Surviving rather than thriving: Indonesian language education in Australian high schools

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Abstract

This paper examines the current state of, and potential opportunities for promoting, Indonesian language education in Australian high schools and the long-term strategic applications of such investment. This paper is presented in two parts. The first examines the decline in the study of Indonesian language, placing this trend in the broader context of issues affecting the efficacy of language planning policy and the praxis of language other than English (LOTE) education in the Australian education system. This section addresses the key limitations of established approaches to the formulation of LOTE education policy and its implementation in Australian schools. The second part of this paper cross-references the findings of linguists, academics and practitioners, and political actors to demonstrate how embedding Indonesian language studies into the Australian education system can deliver a range of benefits for students, Australian society, and the national interest. The introduction of Bahasa Indonesia into the linguistic ecology of Australian schools is an agent of intellectual enrichment for young Australians and equips them for prosperous working lives in the internationalised work cycle of Asia Pacific. Furthermore, Indonesian language is of the utmost importance to achieving subregional security and development as well as culturally embedding Australia with its neighbours. Thus, the paper evaluates present approaches to promote Indonesian languages. The reinvigoration of Indonesian language study needs greater investment into a range of areas including Indonesian language teaching in the early childhood/primary years; increased rigour and access to suitable testing systems; deeper institutional linkages and study abroad; and increased investment in teaching materials and teacher training. Through this more systematic approach to bolstering the study of Bahasa Indonesia, policymakers can secure a more prosperous future for the citizens of both countries and help realise a greater stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Introduction

Indonesian is struggling to thrive in the linguistic ecology of Australian schools. Since 1952, Indonesian has been among the most widely studied foreign languages in Australia but in recent years Indonesian language study has stagnated and the number of institutions that offer Indonesian classes is dwindling (Slaughter, 2007a). While approximately 200,000 primary and secondary students study Bahasa Indonesia, for the last decade it has remained an at-risk low candidature language that floats between 1,000 to 2,000 Year 12 scholars each year (Slaughter, 2007a). This paper argues that this is due to a multitude of factors, largely stemming from decades of neglect, particularly in the amount and ways funding and other support are allocated to language other than English (LOTE) education (Dunne & Pavlyshyn, 2013). Australian school students do not learn a language and consequently miss out on benefits that flow from language learning. A rise in monolingualism also has broader implications for the future of Australia and its place in the region and the world (Scarino, 2014). A more systematic approach to bolstering the study of LOTE, and Bahasa Indonesia in particular, is required. This involves greater investment in Indonesian language teaching in the early childhood/primary years; suitable testing systems; study exchange programs; and teaching materials and teacher training.

