
HOW READY 'INDONESIAN ENGLISH' IS TO LAUNCH: AN EMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study investigating the strength of the proposition of Indonesian English (Indolish) as a potentially emerging English variety from the outer/expanding circle from an emic perspective. This proposed variety does not yet exist even as a de facto English variety spoken in Indonesia or elsewhere. Nonetheless, the growing spread of English used by Indonesians has frequently prompted the idea of promoting the establishment of Indolish as a new English variety in the World Englishes areas for Indonesians. To clarify this early signal, an exploratory study was conducted to investigate the perspective of Indonesian postgraduate students who pursued their higher degrees in some Australian universities and whose overseas learning and language contact experience should bring them into a direct contact with a wide range of English varieties and thereby allowing them to better reflect on the significance of creating a special type of English for Indonesians. Seven participants responded to the three open-questioned survey questionnaire sent to two mailing list groups of Indonesian Postgraduate students. Two participants prefer to have Indolish while five others disagree with the idea. Majority of the participants show a strong nationalistic identity indicating a stagnant foundation process in Schneider's Dynamic Model in Indonesian context. Nevertheless, the participants demonstrate a strong dependence on English NS norms which confirm Kachru's proposition and indicate their rejection of Norton's notion of ownership of English language. In conclusion, these participants view that Indonesian English does not seem ready to launch yet.

Keywords: *dynamic model; Indonesian English; Indonesian identity; world Englishes*

1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that, until today, English has become the world's lingua franca. Since its first and second diasporas (Jenkins, 2009b: 5-9), English has been adopted by non-native speakers (NNS) of English as a means of communication. However, for some English NNSs, the use of English has commonly been dis-preferred at first, as in the case of former colonies of English-speaking countries. As indicated in many studies (Jenkins, 2009b; Kachru, 1985, 2005; Kachru & Smith, 2008; Schneider, 2011), the dispersion English language was caused by the migration of the Native Speakers (NS) of English to areas where English

was not a spoken language. The early migrations eventually gave birth to American, Australian, and New Zealand varieties of English. The second dispersal was imposed by the British Empire's colonialism. Consequently, many varieties of English pidgin and creoles have emerged and evolved into new kinds of English varieties.

In relation to the historical facts of English language, "the three circle models of world Englishes" representing the three groups of English-speaking countries in the world was formulated (Kachru, 1985, 1988). This model divides English speaking countries based on their English nativity and originality. Firstly, countries (UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) from which English originates and is spoken as a first or the national language are included in the inner circle. Secondly, countries that are mostly former colonies of the inner circle countries (such as Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Fiji,) and adopt English as an official language are grouped into the outer circle. Other countries which begin to adopt English or whose English-speaking communities are significantly growing in number are then considered to be included in the expanding circle. Apart from the inner and the outer circles, countries from the expanding circles seem to have more room for considering the adoption of English into their national language policy. These countries (e.g. China, Egypt, Korea, etc) have no historical ties to English colonizers and already have installed their own native language in their national policy. Accordingly, their motives for accepting English can be different compared to the outer circle's group.

For the countries of the expanding circle, acknowledging English language as an important language to be mastered for international communication has become a general trend of post-World War II or after the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. Global societies around the world began to acknowledge languages of socio-politically powerful countries as the official international language to be used in the UN forum, in which English as the language of the World War II's winner is included. From that moment, other collateral aspects to build effective international communication for global development through English language become logical consequences. The countries of the expanding circles begin the process of technological and civilizational transfer by means of English language. Consequently, language industry has been revived and become more institutionalized in those nations, such as Indonesia. Avidity to the western advanced civilization as well as its dominant language becomes apparent where many avid Indonesian speakers of EFL gradually shift their perspective on English from being a foreign language into a second language of their own. At times, these devoted EFL speakers begin to sporadically promote the new concept of Indonesian English in some academic or nonacademic forums. Then, a basic question pops up: is Indonesian English really ready to launch?

2. Literature Review

As a multilingual country, the awareness of using language as a political means to unite people of the country was realized long before the country's independence. Indonesian language, a modified version of Malay, had been adopted as the Indonesian youth's language as declared in the 1928 Youth's Oath in Batavia (now Jakarta) (Sneddon, 2003: 101). Since then, Indonesian language has prominently become the linguistic means for unifying the country. After the independence, Indonesian language was adopted as the nation's only official language. Very soon afterwards, the regional languages and local dialects were admitted as the national linguistic heritage which contributed to the development of the national language. Other internationally recognized (especially the ones

officially used in the UN forum) languages are also admittedly important to be mastered as foreign languages. This includes English (for more detail historical discussion of Indonesian language ((Sneddon, 2003).

