

A RECENT HISTORY OF SPELLING REFORMS IN INDONESIA

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The recent history of the Indonesian language has shown us that the case for a standard spelling has continuously been the center of interest among language scholars and administrators. The need for such a spelling has been dealt with in a considerable number of public meetings and in the mass media.

The Van Ophuijsen Spelling

The First Indonesian Language Congress, 1938, expressed its agreement in principle with the current Van Ophuijsen spelling, while it recommended both the adoption of a new, more simplified, spelling some time in the future and the teaching of the so-called international spelling, possibly referring to the spelling rules as applied in European scientific writings. Framed with the assistance of two Indonesian teachers, Engkoe Nawawi gelar Soetan Makmoer and Moehammad Taib Soetar Ibrahim, the Van Ophuijsen spelling had served the purpose of promoting the consistency of the spelling of Malay. It had been the first official spelling code in the Netherlands East Indies and its standardizing influence on the orthographical practice, through the publication of the rules along with an alphabetical wordlist of about 8,800 entries under the title of Kitab Logat Melajoe (7th ed. 1921), could certainly be observed.

The representation of the phonemes by Roman script, not surprisingly, showed a striking similarity with that of the Dutch code. The /u/ vowel, for instance, was represented by the digraph <oe> as in oetang 'debt', djatoeh 'fall', whereas the laminal consonants /č, ʃ, ś, ħ/ and /y/ were respectively represented by the graphs <tj, dj, sj, nj>, and <j>, as in tjari 'look for', djari 'finger', masjhoer 'well-known', tanja 'ask', saya 'I'. The graphemes <q, u, v, x>, and <y>, were not utilized under this code, whereas <c> only appeared in the digraph <ch> to represent the phoneme /x/ as in chabar 'news', and tachta 'throne'. On the other hand, quite a number of diacritics were employed to mark phonemic distinctions. The acute accent on the grapheme <é> indicated the difference between /e/ and /ə/, e.g. élok 'beautiful', emas 'gold'. A superscript comma <'> after a vowel either represented the glottal stop, as in pa' 'father', ta' 'not', or the 'waslah'-feature in Arabic loan-words, e.g. wa'llahi 'in the name of God', Zoe'lhidjdjah 'twelfth month of the Muslim Year', whereas a superscript inverted comma <·> before or after a vowel marked the presence of the laryngeal fricative ain in Arabic borrowings, e.g. adat 'custom', ma'na 'meaning'. The diaeresis placed over a vowel indicated that the vowel was to be pronounced in a separate syllable, as in iaïtoe 'i.e.', Koerän 'Koran', and menamai' 'give a name to'.

Monosyllabic words, belonging to the class of clitics, were to be linked to the adjacent word or word group. These comprise the forms: koe 'I, me, my', kau 'you', moe 'you, your', nja 'he, his, him', se 'one', ke 'to', and di 'in, at'. The last mentioned three words were to be hyphenated before an initial capital letter in subsequent words: se-Meter 'one meter', ke-Padang 'to Padang', di-Betawi 'in Batavia'. Particles, such as kah, lah, and tah, were linked to the

previous words; likewise, the particle poen was to be joined, unless it functioned as an emphatic marker where it had to be written separately. Compounds were written either in one word, hoeloebalang 'commander, district chief', matahari 'sun'; or hyphenated, anak negeri 'subject of a state', djeroek-manis 'orange' or written separately, katjang goreng 'fried peanuts'. Duplicated forms were optionally written with a kind of shorthand device by placing the figure (2) after the word or constituent, provided that the preceding form was duplicated in full, e.g. laki2 'male', seorang2 'individually', tanam2an 'plants'. In case the preceding word was only to be partially duplicated, no doubling mark was allowed, thus berlari-lari 'to run to and fro', mengerak-ggerakkan 'to put in motion'. The practice of using the number for 'two' at the end of any form to be reduplicated derived from earlier Arabic script in Malay.

The Soewandi Spelling

Amidst the revolutionary upheaval, the Indonesian government felt the pinch to revise the existing spelling code. Minister Soewandi of Education and Culture, in his decision of March 19, 1947, sanctioned the new spelling standards to be applied henceforth.