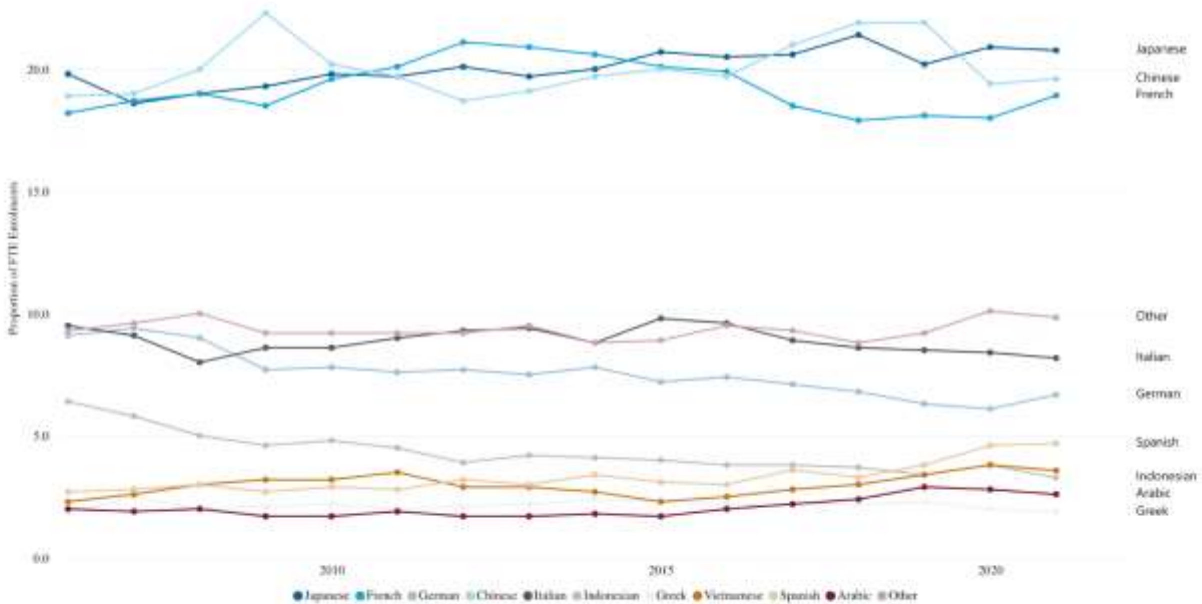

Figure 1: Year 12 enrolments in tertiary-recognised languages are calculated as a percentage of total full-time enrolments in Year 12 languages other than English (LOTE).

Sources: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, (n.d).

The benefits of Indonesian language study

Given Australia's proximity to the Indo-Pacific, the most super-diverse linguistic ecology in the world, and its increasingly multicultural population, diversification of the Australian linguistic ecology is achievable. Australian students spend half the hours of other OECD member state students studying language each week (Bonnor et al., 2021), putting Australian students at a distinct educational and sociocultural disadvantage. Language education, as explained most extensively by Firdaus, is an intellectual entitlement of the global citizen (Firdaus, 2013). Language study has been found to improve bilateral relations, cultural perceptions of other states and the cognitive abilities of students (Dunne & Pavlyshyn, 2013; Oliver, 2013; Rasman, 2021). However, the Australian federal government has continuously failed to intersectionally innovate educational policy on LOTE education. The implemented language planning policies and initiatives of Bahasa Indonesia have been static objects of policy, unlike the fluctuating diplomatic relationship and status of Australia and Indonesia.

Foreign language teaching is considered a fundamental right of students by linguists. Multilingualism can instil many benefits in the context of Australian secondary schools by promoting cultural literacy and increasing learning outcomes and employment prospects for a more diverse cohort of students. However, without the situational placement of children in a linguistically diverse environment, it is nearly impossible for a child to learn another language (Rasman, 2021), placing the onus on Australian schools to mirror the diversity of local communities. These benefits highlight the role Indonesian language can play in securing more equitable outcomes for diverse communities and access to tertiary education. Currently, there is a large disparity between classes offered to secondary students dependent on their socioeconomic status; within a larger context of disparity between private and publicly funded school students' placements in the Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks (ATAR). Diversity is a highly causal factor in the systematic disadvantage of urban public schools.

In 2013, the largest proportion of schools with ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage) scores below 1000 was in south-western Sydney, schools which typically have a high Language

Background Other Than English (LBOTE) student population, at a staggering 72 per cent of students by 2021 (Dunne & Pavlyshyn, 2013). The largest language family is Asian, contributing upwards of 30 per cent of LBOTE students yearly (although Arabic is the largest 'uniform' language). Only 12.7 per cent of NSW teachers from the same data collection stated that they identified with LBOTE, compared to that 29.6 per cent of NSW students. In 2011, we saw public schools teeter over half (to 52 per cent) LBOTE students in NSW—whereas they only make up 37 per cent of Catholic schools and a measly 22 per cent in independent schools.

> In NSW, 83 per cent of students in fully selective schools came from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), while more than half of the 99 schools with **fewer than 10 per cent LBOTE students were private and in wealthy areas**. (Baker & Chrysanthos, 2019)

The promotion of LOTE can generally provide more accessible classes to linguistically diverse students who are familiar with learning a language. Nonetheless, Indonesian is among many often designated a 'community' language, for the fear it would give LBOTE students an 'upper hand' (by this estimation, an 'upper hand' would be possessed by English-language background students currently). It follows that it is the state's responsibility to affect change where students are not able to: it is the state's responsibility to diversify their students' linguistic and social capabilities at a young age, to intellectually and culturally enrich them. More importantly, the reform of LOTE intersects with a dire need for educational reform to close the racial disparity in ICSEA scores and ATAR rankings. By providing a comprehensive revitalisation of the initial launch of Bahasa Indonesia across schools, we can better integrate the educational outcomes and expectations across disparate income students in metropolitan areas—while offering employment opportunities remotely.

