

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN A NATION-BUILDING PROCESS

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Abstract

Language function can be classified into four categories: cognitive (related to learners' intellectual development), instrumental (related to the use of language for material purposes), integrative (related to group membership) and cultural (related to cultural appreciation and understanding). In addition to that, language may be also used as a political and social element in the process of building, unification and maintaining of a nation and as an essential element of national identity. This article discusses cases in relation to the social-political related function of language. It shows interesting aspects of three different languages in serving this function. The first is Indonesian language, a neutral language, which was adopted in Indonesia primarily to unite the society in a newly built nation. The second is the Hebrew language, which has been restored to be an initial reference point for the Jewish people, and became an official language of Israel, and become a key element of national identity. The last one is the Polish language, which is an example of a language that has survived despite the absence of the Polish state and also became an essential element of connecting the Polish society.

Key words: political, social, sociolinguistic, Indonesian, Polish, Jewish, language function

Language can be used in many ways; one of them is in specific purpose area such as social or cultural communication, government decisions, political debate, media which is linked to the ability to express the relevant content (Sutton, 1991: 141). Learner or user of language is connected in time and space to cultural tradition which is considered as a significant process connected with the unique form of access to other traditions. This condition affects education, take for example: history which is in line with time, geography which is closely related to place.

When we relate language and colonialism, the strength of colonial empires were dependent on effective communication between the colonizers and the colonized. For example in Latin America, it can be seen very clearly that European powers adopted different strategies. No matter how much the language policy was imposed on the conquered population, it is difficult to deny the claims of the two. Firstly, after the conquest of the territory language became the language of the colonizer power. Secondly, the language of colonized was degraded - both physically and mentally - to the role of the slave

language, even primitive language. In the period before the conquest (of course with the exception of the New World) missionaries were agents of language. Introducing the teaching of reading and writing, at the same time European languages were taught. It became a symbolic act. It was the transition from a traditional to a modern society. Language has started to be treated as a powerful political instrument (Gawrycki, Szeptycki, 2011: 139–142).

Every cultural group has its own semiotic systems, experiences or values. Learning different artistic traditions or religions allows people to understand what and how they are. It involves gaining knowledge, but also appreciation of otherness- the cultural conceptualizations- which are foundations influencing other groups' collective encounter with reality, whether it is other times, belief or values. Ideally, this has effect of re-imagination assumptions about what is "normal" and appropriate to enriching perspective that diversity makes intercultural awareness (Lo Bianco, 2010).

This paper aims to show that language may be also used as a political and social meaning as the process of building, unification and maintaining the nation as a significant and essential element of national identity. Three examples of languages were used: Indonesian, Hebrew and Polish to show how different role language can play and how strong they are related to concept of national identity. Indonesia is an example of a state that has adopted neutral language in order to maintain independence and to build Indonesian identity, Israel is an example of a country that uses Hebrew – recreated language in order to strengthen identity, and finally Poland is an example of a nation that even without the statehood can sustain language as a part of the identity.

The importance and relation between language and national identity

National identity is an instrument in a political sense, but it is also regarded as an instrument of domestic policy which allows building and maintaining a consolidated society. It involves loyalty towards the nation or state. Every government needs the support of the public opinion, but to generate this sense of loyalty is not without problems, especially in multi-ethnic societies, precisely because of the threat of losing the social stability (Ortmann, 2009: 26).

For the states that gained independence after World War II, the process of selecting the national language was very important. Large number of language users, including those in mass media supports the construction and combination of geographical distribution of imagined communities (Anderson, 1991). Also, it supports nation building process (Simpson, 2007b: 1; Simpson, 2007a). In an attempt to build and maintain a national identity, language is considered to be the primary determinant of success besides the knowledge. In fact, the use of a common language throughout the territory unites its inhabitants (Simpson, 2007b: 2).

