

***Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa Satu Bahasa:***  
**An Analysis of Indonesia's National Language Policy**

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Indonesia's National Language Policy has been called a "miraculous success" (Woolard 2000:456). Other analysts have lauded Indonesia's success in developing and implementing a non-colonial national language, and have contrasted Indonesia's success with the "failures" in other post-colonial nations such as the Philippines, Malaysia and India (Soenjono 1998).

While it is certainly true that Indonesia's policy has been successful in making Bahasa Indonesia a modern language of administration, education and national solidarity, and no other post-colonial nation has been able to bring an indigenous language into the modern world so quickly and completely, this paper questions the conventional wisdom of Indonesia's "miraculous success" from three angles. First, was the choice of Malay as a national language truly an inspired choice, or was it inevitable, due to the historical role of Malay as a lingua franca? Second, did Indonesia have any other choice but to develop an indigenous language, given that its colonial language, Dutch, lacked international prominence? Third, has the absence in Indonesia of a major international language been an obstacle to the nation gaining prominence internationally, both politically and economically, as opposed to the countries which have "failed" in language planning?

The historical issues are examined, along with the factors which led to Indonesia's national language policy. Indonesia's policies are contrasted with other post-colonial nations, and the influence of Indonesia's decisions on the nation's current political, economic and linguistic status is analyzed.

Dardjowidjojo, Soenjono (1998) Strategies for a Successful National Language Policy: the Indonesian Case. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 130.

Woolard, Kathryn A. (2000) Review of *Shifting Languages: Interaction and Identity in Javanese Indonesian* (J. Joseph Errington) in *Language and Society* 29:3.