
Research Article

The Long Journey of a Language: From Malay to Bahasa Indonesia

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Abstract

The historical narrative of Bahasa Indonesia in the books used in Indonesian universities and academic articles usually highlights three things only: the Malay as *lingua franca* in Nusantara archipelago, the establishment of Balai Pustaka, and the Youth Pledge of 1928. Some important milestones may have been overlooked. This article offers a revised narrative of the history of Bahasa Indonesia through its journey from a *lingua franca* in the Indonesian archipelago in the past to the formation of the modern Indonesian state, from Malay to Bahasa Indonesia. Literature review was used in this article by involving various relevant data sources, both printed and digital, regarding the history of Bahasa Indonesia. Literature review produces several findings from the historical phase of Bahasa Indonesia. In addition, this literature review also reveals that Bahasa Indonesia finally became the national language of Indonesia after winning the competition with other languages in the Dutch East Indies. In the process, this involved the construction of identity and the struggle for power in the name of Indonesian nationalism.



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Introduction

Bahasa Indonesia is the official language of the Republic of Indonesia. This language was unanimously accepted as the unifying language of the Indonesian nation in 1928, and it was subsequently established as the official language of the country through the constitution when the Indonesian state was founded on August 18, 1945. Related to this, the history of the development of Bahasa Indonesia has always presented a historical narrative of Malay which was once a *lingua franca* (language of communication) in the Indonesian archipelago, the Youth Pledge event, the establishment as the official language of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, to changes in spelling and absorption from foreign languages as found in several research articles that discuss the history of the Bahasa Indonesia (Marsudi, 2008; Pusposari, 2017; Repelita, 2018; Sudaryanto, 2018, 2019). This makes the historical narratives of Bahasa Indonesia somewhat repetitive, despite the existence of several writings that could provide novelty in discussions on the history of Bahasa Indonesia. This is not to mention the existence of several myths regarding the choice of Malay as the unifying language of the Indonesian nation, which was later given a new name Bahasa Indonesia.

The existing literature on the history of Bahasa Indonesia also appears to have failed to explain the crucial period between the cultural policies of the Dutch colonial government, through the establishment of modern schools and the Balai Pustaka publishing house, and the issues surrounding the Youth Pledge. These periods were crucial for the transition from Malay to Bahasa Indonesia. In short, there seems to be a need for a more detailed discussion within the framework of Indonesian national language history.

In relation to that, the writing of Beng Soon Lim and Gloria R. Poedjosoedarmo (2016), which explains the development of Bahasa Indonesia into several phases from the early development of the Malay language to developments in the post-war period, and Harimurti Kridalaksana's book are two writings that are worth referring to when discussing the history of Bahasa Indonesia. Sudaryanto's (2018) article, which divides the development phase of Bahasa Indonesia into three phases, has the potential to view the historical chronicle of Bahasa Indonesia in a different way. This is another writing worth considering in rewriting Indonesian national language history.

In general, this article describes several phases of the Malay language's journey to Bahasa Indonesia. It combines several aspects of the historical journey of Bahasa Indonesia from previous academics while also discussing some less frequently discussed issues. It is hoped that gaps or deficiencies in previous historical narratives can be filled or revised. In other words, filling these gaps and revising these deficiencies is the novelty offered by this article.

It is hoped that the new historical narrative brought by this article will contribute to meeting students' needs for more interesting and in-depth Indonesian language learning materials (Munzir, 2015; Suhartono et al., 2015). Due to its historical chronicle nature, this article can be categorized as a critical

historiography or socio-political study of language, and can therefore serve as a reference for studying the history of Bahasa Indonesia within the fields of history and social sciences. Therefore, it is not unusual that several articles related to language politics and socio-political issues are included in this article.

Method

This is a literature review article. The literature review was conducted using offline and online searches of books and articles relevant to the history of Bahasa Indonesia from its beginnings as a language used in the Malay world, its change of name to Indonesian with the development of Indonesian nationalism, to the confirmation of its status as the official language of the Republic of Indonesia. The review on reference source texts relevant to the history of Bahasa Indonesia was conducted by "*synthesizing findings and perspectives from a collection of studies*" as described by Hannah Snyder (2024, p. 551).

In general, this literature review article aims to provide an overview of the history and development of Bahasa Indonesia. It is hoped that it will provide new insights and fill existing gaps in the narrative of the history of Bahasa Indonesia. Thus, this article can serve as a reference for issues relevant to the history of Bahasa Indonesia and for future research related to the development of the language.

The research method and preparation of this literature study article refer to opinions from Bolderston (2008), Wee & Banister (2016), and Aaron (2008). The literature discussed and used as references for the historical chronology of Bahasa Indonesia in this article were selected based on its widespread use at the university level, such as a book entitled *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penulisan Karya Tulis Ilmiah* (Indonesian for Scientific Writing), and scientific articles obtained with the keyword "*fase sejarah bahasa Indonesia*" through Google Scholar. Meanwhile, three articles by Lim & Poedjosoedarmo, Adelaar, and Sneddon were obtained through searches related to Bahasa Indonesia and Malay.

Results

Based on literature searching, there is Marsudi (2008) who describes the chronicle of the Malay language becoming Bahasa Indonesia as follows: 1.) *lingua franca*, 2.) the choice of Malay in the Youth Pledge was made because of the flexibility or adaptability of Malay, 3.) the national language developed. Next, there is Dewi Pusposari (2017) referring to the general opinion of experts on the development of Malay to Bahasa Indonesia, namely: 1.) Old Malay, which was influenced by India, 2.) Classical Malay, which was influenced by Arabic and Islam, 3.) Modern Malay, which was influenced by the West.

Meanwhile, Tridays Repelita (2018) discusses the historical development of Bahasa Indonesia, starting with Malay's status as a *lingua franca* for centuries in the archipelago and then the birth of the nationalist movement that led to the Youth Pledge, which sought to choose a single unifying language. Awareness of the need for a unifying language subsequently led to the selection of the language as a tool

of unity. From this event, Bahasa Indonesia ultimately became the national language, and efforts are underway to develop it in response to changing times.

Another article that presents the history of Bahasa Indonesia is an article by Sudaryanto. Sudaryanto (2018) proposes three phases in the history of the development of Bahasa Indonesia, namely: 1.) Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying language marked by the Youth Pledge and the First Indonesian Language Congress in 1938, 2.) Bahasa Indonesia as the official language of the state, which began "*sejak tanggal 18 Agustus 1945 melalui penetapan Pasal 36 UUD 1945, hingga Seminar Politik Bahasa pada tahun 1999* (since August 18, 1945 through the enactment of Article 36 of the 1945 Constitution, until the Language Politics Seminar in 1999)," and 3.) Bahasa Indonesia as an international language began with "*Kongres Internasional IX Bahasa Indonesia di Jakarta, pada tanggal 28 Oktober – 1 November 2008* (the 9th International Congress of the Indonesian Language in Jakarta, on October 28 - November 1, 2008)." It can be seen that the discussion of the history of the development of Bahasa Indonesia by Sudaryanto was carried out without discussing anything about Malay language.

One book that discusses the history of Bahasa Indonesia is *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penulisan Karya Tulis Ilmiah* by Yakub Nasucha et al. In this book, Yakub Nasucha et al. (2018) divide the historical phases of Bahasa Indonesia into: 1.) Before independence, which briefly touches on Old Malay with the Palawa script, the status of *lingua franca*, Malay as a language of communication in the Dutch East Indies, and the Youth Pledge event, 2.) After independence, which is associated with the 1945 Constitution (UUD 45) with article 36 regarding the national language, the formation of institutions that manage language, and competition with English in the era of globalization.

Discussion

Some of those writings clearly do not provide an adequate explanation of the historical development of Bahasa Indonesia from Malay. Based on further research into various literature related to the history of the language, which was then synthesized, a chronicle of the history of Bahasa Indonesia can be compiled based on several phases. These phases, along with their explanations, are as follows:

Phase 1: Early Malay Language (+ IV Century AD): Old Malay Language

Phase one is the initial stage of the Malay language as part of Bahasa Indonesia chronicle. This discussion of the initial stages begins with the beginning of the Malay language, which occurred around the 4th century AD. Although there are differing opinions regarding the origins of the Malay language, Adelaar (2004, p. 24) shows that the strongest opinion is that the Malay language most likely began to develop from the west of Kalimantan Island and then spread and developed in the areas around the west of Kalimantan Island, the Malay Peninsula, and parts of Sumatra Island which are connected to the South China Sea. A little different, Sneddon (2003, p. 7) says that the Malay language originated in the eastern and southeastern coastal areas

of Sumatra, then spread to the Malay Peninsula and the western coastal areas of Kalimantan. It is clear from the opinions of several linguists that the Malay language indeed began to develop in the region now known as Indonesia.