As noted by Steve Fenton, ethnic groups are not just groups of people who share a culture and a common ancestor. The ideas of origin and culture are rather stimulated and used as a reference in order to strengthen a sense of community, a sense of a "groupness" and a common destiny (Fenton, 2007: 20). Assuming that the groups are, in some sense, socially constructed, it is important to indicate the possible answers to a question of who creates the design? Steve Fenton suggests three possible answers: 1) the idea of the group is not constructed by "us", but it is constructed "for us by others". It reflects the reality of colonial period, in which the colonial power established the names for

the “indigenous people”, affecting their form. In the postcolonial world it is easy to find examples of groups whose names and shape are a direct consequence of colonial history; 2) the identity of the group may be a result of the group members work, of the efforts of elites within them and the leaders of the party; 3) groups can be formed by the action of the state and administrative regulations (Fenton, 2007: 20–21). It reveals a very strong role of the state and government in managing the language and culture and affecting the shape of social relations. Language as a core element of culture becomes a major factor contributing to the sense of national identity. Language changes and evolves from the bottom up, and frequently connected by the actions of the politics – mainly through language policy.

Language policy and language planning should not be treated as one topic. Harold S. Schiffman defines language policy (after Bugarski) as a “policy of a society in the area of linguistic communication—that is, a set of positions, principles and decisions reflecting that community’s relationships to its verbal repertoire and communicative potential” and language planning “understood as a set of concrete measures taken within language policy to act on linguistic communication in a community, typically by directing the development of its languages” (Schiffman, 1996: 3).

Linguistic culture is defined as a set of behaviors, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief system, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religion-historical circumstances related to a language. The basic notion postulated by Schiffman is that language policy is grounded in linguistic culture (Schiffman, 1996: 5).

Mohammad Hasan Amara and Abd Al-Rahman Mar’i note that there is a close connection between language, identity and

policy. As it was mentioned, language is a means of communication and also a system of signs and symbols. Language should be treated and perceived broadly as an open system which influences and is influenced by nonlinguistic factors. Language is perceived as an important element of socialization, individual and collective, provides knowledge about feeling, aspirations. Moreover it defines us, as we are and as we wish to be seen (Amara, Mar’i, 2002: 2).

It seems clear that there is a distinction among language practices, language ideology and language policy. The use of the linguistic repertoire by community is defined as a language practices. Language ideology is understood as an expression of the perceptions concerning language and its use. Language policy is government instrument, the means by which polity attempt to influence or to shape the language itself. Language policy could be anchored in the official documents such as constitution, language law, and government document or in an administrative regulation (Amara, Mar’i, 2002: 2).

Indonesia – language and national unity

Every country in Southeast Asia since its independence has been coping with ethnic tension, social stability and national unity issues. These three elements have been blended and affecting each other. It is important for a country which just regained its independence to begin the process of building national unity which may determine the development of a nation.

In Indonesia, before the independence, it was estimated that there were over three hundred traditional and ethnic groups. Afterwards there was political tension, dispute among local ethnic groups creating chaos which became a threat to the national unity (Adhuri, 2007:

11). The territorial integrity and national unity are based on postcolonial nationalist project implementation with the theme of 'Unity in Diversity'.

Indonesia had been more than three hundred years under the domination of the Dutch; therefore many ethnic, cultural or political issues may refer to this history. Though Indonesia was colonized by the Netherlands as a whole, there was no statehood until the late forties of the twentieth century (Vickers, 2005: 2–3). However, under the rule of the Dutch, Indonesians began to perceive themselves as a nation. Japanese attacked Indonesia in 1942 served as the impetus for the national movements that began to expand and strengthen, leading to the Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949) completed by the declaration of independence (Vickers, 2005: 2–3).

Innovative ideas began to appear mostly in Java and Sumatra. Basically, two types of ideas arose concerning with the organization and the concept of identity. The first idea is focused on the issues of leadership, while the other one is based on social, religious, political and economic concerns. The leaders can be divided into two groups: elite Javanese aristocratic members of the upper class - *priyayi*, and a group of *santri*- derived from religious and reformist Muslim communities (Laskowska, 2011: 49).