Bahasa Indonesia emerged as a technology to unite the Indonesian population through a mutually intelligible vernacularisation that shares a script. Unlike the three other priority languages stipulated by the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) initiative—Hindi, Mandarin and Korean—the standardised and non-tonal dialect of Bahasa Indonesia is spoken across multiple borders in the Asia Pacific and is intelligible to the majority of the Indonesian population (Slaughter, 2007b, pp. 51–52). Korean, on the other hand, is limited to native speakers, and Hindi and Mandarin are not practised in their standardised forms countrywide. Bahasa Indonesia bears linguistic connection to the majority of popular LBOTE backgrounds found in Australian schools; particularly Chinese languages, Tagalog, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and Arabic. The number of students that natively speak Indonesian are greatly outnumbered by those that speak Indian, Chinese and Arabic languages, while they may still learn a new vocabulary of the formalised variety, as Indonesian is a diglossic language. As the Indonesian alphabet is also Roman, Indonesian education can coincide with the development of English literacy in children. Children's minds adapt to the semiotic nuance and phonological capacities of Bahasa Indonesia faster than older age groups studying the language (Rasman, 2021).

The sociolinguistic and morphological features of Bahasa Indonesia are identifiable to Australian students, lending to the increased effectiveness of its practical application and teaching. Bahasa Indonesia is a flexible lingua franca derived from the Riau variety of Malay in the Austronesian language family. It is mutually intelligible by many other dialect groups and exists in countless indigenised variants. For these reasons, Australian children reportedly thrive in learning environments that develop knowledge about Indonesian culture and language. Multicultural education that is accessible and beneficial to both English-speaking and LBOTE students is achievable, through its proximity to the Indo-Pacific, the most super-diverse linguistic ecology in the world, and an increasingly diverse culture.

National interest

The import–export structures of Australia and Indonesia are complementary. Australia is currently moving toward a service economy, in which tertiary education and mining exports are the largest sources of revenue,

whereas the Indonesian economy has a large agricultural and manufacturing labour force. Australia and Indonesia rarely compete to sell resources and could mutually benefit from the liberalisation of trade routes through the Torres Strait. Indonesia is on track to place among the world's 10 largest economies by 2025. After undergoing a recession as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesia already boasts a higher economic growth rate than Australia in the second quarter of 2022 (LPEM University of Indonesia, 2021). In 2022, Indonesia presided over the G20 and was arguably the most influential actor in the Association of South-East Asian Nations. Indonesia's economic complexity rating is higher than that of Australia, while Australia's industries have historically competed against each other (to their demise) and outsourced their labour. It is imperative that Australia affirm ties between countries from which it receives specialised practitioners via the Skilled Migrant scheme, such as Indonesia, and revitalises the education of its own population to surpass labour shortages and procure sociocultural prosperity.

Determined cultures versus theoretical frameworks

Foundationally, Indonesian language education is undermined by the lack of cultural nuance, which was historically addressed in the National Policy on Languages (NPL) in 1987. Policies implemented to encourage the scholarship of Indonesian have consisted of static instalments, deprived of the complexity of the socially constructed nature of the NPL. Of the four aspects of typical language planning policy (LPP) —language-in-education planning, status planning, corpus planning, and prestige planning—the latter three are neglected, as mentioned in the 1987 National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco, 1987; see also Firdaus, 2013). In fact, the policy (NPL) noted that language education is a nonpartisan project, as it is a technology conducive to both private and public interaction. Furthermore, it recognises language as ever-evolving and an instrument that can effect change and serve functions in a 'wide range of cultural, artistic, intellectual, personal and group identification, religious, economic and socio-political' contexts (Lo Bianco, 1987, p. 6). The rigid and muted nature of previous policy has created scepticism toward the effectiveness of foreign language teaching. The inconsistency of the NPL plagues each disciplinary approach to teaching Indonesian and fundamentally underscores its shortcomings.