Then, Indian influence occurred. The influence of Indian to the people living in those areas was not limited to Hinduism. This influence also influenced the Malay script, which shows the influence of the Pallava script (Sarkar, 1969) before the influence of the Arabs was slowly "*displacing the older religious beliefs of the Malays*" (Paterson, 1924, p. 255) and paving the way for the birth of Arabic style script.

The Malay language, the root of Bahasa Indonesia, has undergone varying degrees of change in several countries within the Indonesian archipelago, partly due to conditions during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Pre-colonial Malay was the primary language of the Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra. In this region, international trade was so intense in the past that Malay became the primary language of Southeast Asia.

This was further strengthened by the expansion of the Srivijaya empire's territory and trade interactions. Therefore, it can be said that Malay at that time became the *lingua franca* in the Indonesian archipelago and became one of the international trade languages commonly mastered even by European traders. Malay's important position as an international language in the Indonesian archipelago remained unshaken even after the fall of the Srivijaya empire (Lowenberg, 1985). Malay continued to be used in the Indonesian archipelago as an international trading language in Southeast Asian ports, not only by traders from the Indonesian archipelago but also by traders from Arabia, China, India, and Europe (Lim & Poedjosoedarmo, 2016).

Phase 2: The Influence of Islam and the Birth of the Malay Language (Classical Malay)

Islam began to spread to the Indonesian archipelago in the 13th century (Ibrahim, 2015, p. 94). Previously, Malay had been the language used officially in government and had its own writing system using the Palawa script since the 7th century as seen in the remains of the Sriwijaya kingdom (Dungcik, 2017, pp. 113–114). With the spread of Islam across the Indonesian archipelago, Malay speakers adopted the Arabic script used by the Arabs to write Malay. Through local genius, Malay speakers adopted and developed the Jawi script at least as early as the 14th century (Kratz, 2002, pp. 21–22). The increase in the number of Muslims and the widespread use of this script then pushed aside the use of the Palawa script because the Jawi script was "*lebih sesuai dan memudahkan proses pembelajaran terutama sekali untuk mempelajari agama Islam*" or more appropriate and made the learning process easier, especially for studying the Islamic religion (Ahmad et al., 2012, p. 82).

Phase 3: Separated from the Alam Melayu or Malay Realm (1824)

The next phase of Bahasa Indonesia development was a phase of movement away from or separation from

the Malay realm. The Malay realm is characterized by the Malay people, Malay customs, the Malay language, and the Islamic religion (cf. Alisjahbana, 1979, p. 4; Chee, 1992, pp. 6–7; Embong et al., 2016, p. 238) and the use of Jawi transcript (cf. Abdullah et al., 2020, p. 74; Ibrahim, 2015, p. 94; Kratz, 2002, p. 21). The separation of the Malay language, the precursor to Bahasa Indonesia, from the Malay world was caused by the influence of British, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese colonialism in the Nusantara region. The term Nusantara in this discussion refers to a region encompassing the Malay Peninsula (including southern Thailand), Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, the Philippine Islands, and the Indonesian archipelago, before this term in Bahasa Indonesia finally narrowed to refer only to the Indonesian archipelago.

The Treaty of London of 1824 is worth mentioning. The Treaty of London between Britain and the Netherlands divided the Malay realm. British colonialism encompassed the territory of the Malay Peninsula and the northern part of the island of Borneo, which is now part of three countries (Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam), while Dutch colonialism encompassed the territory that is now Indonesia. In addition to British and Dutch colonialism, Spanish colonialism took place in the islands that are now the Philippines, and Portuguese colonialism took place in the territory that is now East Timor. The Malay realm, or the region influenced by Malayism, ultimately split.

The fragmentation of the Malay realm can be linked to the fragmentation of the Malay language center. Malay, which had previously been a trade language connecting the kingdoms of the archipelago with trade in the Strait of Malacca, with a language center tied to the Johor-Riau Sultanate or the Old Johor-Riau Sultanate, then split. Following the Treaty of London, the Johor-Riau Sultanate split into two. The Johor Sultanate came under British influence, while the Riau-Lingga Sultanate came under Dutch influence. The Malay language that developed in the British-controlled region took a different direction from that developed in the Dutch-controlled region (Lim & Poedjosoedarmo, 2016).

Meanwhile in the East Timor region, Portuguese influence reduced the use of Malay after 1870 and gave way to the development of the Tetum-Dili language and Portuguese (Hajek, 2000). In the archipelago that is now the Philippines, Spanish colonialism transformed the northern region into a Hispanicized region beginning in the mid-17th century, leaving the southern region with traces of Malay. This, however, did not eliminate the use of Malay by the Philippine archipelago's inhabitants until the 19th century, according to Spanish academics such as de Zenuga (Curaming, 2011). The rapid pace of Hispanicization and the writings of Spanish academics who preferred to place the indigenous Filipinos in a culturally disconnected position with the Malays, who were spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago before the arrival of the Spanish. Catholicism was a massive endeavor from the 16th century onward, and towards the end of the 19th century, the Spanish colonial government established Spanish-language schools (Kemmerer, 1908). Gone are the characteristics of the Malayness of the Filipino population. However, the founder of the Philippines, José

Rizal, always referred to his people as Malays. On the other hand, efforts to rewrite history regarding the Filipino population as part of the Malay nation are now starting to become widespread (Curaming, 2011; DeStephano, 2011; Gomez, 2020).

It should be noted that the Malay cultural network in the Indonesian archipelago was characterized by the use of the Malay language and the Jawi script. The use of the Jawi script had led to the Malay-speaking community in some parts of the Indonesian archipelago being referred to by other nations as the Jawi people. The Arabs also referred to the native inhabitants of the Indonesian archipelago who used the Malay language and Jawi script as the Jawi people, regardless of their island of origin (Masyhur, 2018; Tirtosudarmo, 2005). The indigenous people of the Indonesian archipelago within the Dutch East Indies were sometimes also referred to as *bangsa Islam* because of their religion (Laffan, 2003). So, loosely and fluidly, Malay language users in the Dutch East Indies had an identity as a Jawi nation because they used the Jawi script and an Islamic nation. After all, they were generally Muslim or were bound by an Islamic identity.

All that changed after the Dutch adopted the Rumi script in Malay, causing the use of Jawi to decline drastically. Previously, Jawi script was used in all forms of Malay-language publications without necessarily being associated with Islam. However, the Dutch's intensified cultural policy of replacing Jawi with Rumi script not only removed Jawi from general Malay-language publications, but also, as Mulaika Hijjas points out, (2021) finally "*when Malay in Rumi occupies all secular cultural space—dime novels, comic books, newspapers, advertisements—that Jawi has come to be seen as exclusively Islamic.*" The Jawi script, which was previously tied to the Malay language, gradually became a foreign entity to the Malay language.

In fact, the use of the Rumi (Latin) script to replace the Jawi script in the use of the Malay language was caused by several things, namely: 1.) The desire of Dutch thinkers to reduce the Arabic and Islamic influence found in the Jawi script on the Bumiputra population (Laffan, 2003; Moriyama, 2005), 2.) to make it easier for the Dutch to master and use the Malay language, who were more accustomed to the Roman or Latin script, and at the same time to break the association of the Malay language with Islam (Mahayana, 2009), 3.) considered unsuitable for local languages and difficult for printing machines as claimed by Douwe Adolf Rinkes (1923), 4.) the association of Rumi's writing with Western modernity and progress (Moriyama, 2021), 5.) economic reasons related to calculating the cost of a set of printed typefaces in Rumi script, which is much cheaper when compared to other script publications (Jedamski, 1997), and 6.) layouting reason and still related to other economic reasons, namely the issue of spacing between lines which is more economical for Rumi script when compared to other scripts (Moriyama, 2021). The decline in the use of the Jawi script had also had an impact on the decline in the use of the term Jawi nation.

The policy that led to the decision to use Malay instead of Dutch was not a simple process. There

was a debate over whether to choose Dutch or Malay. Groeneboer (1999) presents the justification from the pro side for the use of Dutch in the context of Dutch East Indies colonialism, namely the increasing power of thought of the native population [because many of the latest knowledge sources at that time were in Dutch editions], government administration work would be easier and more efficient, the spread of Christianity would be easier, and a closer relationship would be created between the Dutch and the people of the Dutch East Indies. Meanwhile, the opposing side put forward the reasons that Malay had proven effective in international relations in the archipelago, the mastery of Dutch by the Natives was feared to have a negative influence, the purity of Dutch could be polluted by the potential emergence of Dutch variants of the Dutch East Indies, there was a possibility that Natives would feel equal to the Dutch because they had the same tongue, and Dutch was factually not easy to learn by Eastern people. The polemic that existed among the Dutch regarding the language that would be designated as the language whose learning and distribution was expanded among the population by the Dutch East Indies government was finally won by the pro-Malay side.

