

SPELLING REFORM 1972: A STAGE IN THE PROCESS OF STANDARDISATION OF BAHASA INDONESIA

Harimurti Kridalaksana

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1966 the Department of Education and Culture introduced a spelling reform with the aim of modernising the existing system and of unifying the Indonesian with that of the Malaysian spelling. The new spelling system was eventually declared official by the President on August 17, 1972.

The six-year period of 1966-1972 supports the evidence that problems posed by the formulation of a new spelling for a language with a deep-rooted traditional system differs widely from that by a completely unwritten language and that the making of a new spelling based on linguistic principles is relatively easy compared with the efforts of putting it into actual practice.

2. A SHORT HISTORY OF INDONESIAN SPELLING

Spelling has a unique place in the development of Malay and Bahasa Indonesia.

Before the 20th century there was no uniform orthography to represent the language. The writing of Malay in Roman script differed from author to author. They were usually phonetic in nature, as they were devised by and for non-Indonesians.

The first standardised spelling for Malay that more or less put a stop to the existing confusions was instituted by Ch.A. Van Ophuijsen, published in his *Kitab Logat Melajoe* in 1901. The system, which is generally known as the Van Ophuijsen spelling 1901, became the official spelling for Malay in the Dutch colonial possessions.

In the First Congress of Bahasa Indonesia held in Surakarta in 1938 - ten years after the Youth Congress that declared Bahasa Indonesia as national language for the future nation of Indonesia - a resolution was adopted which accepted the Van Ophuijsen spelling for the time being, while recommending that change to serve economy and simplicity should be considered for the future, and that 'international spelling' should also be taught in schools.

Two years after Independence, i.e. on March 19, 1947, the then Minister of Education Soewandi decreed a new spelling for Bahasa Indonesia which aimed at the simplification of the Van Ophuijsen system. This is known as the Republican or Soewandi Spelling 1947.

From October 28 to November 2, 1957 in Medan the Second Congress of Bahasa Indonesia was held and one of the results was a resolution to improve the existing system. To implement this resolution the Minister of Education appointed a commission headed by Prijono and later by E. Katoppo. The commission put proposals to the Government and the spelling system was known as the Pembaruan system 1957. This system was never put into use.

Meanwhile the romanised spelling as current in the Malay Peninsula, as it was a British colony at that time, has its own history. On October 1904 a committee appointed by the Government of the Federated Malay States and headed by R.J. Wilkinson formulated what was later known as Ejaan Wilkinson. Later in Malay schools a slightly different system came into existence - the system known as Ejaan Za'ba. Among Malay writers of the fifties another system - known earlier as Ejaan Fajar Asia - formed during the Japanese occupation, was current.

In September 1956 in the Language Congress held in Singapore a desire to unify the spelling systems of Malay and Indonesia was articulated, and a new system that would be acceptable to both countries was proposed. And this is the beginning of all the attempts to unify the spelling systems of the two countries.

As a follow-up of the friendship treaty between the Republic of Indonesia and the Federation of Malay, a meeting was held between the Commission for the Implementation of Malay-Indonesian Language Cooperation headed by Slametmuljana and the Commission of the New Romanized Spelling headed by Syed Nasir bin Ismail on December 4 to December 7, 1959 in Jakarta. The result of this meeting was a proposal for the unification of the spellings of the two countries, known as **Pengumuman Bersama Ejaan Bahasa Melayu-Indonesia (Melindo)** (Joint Communiqué on the Malay-Indonesian (Melindo) Spelling). The proposal is widely known as **Ejaan Melindo 1959**. In the joint communiqué it was iterated that both governments were to make the system official not later than

January 1962. Meanwhile due to the Confrontation, the treaty was not realised, and the Melindo spelling - as was the Pembaruan system of 1957 - was never put into practice.

In 1966 at the end of the Confrontation the desire to activate earlier efforts came to the fore again. No attempt was made to implement the Ejaan Melindo in its entirety, as it was found that unsatisfactory principles, as seen from the linguistic point of view, and inefficiencies, as seen from the practical point of view, was prevalent in it. To improve the common spelling the Department of Education and Culture appointed a commission headed by Anton M. Moeliono to draft a new system. The new draft was put before consultation with the (now) Malaysian spelling committee headed by Syen Nasir bin Ismail. As a result the final draft was forwarded to both the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Indonesia. The common spelling system was called Ejaan Baru Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia and Ejaan Baru Bahasa Indonesia in Indonesia - different in name, but identical in substance. (On this common spelling see Harimurti Kridalaksana 1968.)

