system that they were committed to, as the means to reproduce children into Indonesia, into the nation. For them, the language *is* the nation. Therefore, we argue that the policy's withdrawal was the result of the tension between these two opposing *imaginary significations* about what a national language means for the people who use it in education.

Note

1. We thank one of the reviewers of this paper for reminding us that there are other possible reasons for the withdrawal of the school EMI policy. These include the policy's role in the creation of elite state schools, abandoned as a result of parental complaints that it was discriminatory and redirected resources away from the poorer sectors. Our focus on the implementation difficulties experienced by the teachers should not be taken as excluding these other reasons.

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