If national identity and language institutionalization are closely linked in the Malaysian context (Ozay, 2011), in the context of the Dutch East Indies, the institutionalization of language became a catalyst for a series of changes, starting from the movement away from the Malay, the language used on the Malay peninsula, the emergence of a national awakening that gave birth to Indonesian nationality, and spreading to the birth of the Indonesian, the language of Indonesians.

This series of changes cannot be separated from the Ethical Policy (1901) and the establishment of Balai Pustaka (1917). Launched in 1901, the Ethical Policy was touted as a policy of gratitude for the Dutch East Indies' services in assisting the Netherlands. In practice, it was another attempt to maximize the exploitation of the Dutch East Indies, especially as the Dutch colonialists were undertaking expansion projects in the Indonesian archipelago to expand their power. This necessitated a new policy that could address the current problems of civil servants and administration in managing new territories and administering Java outer islands.

The Ethical Policy emerged with a focus on expanding education for the native population of the Dutch East Indies to produce a needed workforce, immigration from Java to other islands to open new land, and the construction of a modern irrigation system to irrigate government plantations. However, the package was a form of reciprocation through education by the Dutch East Indies, which had suffered under the Cultivation System and was still underdeveloped in civilization. This is where the story of the process of integration, centralization, and standardization was built and began (Locher-Scholten, 1994). From here, modern schools for the natives of the Dutch East Indies or Bumiputra emerged, their purpose was expanded not only for a small group of selected local nobles who had previously been used as an extension of the

practice of the Cultivation System (Silaen & Smark, 2006) but also to the native people in general. The schools were expanded in their use, and the standardization required to provide education gave rise to the *Commission for Inlandsche School en Volkslectuur* in 1908, which later changed its name to Balai Pustaka.

Initially, Balai Pustaka was established as a commission to investigate the need for schools for the indigenous people and public literature (*Commisie voor de Inlandsche School en Volkslectuur* or the Commission for Native People's Education and Reading) in 1908. On September 17, 1917, this commission was transformed into the official publishing house of the Dutch East Indies government under the name Balai Pustaka. The birth of Balai Pustaka was part of the Dutch East Indies government's cultural policy in educating the indigenous people away from ideologies that were considered dangerous to public order and the colonial government's control over the colony (T. Jones, 2013) and making them become accustomed to and associate themselves with Dutch traditions and values (Jedamski, 1992).

Balai Pustaka collected local folktales and fairy tales for publication, translated or adapted European literature, and produced works that could enhance the intelligence and skills of the indigenous population. In addition to printing books for indigenous schools, Balai Pustaka also distributed books for low-cost borrowing through Taman Pustaka libraries, which were housed in small spaces at several schools and hospitals. Furthermore, sales agents were established in some regions, and mobile vans traveled to sell Balai Pustaka products. Balai Pustaka also supported the publication of some Malay magazines, such as *Sri Pustaka* and *Pandji Pustaka* (Jedamski, 1992; Siregar, 1964). Balai Pustaka, as part of the colonial government's cultural policy, also produced language criteria which Siregar (1964) called as *bahasa Melayu Balai Pustaka* (Balai Pustaka Malay).

The impact of Balai Pustaka was not only to create a community of readers, but also to institutionalize standard Malay in the Dutch East Indies which was normalized as a medium of communication, expression, and exchange of ideas among the Bumiputra in the Dutch East Indies (Kuitert, 2021; Teeuw, 1972), moved the center of the Malay in the Dutch East Indies to Batavia from Johor (Enre, 1963), and made Batavia or Jakarta a new orientation regarding the center of literacy and language (A. H. Johns, 1959). The conditions that occurred in the Dutch East Indies at that time, according to Schrieke (1929), imply that Batavia became the center of the educational curriculum, government administration, and the placement of graduates in the regions, thus contributing to a sense of unity among the Bumiputra, who were previously regionally oriented. The social situation experienced by the Bumiputra led them to believe that wherever they explored the Dutch East Indies, Batavia was the center of the region.

Schrieke's point can be found in the story of Samsulbahri in the novel *Sitti Nurbaja*. In *Sitti Nurbaja*, there is an explicit awareness from the native characters that Batavia (later renamed Jakarta) was the center of the Dutch East Indies. Furthermore, Balai Pustaka not only shifted its linguistic orientation to Jakarta but

also maintained Malay, which had previously become the *lingua franca* in the archipelago, so that it could develop alongside the changes occurring in the archipelago within the unified territory of the Dutch East Indies.

Phase 4: Part of the New National Identity Construct (1928)

In Sudaryanto's (2018) article, the journey of Bahasa Indonesia began in 1928. It was as if 1928 was the beginning of an important milestone in the journey of the language. The mention of 1928 as the first milestone in the beginning of the Bahasa Indonesia was also made by Umar Junus (1960). Almost the same thing was also expressed by Nasucha, Rochmadi, and Budi Wahyudi (2018). Meanwhile, so far, the presentation of Indonesian language chronicles has often started from the Classical Malay period without needing to discuss Old Malay, the emergence of the Jawi script thanks to Arab-Islamic influence, until finally the moment of the Second Youth Congress on October 28, 1928.

However, specifically regarding the birth of Bahasa Indonesia, Harimurti Kridalaksana (2010) has a different opinion. He argued that the birth of Bahasa Indonesia was at the moment of the formulation meeting for the preparation of the Second Youth Congress, which took place during the First Youth Congress, when Mohamad Tabrani on May 2, 1926, stated that the language that should be the language for one nation and homeland of Indonesia is Bahasa Indonesia. When the Second Youth Congress took place, Mohamad Tabrani was abroad but the formulation regarding the change of the name of the Malay language to Bahasa Indonesia was then continued by Mohamad Yamin in the Second Youth Congress, which previously in the First Youth Congress still used the name Malay language.

It is actually necessary to emphasize that the giving of a new name, which has an impact on the new status of the Malay (bahasa Melayu) as Bahasa Indonesia would not have happened if national awareness had not emerged among the natives (Siregar, 1964). In other words, the relationship between Indonesian consciousness and the birth of Bahasa Indonesia is closely linked. There would be no Bahasa Indonesia if Indonesian nationality had not emerged first. Likewise, the events that occurred at the First and Second Indonesian Youth Congresses, or the Great Meeting of Indonesian Youth, regarding the Indonesian language were merely a continuation and reinforcement of what occurred simultaneously with the birth of Indonesian nationalism.

It can be said that Indonesian nationality was born in 1917 among indigenous students studying in the Netherlands, when this term was used for the first time specifically in a certain political context. The term "Indonesia" was first used in such context by referring to the homeland of the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies as Indonesia (Nagazumi, 1978, 1986), not the Dutch East Indies or Insulinde. This event ignited the birth of the new identity of the native people related to the geo-spatial scope of a very specific area of the Dutch East Indies under Dutch colonialism. Table 1 shows how the word Indonesia started the

politics of the native people in the Dutch East Indies and how it affected the birth of Bahasa Indonesia.

Table 1. Events on the development of Indonesian nationalism and the birth of Bahasa Indonesia

| Year | Event | Reference |
|-------------|--|--|
| Before 1917 | The terms 'Indu-nesians' and 'Malayu-nesians' were introduced by George Samuel Windsor Earl in February 1850 as a single word to simplify the naming of the Indian archipelago [the Indian archipelago referred to as Charles Otto Blagden in the book <i>An introduction to Indonesian linguistics: Being four essays by Renward Brandstetter</i>] and to refer to a group of brown-skinned Polynesians who inhabited it. George Samuel Windsor Earl preferred the term 'Malayu-nesians'. | Russell Jones (1973, p. 102), Jan B. Avé (1989, p. 220) |
| | James Richardson Logan, in an article published on June 18, 1850, mentioned the terms introduced by his colleague George Samuel Windsor Earl, namely 'Indu-nesians' and 'Malayu-nesians', preferring the first term and slightly changing the word to 'Indonesia.' | Russell Jones (1973, p. 103, 1975, p. 13), Justus Maria Van der Kroef (1951, p. 167) |
| | In 1857, published a collection of Malay poetry was written in Rumi (Latin) letters and printed in a modern way with the title <i>Boek Saier oetawa Terseboet Pantoen</i> by Sa-orang Jang Bangsjawan. In one of the poems, there is the use of the word 'bangsa' in the line " <i>Mendjadic berasa kepada ělmoe/Meroesak poela kepada bangsamoe</i> ", but it seems to refer to the meaning of the human nation or any nation the reader of the poem imagines. In addition, on the back cover of this book there is information about the use of printing machines, printing business, terms 'Negrie Batawie', There is the same book in Malajjoe language but there is a choice of printing it using Malajjoe, Hollanda or Javanese letters. | Sa-orang Jang Bangsjawan (1857, pp. 4, 18) |
| | George Karel Niemann, in an 1879 article, said that the Indian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula could be called 'Indonesia' using the term introduced by James Richardson Logan. | George Karel Niemann (1879, p. 233) |
| | The word 'Indonesia' refers to a region that stretches from Madagascar to Papua New Guinea, Formosa, the Philippines, the Malay Peninsula, and the eastern part of Indochina. | Check foreword by Charles Otto Blagden (1916, pp. 5–6) for <i>An introduction to Indonesian linguistics: Being four essays by Renward Brandstetter</i> . |
| | The territory that is now Indonesia was called India Nederland in Malay. Its native inhabitants were called <i>Boemi Putra, orang-orang anak negri, or bangsa anak</i> | Check <i>Albrecht's Almanak Prijai</i> (1898) by Ferdinand Wiggers |