From a linguistic point of view, the main objective of this reform was to simplify the writing of Indonesian. For that reason the new code stipulated that all diacritics used so far were to be substituted or be dispensed with. The superscript comma, indicating the glottal stop, for example, was to be changed into <k>, whereas the others were to be eliminated. From a psychological point of view, the substitution of <u> for <oe>, being the only letter-change in phoneme representation, could be interpreted as the expression of alienated feelings towards the Dutch at that time. Oetang 'debt' and djatoeh 'fall' were in future to be spelled utang and djatuh. In spite of the fact that the Roman alphabet had been wholly adopted for written purposes in Indonesian, no specific mention was made as to the status of the graphemes <c, f, q, v, x, y, z>. One need only think of their uses in the field of natural sciences to become aware of this oversight.

Alternative spellings were permitted in the case of long established borrowings. So one could write either djaman or zaman 'period, era', lasat or lazat 'delicious', masarakat or masjarakat 'society', the reasoning being that the Indonesianization process was still in progress. Likewise, the new standard allowed the deletion of the schwa in certain polysyllabic words thereby creating potentially new consonantal-cluster patterns. Both members of each following pair would be acceptable: perahu - prahu 'boat', menteri - mentri 'minister', belakang - blakang 'back, backside'. In line with the purpose of simplification, Soewandi's rule on the writing of doubled forms gave more leeway in that one would be permitted to use the figure (2) also after the prefixed constituents of complex words, provided that hyphens be used to demarcate the duplicated parts. Thus one would be allowed to write se-kali2 'absolutely', ber-hubung2-an 'interrelated', beside sekali-

kali and berhubung-hubungan. Interestingly, this provision was eventually considered by many people as having obligatory force so that even in official texts duplicated forms were hardly ever written in full.

In consideration of any possible juridical consequences, the code did not obtain in the case of current personal names and those of corporate bodies whose spellings had been fixed. Nevertheless, many people found it worth while to change the spelling of their names since, on the one hand, this did not entail any complicated legal procedures for the majority of the public, while on the other hand, the change symbolized an awareness of a new identity.

Because Soewandi's ministerial decree had merely laid down the modifications in the previous standards, the unaffected provisions under the Van Ophuijsen code apparently remained in force, although never expressly stated in later communications. This situation understandably gave rise to uncertain attitudes among the public as to the spelling of lexical and grammatical items not mentioned in the standards of 1947, which further resulted in several deviations from the norm. Alisjahbana's journal Pembina Bahasa Indonesia, for example, argued for and promoted the writing of compounds in one word.

Anyhow, the problem of standard spelling seemed not to have been settled for the time being and it was therefore not surprising that the question of spelling was again in the lime-light during the Second Indonesian Language Congress in Medan, 1954. The fact that this convention was opened by the President of the Republic and attended by the Minister of Education was enough proof of the importance given to matters of a linguistic nature. Professor Prijana (1955), of the University of Indonesia, presented a paper on the principles of a rational, standard spelling. The participants, representing a wide group of scholars, writers, teachers, and journalists, thereupon agreed to adopt a resolution specifying the basic principles of a new spelling.

A competent commission, recognized by the government, was to be charged with the design of a practical spelling for daily purposes without alleviating linguistic considerations. The principle of one-to-one correspondence became the basis for phonemic representation. The commission was also given the task of composing an accurate dictionary on orthography and pronunciation, based on conscientious research. It was further decided that the spelling of Indonesian loan-words should be determined after the fixed spelling of "native" words had been completed. Finally, the new spelling code was to become official by legislation.

The follow-up of this widely publicized meeting was the appointment by the Minister of Education of the Committee for the Renewal of the Spelling, headed by Prijana and comprising sixteen other members, in July, 1956. The committee finished its draft in August, 1957. The most salient features of the proposals are outlined hereunder.