Since Indonesia has never been colonized by English speaking countries, the country did not have English language attached earlier in the national language policy. Considering the history of English as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is plausible to say that Indonesian English does not yet exist since English has never been a lingua franca in the nation. Consequently, such historical account also explains why there has never been any published study on Indonesian English in comparison with the existing Asian Englishes such as Malaysian (Pereira et al., 2013; Hasyim, 2020) and Singaporean (Ziegeler, 1995; Cavallaro et al., 2020) Englishes. Indonesia's language policy defines English as a foreign language thereby placing Indonesians in the group of EFL speakers (Kachru, 1992). Like in any EFL situation, the quality of English language mastery is oriented toward the standard norms of English NS (the inner circle) with minimal tolerance for deviations and lower appreciation toward the acts of code switching (Jenkins, 2009a: 42). Consequently, pedagogical implication of this policy is significant in that English language teaching is, in practice, directed to the mastery of English language standard norms for the inner circle environment. In other words, Indonesians are expected to speak/write the correct and proper English in accordance with the standard English rules.

From the discursive perspective, English has also been considered as an invading language or a linguistic imperialist (Philipson, 1992). It may have not invaded Indonesian under Schneider's (2003) hard definition of colonial and socio-historical contact but its invasion to Indonesia is executed through a softer form of discursive and civilizational contact processes. Accordingly, the fast-growing civilization of the inner circle group of English-speaking countries has given a significant linguistic threat to Indonesians and their language as well. Despite local resistance to English influence on Indonesian, i.e. the national language, many English words have been borrowed and assimilated in Indonesian language in order to keep up with the global development. International communication, bilateral coordination, and multilateral networking must all be conducted in an international language in which English has become mostly predominant. Thus, such practical, economic, and political pressures in using English language as the linguistic instrument to learn and benefit from English-speaking countries' advanced civilization cannot be resisted.

From this perspective, Schneider's Dynamic Model of the Evolution of New Englishes (2003) which was meant to explain the development of English varieties in the former colonies of English countries may be applicable partially to explain the EFL situation in Indonesian context. In this regard, a contest of identity reconstruction between our and others' languages seems to be also true in its earlier 'foundation' process (p.244-255) in Indonesia. English speakers may have not literally invaded Indonesia but their language has definitely done so for quite many years through various discursive practices. Dependency upon imported tools, technological transfer, and exposure to global information through digital media may have forced Indonesians to accommodate such sovereign foreign language by allocating more room for English language in their national language policy. However, the identity differentiation between 'us/self' (Indonesian) and 'them/other' (English speakers) (Pennycook, 1998) is likely to be reversely applied by Indonesians as they seem to strictly maintain their Indonesian identity through their language and are resistant to the sense of

English 'ownership' (Norton, 1997; Higgins, 2003). Consequently, English appears to have never been internalized by any Indonesian speaker of English, even by those who have been extensively exposed to English norms and environment. This initial process in Schneider's model seems to have never progressed to the next level for Indonesian speakers of English.

In order to search for the appropriate model of the evolution of new Englishes in such countries of the expanding circle as Indonesia, a new method of inquiry should be considered. The etic approach dedicated for so long in previous studies of World Englishes may have to be balanced with an emic approach. In order to assess the possibility of Indonesian speakers of English to form a community using their own variety of English language, which can be labeled Indonesian English, this paper reports a small-scaled study using an emic approach to investigate the Indonesians' internal preferences for the new variant of World Englishes. This study explores the extent to which Indonesian students who have been exposed to ESL environment prefer or disprefer the emergence of Indonesian English. These participants were particularly targeted for their strategic intercultural contact position with communities of the English inner and outer circle countries which allows them to adopt the potential process of owning and then nativizing English as a new variety of language for their Indonesian community (see Ha, 2009 for in-depth discussion on international students' identity and English language). If they do not deem the 'Indonesian English' as a plausible option, no other Indonesian may probably be more eligible to make similar proposition for such English variety in the near future despite their strongest form of avidity toward English language.

There are three goals of this very study. The first goal is to investigate Indonesian postgraduate students' opinion concerning their perspective on the emergence of Indonesian English as an alternative variety of English in Indonesia. Secondly, this research also attempts to identify and discover any distinct characteristics of the Indonesian English preferred by the students to exist in such prospective Indonesian English. At last, based on their preferences or dispreferences on Indonesian English variety, this study investigates the students' reasons for their preference or dispreference to Indolish and for choosing such Indolis characteristics by relating them to their identity as Indonesians.

