

## **BAHASA INDONESIA DIPLOMACY AND OTHER COUNTRY LANGUAGE DIPLOMACY EXPERIENCES**

**Tonny Dian Effendi**

Department of Internasional Relations, University of Muhammadiyah Malang

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Language is not only as communication tool but also have potential as political tool. In the context of International Relations study, language can be used as state political tool in the context of cultural diplomacy. Language is used to influence foreign public and develops positive image. Bahasa Indonesia have potential as a tool of Indonesian cultural diplomacy. It is supported by the Indonesia position as the largest country in Southeast Asia and Bahasa Indonesia is used by majority in the region. This article focus on the way to develop Bahasa Indonesia as a tool of Indonesian diplomacy by learning from other countries experiences like Japan Foundation of Japan, Confucius Institute of China, and Goethe Institute of Germany. From those countries experiences there are three strategies that can be considered to develop Bahasa Indonesia as cultural diplomacy's tool. First is the establishment of Indonesian cultural and language center including with the programs. Second is the development of cooperation with education institutions such as university to open Bahasa Indonesia program under their Asian studies. And strengthening Indonesian position in economic and politics, especially in the region as significance factor the importance of Bahasa Indonesia.*

**KEYWORDS:** Bahasa Indonesia, Indonesia, Diplomacy, International Relations

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

Indonesia is the biggest country in Southeast Asia region geographically and also the most populated country. This condition places Indonesia as influential country in politics, economy and social culture in the region. Indonesia's influences can be viewed in the political influence in the regional organization, ASEAN and from economic side by Indonesian trade with countries in the region. Indonesia have many potentials in material or immaterial sources to strengthen Indonesian position in the region.

One of national power potential of Indonesia is culture. Culture is one of national power source. Country which have high culture, including working ethos and how to keep its culture, have opportunity to strengthening its position and power in international relations (Perwita, 2005). Culture can be consolidated domestic power and uses to influence other countries. Some countries have been showing the fact how to use culture as their national power. UK, France, Germany, Japan and China, use their culture as diplomacy tool to develop positive image of country and to influencing people and government in other country. Those countries, established culture institution to manage their cultural diplomacy, and language is the important point. Germany have Goethe Institute, Japan have Japan Foundation and China have Confucius Institute, those institution promoting their culture and language to other countries. Although those countries are not English speaking country but they confident to promote their language

with some attractive approach to the people to learn their language and developing positive image. In this context, language is important and significant instrument in cultural diplomacy.

As the biggest and dominant country in Southeast Asia region, Indonesia have opportunity to strengthening its position by use *Bahasa Indonesia* as instrument of diplomacy, or promoting *Bahasa Indonesia* as regional language. This argument is based on some reasons. First, as the biggest country in population, of course *Bahasa Indonesia* is the most used by people in the region. Second, the improving Indonesian economy and trade as member of G20 with good economic growth, increasing other countries motivation to strengthen economic and trade relations with Indonesia. In other hand, this condition makes Indonesia more important in the region, so *Bahasa Indonesia* have opportunity to become important as trade language in the region. Third, politically, Indonesia as the biggest democratic country can support the importance of *Bahasa Indonesia* in the region. Fourth, from cultural side, Indonesia is influenced by Malay culture, so *Bahasa Indonesia* have some similarities with Bahasa Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, and easy to learn by Singaporean, Thai and Filipino. So this condition also supporting the opportunity of *Bahasa Indonesia* as regional language in Southeast Asia.

This article aims to discuss the opportunity and challenges of *Bahasa Indonesia* as Indonesian cultural diplomacy instrument and how to make *Bahasa Indonesia* as regional language. To discussing this topic, the experiences of other countries like Germany, Japan and China are interesting to be discussed as learning point. By learning from those countries experiences, Indonesia can develop strategy to strengthen its cultural diplomacy and use *Bahasa Indonesia* as the main instrument. Why I chose those country? Because those country represent three different countries. Germany represents developed country with European value. Japan represents developed country with Asian value and China represents developing country and in the progress to develop cultural diplomacy but China gets amazing result from the point of view the number of Confucius Institute in the world. This discussion does not means Indonesia should to follow their strategy but Indonesia can learn and mix some strategy to be more effective and efficient and fit with domestic sources.