In 1928, second Youth Congress was organized by the student communities. The concept of Indonesian identity was not yet present, but it appeared in a stronger form as a result of the congress. The delegates took the oath, but more importantly they came from different ethnic, religious, cultural and affirmed the existence of one country. The idea of one language and one nation reflected a process of forming self-awareness.

However, the struggle for giving a social meaning to "Indonesia" as an archipelago country for the massive population to identify themselves as Indonesians turned out to be a very difficult process. Collective identification in Indonesia was a main challenge for Sukarno and Suharto - Indonesia's first and second president. Both were focused largely on the consolidation of this identification (Simpson, 2007b: 3).

The project to build "the Indonesian nation and state" was established by the Indonesian language as a neutral language, to unite all ethno-linguistic groups in Indonesia, the adoption of *Pancasila* ideology as the basis for the social and political relations and the rejection of Islam as state religion.

The problem of determining national language in Indonesia appeared with the beginning of the formation of nationalist movements in the first decade of the twentieth century. This issue has been a challenge for all postcolonial state, the decision about the national language has its political, social and cultural consequences. There were several possibilities: international language and the language of the colonizer or the local language, which could become the national language (Paauw, 2009: 2). In the case of Indonesia, there was some choice of three languages: the Dutch as the language of the colonizer, the language of the largest and most influential ethnic group-Javanese and historical *lingua franca* of the region – Malay (Paauw, 2009: 2–3).

It was decided to discard all previous considered language and to accept the Indonesian language as the national language, language based upon the Malay language (see Nugroho, 1957). Dutch language was rejected since the adoption of a foreign language would be a symbolic gesture of maintaining a relationship. Javanese language was discarded due to the

fear that the sense of favoring the largest ethnic group in Indonesia can become an obstacle to the unification of the nation.

Indonesia is an archipelago country which consists of around 13,000 islands. Indonesian geography in some sense reflects the diversity of the nation, plurality of ethnic groups, cultures, and languages. The people of Indonesia, at present totally more than 240 million (2012), speak a large number of languages. It is estimated there are over 400 languages in Indonesia. In 1972 The National Language Institute, the institutional predecessor of the present National Center for Language Development in Jakarta indicated number of 418 languages. It was estimated there were 569 languages in Irian Jaya and National Language Institute listed 128 languages in this province (Nabanan, 1991: 116–117; see Errington, 1986).

Bahasa Indonesia was declared the “state language” in August 1945 in Indonesian Constitution. As the national language, it serves as the only official language in Indonesia. Indonesian language is based on Malay language; however it has its own originality what was essential for independent state and from the beginning it has been treated as an instrument of connecting all ethnic groups in Indonesia (see Sneddon, 2003). The National Center for Language Development of the Ministry of Education and Culture as the main institution for the development of language has been protecting Bahasa Indonesia from strong regionalisms and localisms (Nabanan, 1991: 118). From the national central point, it is important due to linguistic diversity (see Laitin 2001).

Indonesian languages may be divided into three classes: 1) Bahasa Indonesia, 2) local or regional languages (also called “vernaculars”), 3) foreign languages. The 1971 census showed the proportion of the number of speakers: 40.8% of Indonesian, 59% of vernaculars, and 0.2% of foreign

languages. The figure for the vernacular language showed the percentage of speakers who did not speak Bahasa Indonesia at all (Nabanan, 1991: 117).

Indonesian government believed that the adoption and development of a national language is an essential feature of nationhood. Former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman that “it is only right that as a developing nation we should want to have a language of our own ... If the national language is not introduced, our country will be devoid of a unified character and personality - as I could put it, a nation without a soul and without life.” Language is treated as a powerful instrument, individuals may express their thoughts, beliefs and personality, but what is more important groups may identify their collective consciousness (Hoy-Kee, 1971:73).