3. Research Method

This qualitative research drew and analysed data from a written form questionnaire distributed in two email group of postgraduate students in Australia with methodological details as follows:

Instrument

To meet the research objectives, an open-ended survey questionnaire is employed. The questionnaire consists of participants' information and questions sections. In the information section, participants are asked about their age, sex, country of current residence, and length of stay in the country. The second section contains three open questions as follows:

1. In the past decades, many varieties of English have emerged in many Asian countries by not abandoning their national identity such as Singaporean English (Singlish), Malaysian

English, Indian English, etc. In your opinion, should we, as Indonesians, establish and develop our own “Indonesian English (Indolish)”? Please explain your reason.

2. If you think we should, what special characteristics do you think that should exist in the Indolish? Please provide examples!
3. Will such characteristics be sufficient as our identity markers as Indonesians or should we imitate standard English varieties (British, America, Australia)?

These open questions are particularly designed for the purpose of collecting qualitative information in the emic exploration of those English-speaking Indonesians with regard with their own preference or dispreference to the proposed English variety.

Participants

There were seven (7) Indonesian postgraduate students (5 females and 2 males) responded the request and sent back their completed forms. Five participants were from Java, one from Sumatra, and another from Sulawesi. These different ethnic backgrounds give a little advantage to the discussion on the language choice and identity. These participants were coded and identified by number in order to protect their identity.

Procedure

An email containing a form of written questionnaire was sent to two mailing lists of Indonesian students studying in Australia. Participants were invited to voluntarily take part in this study by automatically filling in the participants’ information section and answering three questions directly as they were replying the email and sending it back to the researcher’s email address. After the completed forms were received, the participants’ answers were grouped based on their agreement and disagreement to support the emergence of Indolish. Their individual answers were respectively analyzed by applying Schneider’s ‘dynamic model’ (2003), Norton’s ‘ownership’ (1997), and relating them with their national identity. Their answers were also discussed in relation to the general policy of English language in Indonesian as well as to their ethnicity whenever applicable.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

On one hand, there were only two participants that who were in favour of Indolish. One of them provided a firm approval for the establishment of Indolish while the other expressed a possibility to have Indolish on a condition that it is meant to showcase Indonesian characteristics. The latter respondent seems to even undermine his own preference by suggesting that even his Singaporean and Malaysian friends tried to disguise their English variety. On the other hand, five other participants produce clear negative answers that they did not deem necessary for Indonesians to have Indolish. These responses can be seen as follows:

Preference for Indolish

There are two participants who are in favour of the creation of Indolish. Their answers are as follows:

Student 1 (female)

"Menurut saya, ya. Hal ini karena penggunaan bahasa Inggris sudah tidak bisa terelakkan dalam dunia global. Dan karena bahasa Inggris sudah menjadi bahasa internasional maka bahasa Inggris semestinya nationless. Artinya, setiap pengguna bahasa Inggris berhak untuk mengembangkannya sesuai dengan kebutuhan mereka. Terlebih, sekarang ini jumlah native speakers of English jauh lebih sedikit dari pada jumlah non-native speakers of English yang actively use English. Untuk konteks Indonesia, saya pikir Indolish perlu dikembangkan. Disatu sisi ini akan meningkatkan kepercayaan diri pengguna bahasa Inggris di Indonesia untuk secara aktif menggunakan bahasa Inggrisnya (diakui atau tidak kebanyakan orang Indonesia hesitate untuk menggunakan bahasa Inggrisnya secara aktif meskipun jika di tes TOEFL atau tes tulis jenis yang lain, mereka memiliki kemampuan yang cukup baik). Selain itu, jika Indolish dikembangkan, maka akan ada lebih banyak variant bahasa Inggris yang tentu akan menambah khasanah linguistik dunia."

(I think yes. It is because English use has been inevitable in the global world and because English has been an international language, English should be 'nationless'. That means every English user has the right to develop it based on their needs. Furthermore, the number of English native speakers is now far less than the non-native speakers who actively use English. In Indonesian context, I think Indolish needs developing. On one hand, it will develop the English users' confidence in Indonesia to actively use the language. Admitted or not, most Indonesians hesitate to actively use English even when they have TOEFL or other written tests to come. Besides, if Indolish is developed, there will be more English varieties that of course adds to the world's linguistic heritage.)

Student 2 (male)

"Bisa perlu, jika ingin menunjukkan ciri khas Indonesia. Namun kalau saya perhatikan di Australia, rekan-rekan saya yang datang dari Malaysia dan Singapore malahan berusaha untuk menyamarkan english versi mereka."