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| | <p><i>negri</i>. The city of Jakarta was called Batavia, Betawi, or Batawi.</p> <p>In <i>Boeah-Pikiran</i>, B. Djamaloedin bin Moh. Rasad, apart from his support for belasting and several activities of the Dutch colonial government, but he also wrote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • " 'kau, Insoelinda, tanah-airkoe' (pp. 15-16) • <i>Kesaktian ilmu dan pengetahuan tulis-menulis yang terlihat pada bangsa Eropa dan juga dilakukan bangsa Jepang</i> (p. 15) • " <i>Basa-Melajoe, basa-persekoetoean di Insoelinda</i>" (p. 18) | <p>B. Djamaloedin bin Moh. Rasad (1910)</p> |
| | <p>In Dutch, the area now known as Indonesia was previously called Nederlandsch Indie, Nederland's Indië, Nederlandsch Oost-Indië, or Nederlandsch-Indische Archipel.</p> | <p>Russell Jones (1973, p. 97), see also <i>Voordracht over De bediening der Paketvaart inden Nederl. Indischen Archipel</i> (1913) by J.H. Hummel</p> |
| 14 April 1917 | <p>The word 'Indonesia' was first used by Raden Mas Ario Soerjo Poetro as the name of the people who inhabited the Dutch East Indies.</p> | <p>Akira Nagazumi (1978, p. 28)</p> |
| 23 November 1917 | <p>Baginda Dahlan Abdoellah used the term 'Indonesia' to refer to the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies.</p> | <p>Akira Nagazumi (1978, p. 29)</p> |
| April 1920 | <p>Poem "Tanah Air" by Muhammad Yamin was published in <i>Jong Sumatra</i> No. 4, Tahun III, 1920. Sumatra is the homeland as addressed explicitly, for example: " <i>Itulah tanah, tanah airku,/Sumatra namanya, tumpah darahku</i> (That is the land, my homeland, / Sumatra is its name, my blood is spilled for her)"</p> | <p>Fachruddin Ambo Enre (1963, pp. 28–29), Boen Oemarjati <i>et al.</i> (1993, p. 46)</p> |
| April 1920 | <p>In an article entitled "Soeara Semangat", published in <i>Jong Sumatra</i>, No. 2/3 or 4 (?), Tahun III. Yamin writes " <i>Sebenarnya kecil hati kita melihat perangsuran bangsa-bangsa di sebelah benua Besar dan Eropah dalam bahasa, kecil hati kita , karena kita ta' (belum!) sanggup bermain atau berjuang mengeluarkan perasaan hati dalam basa sendiri</i> (In fact, we are discouraged when we see people from different nations on the continent of Asia and Europe in language, we are discouraged, because we are not (yet!) capable of playing or struggling to express our feelings in our own language)." Next, he invited people to express their thoughts and feelings in their own language.</p> | <p>Cf. Anthony Reid <i>et al.</i> (1983, p. 38), Keith Foulcher (1977, p. 41)</p> |
| February 1921 | <p>Poem "Bahasa, Bangsa" from Muhammad Yamin was published in <i>Jong Sumatra</i>, No. 2, Tahun IV, 1921. In this poem there are lines: " <i>Di mana Sumatera, di situ bangsa,/Di mana Perca, di sana Bahasa</i> (Where Sumatra is, there is the nation, / Where Perca is, there is the language)" dan "Ingat pemuda, Sumatera malang/Tiada bahasa, bangsa pun hilang (Remember young people,</p> | <p>Fachruddin Ambo Enre (1963, pp. 28–29), Sapardi Djoko Damono (2014, p. 118)</p> |

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| | poor Sumatra/Without language, the nation is lost).” There is a part that Sapardi Djoko Damono highlighted in this poem because it contains “ajakan bagi pemuda Sumatra untuk menggunakan bahasa Melayu (an invitation for Sumatran youth to use Malay),” not Dutch which is the language they learn in school. | |
| November 1921 | Poem “Tanah Airku” by Sanusi Pane published in <i>Jong Sumatra</i> , th. IV, no 11. It is not just the title of the poem, but this poem also contains a couplet that reads: “ <i>Poelau pertja, poelau Andalas/Hatikoe selamanja soetji dan ichlas/Menolong engkau tiadakan malas,/ Senantiasa hari tiadalah tiwas</i> (Perca island, Andalas island/My heart will forever be holy and sincere/I will not hesitate to help you,/ Everyday with full spirit).” | Fachruddin Ambo Enre (1963, pp. 28–29) |
| 9 December 1922 | Muhammad Yamin published <i>Tanah Air</i> , a manuscript of 30 poems, each consisting of 9 lines, that refer to Sumatra as the homeland. Some of the poems in this manuscript have been published in <i>Jong Sumatra</i> magazine. | Christiaan Hooykaas (1951, pp. 39–40), Fachruddin Ambo Enre (1963, pp. 28–29) |
| March 1924 | <i>Hindia Poetra</i> magazine in the Netherlands changed its name to <i>Indonesia Merdeka</i> | Klaas Stutje (2016, p. 46), Akira Nagazumi (1978, p. 32) |
| 8 February 1925 | Indonesische Vereniging changed its name to Perhimpunan Indonesia | Akira Nagazumi (1978, p. 32), Momon Abdul Rahman <i>et al.</i> (2008, p. 28) |
| 1925 | <i>Indonesia Merdeka</i> magazine started its distribution from the Netherlands to the young people in Dutch East Indies. | Bambang Sularto (1986, p. 11) |
| 16 January 1926 and 19 January 1926 | The term ‘ <i>bahasa Indonesia</i> ’ was introduced by M. Tabrani (Mohammad Tabrani Soerjo Witjirto). | “Kasihannya!” in <i>Hindia Baroe</i> newspaper 16 January 1926 edition and “Pemerintah dan Ra’jat” in <i>Hindia Baroe</i> newspaper 19 January 1926 edition. |
| 2 May 1926 | Muhammad Yamin gave a speech in the first Indonesian Youth Congress entitled “ <i>De toekomstmogelijkheden van onze Indonesische talen en letterkunde</i> (The future possibilities of our Indonesian languages and literature).” In this speech, Yamin said: “ <i>Ik voor mij heb daarnaast de volle overtuiging, dat het Maleisch langzamerhand de aangewezen conversatie- of eenheidstaal zal zijn voor de Indonesiërs, en dat de toekomstige Indonesische cultuur zijn uitdrukking in die taal vinden zal</i> (I am also fully convinced that Malay will gradually become the designated language of conversation or common denomination for Indonesians, and that future Indonesian culture will find its expression in that language).” He also argued that | Dhakidae (2003, pp. 121–122), Sugiharta (2015, pp. 50–53) |