Israel– language and national construction

Hebrew language was spoken in ancient Israel, from the era of the Babylonian exile; however, it began to come out of general use, and became a dead language. Hebrew was used only in prayers during the ceremony and in religious texts. In everyday life, the Jews used other languages: originally Aramaic, later Yiddish (Ashkenazi, mainly in the Diasporas) and Ladino (the Sephardic language) or Arabic. At the end of the nineteenth century, due to the efforts of Eliezer ben Yehuda - reviver of the Hebrew language - modern version of the Hebrew language started to be created. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 Hebrew is official language of this state (Rabin, 1973; Sáenz-Badillos, 1993).

The history of the Hebrew language can be divided into several periods: 1) Hebrew, the spoken language, was used in the twelfth century BCE; 2) an ancient Hebrew (biblical) was defined as the literary language in which the Hebrew Bible was

written. It was the period from 1200 to 200 BCE (although as a written language, it remained to be used for more than two centuries; 3) Rabbinic Hebrew (Rabbinic) was dated since the fourth century BCE (or at least since 200 BCE) until the middle of the second century CE. This type of Hebrew probably was not directly derived from the Hebrew Bible, but rather from the previous dialects. It was the spoken language of Jews living in Palestine, along with Aramaic. In the first century, around 70 CE Rabbinic Hebrew became the language of literature; 4) the medieval Hebrew was dated approximately from 500 to 1880 as a primarily a liturgical language. It was also used to write poetry, scientific and philosophical works; 5) Modern Hebrew from 1881 onwards as the year in which Eliezer Ben Yehuda arrived in Palestine and began his great work. It was also the period of revival of the national culture and political thought among the Jews. The need for language restoration appeared primarily among the scattered Jewish masses around the globe. Strong ethnic accents in Europe in the nineteenth century were also influenced by the Semitic community who needed such a strong bond as language (Kutscher, 1982; also Hoffman 2004).

Hebrew language is used by more than 5 million people. It is roughly estimated from the Israeli Arabs and Israelis living in exile, the number of members of the Hebrew language may be around 8 million. Israeli supreme institution which is dedicated to the Hebrew language is the Hebrew Academy - continuation of Hebrew Language Council founded by Eliezer ben Yehuda to restore the Hebrew language to the general public. The academy was established in 1953 on the basis of the Israeli government decision. Hebrew is the main language of the Jewish population in Israel, but it is also the native language of a non-Jewish Israeli citizens, mostly native speakers of Arabic (Myhill 2004: 73).

Although Hebrew language never completely disappeared, it may be related with language re-creation. John Myhillin *Language in Jewish Society: towards a New Understanding* writes "it is necessary to state clearly at the outset: that the revival of Hebrew is, as far as we know, an event unique in human history. There has never before a case of what I am referring to as a 'revival', a natural language which was previously spoken by native speakers, then ceased to have native speakers, and then came again to have an entire community of speakers—in fact an entire nation of native speakers. This is simply an undeniable empirical fact. There have, of course, been languages which were seriously endangered but which appear to be making a comeback (such as Catalan) but this is quite a different matter, because they always retained a significant stock of native speakers" (Myhill 2004: 74).

Hebrew language may also survive as it was used as a written language and used as a means of communication. The role of Hebrew language may be understood as an expression of Judaic heritage, instrument ensuring survival of the Jewish people, both in Diasporas and in Israel. It was kept in mind that in order to be a nation, Jewish people needed to have their language, as their *lingua franca*. For revivalists, Hebrew language could be a uniting force among Jews around the world (Moragh 2000).

Gilead Morahg writes "if we accept the premise that there is a Jewishness that transcends all Judaism and binds them together, and if we try to identify the components that constitute this Jewishness, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hebrew is a crucial unifying element and that abandoning Hebrew education in America may very well mean abandoning one of the primary defenses against the fragmentation and dissolution of the Jewish people." In this sense, Hebrew is an

essential force unifying the Jewish people (Moragh 2000).