The National Policy on Languages (1987) set out four goals to achieve the 'integration of foreign languages in domestic education'. The first goal, 'competence in English', was indicative of the cultural anxiety that English could be linguistically and culturally endangered by the introduction of a foreign language (Bostock, 1973). Monolingualism is so steeped in Australian culture that the Australian curriculum only considers students to be of three groups; second and first language learners as well as 'background' learners, all of which are at most bilingual (Scarino, 2014). Consequently, federal reports commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Hill, 2012), or those formulated by political actors like Kevin Rudd, have characterised the addition of Indonesian to the Australian school curriculum as a primarily economic endeavour, to deemphasise Indonesia's potential sphere of cultural influence (Kohler, 2018). Between the 1960s and 1990s, the Indonesian language was widely implemented in Australian schools as a result of staunch opposition to Communism, due to Indonesia's non-alignment with either the East or West during the Cold War (Mason, 2020). The popularity of the language continued to rise into the era of Paul Keating's administration, which had developed relatively strong diplomatic relations with the Suharto regime (Lindsey, 2010). Teaching Indonesian was in the political interests of both globalist thinkers, who wanted multiculturalism to begin to permeate Australian education, and nationalists, who feared the threat of communist ideology to domestic politics.

The centralisation of economic strategy in government and institute reports has prevailed, driving popular engagement with Indonesian language study before the Australian–Indonesian diplomatic relationship took a downward turn. The economic status of Indonesia, despite fiscal growth, has been in decline due to the overwhelmingly disparaging representation of poverty and crime during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1999 by the Australian press. This reporting amplified the downfall of diplomatic relations post-Keating administration due to events such as:

- A sequence of unlinked terrorist bombings at Australian tourist or working hotspots,
- Conflict as a result of the East Timorese referendum for independence (from Indonesian sovereignty) and the subsequent injection of Australian–UN peacekeepers in the region,
- Multiple high-profile cases of transnational drug trafficking (the 'Bali Nine' and Schapelle Corby) (Troath, 2019).

The characterisation of Indonesian language education as an economic venture conceptually linked its practice to these downfalls (Lawson, 1998). Slaughter (2007a) found a range of schools that cited media, political reputation, and economic status as the reasons they discontinued Indonesian courses after their initial popularity; they had mostly been installed due to the National Policy on Languages (1987) and the LLP. Classes across the nation were unstandardised and often took a separatist approach in teaching Indonesian, in which society and culture were given differing degrees of coverage. Training regarding the specific ways in which educators are to fulfil the learning outcomes through Indonesian language classes is paramount to the viability of the LPP (Naidu, 2018). This demands a bridging of (fluid) sociocultural and (static) economic interests and further research and analysis of the results of prior implementation. The combination of the LPP with educational reform is one of the most salient modes of cultural diplomacy, and rears individual and community benefits.

The widespread study of Indonesian language in the 1990s is one of the main factors producing the resilient diplomatic relations between Australia and Indonesia (Slaughter, 2007a). Research by Hill, Slaughter, and the Department of Foreign Affairs (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2013) all conclude that domestic political perceptions of Indonesia are positively influenced by the study of Indonesian language and exposure to Indonesian culture at a young age. The Lowy Institute has consistently reached similar conclusions through surveys tracking the enrolment in Indonesian in relation to political positioning (Firdaus, 2013). Little has been done to equip Indonesian language educators in the way of teaching interculturality in the past, but the efforts of Indonesian teachers and their political advocacy for the reform of language education have had a profound effect on Australia's transition to a multicultural education system. Despite the lows of the News Corp–influenced media characterisation of poverty and othering of the 2000s, the Australia–Indonesia relationship has stabilised (Lindsey, 2010). This has been greatly beneficial to both nations, although much could be done in establishing larger trade and economic engagement with one another.