The Renewal Spelling

Two alphabets would be officially recognized. The "national" one, deviating in its order of presentation from the Roman, and reflecting the Sanskritist background of the committee's chairman, actually consisted of a phonemic inventory chart, starting with the vowels, followed by the diphthongs and the

list of consonants. In that order, the names of the graphs in Indonesian, and new names at that, were for the first time officially introduced. In accordance with the regional Nusantara syllabaries, all letters, except for the vowels (6) and diphthongs (3), were to be pronounced with an /a/ at the end. Thus the velars sounded like ka, ga, nga. (One could sense an inconsistency in the distinction between phonemes and graphemes in finding the letter <v> among the list of phonemes.) The "international" alphabet, i.e. the Roman set of letters in the customary order, essentially followed the Dutch pronunciation with six exceptions: gé, jé, ku, u, yé, and eks.

In order to comply with the one-to-one correspondence principle, six new symbols were introduced <ɟ, ʈ, j, ɲ, y>, and <ś>, in exchange for the old <ng, tj, dj, ny, j>, and <sj>, respectively. How these changes were to be realized in typing and in print, in view of the scarcity of the needed facilities at that time, remained an open question. Two other proposals involved the revival of the acute accent, to distinguish the phoneme /e/ from the schwa /ə/, and the change of diphthong representations into <ay, aw, oy>, to mark them off from the vowel sequences ai, au, oi.

A step forward in the standardization process was the inclusion of a number of chapters cursorily dealing with (1) the adaptation of loanwords in spelling and pronunciation; (2) the use of capital letters; (3) the codification of abbreviations and acronyms; and (4) punctuation. In terms of coverage of subjects, the Renewal-draft certainly surpassed the two preceding codes. Opinions among the members were not always unanimous, however. An example of different views was expressed by the final consensus to defer the decision of when and where to write the letter <h> in words since some committee members had their doubts about the phonemic status of the unit represented by that letter in certain environments. A minority group, lead by Amin Singgih, filed a dissenting report wherein it was stated that the syllabication of complex words should have also taken morpheme boundaries into account so that the visual form of stem and affixes be preserved. In support of their argument, these members cited the confusing division of duplicated forms as in me-na-kut-na-ku-ti, where the first part showed the stem -nakut- while the second only the form -naku-. Considerations of pronunciation and tradition, i.e. Malay and Indonesian in Arabic script, had not enough weight, in their opinion, to motivate a change in the existing rules (cf. Verhaar's comment on this question, 1973).

Meanwhile, language protagonists in the Federated States of Malaya declared their wish at a language congress in Johor, 1956, to unify the spelling codes of Malay and Indonesian. The Indonesian government was very receptive to this idea, not the least on account of the fact that the Commission on the Renewal of the Spelling had recently been appointed. A meeting was consequently scheduled for the preparation of a joint spelling system by both parties in December 1957. The Malay delegation was lead by Syed Nasir bin Ismail, Director of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the language planning and development agency in Kuala Lumpur. Professor Slametmuljana, of the University of Indonesia, headed the Indonesian group. The outcome of the work sessions was a draft proposal called Edjaan Melaju-Indonesia, or Edjaan MELINDO if abbreviated.

The MELINDO Spelling

A study of the MELINDO draft leads us to the conclusion that it was essentially the Renewal draft, if only modified in formulation and in the order of presentation. The prevailing spirit of friendship and solidarity and the willingness to give and take among the delegates was strikingly expressed in the agreed naming of the letters of the 'international' Roman alphabet. The name list manifested a mixture of three sources: the Dutch tradition, ha (h), ka (k), er (r); the national alphabet of the 1957-Renewal draft, e.g. ja (j), wa (w), and ya (y); and the English-Malay usage, e.g. bi (b), di (d), pi (p), vi (v), and eks (x). As for the consonantal representations, the 1957 phonemic chart reappeared with three alterations: the <c> instead of <ɟ>, <ŋ> replacing <ñ>, and <š> instead of <ś>. The <ɲ>, <j>, and <y> symbols had been retained. Also included were explanations on the allophonic variations of /n/, /k/, /b/ and /d/, which should remain unchanged in the orthography. The /h/ was given full phonemic status and the traditional spelling of words in which the <h> graph appeared was to be maintained.