Both favourable and unfavourable reactions came from various sides, as the result of the New Spelling 1966. Several symposia, conferences and meetings were held to deal with all the reactions of the public. As a consequence, to conform the New Spelling with all the reactions, another draft was drawn; the result of which was the Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan 'Improved Spelling' popularly abbreviated as EYD. A commission to implement and disseminate this system headed by I.B. Mantra was installed. At the termination of the commission's task, the Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan was made official in an executive order no. 57/1972 and announced by President Soeharto before the Parliament.

From the historical survey outlined above it is clear that the endeavour to unify the spelling systems of Malay/Malaysia and Indonesia is simply a continuation and implementation of earlier efforts in both countries. Even from the conceptual point of view there is nothing new in it. Fokker Sr. should be credited as the first scholar who advocated the uniformity of the romanisation of Malay in the Dutch and British colonies (Fokker 1897). In the fifties Denzell-Carr made similar proposals (Carr 1951-2).

3. THE EVOLUTION OF INDONESIAN SPELLING

In this paper and in an earlier article (Harimurti Kridalaksana 1968) the focus of the study is on the institutional history of the Indonesian spelling. By 'institutional history' here is meant the history of the principles of all the officially created systems and their applications.

A conceptual history based on the studies and proposals of individual scholars which more or less influenced the officially created systems, is yet to be written.

This section will cover the principles, the choice and naming of the graphs, and the scope of all the systems mentioned in the preceding sections. The reader should remind himself that of the six systems, the Pembaruan 1957, the Melindo 1959 and the New Spelling 1966 were never officially put into practice.

3.1. PRINCIPLES OF THE SPELLING SYSTEMS

The Van Ophuijsen Spelling 1901 consists of principles and a list of words; so that the book is substantially a spelling dictionary. The objectives are clearly pedagogical, although phonemic insights are apparent in the formulations.

The Soewandi system 1947 is essentially a simplification and improvement of the Van Ophuijsen system, without any linguistic consideration iterated. The most notable characteristic of this system is the replacement of the Dutch-like *oe /u/* with the more widespread or 'international' *u* (cf. the proposal of the First Congress of Bahasa Indonesia 1938 to teach international spelling in schools), and the elimination of diaeresis and acute accent (cf. the resolution of the First Congress to consider simplification in the future).

The Pembaruan 1957 and the Melindo 1959 systems try to be consistent in the implementation of the one-to-one correspondence between phoneme and grapheme. The New Spelling 1966 and the Improved Spelling 1972, on the other hand, "..... try as far as possible to conform linguistic principles and social conditions by utilising Latin characters not productive in Bahasa Indonesia, without making extreme deviations from international conventions", and without requiring the replacement of existing typewriters and printing implements.

3.2. THE CHOICE OF GRAPHS

The following table will be useful in differentiating the spelling systems.

TABLE 1

Van Ophuijsen 1901	Soewandi 1947	Pembaruan 1957	Melindo 1959	New Sp. 1966	Improved Sp. 1972
j	j	y	y	y	y
dj	dj	j	j	j	j
nj	nj	ñ	ŋ ŋ̥	ny	ny
sj	-	ś	š	sy	sy
tj	tj	ṭ	c	c	c
ch	-	-	-	kh	kh
ng	ng	ŋ	ŋ	ng	ng
z	-	z	z	z	z
f	-	f	f	f	f
-	-	v	v	v	v
é	e	é	é	e	e
e	e	e	e	e	e
oe	u	u	u	u	u
ai	ai	ay	ay	ai	ai
au	au	aw	aw	au	au
oi	oi	oy	oy	oi	oi

- : not officially prescribed, but the use is quite widespread.

The Van Ophuijsen system uses diaeresis to differentiate *gulai curry soup* from *gulaï to put sugar into* and to indicate open syllable boundary, e.g. *saät, Koerän*. It uses <'> to indicate glottal stop. In the later systems these two diacritic marks were left out.