Educational reform

Educational reform is a highly politicised arena, considering that ultimately it is for the public good and will enhance Australia's intellectual, economic, and social capacities to compete in the Asia-Pacific region. Stakeholders that have held a major influence over the prospect of challenging the current educational system range from teachers and institutions to consumer markets. Ultimately, party politics have seen the consistent underfunding of public secondary education over the last decade (Dunne & Pavlyshyn, 2013). The private consumers of Australian education—prospective students at private schools and foreign students—are beginning to dictate the educational facilities available to them through demand (Crouch, 2021). Meanwhile, in public education, where there is no consumer party, change in any form is often forgone due to the expenses it incurs. For this reason, most high schools that continue to offer Indonesian are non-metropolitan or publicly funded. Evidence shows that privately funded secondary schools regularly drop Indonesian programs beyond Years 7 and 8, as they have complete discretion to reallocate funding elsewhere. Half of the schools assessed by Slaughter did not introduce another language after the seizure of funding allocated to Indonesian teaching, while others pivoted to a more popular, and therefore more profitable, language (often Japanese) (Slaughter, 2007a). While language education infrastructure remains from the initial implementation of the NALSAS and National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) initiatives, it is remarkably more convenient for both schools and regulatory bodies to improve policy and economic channels than to reintroduce the Indonesian language to Australian secondary

schools. However, bureaucracy and politicisation often divides the interests of those formulating the curriculum (ACARA) and those executing study program funding (the Department of Education, private investment funding, the Catholic Church and parents' 'voluntary contributions').

Indonesian language has lost popularity since the 2000s, primarily due to the 2002 travel advisory prompting Australians to 'reconsider the need to travel' following the Bali bombings, which has not since been lifted (Hill, 2013). With academic exchanges to Indonesia almost entirely eradicated, the appeal for parents to pursue Indonesian education for their children has declined (Slaughter, 2007a). The NALSAS strategy softened the blow of this loss by pledging A$ 30 million annually to support Indonesian and three other Asian languages. This program ceased funding in 2002. The NALSAS strategy was briefly revived as the NALSSP strategy from 2008 to 2012 under Kevin Rudd, which intended to address the failed target of 40 per cent of Year 12 students studying a foreign language (Department of Education, 2018). NALSSP committed $62.15 million to Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Indonesian to reach 12 per cent of Year 12 students having graduated with working proficiency in one of these languages by 2020. The program ceased in 2012 after Kevin Rudd left office. Only 9.5 per cent of Australian Year 12 students in NSW studied a foreign language in 2020 (ACARA, 2020). The provision of Indonesian languages in schools was inadequate in the context of consumer demand for more culturally engaging and immersive language study. In 2012 a study found that 'cultural immersion' programs were a pivotal factor in school choice, middle-class parents often citing a desire to attain 'positional goods' (Smala et al., 2012) from marketed international travel for their children. All of these were ceased for Indonesia but greenlit for countries like Japan or Spain.

Indonesian is unlikely to be studied past secondary education because of three main obstacles. The first is that Indonesian language is only taught by a handful of public universities. The second is that Indonesian is most taught in non-metropolitan or public schools, the students of which are less likely to pursue tertiary education. The third reason students do not continue to study Indonesian in university is due to the poor scaling of Indonesian as a subject, limiting the attainment of required university entrance exam marks. Prior to the advice of the McGaw Report (2002) against equal scaling, all languages were scaled the same as French. This report produced a hierarchy of languages to mitigate the '"unfair" advantage' that community language positive scaling brought about for lower socio-economic status (SES) schools' students (Sitou, 2018). The advantage that students perceivably had was cultural proximity to languages assessed in the Higher School Certificate exams, as 80 per cent of all studies of 'community languages' take place in lower-SES schools (Sitou, 2018). Therefore, this provision asserts the cultural dominance of particular languages taught in private education and penalises students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Studying Indonesian has been a mechanism of social mobility. The delivery of Bahasa Indonesia in these diverse educational settings has the potential to reduce the cultural gentrification and stratification that typifies the public/private and metro/non-metropolitan school divide in Australia. The schools that did not cease funding Indonesian language programs boast high results that have put them on the academic map (Ardha, 2022; Curry, 2021). Language resources that were issued as part of the NALSAS strategy have granted equitable access to study material for many students from low-income backgrounds as private schools were granted access to the same resources (Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). The strategy also provided cultural and language materials to culturally homogenous non-metropolitan areas (Abdellatif, 2021), which were somewhat inaccessible in the past. Public schools continue to dominate the field of Indonesian language in Year 12 exams, which has further influenced public schools to maintain the language and private schools to discard it.