The paragraphs on punctuation, capitalization, reduplication, and the writing of particles and clitics were almost identical in content with the relevant sections in the Renewal draft.

Both parties agreed that the MELINDO-spelling was to be promulgated by their respective governments as the new standard in the two countries in January, 1962, at the latest. Political developments however prevented temporarily the realization of this modern example of international cooperation in language planning and language standardization. The ensuing confrontation period not only put a halt to further unification, but it also initiated a slack of interest in language development on the part of the Government.

The transfer of executive power in March 1966 heralded a new era of political order. In response to the call for national restructuring and reconstruction, the Institute of Language and Literature launched an overall program, albeit somewhat vague in terms of manpower and funding, of language standardization and literary development. Mrs. Rujati Mulyadi, head of the Institute, assigned to a small committee, consisting of four staff members and four University of Indonesia lecturers with Anton M. Moeliono as chairman, the task of studying previous spelling systems and drafting a new proposal. The committee completed this crash program within four months and presented its draft to the Minister of Education for consideration in September, 1966.

The New Spelling

The efforts to improve the spelling rules again had been warranted by (1) the deficiencies in the current code vis-à-vis the rapid development of Indonesian; (2) the development of linguistic insight and the growth of linguistic sophistication; (3) the future role of Indonesian in the region and in the international world; and (4) the goals of language codification and eradication of illiteracy. Soepomo, in a recent article (1972), mentioned in this respect the lack of editorial norms, the variant and often confusing forms of abbreviations, and the unsystematic adaptation of loanwords. In a similar vein, Harimurti Kridalaksana (1974) observed a deterioration

in language performance and the disordered use of the Soewandi code as people did not properly adhere to the rules.

The new draft, named Edjaan Baru (New Spelling), was in effect a synthesis and an improved systematization of the previous 1957 and 1959 proposals, while at the same time incorporating a number of sound suggestions which had been published in Bahasa dan Budaya, the Language Institute's journal.

At the outset it was explained that spelling standardization had to take into account three main aspects: (1) the phonological, which involved the phoneme inventory, the graphs to represent the phonemes, and the choice of an alphabet; (2) the morphological, which had to deal with the representation of morphemic units such as stems, clitics, and complex forms, including rules for the adaptation of borrowed elements; and (3) the syntactical, pertaining to the representation of utterances and sentences, a subject usually included in a style manual. Accordingly, the 1966 draft consisted of the following chapters: 1. Principles of the New Spelling; 2. Phonemic System and Alphabet; 3. Spelling of Words; 4. Capitalization; 5. Italicization; and 6. Punctuation.

Although the New Spelling proposals were the most comprehensive in substance and in coverage of topics collected so far, public reaction was not overwhelmingly favorable. Popularization by members of the committee in the newspapers and television programs, and in discussions with teachers, journalists, and students, met with criticism and feelings of coercion. The fact that the same draft was simultaneously presented to the Malays was another reason for some to suspect that the New Spelling would be a degrading surrender to a smaller country. A social group which still adhered to the confrontation doctrine even dubbed the new spelling EJABU, thereby insinuating its similarity and techniques with GESTAPU. In fact, when initial efforts of rapprochement were undertaken by the Indonesian Supreme Military Operational Command and the Malay Government to eventually reestablish diplomatic relations, language cooperation again cropped up during the negotiations. The ILL-spelling committee was thereupon attached to the office of the military command and after preliminary talks in Jakarta, formal discussions between the two parties were continued in Kuala Lumpur in June, 1967.

Public meetings, sometimes lasting ten hours or more, were organized in the major cities of the country: Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Ujung Pandang (Makassar). It must be noted here, that, whereas polemic articles in the mass media hardly succeeded in reconciling opposing views, face-to-face communication during these gatherings almost invariably brought about a sphere of mutual understanding and a consensus that a new spelling was warranted, be it not necessarily the one advocated by the Language Institute. Both the Language and Literature Symposium of 1966 and the Indonesian Language Seminar of 1968, each attended by approximately two hundred participants, were in favor of the New Spelling. The Standardization ad hoc Committee of the Seminar even adopted a resolution that the draft be made official within the shortest time possible without the revocation of the 1947 code for a minimum period of five years as a transitory measure.