The use of <c> in the New Spelling 1966 and in the Improved Spelling 1972 to represent /ç/ has caused a lot of criticism. The use of the graph is also suggested in the Melindo system 1959, but as this system is never revealed in public, no reaction has been reported. The March 1972 Seminar on Bahasa Indonesia suggested the use of either <ch> or <c> to represent the phoneme.

The Commission on the Implementation and Dissemination of the Improved Spelling offered the following explanations:

The suggestion to use <ch> instead of <c> to represent /ç/ is not rejected on a priori grounds. The objection to this suggestion is only systematic in nature: if <tj> is changed to <ch>, as a consequence the old <sj> which represents /š/ should be changed to <sh> (cf. its

use in English spelling), and the old <nj> which represents /ñ/ should be changed to <nh> (cf. its use in Portuguese spelling), then what should the old <ch> which represents /X/ be changed to?

It was also suggested that <ch> will be more easily learned, because of its similarity to the English <ch>. This suggestion is without enough foundation: the English <ch> does not only represents /č/, but also /j/ as in *Chicago*, *machine*, *parachute*, /k/ as in *choir*, *orchid*, *school*, and /X/ as in *loch*.

In the fifties the Commission of Terminology has prescribed the Indonesianisation of the foreign graph <c> as follows:

c that represents /k/ should be written as k

e.g. *carbon* - karbon

classic - klasik

c that represents /s/ should be written as s

e.g. *cent* - sen

civil - sipil

As seen from the spelling and terminology standardisation up to 1966, the graph <c> can be regarded as unproductive graph; that is the reason why it is given new phonemic value in the 1966 and the 1972 spelling systems.

The use of <c> to represent /č/ is also motivated by the tradition in the romanisation of classical Indonesian languages.

The commission does not find it difficult to use it in the symbolisation of chemical elements and names, as the Geneva Convention on Chemical Nomenclature does not hold the principle of one-to-one correspondence between element and symbol; so that the symbol Ca is used to represent the Indonesianised term kalsium *calcium*, and Cd for kadmium *cadmium* (cf. in English the element gold is symbolised by Au, silver by Ag, sodium by Na, etc.)

3.3. THE NAMING OF THE GRAPHS

Letters of the alphabet and the manner of their naming in a language give an identity to the language. English, French, Dutch and German - to mention some well-known languages - use the same alphabet and the same letters, but what distinguishes one language from the other is the manner each names the letters. Indonesian language planners are always aware of the fact. The following table shows how they try to put a distinction to the system which they devise.

TABLE 2

Van Ophuijsen 1901	Soewandi 1947	Pembaruan 1957	Melindo 1959	New Sp. 1966	Improved Sp. 1972
		a	a	a	a
		bé	bi	ba	be
		cé(?)	ci/çi/	ca/ča/	ca/če/
		dé	di	da	de
		é	e	e	e
		éf	ef	ef	ef
		gé	gi	ga	ge
		ha	ha	ha	ha
		i	i	i	i
		jé/je/	ja/ĵa/	ja/ĵa/	je/je/
		ka	ka	ka	ka
		-	-	kja/Xa/	-
		él	el	el	el
		ém	em	em	em
		én	en	en	en
		-	-	nga/ŋa/	-
		-	-	nya/ña/	-
		o	o	o	o
		pé	pi	pa	pe
		ku	ku	ki	ki
		ér	er	er	er
		és	es	es	es
		-	-	sya/ša/	-
		té	ti	ta	te
		u	u	u	u
		vé	vi	vi	ve
		wé	wa	wa	we
		éks	eks	eks	eks
		yé	ya	ya	ye
		zét	zet	zet	zet

NOT PRESCRIBED

Neither the Van Ophuijsen nor the Soewandi system prescribed the naming of the graphs. Until the Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan or Improved Spelling was declared official in 1972 to spell the letters Indonesians adhered to the Dutch tradition. It is only natural that the Malaysians adhered to the English tradition.

A mixture of Dutch and English methods of spelling can be seen in the Melindo system, as it was designed to be the common spelling for the two countries.