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| | <p>Malay had a long history as the connecting language for the native peoples in the Dutch East Indies and was already widely used in art, literature, commerce, and science. Thus, Malay was "<i>reeds de overhand gekregen</i> (already gained the upper hand)."</p> <p>This speech can be compared to the vision Yamin had in his early 1920s poems regarding his nationhood and <i>bahasa Melayu</i>. He now identified himself as part of <i>de Indonesiërs</i>, changing from merely the son of Sumatra, and saw <i>bahasa Melayu</i> can be the language for this new nation, <i>de Indonesiërs</i>.</p> | |
| 2 May 1926 | M. Tabrani insisted on holding the <i>bahasa Indonesia</i> name over the name <i>bahasa Melayu</i> from the 3-point draft "Ikrah Pemuda (Youth Pledge)" proposed by Muhammad Yamin. Muhammad Yamin rejected the name, ' <i>bahasa Indonesia</i> ,' to change the name of <i>bahasa Melayu</i> based on the fact that the name <i>bahasa Melayu</i> had long been used to call the language they were referring to. | Bambang Sularto (1986, p. 29), Harimurti Kridalaksana (2010, p. 16) |
| 28 February 1927 | The word 'Indonesia' first appeared in a literary work in the form of a poem entitled "Indonesia" by Ngudi Ginting Djawak in <i>Bintang Hindia</i> , No. 9, Tahun VII. | S. Amran Tasai <i>et al.</i> (2002, pp. 27, 102) |
| 4 July 1927 | The members of the Perhimpunan Indonesia in the Netherlands who had completed their studies and returned to Indonesia then founded Partai Nasional Indonesia (the Indonesian National Party). | Mohammad Hatta (1986, pp. 307–308) |
| 28 October 1928 | There are three points regarding the Indonesian nation, the Indonesian homeland, and the Indonesian language recorded as part of "Poatoesan Congres Pemoeda-Pemoeda Indonesia". There was actually no word as ' <i>sumpah</i> (pledge, oath)' or specific words like ' <i>Sumpah Pemuda</i> (Youth Pledge).' | cf. Bambang Sularto (1986, p. 61) |
| January 1931 | R.M. Joesoepadi Danoehadiningrat in his report on <i>Kerapatan Besar Pemoeda Indonesia Jang Ke-1</i> mentioning the event where there was an agreement on 3 points regarding nationality, homeland and a unifying language; it was the day when " <i>kita poetri dan poeta Indonesia bersoempah</i> (we, the sons and daughters of Indonesia, made a pledge)" | Daniel Dhakidae (2003, pp. 126–127), Darmansyah & Misman (2010, pp. 33–34) |
| June 1931 | In <i>Aboean Goeroe-Goeroe</i> magazine there seems a kind of continuation of the spirit of a previous movement event, but it could be that Indonesia-Moeda does not associate itself with the 1928 youth congress but rather has its own three-point formulation which is similar to the 3 points of the 1928 youth congress, namely " <i>bersoempah pertjaja akan dasar jang tiga serta toedjoean jang satoe</i> (swear to believe in the three principles and one true faith)" from the report on the | Indonesia-Moeda (1931, p. 107), cf. Keith Foulcher (2000, pp. 383–384), Hardjito (1952, p. 103), Darmansyah & Misman (2010, p. 63) |

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| | activities of the Young Indonesia Founding Congress which took place on December 31, 1930 – January 1, 1931. It should also be noted that Muhammad Yamin was one of the prominent members of Indonesia-Moeda. | |
| November 1931 | Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in <i>Djoernalis, Orgaan dari Perserikatan Kaoem Journalist</i> magazine writes the event took place on 28 October 1928 as an event when " <i>soempah pemoeda-pemoeda bangsa kita ialah sesoeatoe kedjadian jang penting ... (the youth oath of our nation.... is an important event...)</i> " | Daniel Dhakidae (2003, pp. 126–127) |
| 16 December 1959 | President Sukarno issued a Presidential Decree considering the need for " <i>menetapkan beberapa hari bersedjarah bagi Nusa dan Bangsa Indonesia</i> (to establish several historic days for the Indonesian Nation and State)" with additional explanation that people are instructed " <i>selajaknja apabila kita memperingati sebagai hari-hari jang bersedjarah bagi seluruh Bangsa Indonesia dengan djalan/tjara mengadakan upatjara dikantor/sekolah/tempatnja masing-masing</i> (It would be appropriate if we commemorate these historical days for the entire Indonesian nation by holding ceremonies at their respective offices/schools/places.)." This decree was a political move by Sukarno, supported by Yamin, who had been labelling and using Poetoesan Congres Pemoeda-Pemoeda Indonesia on 28 October 1928 since the mid of 1950s "as an ideological weapon ... as a way of sending a warning to those behind the separatist threats that were emerging to challenge the unity of the Indonesian nation." The word <i>sumpah</i> , a word associated with honor, integrity, and sacrality, in the institutionalization of the event in 1928 into Sumpah Pemuda, was the key to intimidate any opposing movements against the government and the idea of Indonesia. This Hari Sumpah Pemuda replaced Hari Lagu Indonesia Raya which was previously held annually since the 1950s. Changing the commemoration of the events of October 28, 1928, from the first time the national anthem was sung to the moment the people took the <i>sumpah</i> , was a significant step in strengthening Indonesia's nationalist ideology. | Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia No. 316 Tahun 1959 tentang Hari-Hari Nasional Jang Bukan Hari Libur; Foulcher (2000, p. 389) |

Phase 5: Youth Pledge Consensus (1928)

The consensus phase of Malay language becoming Bahasa Indonesia was marked by the Youth Pledge which was pledged on October 28, 1928 by representatives of Bumiputra youth associations from several

regions of the Dutch East Indies. In fact, there are several reasons why Malay was finally agreed upon through consensus on that day to have a new name, *bahasa Indonesia* or Bahasa Indonesia, and become the language of the Indonesian people. The first reason can of course be referred to Mohamad Tabrani's reasons, which were explained previously regarding the language of the Indonesian people, which should be called as *bahasa Indonesia*, not *bahasa Melayu*.

Historical records show that long before the Tabrani and Yamin debate, a Javanese man named Suwardi Suryoningrat (later known as Ki Hajar Dewantara) understood the uniqueness of the Malay language. On August 28, 1916, at a teachers' meeting, Ki Hajar Dewantara realized that Malay was more acceptable to the natives in the Dutch East Indies than other languages, through his suggestion of a language of instruction for natives in schools (Kridalaksana, 2010, pp. 13–14). This all demonstrated the awareness among national activists of the important position of Malay in the Dutch East Indies. Malay has a long history as a means of communication in the Indonesian archipelago, something that Javanese lacks.

Going back even further, the Dutch also recognized the acceptability of Malay over other languages in the context of communication in the Indonesian archipelago. This led them to use Malay in Bible translations, missionary work, and the establishment of a seminary in Batavia starting in the 18th century (Ali, 2010, p. 124). This awareness continued among Dutch politicians and cultural figures who emerged regarding options regarding which language would be more acceptable in the Dutch East Indies with various considerations (Groeneboer, 1999; Jedamski, 1992; Laffan, 2003; Mahayana, 2009) to choose Malay. Not only the Dutch, even other nations know that Malay was the language that had the widest acceptance in the Nusantara archipelago compared to other languages. (Laffan, 2003, p. 15; Mahayana, 2009). Apart from seeing the difficulties that might arise if the Dutch language was spread in the Dutch East Indies among Bumiputra, Dutch thinkers and policy makers experienced what Homi Bhabha (1984, p. 126) calls as ambivalence. In the minds of Dutch thinkers and policy makers at that time, there was a spirit of colonial mimicry to advance the Bumiputra colonial subjects through education so that it was created "*reformed, recognizable Other*," but besides that, it is also necessary to maintain the ongoing inequality that is manifested through language politics within the colonial power structure.

Another reason is the advantages of Malay over Javanese. Javanese youth activists disliked the use of Javanese in modern movements. Sukarno, a populist nationalist from Java, recognized the potential of Javanese to reinforce elitism in society through the use of *kromo* and *ngoko* (lower-ranking) dialects, and he campaigned for the use of Malay.

Sukarno, who came from a low-ranking aristocratic family, had previously had an unpleasant experience when his speech in *ngoko* before the Jong Java meeting in Surabaya in February 1921 was reprimanded by the committee. He was considered impolite to speak in *ngoko* before the high-ranking

guests in attendance (Wardaya, 2006, p. 43). Not all of the young Bumiputra who received education, occupied positions as 'new priyayi' in the changing Dutch East Indies society, were active in the movement for equal rights for the Bumiputra in the Dutch East Indies, or sought independence from the Dutch, came from high-ranking aristocratic families. However, these educated young Bumiputra, Tichelman (1980, pp. 152, 183) called a new neo-priyayi stratum, they developed a nationalist movement that was modern, Western-oriented, and at the same time imbued with a renewed priyayi culture. They envisioned a new society free not only from colonialism but also from the power of the old priyayi. The connection between this vision of a new society and language choice can be explained through Sukarno's situation.