Zionist ideology has aimed to create a new identity. The central role of it was assigned to Hebrew language. There were some slogans such as “The Hebrew person speaks Hebrew” and “He will work the Hebrew ground” which reflected how devoted Israel was in spreading the Hebrew language among citizens, immigrants and Arabs as one (Amara, Mar’i 2002: 55).

“Fostering the teaching of the Hebrew language and culture in all the ranks of the society” was indicated by the Israel as a fifth goal. It showed that government treated the teaching of the Hebrew language as a national mission. All language developments were focused on turning Hebrew into the dominant language of the country (Amara, Mar’i 2002: 55). The most important goal of the state is to achieve a high linguistic competence in spoken and written Hebrew. It is assumed that Israel government aims to change Israel into a monolingual, not multilingual state, despite the fact Israeli society is diverse and some groups prefer and are interested in preserving their mother tongues (Amara, Mar’i 2002: 58–60).

Hebrew language is generally conceptualized as the Jewish language, and it continues to be used as a ritual language and as a symbol of Jewish identity in the Diasporas, creating and maintaining national identity (Myhill 2004: 58).

Poland – language and stateless nation

Polish language belongs to the West Slavonic group of Indo-European languages. Because of its structure, Polish language is classified as inflectional and synthetic language. As a separate language, Polish began to spread in tenth century, and played a crucial role during formation and development of the Polish state. The earliest preserved records of individual

words in the Polish language from the twelfth century. Until the fourteenth century, Polish language existed only in the regional and folk spoken varieties. Supra-regional variety of language developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as evidenced by the Renaissance literature written in Polish. Initially, development of the Polish language was influenced by the neighboring languages - German and Czech, as well as Latin. In later centuries Polish was marked by a significant influence of the French language. Number of Polish speakers can be estimated to more than 45 million people, of whom 38 million live in Poland. Polish language is used by groups of Poles and Polish origin people living abroad, to name a few, in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, Great Britain, France, and also in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Ukraine. Locally, the most common spoken dialects used are Kashubian, Silesian, and Mazovian (Grzywacz 2012: 9).

One of the biggest stories of the sustainability of the Polish language which is also prominent for Polish national identity was Partitions of Poland, resulting in the elimination of sovereign Poland for 123 years. In 1772 the First Partition of Poland took place, the second was signed in 1793 and third in 1795. Polish territories were divided into Russia Empire, Habsburg Austria and Kingdom of Prussia. Although the people are categorized into various blends such as the Germanization and Russification of Polish territory, it remained to keep Polish language and culture. Language becomes an essential element of national identity and strengthened it due to the lack of statehood. Polish language was the most important factor and the expression of national consciousness, Russification and Germanisation met with fierce resistance.

Germanisation and Russification are the process of assimilation German or Russian language and culture by individuals

and social groups which are mixed with other cultures. Both may occur as a result of a coercion administration or education and can be voluntary work but it does not involve any direct pressure. It is often understood as a process of denationalization, through inducement or coercion of Indigenous people to assimilate a specific area of the German or Russian language and culture, as well as the process of the language, culture and people spread through assimilation and adaptation of foreign words.

Germanisation had started long before the Partitions of the Polish state. It was dated to 1740 when Prussian king Frederick the Great decided to occupy area of Upper Silesia. Upon entering the Prussian troops to this area, there were a number of Polish people. In 1744 in Silesia, Prussia introduced a ban on Polish language used in the judiciary. Ten years later, it was forbidden to employ teachers in schools who did not master German language. In 1763 there was a general obligation not to use the Polish language in all primary schools; a year later, all the teachers who did not understand the German language were banned to teach in schools. In 1766 Frederick the Great issued an edict ordering all teachers to master German language or else they could lose their jobs. Germanisation did not stop after the Partition of the Poland, the Prussian authorities were aware of the widespread presence of the Polish culture and language in the conquered territories conducted the new restrictions and repressions against Polish people. From 1810 it was prohibited to use the Polish language during the masses celebrated in Protestant churches. In 1826 there was an order to use German language during confessions and sermons (Drabina, 2002).