A notable misstep that ensued in this application of teaching Indonesian was the transition of educational regulatory bodies toward a competency-based curriculum rather than a communicative approach to language teaching (CLT). By nature, competency-based assessment is quantitative rather than qualitative. Some faults of this ambiguous application manifested in gaps in anecdotal vocabulary necessary to engage with Indonesian youth (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Most BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia Penutur Asing) resources used in high schools were developed by the Asian Studies Council, funded by the Commonwealth

Department of Employment, Education and Training (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2002). These consisted of ‘modules, handouts, and worksheets … Passages to read, task-based activities, and exercises for speaking, reading and writing’ that were suited to the former CLT teaching method (Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). These texts have been diplomatically influential, as in these texts ‘Indonesian negotiation [in Australian textbooks] is significantly characterised by the role of a good relationship’ (Arafah & Mokoginta, 2022). Despite the new regulations in secondary education, CLT teaching approaches have been more likely to engage the interest of students with a wide variety of interests and learning styles. In tertiary education, where the teaching of the Indonesian language is delivered in an unadulterated CLT format, students develop a sense of contextual and situational application for Indonesian. By studying under a competency-based system, students grew in communicative competence at the expense of linguistic accuracy. Once again, the educational goals Indonesian teachers are to fulfil urgently need clarification to maximise the potential of their talents and materials provided through government grants.

It is of great priority to utilise these frameworks to increase the study of Bahasa Indonesia. The ongoing decline in national educational outcomes, combined with skilled and specialised labour shortages, point to the urgency with which Australian secondary education must be systematically reformed. Though they have ultimately unwound, the NPL and NALSAS initiatives were initially successful. The models of implementation and budgeting, resources, and staffing are all that remain of the Australian Federal Government’s initial investment in LOTE education, particularly in Indonesian. The rollout of materials reached schools in a more comprehensive manner than following language education strategies. Scholars argue that the innovation of policymaking regarding language teaching could potentially offer opportunities for iterative investment of staff and resources between Australia and Indonesia. Revamping the administration of teaching materials and funding in such a way would build diplomatic relations and hedge Australia behind (literally and figuratively) a non-aligned economic powerhouse in the uncertain future. To achieve this, educational funding and development need to be prioritised in a bipartisan manner and in consultation with the Indonesian government.

Plans of action

Recommendations to address some key barriers to the growth of Indonesian language learning in Australian secondary schools are given below. These aim to address the insufficiency of educational policy and architecture that fail to support:

1. Language proficiency testing and accreditation,
2. The development of Indonesian language learning materials, and
3. Indonesian language educators.

Language proficiency testing and accreditation

Indonesian language education does not currently accredit students’ language proficiency as there is no proficiency scale for a classroom-based relative assessment tool. This is not explicitly addressed in the plan. The last update to the content, learning outcomes, and tested capabilities of Indonesian language education at a federal level was in 2014. This established a second level of proficiency testing, although it did not introduce a relative scale of proficiency in the Indonesian language for students to place themselves on. Proficiency testing in languages typically denotes up to 12 points on a scale of fluency in writing, reading, and comprehension. In the Common European Framework of Reference, A1 denotes little proficiency, whereas C2 denotes fluency. The Australian government needs to mediate the unequal offering of differentiated proficiency levels (Bahasa Indonesia has 2 at most across states, while Mandarin and Japanese have the most—up to 5), by placing these class outcomes on a comparative scale for Asian language proficiency fulfilled by the curriculum of each level class. This method would be aligned with existing syllabuses and students would be further assessed by trained teachers. This could be supported by

the facilitation of the training of Indonesian teachers in standardised progression and assessment varieties and the development and trialling of an Indonesian learning progression test (similar to the internationally standardised Test of English as a Foreign Language or International English Language Testing System exams). Furthermore, work samples and validation testing of such progression will further cement the effective changes.