Objections of a technical nature were directed against the naming of the graphs in the new alphabet. Most people could not very well accept the idea of having to pronounce the letters like a, ba, cha, da ... although this method of naming had been derived from the existing regional syllabaries as had been suggested in the Renewal system. Another topic of dispute was the writing of compounds. It very often appeared that the discussants had no clear ideas about the nature of these words, which had hardly been subjected to linguistic analysis. The most neutral solution to generally write them separately was felt as a setback after years of practice of linking words arbitrarily.

More serious objections, which ultimately prevented the official enacting of the new standards, originated from unsuspected quarters. Had the members of the spelling committee been more familiar with mass psychology and techniques of social engineering, these attacks could have been diverted if not eliminated. Rubin (1973) in her report on language planning processes in Indonesia pointed to three other components beside the political trauma. The implementation of the New Spelling was considered too costly at a time when the economic position was relatively weak. The timing was therefore unfortunate since language development was not high on the scale of priorities. Some important groups felt left out when they learned of the completed draft. Terminology committee members, teachers, and religious spokesmen criticized the conceptual framework of the proposal, while in fact they were complaining about the lack of representation of their respective groups. Although the spelling committee was retroactively appointed by the Minister of Education, official support and participation in the promotion of the new spelling by officials in the Education Ministry proved inadequate. As a result, the reform appeared to be the creation of a very small group by virtue of its perhaps somewhat exclusive, and admittedly single-hearted, activities.

It was only after the intervention of the new Minister of Education, Mashuri, and of his Director of Higher Education, Koesnadi Hardjasoemantri, that any hope existed for survival of the spelling reform. Then Harsja W. Bachtiar, Coordinator of the Ministerial Consortium for Social and Cultural Sciences, noted for his deep involvement in language development, convened a nationwide seminar in March 1972, which was attended by a select group of well-known linguists, prominent scholars from educational circles, influential journalists, and a number of outstanding scientists. The outcome of this important meeting was unanimous agreement with the New Spelling draft, but with the recommendation that the naming of the letters should comply with traditional usage and that the digraph <ch> should preferably be used in stead of <c> to represent the /c/ phoneme. It was also suggested to name the new code Ejaan Nasional (National Spelling) for psychological reasons, and to have the New Spelling become effective not later than January, 1973.

It turned out that the promulgation of the reform could be realized earlier than expected, thanks to the sympathetic stand of the media and the efficient staff work in the Education Ministry and several other Ministries. Favorable editorials and commentaries in the newspapers, successful lobbying in parliament, and widespread campaign efforts by the Language Institute members, paved the way for general public acceptance. On Indonesia's National Day, 17 August, 1972,

President Soeharto announced in an executive order the sanctioning of the new spelling standards under the name of Ejaan yang Disempurnakan (The Improved Spelling), published in a red-and-white booklet. Simultaneously, a substantially identical Malay version was enacted in Kuala Lumpur.

The Improved Spelling

Rules of the Improved Spelling were classified under the following chapters: 1. The Alphabet; 2. The Spelling of Words; 3. Capitalization and Italicization; 4. Punctuation. The guide dispensed with the lengthy expositions of the underlying principles and arguments, included in the 1966 draft, which had proved too difficult for layman comprehension.

The first chapter started with the listing of the Roman alphabet and the naming of the graphs. The traditional pronunciation was largely maintained so as not to incur too great difficulties in adaptation. The changes were /ce/ for <c>, /je/ for <j>, /ki/ for <q>, and /ye/ for <y>. The next few paragraphs dealt with the representation of vowels, diphthongs, and consonants. On the evidence of past practice, the <e> was maintained to represent both /e/ and /ə/. New consonant symbols were <j> as in jalan 'way, road', <y> as in payung 'umbrella', <ny> as in nyonya 'lady, Mrs.', <sy> as in syarat 'condition', <c> as in cakap 'able, handsome', <kh> as in tarikh 'calendar, era'. It appeared that ultimately <c> in stead of <ch> had been selected to represent /c/, consistent with the Linguistic Institute's advice. The last section stipulated a recommendation to adapt the spelling of personal names and other proper names to the new code.