Sukarno's situation is one example of why Malay ultimately became the language of choice in the movement. As an educated young man and activist for change in the Dutch East Indies, Sukarno understood the difficulties encountered in using Javanese compared to Malay. The old Javanese social structure with its old priyayi class, which was partly supported by the use of Javanese, was clearly incompatible with the vision of a new social structure with the emergence of a new stratum within society, namely the educated Bumiputra class or neo-priyayi, a term used by Fritjof Tichelman (1980, p. 152) or new priyayi by *Merle Calvin* Ricklefs (2001, p. 168). Meanwhile, these new priyayi were the envisioners of a new society in a new era, championing the Indonesian national movement. The preservation of the Javanese, which underpinned the old social structure, actually made it difficult for the educated Bumiputra to realize their vision of a new society, while the use of Malay provided them with a space to be on equal footing.

It is also necessary to pay close attention to Sneddon's (2003, p. 15) view, which rejects the opinion that the reason for choosing Malay as the national language is its simplicity compared to other languages. It is important to understand that the importance of a language is not determined by its linguistic character, as is the basis of the prevailing opinion. Another myth, such as the willingness of the Javanese, who were the majority in the Dutch East Indies, to give up Malay, instead of their own Javanese, as a form of prioritizing unity.

The Malay's position and acceptance compared to other languages is actually a consequence of its historical trajectory. It became a *lingua franca* due to the greatness of Srivijaya with its inter-island trade activities. It became the language of trade between the West and the East, influencing European nations in carrying out other activities, such as the spread of religion, and as a means of communication within colonialism, thus maintaining its important position. This was then followed by the complexity of cultural policies that involved Malay within the Dutch colonial government structure. Subsequently, as discussed later, Malay became increasingly established alongside the presence of the Japanese military government. It was through this long and complex historical journey that Malay ultimately rose to a status that surpassed that of other languages in the archipelago.

Once again, Malay being a language that is widely used is not very accurate if based on arguments regarding its simplicity and flexibility as stated by Husen Abas (1987) or the generosity of the Javanese majority in allowing Malay, not Javanese, as the language of the movement for the unity of the Indies as narrated by Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1985). Hafiz et al. (2025) say that this willingness to use Malay over Javanese is attributed to psychological factors, whilst Khuzaemah and Nurpadillah (2022, p. 5) argue that *"kearifan para pemimpin kita dahulu ... [yang] tidak memilih bahasa daerah yang besar sebagai dasar bagi bahasa Indonesia karena dikhawatirkan akan dirasakan sebagai pengistimewaan yang berlebihan* (the wisdom of our leaders in the past... [who] did not choose a major regional language as the basis for Indonesian because it was feared that it would be perceived as excessive privilege)" and *"bahasa [Melayu] itu sederhana sehingga lebih mudah dipelajari dan dikuasai* ([Malay] language is simple so it is easier to learn and master)." None of these arguments is solid or even factual because that was not the case.

Meanwhile, Repelita (2018, p. 46) says that *"sebelum adanya bahasa Indonesia [yang lahir dalam peristiwa Sumpah Pemuda], belum ada bahasa yang memiliki fungsi untuk mempersatukan bangsa dalam p[er]spektif persatuan dan kesatuan bangsa* (before the existence of Indonesian [which was born in the Youth Pledge event], there was no language that had the function of uniting the nation from the perspective of national unity and oneness)". This one is also incorrect, as the important value of the Youth Pledge event was the existence of a 'moment of consensus' of one language that united the activists of the national movement. That was the moment, like Andries Teeuw (1950, p. 23) says, *"het doopur: niet dus het geboortuur (jam pembaptisan: bukan jam kelahiran* (baptism time: not birth time))" from a language that already existed and was used by educated people in the Dutch East Indies.

Another opinion that is slightly different and needs to be presented here, for example, from Andi Hasrianti. She (2014, p. 5) says that at that time there was a need to *"berusaha keras mempersatukan rakyat* (strive to unite the people)" through language, leading to the choice of Malay. However, this opinion is inconsistent with the actual discourse occurring in the 1920s.

First, the use of Malay in the context of literacy at that time actually only involved a small group of educated native Indonesians, as the majority of the population was still illiterate. This small group, according to Robert van Niel (1960, pp. 159, 165), was "newly emerging Indonesian elite" in the society. They were educated or able to read and write, attended modern schools, worked as civil servants, and lived within a governance structure and responsibilities distinct from those of traditional society. The term "neo-priyayi" or "new priyayi" refers to this group. This group needed to create a better space for their existence. Realizing a new society with a new system was the way, and could be achieved through the idea of nationalism. Therefore, the desire to establish a common language (Malay) had nothing to do with unifying the people or society at large, but based on the need of this group of indigenous elites.

Two, the Youth Pledge as an important event in the history of the Indonesian national movement that occurred in an event of the Second Indonesian Youth General Meeting in 1928 was actually predominantly held in Dutch and the resolution regarding Bahasa Indonesia as the language of unity could be said to be part of Mohammad Yamin's political vision which was a widespread transformation towards Indonesian unity in the second half of the 1920s from the previous idea based on the unity of Sumatra with the Malay language in the early 1920s (Foulcher, 2000). This political vision was later successful due to the socio-political situation among educated young Bumiputra groups in Jakarta, far from home, and feeling a shared destiny despite coming from different youth organizations. They began to be exposed to the idea of nationalism that transcended tribal ties in realizing freedom and a better future. This was difficult to achieve under colonialism or traditional systems.

The status of "native people" (*Bumiputra*), which to some extent formed the basis of a new Indonesian identity, coincided with the need for a language that did not represent the colonial nation. This led to Malay, the language already common to educated youth during their school years, becoming a realistic political choice among them. Therefore, it could be argued that the choice of Malay had nothing to do with the idea of uniting the people.

Regarding generosity or psychological factors to be willing to accept Malay as a unifying language or common language, Benedict Anderson (1990, p. 139) alludes to it being a claim that emerged later by the Javanese. However, the choice of Indonesian national activists for Malay as the language of unity or nationality is actually more than what Benedict Anderson has said. Malay offered an egalitarian situation and social interaction "in an essentially Dutch manner, but without the mediation of the Dutch language," but also its ability to create a space that made the Dutch colonial nation and the local aristocrats no longer in a space that represented the structure of colonial society, the Dutch colonial subjects, and the traditional local aristocratic subjects in the Dutch East Indies through Dutch and Javanese. This was part of a social transition that helped pave the way for the national movement and the realization of the Indonesian nation-state.

Another noteworthy aspect of this transition is the new tradition that emerged alongside capitalism and print culture: the exchange of ideas through modern media and platforms in Malay. This activity was one of the many impacts of the establishment of modern schools for indigenous people, which used Malay as the medium of instruction, thus providing the foundation for a sense of belonging, or belonging to a community, that shared the same language. Furthermore, the use of Malay subsequently became a symbol of indigenous identity and acquired political symbolism when compared with Dutch. Malay was, of course, preferred as the unifying language of the resistance movement over Dutch, the language of the colonizers.

At that time, Malay also dominated the discourse on progress and unity in the mass media (cf.

Adam, 1995). Bumiputra activists from Java, such as Sukarno and Suwardi Suryoningrat, understood the greater power of Malay in the mobility and manipulation of the masses and the implications of its political use for and by Bumiputra when compared to other local languages (Mahayana, 2009). Also observed among other indigenous activists from various regions of the Dutch East Indies, such as Agus Salim, Iskandar Dinata, and Yahya Datuk Kayo, that they deliberately used Malay in the *Volksraad*, the Dutch East Indies' representative council, despite their fluency in Dutch (Etek et al., 2008).

Not only individually, the largest Bumiputra mass organization in the Dutch East Indies at the beginning of the 20th century, Sarekat Islam, also used Malay as their official language (Paauw, 2009). Moreover, the Malay continued to color modern activities in the Dutch East Indies, as in the Congress for the Development of Javanese Culture (*Congres voor Javaansche Cultuur Ontwikkeling*) which took place in 1918 in Semarang, was implicitly stated that the position of the Javanese language was starting to be pushed aside in Java by the Malay (Supardi, 2003), even though the Javanese ethnic group was the majority in the Dutch East Indies. In short, Malay in the early 20th century in the Dutch East Indies could be said to be the only language that was synonymous with the movement for the unity of the native people, equality with white people, and the spirit of progress.

The Youth Pledge, declared by the young Bumiputra on October 28, 1928, became the next milestone in the development of Bahasa Indonesia. Unlike the Dutch government's decision to establish Malay as the official language for the Bumiputra, in the context of the Youth Pledge, Malay was chosen as the unifying language at that time, not because it was easier to learn than Javanese, but because Malay had previously been the *lingua franca* of the archipelago. Malay was chosen at that time because of its dominant position in Dutch East Indies society compared to other languages. Malay at that time also became a symbol of resistance and the identity of educated Bumiputra against Dutch colonialism.