When the New Spelling 1966 was introduced, the objections were directed not only to the use of the graphs, but also to the naming of the letters. In the 1972 Seminars on Bahasa Indonesia it was suggested to name the letters as presented in Table 2. The Commission on the Implementation and Dissemination of the Improved Spelling accepted the suggestion for the following reasons: (1) it does not entail a change in the proposed use of the graphs and their phonetic value, (2) it will minimise the change of habit that people have to sacrifice as a consequence of the Improved Spelling.

The Malaysian Spelling Committee, on the other hand, has announced that Bahasa Malaysia will retain the existing tradition.

As we can see from Table 2, the New Spelling 1966 tries to prescribe the naming of the digraphs kh, ng, ny, sy. This method was not adopted in the Improved Spelling 1972.

3.4. THE SCOPE OF SPELLING STANDARDISATION

On the creation of spelling the New Spelling 1966 put forth the following:

The problem of spelling has three aspects:

1. The phonological aspect, which involves the inventory of Indonesian phonemes, the selection of the graphs to represent them and the composition of an alphabet;
2. The morphological aspect, which involves the representation of morphemic units, such as stems, derivatives, reduplication, compounding, particles, and also a standardised spelling for borrowed elements;
3. The syntactical aspect, which involves utterance and sentence markers represented by punctuation.

The principle that spelling does not represent only the phonemes of a language and does not involve only the use of letters as outlined above are apparent in all the systems under study. There are, however, different degrees of exhaustiveness in their efforts to treat all the aspects of spelling standardisation.

As an example it might be useful to list the items treated by the

Improved Spelling which are as follows:

1. Indonesian alphabet and the naming of the letters
2. vowels, consonants, diphthongs
3. syllabication
4. phonotactics
5. proper nouns in the Improved Spelling
6. capitalisation
7. cursive style
8. morphology: (a) stems
(b) derivatives
(c) reduplication
(d) compounding
(e) particles
(f) prepositions
9. numbers
10. assimilation of borrowings: (a) graphemes and phonemes
(b) grammatical units
11. punctuation.

(Executive Order no. 57/1972 does not treat syllabication, phonotactics and assimilation of borrowings. They are treated in the extended version of the Improved Spelling called *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan* 'Guide of the Improved Spelling' completed after the Improved Spelling was made official, which was agreed upon in substance by both the Indonesian and Malaysian standing committees. The implementation of the *Pedoman*, however, is still to be sanctioned by the ministers of education of both countries.)

The *Pembaruan* system 1957 prescribes the writing of abbreviations and acronyms, but it does not seem to be systematically successful.

In the Improved Spelling 1972, on the other hand, they are dealt with in sections on capitalisation and punctuation.

4. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMPROVED SPELLING 1972

When the New Spelling was being introduced from 1966 to 1970, objections of both political and technical nature were raised.

Political objections were manifested in such accusations as that the New Spelling was a wholesale imitation of Malaysian spelling, and that its introduction was contrary to the spirit of the Youth Pledge 1928 (samples of such allegations could be found in the newspapers *Suluh Marhaen* and *El Bahar* and the magazine *Skets Masjarakat* of that period).

This outburst of emotion is understandable, as at that time a lot of people still suffered from the 'Confrontation trauma'. It might be

appropriate in this conjunction to quote an observer's remark:

A study of the recent Indonesian attempt to equate its spelling with that of Malaysia indicated that the complicated response to a spelling change was a reflection both of the changing political situation and of the pendulum-like political relations of the two countries. The vehemence of the attack on the suggested new spelling was perhaps more closely related to the new era of democracy that arose with Suharto and to opportunities for expression than a rejection of the spelling reform per se. Nonetheless, the criticisms reflected some of the political positions of various vested interests quite well and brought to light social alliances hitherto not clearly defined. (Rubin 1974:497)

Counter-attack against such unwarranted political accusations would no doubt generate political polarisation; and this could be harmful to the welfare of the nation, as the New Order was still in the process of putting political, economic, social and cultural conditions into normalcy.

Yet, to wait until the political and economic stability was reached could be too late and could have damaging effect to Bahasa Indonesia. The years up to 1966 witnessed that politics was the main and only pre-occupation of the government and consequently there was widespread deterioration in the economic, social and cultural sectors. The deterioration was most apparent in the language situation.