(It can be necessary, if the purpose is to show Indonesia's characteristics. However, as I see in Australia, my friends who are from Malaysia or Singapore even try to hide their English version.)

These two students (one male and female) agree to the emergence of Indolish. Their reasons are a little bit different. Student 1 (female) seems to refer to English as International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as the ground for her pedagogic advantage of the possible emergence of Indolish. She also indicates the Indolish's benefit to psychological state of Indolish speakers' pedagogic progress. Her orientation to formal English test such as TOEFL confirms her standing point in the side of English ownership. Her concluding remark also shows that she has adequate knowledge and concern over linguistic studies and the world Englishes. These arguments appear to be similar in tone as the ones

provided by the second (male) student who emphasizes on the Indonesian 'self' identity for the prospective Indolish. However, he also informs a paradoxical state of identity experienced by his friends from the outer circle countries, i.e. Malaysia and Singapore (which was also discussed in Ho, 2006) which seems to have undermined his own preference for the Indolish.

Dispreference for Indolish

Five participants do not agree with the emergence of Indolish. The following is their answers:

Student 3 (female) (writing in English)

"I think Indonesia doesn't have to have Indolish as identity. Because the history of using English in Indonesia is different with the history of countries ever colonized by British such as India, Malaysia and Singapore. Besides there are more ways to show Indonesian identity instead of having Indolish such as many others Indonesian cultural practices in dress, behavior, religion. Even when an Indonesian becomes bilingual or multilingual, she/he still has Indonesian identity depends on her/his family and society. In other words, people in Indonesia just need to speak English just like English native speaker whether in Australian, British or American."

Student 4 (male)

"Tidak perlu, karena bahasa dasar kita bahasa Indonesia...tidak seperti Amerika dan Australia asal usulnya-keturunan Inggris."

(Not necessary, because our base language is Indonesian...unlike Americans and Australians whose origin is English descent.)

Student 5 (female) (writing in English)

"Unnecessary. English is English, Indonesian is Indonesian. It is annoying to interact with people whose English is not their native language, because the way they speak requires more time and energy to be understood."

Student 6 (female)

"Menurut saya belum perlu. Tidak semata-mata karena kita bukan jajahan Inggris, melainkan karena kita sudah punya bahasa sendiri."

(In my opinion, not necessary. Not only because we are not a former colony of English, but because we already have our own language.)

Student 7 (female)

"Ternyata saya cukup menjawab pertanyaan pertama karena jawaban saya adalah: TIDAK PERLU. Alasannya, karena menurut saya kalau diadakan ragam Indolish justru akan mengancam keberadaan bahasa Indonesia. Saat ini saja bahasa Indonesia itu menurut saya sudah sangat rentan untuk punah/terganggu. Misalnya, anak muda sudah tidak mau"

memakai bahasa Indonesia yang baik dan benar. Penggunaan bahasa Indonesia sangat mudah dipengaruhi oleh trend sesaat. Saya khawatir kalau kita membuat ragam Indolish, nanti Bahasa Indonesia justru akan terancam. Di samping itu, menurut saya generasi sekarang ini sudah bagus2 bahasa Inggrisnya, jadi saya tidak khawatir bahwa kita akan ketinggalan dari bangsa lain dengan alasan penguasaan bahasa. Kalau kita ketinggalan, itu adalah karena alasan yang lain, yaitu aspek mental/psikologis bangsa kita (yang tidak relevan utk dibahas di sini)."

(Apparently, I sufficiently answer the first question because my answer is: NO NEED. The reason is that, because I think if Indolish variety is made up, it will actually threaten the existence of Indonesian language. Even at this time, Indonesian, I think, has already susceptible to extinction/disturbance. For example, young people have already reluctant to use Indonesian language correctly and properly. The use of Indonesian language is really easy to be influenced by temporary trends. I am worried if we make Indolish variety, Indonesian language will be threatened. Besides, I think, the current generation has got good English language skills, so I am not worried if we are behind other nations in terms of language mastery. If we are behind, that is due to other excuses, i.e. our people's mental/psychological aspects (which are irrelevant to be discussed here.)

These five participants have almost similar ground of argumentation. Their reasons are characterized by the affirmation of their strong sense of 'being Indonesian'. All of them clearly differentiate between Indonesian and English language by differentiating the origin and history of the two languages. This group of participants also indicates their preference to follow the English NS's norms. Student 5 even presents a critical assessment of Non-Native Speakers' fossilized state of English language competence, and presumably L1 interference, to their English language performance, which prevent listeners from comprehending them easily and effortlessly. Such disobedience to English NS norms is considered to draw more of their conversational resources, such as moods, attention, and time. Additionally, student 7 argues further that, even without the emergence of Indolish, the wide spread of English will endanger the Indonesian language that is supposedly used by Indonesian youths. She also illustrates that the danger that the official language has already faced will get worse if Indolish is supported to be established.