On the other hand, changing the name of the Malay language was also necessary because by retaining the name Malay, Malay might not be accepted by the Bumiputra people in the Dutch East Indies whose native language was not Malay (Samekto, 1991). Through the Youth Pledge, the Malay language in the Dutch East Indies was then unanimously adopted by the indigenous community as Indonesian, changing its inherent direction in all discourses about Indonesianess. This aligns with the well-known expression in Malay, "*bahasa menunjukkan bangsa* (language indicates the nation)," thus fulfilling Indonesia's new national identity with a single language.

Although the significance of the Youth Pledge only emerged later, largely due to the influence of Sukarno's political actions in the 1950s, there had never before been a consensus among individuals and organizations regarding the use of a unifying language. The Youth Pledge was significant because it laid the foundation for the newly born nation of Indonesia in 1917 to claim Malay as its own language, Bahasa

Indonesia. The oath or pledge of these youths was then also needed as a binding discourse on the rise of Indonesian nationalism and the marginalization of other nationalisms that emerged in the Dutch East Indies.

The Youth Pledge ultimately became an inseparable part of the milestones of Indonesian history, which were useful for politicians in the future in addressing regional or religious issues of the struggle against Dutch colonialism (Formichi, 2012). At the same time, in the course of the modern Indonesian state, it also served as a milestone for resolving differences among the indigenous people in combating separatism. This subsequently became a useful tool for Indonesian nationalists (e.g., Sukarno) in eradicating the old-fashioned loyalty to nationhood and statehood that could emerge in any separatist movement (Foulcher, 2000).

The output of the Second Youth Congress, which several years later was called the Youth Pledge, is a moment in Indonesian history whose historical significance was actually created politically and has not only effectively succeeded in giving birth to the narrative of Indonesian nationality, but also produced a historical moment regarding the birth of a language called Bahasa Indonesia.

The narrative that youth representatives from various parts of the Dutch East Indies, both from the west and east, gathered without coercion to swear an oath to unite the homeland, nation, and language was something that Indonesian nationalist activists needed as political justification amidst the hustle and bustle and competition of other nationalist ideas circulating in the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century. The construction of Indonesian history was created thanks to the Youth Pledge. The Youth Pledge then became a symbol of the ideological apparatus not only of the Indonesian nation but also of the Indonesian state. The spirit of federalism and regionalism that emerged later was then considered contrary to the youth oath (Foulcher, 2000). As a result, the Youth Pledge from that time until now has become part of the construction of Indonesian history and has provided legitimacy and a new direction for the history of naming the Indonesian national language.

Phase 6: The Struggle for Language Authority: A Symbol of the Assertion of Power (1938)

The once-strong nationalism of that time, Javanese and Sumatran nationalism, had begun to fade with the emerging influence of the Indonesian national discourse. Bahasa Indonesia had also effectively begun to gain a foothold among the natives. Regional languages were still used among the natives, but not in a way that competed with Bahasa Indonesia, which was widely considered the unifying language of the natives (cf. Sungkowati, 2019). The recently recognized language of Indonesian, despite its dominance and its place in the discourse of Indonesian identity, was not yet the national language. After the Youth Pledge, however, Bahasa Indonesia remained the language of the natives or the colonized people of the Dutch East Indies. At that time, other languages existed alongside Bahasa Indonesia in the Dutch East Indies: a variant of Malay

used in the mass media by the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies, and the Dutch of the ruling class.

The van Ophuysen spelling, which became the Balai Pustaka Malay spelling and served as the standard for using Malay in the Dutch East Indies, naturally became an issue at the First Language Congress in Solo. Even though in the Second Youth Congress and the First Indonesian Language Congress the spelling van Ophuysen was still used (Sudaryanto, 2019). However, at the First Indonesian Language Congress, held on June 25-27, 1938, the desire to replace the van Ophuysen spelling emerged. The van Ophuysen spelling was temporarily accepted until a self-created spelling for Bahasa Indonesia was created and used by the Indonesian people. The proposal to replace the spelling created by the Dutch colonial government actually implied the affirmation of the Indonesian people present at that time to be independent from the Netherlands.

Thus, the direction of Bahasa Indonesia, as an inseparable part of the three-line mantra of Indonesianess in the Youth Pledge, must be determined by the Indonesian people themselves. The First Language Congress even went further, namely planning a proposal to the Dutch East Indies government that the Bahasa Indonesia used officially in government offices and legal texts in the Dutch East Indies would one day use the Indonesian version of the Indonesian spelling. In addition, the First Language Congress also expressed concerns about the Malay language used by the Chinese community in the Dutch East Indies.

After naming the standard Malay language used in the Dutch East Indies as Bahasa Indonesia, the attempt to replace van Ophuysen's spelling in Malay and erode the Malay used by Chinese publishers and press was a manifestation of the struggle for authority in the Dutch East Indies through language. In the context of the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century, control over language became part of the enforcement of domination and the power struggle. The concept of following our language and not theirs became a form of competition and influence in the Dutch East Indies situation, which consisted of three main strata: Dutch, Chinese, and Bumiputra. Language as a tool for demonstrating power in the Dutch East Indies is evident, for example, in *Student Hidjo*, a novel written by Mas Marco Kartodikromo and first published in book form in 1919 by the Masman & Stroink Boekhandel bookstore in Semarang.

In the novel *Student Hidjo* ([1919] 2018), republished by Narasi publishers in Chapter XVII, entitled "*Controleur Walter ingin verlot ke Eropa*," Mas Marco presents an interesting story. Using two Dutch characters, Controleur Walter and Sergeant Djepri, several issues regarding the Dutch East Indies are presented through conversations and a Malay-language leaflet (brochure) entitled "*Bangsa Belanda di Hindia* (The Dutch Nation in the Indies)".

In the conversation between the two characters, the Indies or Bumiputra or Javanese – Mas Marco saw the Dutch East Indies as still just Java – are defended by Controleur Walter as a nation that is not stupid, lazy, dirty, and uncultured when compared to the Dutch. Meanwhile, in the brochure that Controleur Walter

gave to Sergeant Djepri, three languages commonly used as a means of interaction between the Dutch and the Bumiputra in the Dutch East Indies are described. There is an issue of power in the use of Javanese by Bumiputra from Java in the Dutch East Indies. The suggestion that arises is how Malay is a language that provides equality between the Bumiputra and the Dutch.

The author argues that Dutch power in the Dutch East Indies, or Dutch colonialism, weakened in part due to the decision to disseminate and standardize Malay as the official language in the Dutch East Indies. Following Marshall McLuhan's (1964, p. 24) argument that "*it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action,*" thus the presence of Malay (which later became Bahasa Indonesia) actually gave the native people a sense of confidence. Not only was their tongue easier and more fluent in mastering Malay compared to Dutch, but the project of disseminating and authorizing Malay in the Dutch East Indies, which was actually intended as a form of social segregation between the colonizers and the colonized, instead formed an imagined community that referred to the existence of linguistic unity. In short, the decision of the Dutch colonizers to give official status and promote the use of Malay can be said to be a blunder, as mentioned by Lisa Kuitert (2021, p. 15) that "by promoting Malay as a common language, communication among the indigenous people was made easier and nationalistic feelings grew." The Malay language was a medium that united the Bumiputra.

Thus, this author's perspective differs slightly from that proposed by Benedict Anderson regarding an imagined community in the Dutch East Indies that emerged thanks to the development of the printing industry. In fact, it wasn't the development of the printing industry that created a space and time for movement together within an imagined community, but rather the presence of language. Language, rather than newspapers and magazines, was the message. In this context, what was in the minds of the native Indonesians was then articulated through the medium of Malay. This medium shaped and controlled how they interacted and associated themselves with each other and with the Dutch colonialists.

This can be compared, for example, with the memories of Ahmad Dahlan Ranuwihardjo (1986) in *Bunga Rampai Soempah Pemoeda*. In Java at that time, Dutch officials who greeted or spoke to them in Dutch had to respond in high Javanese. The language used in the Dutch East Indies also became a struggle for the speakers' prestige. Therefore, this did not only add to the consensus of the Bumiputra or Indonesian native people in choosing Malay but also a sense of urgency to change the Malay language, which had already been agreed upon, to be Bahasa Indonesia, to counter threats from other languages within the context of language authority.

The Youth Pledge resolved the competition between Dutch and Malay in Dutch East Indies society (Alisjahbana, 1991) among educated natives and also provided a means of resistance for the indigenous people of any nation in the Dutch East Indies to use Bahasa Indonesia to align themselves with the Dutch.

Each indigenous nation could claim it as their own language. However, there were still other competing languages in the Dutch East Indies, though often undiscussed. This issue emerged at the first Language Congress.