In Pomerania, in 1834 the German language was introduced as the language for lecturing. In Poznań, Germanisation

process ended in 1887, after a complete prohibition of using Polish language - even in primary schools. During this time, the German language was introduced to the government and the judiciary. In 1900 Polish language was forbidden to use during religion classes which triggered a wave of strikes - including in Września in 1901 which became the most glaring manifestation of resistance to this educational policy.

Germanization process was slightly different under the Austrian annexation. In 1805 the Cracow Academy was Germanized, however it was Polanized already in 1809, and nine years later it awarded the autonomy re-named it as the Jagiellonian University. The situation began to change in the sixties of the nineteenth century. Germanisation process stopped and Polish language went back to schools and administration.

Russification process started later. Education was under the supervision of former University of Vilnius using Polish language as a language of instruction. In Warsaw, The Society of Friends of Learning and the king of Saxony Frederick Augustus preserve the integrity of the Polish language. Good conditions also existed in the early years of the Congress in Poland. The basic education and vocational training were expended and in 1816 the University of Warsaw was established (Frączykowski 2001; Korobowicz, Witkowski 2009).

The reinforcement effort of Russification coincided with the collapse of the November Uprising in 1831. The Society of Friends of Learning was resolved. A year later, Russian language became an official language and the University of Warsaw was closed. The crisis of the Crimean War improved the situation for a moment. The defeat of the January uprising sparked another wave of Russification. It was ordered in 1866 to learn and use Russian languages and in 1868 Russian became the language of administration and the

judiciary. A year later public schools were transformed into Russian schools. Authorities made some concessions in 1905 allowing Polish language to be present at the private schools (Frączykowski, 2001).

In nineteenth-century in Tsarist Russia language policy was based on Russian only. However, from this policy some variation occurred, especially in the partitioned Poland occupied by Russia. From the anecdotal evidence, like autobiographies of Polish speakers, like Maria Skłodowska-Curie told that teacher at school covertly taught in Polish, however, during the evaluations, the best students (those speaking Russian best) were parading before the school inspector. This is what Schiffman calls "Potemkin" policies. Potemkin village was a construction of false-front, with smiling and waving actors to Tsarina Catherine the Great (Schiffman, 1996: 6).

Polish language not only constitutes a part of Polish culture, but also endures the endangered Polish national identity and the lack of supports became part of struggle and opposition to such a situation. Polish language was treated as a basic instrument in the fight for national liberation.

Conclusions

Language in education can be divided into two major categories: medium of instruction and language taught as a subject. These functions of language can be classified into four categories: cognitive, instrumental, integrative and cultural. The first one is related to learners' intellectual development. The instrumental function refers to knowledge or how to use language for material purposes. The integrative function makes an individual become a member of the group using language as a symbol of identity. Finally, cultural function is related to the possibility in gaining a deep understanding and appreciation of the

culture to which language it belongs (Nababan, 1991: 121). At this point, cultural function seems to be the most important part. Learning a language is a process where all language skills are acquired which link to many areas, including country's economy, history, political system, and social issues.

For these reasons, language can be regarded as an essential part of culture and media. From the point of view of language, state-centric can perform its functions, but the key point is to unite and unify the society and to retain their sense of identity.

This work aimed to show and to determine what aspects are based on three different languages: Indonesian language as a neutral language, which was adopted in Indonesia primarily to unite the society in newly nation; the Hebrew language, which has been restored to be an initial reference point for the Jewish people, and became an official language of Israel, and become a key element of national identity; and at last the Polish language, which is an example of a language that has survived despite the absence of the Polish state and also became an essential element of connecting the Polish society.

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