Indonesian language learning materials

It is vital to bridge the different approaches taken by Indonesian-funded BIPA institutes and domestic organisations. There is substantial overlap in the objectives of the BIPA teachers' new association (APPBIPA) or the Center for Strategy Development and Language Diplomacy (PPSDK) and the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association. BIPA initiatives are founded with the goal of instilling longevity in Indonesian language education by aiming for innovative training to increase the competency and tools of Indonesian teachers. With the consultation of these two interest groups, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority would be able to debut a suitable update to learning outcomes. Moreover, these bodies must increase their monitoring of these outcomes to continue to innovate language policy and materials provided to schools. It is necessary to update the itinerary of Indonesian teaching staff to teach culturally relevant and practically applicable language skills. Liaison with the PPSDK or Indonesian teaching consortiums is in itself an act of cultural diplomacy, which can help to imbue Australian educational standards with intersectional perspectives and innovative approaches.

Language planning must reflect upon empirical data, which Australia lacks regarding LOTE education. Education regulation authorities need to expand the collection of data regarding courses offered and their respective outcomes to serve the needs of policymakers and improve educational quality. Through the development of a central plan, the Educational Reporting Authority can operate coordinated interventions to promote Indonesian learning in schools and resource the development of Indonesian language learning materials. Greater government investment in developing curricula and materials is required. The potential for interdisciplinary approaches to teaching by using ICT and language learning apps should also be explored. Hopefully, we will see positive results from the joint efforts of Statistics Indonesia and the Australia Bureau of Statistics outlined in such a plan.

The shortage of Indonesian language educators

Indonesian language educators can be difficult to source. The biggest threat to the continuation of Indonesian teaching is referenced in the 'Joint Working Group meetings on Education, Training and Research', which notes a dire need for capacity building among educators and broader recruitment strategies. This is symptomatic of a larger staffing crisis in Australian (public) high schools. Realistically, the Australian government needs to fund the promotion of teaching degrees at public universities to expand the sector. To make this accessible and financially viable, the Department of Education (and federal Minister for Education, accordingly) needs to allocate the funding required by low-SES schools to hire tenured language staff. The low salaries relative to the high responsibilities placed upon teachers, cost of living rising during one's studies and limited offerings to study teaching all disincentivise young Australians from pursuing teaching careers. The allocation of long-term funding of scholarships for Bachelor degrees in teaching, especially language teaching, is a bare necessity to rectify the labour shortage. Moreover, tertiary institutions that employ teachers ought to offer teaching to students. Teacher-focused exchanges and flexible policy frameworks will render the best results among students. Through the establishment of an accreditation authority for specific languages (potentially on the same scale of language fluency as A1–C2), Indonesian language will be recognised in a formal capacity as a professional skill. Moreover, by this process teachers may be accredited for their tireless work, and schools can prioritise candidates for employment and upskill current staff. Little has been done to equip Indonesian language educators in the way of teaching interculturality in the past, but the efforts of Indonesian teachers and their

political advocacy to reform language education have had a profound effect on Australia's transition to a multicultural education system.

Conclusion

Language policy must be revisited as part of the reforms needed by the Australian education system if we are to put a stop to the decline in LOTE study. It is imperative that the federal educational authorities intervene in the downward spiral fuelled by the shortcomings of long-established approaches to LOTE education that overemphasise economic gain. The neglected sociocultural elements of language policy point to major opportunities for intellectual enhancement for young Australians and to equip them for prosperous working lives in the Asia Pacific. Indonesian language is of the utmost importance to promote in order to achieve subregional security and development as well as culturally embed Australia with its neighbours. Despite the progression of the NALSAS framework, it has faded into obscurity rather than been met with the innovation necessary to supply adequate testing, study programs and institutions, materials and educational training. By focusing on these foundational weaknesses, policy will address the sociolinguistic needs of students. Through the systemic bolstering of Bahasa Indonesia, Australian policymakers can secure a more prosperous future for educators and students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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