The second chapter was divided into seven sections dealing with the orthography of stems, derivatives, reduplications, compounds, prepositions, emphatic particles, and clitical pronouns. Notable changes concerned the spelling of reduplicated forms, which were generally to be written in full; the writing of compounds as separate words; and the distinctive separation of the prepositions di 'in, at' and ke 'to' from the homonymous prefixes di- and ke-.

The third chapter introduced a new tradition in that the use of capital letters and italics was henceforth formally regulated. It only consisted of two short sections since it was anticipated that further specifications would be included in a forthcoming elaborated version of the guide.

The concluding fourth chapter specified the rules for the use of punctuation marks such as the period, comma, semicolon, colon, hyphen, dash, ellipsis, question mark, exclamation mark, parentheses, brackets, double and single quotation marks, the reduplicative mark, and the solidus or virgule. These rules generally conformed with international standards.

The common spelling code was the beginning of a step up of joint language planning and development efforts. In October, 1972, a standing committee for the development of the Indonesian language, under the chairmanship of Amran Halim, was installed, charged with the task of promoting further cooperation with Malaysia in language matters. The Indonesians and Malaysians met twice annually and succeed-

ed after six fruitful meetings to produce two general manuals consisting of rules and guidelines in elaboration of the improved spelling standard and the coining of terminology. The Indonesian versions were named Pedoman Umum Ejaan yang Disempurnakan (General Manual for the Improved Spelling) and Pedoman Umum Pembentukan Istilah (General Manual for Terminology) respectively. As a gesture of courteous reciprocity, both the Indonesian and the Malaysian version were simultaneously sanctioned by the two nations' Ministers of Education on August 31, 1975, Malaysia's National Day. The Indonesian committee also assigned a work group, headed by Harimurti Kridalaksana, to compose a spelling dictionary: a continuous list of orthographically written words of the standard language whose syllable divisions were to be expressly indicated. A first draft was completed in May, 1973, and distributed to a sample group of potential users for comments and corrections.

In conclusion, the pertinent questions naturally force themselves upon us whether the implementation of the Improved Spelling so far has been faithfully adhered to and whether the new code has indeed served its purpose of meeting the demands of the Indonesian language, which has gradually been increasing its registers. A well-founded assessment at this stage is hardly possible on account of the short period since the Improved Spelling took effect and by reason of, paradoxically, the delay of three years before the manual has become official and available to the public. Therefore, the following cursory remarks are presented, based only on the limited observations of the writer concerning the practice of the new spelling in newspapers and magazines.

As for the use of the letter symbols, <c>, surprisingly enough, has caused fewer difficulties for written purposes than expected. Its new pronunciation however has not yet been adopted satisfactorily: the pronunciation /se/ appears to be virtually ineradicable. People also do not seem to know exactly how to pronounce <q> and <x>. The adaptation of loanwords to the Indonesian spelling poses great problems. This may be accounted for by people's ignorance of the existing rules and those yet to be published. To cite a few examples, one may find psikologi beside psychologi and psykhologi; taksi varying with taxi. The spellings of some personal names, usually adapted to the new standard by the editors, have frequently resulted in mispronunciations. How does one pronounce the name Sujono?

The morphological aspect in the orthographic practice shows the following problems. Combination forms, such as antar- 'inter', swa- 'self', and panca- 'fivefold', are often separately written from the subsequent word. Journalese evidently prefers the use of the reduplicative mark (2), and in raised position as a square mark (²) at that, to the writing of words in full. A serious matter concerns the practice of writing the homonymous prepositions and prefixes di and ke. They are either consistently linked to or consistently separated from the adjacent word irrespective of their categories.

Due to the absence of a strong tradition in modern

rhetoric and style, the practice of capitalization and punctuation is perhaps relatively the worst part. Here it seems that, without proper guidance and long term practice at school level, people will continue to put the wrong marks in the wrong places.

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