The language authority that emerged at the First Indonesian Language Congress spoke about the status of another language, Chinese Malay, in the Dutch East Indies. The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies had their own distinct variety of Malay, called Bazaar Malay. The Chinese were a people who could inspire the progress and unity of the indigenous people in the early 20th century, as Abdul Rivai put it in his newspaper, *Bintang Hindia*, which was read by the new gentry in the Dutch East Indies (Poeze, 1989). But borrowing from Johns' (1959) view regarding the use of novels as a reflection of the social conditions of society, the Chinese in other aspects also became rivals of the Bumiputra in the Dutch East Indies, as stated in *Sitti Nurbaja* (Rusli, 2013). In the world of publishing and the newspapers industries, the Bumiputra at the beginning of the 20th century was relatively unable to compete with the Chinese who controlled the market with their Malay language, both in big cities and several small cities in the Dutch East Indies (Adam, 1995; Yamamoto, 2011). For this reason, the issue regarding the standardization of the Malay language in the Dutch East Indies, which had been agreed upon to have a new name by the Bumiputra as Indonesian, was normal if it was also touched upon "*bahasa Indonesia di persuratkabaran* (the bahasa Indonesia on newspapers)." This was exactly like what Antonio Gramsci (1985, pp. 183–184) says that "*every time the question of the language surfaces, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore: the formation and enlargement of the governing class, ... in other words to reorganize the cultural hegemony.*"

If language control is a manifestation of power, then after the renaming of Riau Malay as Bahasa Indonesia by Bumiputra nationalists, the question of the existence of other Malay languages in the Dutch East Indies became a crucial part in the history of Bahasa Indonesia. This question positioned speakers of Malay languages other than Riau Malay (read: Indonesian) as the other, while Indonesian claimants held the power. This practice only became a reality in the next phase, when Dutch was completely banned and Bumiputra nationalists controlled the language through Japanese rule.

Phase 7 – Confirmation as the Official Language of the State (1945)

This phase occurred when the Japanese military government took over power in the Dutch East Indies. During the Japanese occupation, the use of Dutch was banned. This moment ruined any discourse by the indigenous elites on the possible use of the Dutch as a national language. This is also a phase when Bahasa Indonesia became the official language of the occupied Dutch East Indies and an important dictionary using the name Indonesia was published.

The dictionary that uses the Indonesian name, *Kamoes Indonesia*, was published in 1942, shortly

after the Japanese military government announced the abolition of Dutch language use in the occupied Dutch East Indies (Mahayana, 2009). The publication of this dictionary marked a significant milestone in the history of Bahasa Indonesia. It drew on word lists and dictionaries published by Europeans and Chinese since the 16th century (Hoogervorst, 2024; Labrousse, 1976) to the *Kitab Logat Melajoe* (1901) by Charles Adriaan van Ophuijsen with Engku Nawawi Gelar Soetan Ma'moer and Muhammad Taib Sutan Ibrahim, which became the official reference for the colonial government regarding language. The publication of *Kamoes Indonesia* confirmed further separation of Bahasa Indonesia from Malay.

During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese military government placed Japanese as a foreign language rather than a national language (*kokugo*), while Bahasa Indonesia to become the national language in the Japanese-occupied Dutch East Indies. Japan also sponsored the establishment of the Language Commission (*Keimin Bunka Shidosho*) on October 20, 1942, which aimed to disseminate and develop Bahasa Indonesia. Japan also established the Indonesian Language Institute in Medan in early 1943 (A Reid, 2014). The potential for tension between local languages and Bahasa Indonesia in the future was actually resolved during the Japanese occupation by including local languages and Indonesian in the school curriculum (Pourpouras, 2010). The spirit of *Zaman Baru* (New Era), which can be found in Ki Hajar Dewantara's statement at the 1st Indonesian Language Congress in a statement about language that was relevant with "*keperluan zaman dan alam baru* (the needs of the new era and nature)" (Manuaba, 2019, p. 50), finally had its chance to be implemented during the Japanese occupation. *Kamoes Indonesia* received the campaign phrase "*alat dizaman baroe oentoek bahasa Indonesia* (the tool in the new era of Bahasa Indonesia)."

In the period, Bahasa Indonesia was increasingly used in offices. It became a compulsory language in schools, and its spread was extraordinary, even to remote rural areas (Pourpouras, 2010, p. 384). In relation to Indonesianess, it can be said that Japan's role in supporting the rapid and massive spread of Bahasa Indonesia was to further strengthen the idea of Indonesian unity, which was supported by the linguistic unity of the language (Mackie, 1980, p. 679).

Regarding the journey of Malay or *bahasa Melayu* to Bahasa Indonesia or *bahasa Indonesia*, apart from the explanation of the 7 phases above, Figure 1 provides a visual summary to support and synthesize this progression.

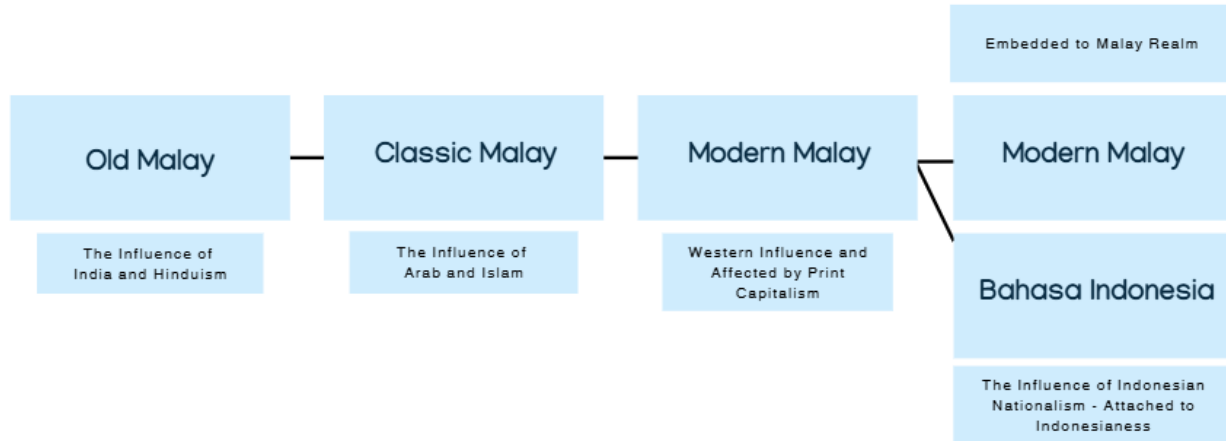


Figure 1. The journey of Malay to Bahasa Indonesia

Conclusion

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Bahasa Indonesia went through seven phases in its development until it was finally confirmed as the national and state language of Indonesia. The selection of Bahasa Indonesia as the unifying language had complex antecedents. In the process, the name of Malay was changed to Bahasa Indonesia. This change was significant in affirming Indonesia's national identity because, politically and psychologically, it made Bahasa Indonesia a language belonging to the Indonesian people, no longer a language belonging to the Malay people.

Through a long and complex journey, Bahasa Indonesia was finally decided in 1945 to be the official language of the Indonesian nation by the Founding Fathers of the Indonesian nation without the slightest objection. Malay, which since the 1920s has been known as Bahasa Indonesia, has indeed continuously occupied a very important position: it was once a *lingua franca*, the language of choice for ambivalent colonial cultural policies during Dutch rule, and the language of choice in anti-Western propaganda during Japanese rule.

Malay, not Dutch, eventually became the language of a nation previously under Dutch colonialism because as stated by Groeneboer (1999, p. 43), that "*pilihan menjadikan bahasa Melayu menjadi bahasa pemersatu dan bukan bahasa Belanda disebabkan di Indonesia pada dasarnya hanya ada satu lingua franca, yaitu bahasa Melayu, tetapi [ditambah] juga karena politik bahasa [pemerintah kolonial] yang tidak pernah mendukung penyebaran bahasa Belanda secara luas* (The choice to make Malay the unifying language and not Dutch was because in Indonesia there was basically only one *lingua franca*, namely Malay, but also because of the language policy of the colonial government which never supported the

widespread of Dutch).” With the Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies, which was motivated by the elimination of Dutch influence, Dutch became a forbidden language, and the status of Bahasa Indonesia got strengthened among the native people. This led to Bahasa Indonesia finally being accepted as the official language of the Indonesian state when the constitution was drafted by the Founding Fathers of the Indonesian nation. Thus, Sneddon's (2003, p. 15) statement that a particular language acquired its important position due to its journey “in the right place at the right time” can be agreed with evidence of the journey of Malay to Bahasa Indonesia.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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