4.2 Discussion

The questionnaire result has clearly indicated that majority of Indonesian participants in this study did not support the emergence of Indolish as a potential variety of English for Indonesians. This result was actually surprising because the anticipated assumption that motivated this research was contrary to this result. As the ones who have been exposed to the experience of living in English speaking countries, the participants' sense of ownership of English language was expected to get more intense. They were assumed to be avid speakers of English language and were predicted to strongly support the establishment of Indolis as an effective instrument to relate Indonesians more quickly and more equally to people from other advanced nations in the world. It was preliminarily assumed that they would be more

open and more receptive to English language and find a way to assimilate their Indonesian identity in the new form English which can also suit their tongue.

However, the result has confirmed the earlier notion that the foundation process of Schneider Dynamic Model (2003) may be only partially true in the case of English for Indonesians. Like any other less-dominant languages in the world, code switching to and borrowing from English have contributed to the development of Indonesian language. The country's language policy to accommodate English as an important foreign language to be acquired is relevant with the participants' answers and yet it does not seem to be so much influential in compromising their national identity as reflected in their choice of code. In other words, despite long exposure to English language and culture, these Indonesian postgraduate students are still holding tight to their language and consider English still as the language of others. Unlike speakers from the outer circles who seem to undergo an identity crisis through their language (Ho, 2006) which was also affirmed by student 2 of this study, identity affirmation may apparently characterize the English speakers from the expanding circles, at least in case of Indonesian speakers of English. Instead of undertaking identity crisis, Indonesian speakers seem to have a clear distinction between 'themselves' and 'others' which is reflected from their choice of code. They respect English as the language of others which must be treated and acquired as 'the other's language' as much as their own Indonesian language which must be highly preserved and prevented from extinction because of the assimilated existence in the new variety of Indolish. In this case, Norton's (1997) view of English ownership by speakers other than English NS does not seem to manifest in Indonesian context.

In terms of English norm orientation, this study confirms Kachru's (1992) notion of 'norm dependence'. Almost all participants orient their English language acquisitional process toward English NS norm. Their clear nationalistic identity appears to drive their fair treatment of English language based on its NS. As much as they do not appear to be happy when their Indonesian language extinct because of other languages' domination, they respect English language by adhering to the NS norm. They all argue that good English speakers are the ones who can approach English NS's way of speaking. Jenkin (2009a) has pointed out that this tendency is clearly demonstrated by EFL group from the expanding circle countries. They consider deviations and shortcomings in following the standard English language rules to be unacceptable and unbearable. Student 5 has given a frank assessment on this issue. Therefore, less debate on justifying and accepting innovative wording/coinage in English can be expected from this group of English speakers.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the study has elicited the insiders' perspective on the future emergence of Indonesian English. They mostly disprefer the establishment of Indolish therefore being unwilling to go into the detailed description of Indolish characteristics. Such dispreference was realized because the participants appear to have a strong stance of self-identity. The role of Indonesian as the national language unifying all different peoples in Indonesia seems to have rooted so deep that converging Indonesia with the most powerful language of the world is seen to pose a threat to Indonesian language and identity instead of offering potential advantages. This study clearly shows that most participants do not believe that Indolish is ready to launch.

Despite a strong conclusive result that the new variety is unlikely to emerge in Indonesia according to the participants, the result of this study may not be strong enough to be used for a generalization in a wider context. Further studies with a larger number of participants representing the Indonesian speakers of English may be needed to validate the finding from this study for a stronger and wider generalisation. However, since these participants are expected to become influential figures in the Indonesian future development, their current standing of seeing English language may also affect their decision later when sitting in the executive governmental positions.

Accordingly, some potential implications may be expected from this study. Firstly, English language teaching in Indonesia may still be relevantly heading toward its current course, i.e. aiming at achieving the standard norms of the inner circle English. Therefore, there can be not much change in English language curriculum and teaching goals in Indonesian schools, although drastic change in classroom approach may be needed to warrant effective acquisitional outcomes instead of linguistic knowledge orientation. Lastly, in the national language policy, the status-quo discourse remains stable in that Indonesian language will remain to become an effective political tool to unify Indonesian peoples and a strong identity marker for Indonesians.

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