It is true that so far Bahasa Indonesia has shown itself capable of being the medium of culture and of national unity. But the following facts proved that up to that time nobody was aware that for a medium of communication maintenance was needed:

1. There was a decline in the appreciation of Bahasa Indonesia as a mark of national identity. There were more and more people, especially the intellectuals, who preferred to use foreign languages as a medium of communication. Also in the governmental circles such a situation was prevalent, whereas the Constitution explicitly stated that Bahasa Indonesia was the state language, so that Bahasa Indonesia should be used in formal and official communication;
2. Deterioration in language performance among students could be detected;
3. Technical and scientific terminology was in a state of confusion;
4. Also there was confusion in the use of spelling, as the official spelling, namely the Soewandi or the Republican system, was not properly observed.

If such development became out of hand, naturally people would not appreciate the important function of Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying factor in the multiethnic nation of Indonesia, the interest to learn Bahasa Indonesia would melt away, and communication in education and

in the sciences would be disintegrated, because of the lack of a standardised terminology, grammar and spelling. In other words, the life of the national language would be endangered, and this would be detrimental to the development of the country itself.

The Department of Education and Culture laid out a tentative plan to "to save the language" by standardising the grammar, terminology and spelling of Bahasa Indonesia. Priority was given to the standardisation of spelling system for the following reasons:

1. A standardised spelling is the foundation for a standardised grammar and terminology;
2. A standardised spelling has a filtering function against influences from other languages;
3. Standardising the spelling is easier to accomplish and it does not take too much time.

As stated above, no counter-attack against political objections were offered. Symposia, seminars and meetings on the Improved Spelling - which was developed from the New Spelling 1966 - were held, but the topic was always technical. Publicity of a technical nature was so efficient that eventually made any kind of antagonism of a political tint seem absurd.

It should be pointed out that publicity on the Improved Spelling was made possible only because the major newspapers of the country took a sympathetic stand for the Improved Spelling.

In the meantime, the general election of 1971 stabilised the political climate of the country and the obstacle that could have prevented the implementation of the Improved Spelling was removed.

A plan was announced for a transitional period of five years, upon which books with the old spelling could still be used, and only new publications and reprints were to be written in the Improved Spelling.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The implementation of the Improved Spelling was made possible because all factions of the society - administrators, educators, publishers, the military and the mass media - were involved. In other words, exactly because it became a national issue, its implementation was realised.

From the technical point of view, to prepare a spelling system is easier to accomplish than to make a standardised terminology and a standardised grammar; hence, of necessity, the standardisation of language should start from the standardisation of spelling. But since it needs a great deal of persuasion on the users, its realisation will

surely take some time.

The practice of standardisation is ultimately a social endeavour: although the linguist as the architect and technician of its linguistic aspect exerts his maximum effort to bring about his idea, he must be prepared for some compromise, as it is the public who will finally decide whether or not his concept is to be put into practice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANTON LAKE and Djajanto SUPRA

1973 *Seminar Bahasa Indonesia 1972*. Ende: Nusa Indah.

CARR, Denzel

1951-2 'The Prospects of Malay Orthographic Unification'.
Rocznik Orientalistyczne 17:169-72.

DEPARTEMEN PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAJAAN

1972 *Pendjelasan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan mengenai
Edjaan Jang Disempurnakan*. August 1972. Djakarta.

DEPARTEMEN PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN

1972 *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan*. Jakarta.

FOKKER, A.A.

1897 'Een uniforme spelling van het Maleische in de Nederlandsche
and Britsche bezittingen'. *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-
Indie* 2:29-43.

HARIMURTI KRIDALAKSANA

1968 'The New Spelling for Bahasa Indonesia'. *Indonesian Journal
of Cultural Studies* 3:200-25.

LEMBAGA BAHASA NASIONAL

1972 *Sedjarah Singkat Edjaan Bahasa Indonesia*. Djakarta.

RUBIN, Joan

1974 'Sociolinguistics'. In: Honigman, ed. *Handbook of Social
and Cultural Anthropology* 479-508.

INDONESIA