### **Cultural Diplomacy: Germany, Japan and China experiences**

Diplomacy is country effort to gain national interest in international community (Holsti, 1978). While culture is defined as the all of the result of human being to adopt and fit with their environment (Bekker, 1984). Diplomacy is a tool of foreign policy to gain national interest. Every country had their own strategy in diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is one of strategy in foreign policy and can be effective tool for some countries to gain their interest (Roy, 1995). Cultural diplomacy is defined as a country effort to gain its national interest by culture like education, science, sport and art, and also by propaganda which are done by both state and non-state actors (Warsio & Kartikasari, 2007). The involvement of all of country's element in diplomacy is called total diplomacy (Jemadu, 2014). It means that in cultural diplomacy the involvement of all of Indonesian element is also important. Cultural diplomacy shows the level of civilization of a country that can be learnt by other country. In the wider context, cultural diplomacy also relates with soft power, where soft power is the capability to influence other country but not use military and economy power (Watanabe & David, 2009). In this context, culture is the important source of soft power (Mellisen, 2005). By using cultural approach, the relations among countries becomes more open and non-conflictual. This section will describe the experiences of Germany, Japan and China on their cultural diplomacy.

**Germany: Goethe Institute ([goethe.de](http://goethe.de))**

Goethe Institute is an institution established by Germany Federal government to promote German language and cultural cooperation and exchange with other countries. This institute gives information about German politics, economy and social-culture to all of country in the world by its international network. In 1951, Germany government established Goethe Institute as the continuity of German Academy (Deutsche Akademie, DA) as the center of foreign German teacher in Germany. In 1959, Goethe Institute take over all of German cultural institution in overseas, and developed its international networks. In 1960s, culture become integral part of Germany foreign policy as one of the pillars. It was implemented in the extended German culture program as the focus of Goethe Institute. In 1976, Goethe Institute was independent culture organization and post the fall of Berlin Wall, Goethe Institute expand its network to Eastern Europe and in 2004 established its office in Pyongyang, North Korea.

In general, the focus of Goethe Institute is to promote German language and culture. Goethe Institute gets important duty to spreading German language to the world by offering learning class and examination to more than 90 countries in the world. In the German language learning, Goethe Institute offering practical method that can be followed by foreign people in many course in its representative office and also by online. To know the level of German language, Goethe Institute also provide the German language examination and improving teacher skill by assistance and training program, directly or by long distance learning program. In the cultural side, Goethe Institute also promoting traditional and contemporary German culture which is divided into some field like architecture, library, visual arts, science and education, design and fashion, film, society and current affairs, literature, media, modern life, music, dance and theater.

Goethe institute have three main responsibilities. First is develop international standard of German language learning, including learning system, course, examination, learning material and training for foreign German language teacher. Second is monitoring cultural cooperation trend from all of country by held exhibition of music, art, dance, theater, literature and book. Third, provide information about Germany by library, discussion, written material, audio and video. Goethe Institute also held yearly event like Goethe Medals award to the people who contribute on German culture and language international cooperation. Since 1955 there were 335 peoples from 36 countries awarded. Goethe institute also provide many materials about German language and culture that can be bought online and also free newsletter. Goethe institute centered in Munich and now have 160 offices in 94 countries.

**Japan: Japan Foundation ([jpf.or.jp](http://jpf.or.jp))**

Japan Foundation was established in 1972 under Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. It has duty to promoting cultural cooperation between Japan and other countries. Japan Foundation headquarter is in Tokyo and have some office in Japan like Kyoto office and the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute in Urawa and Kansai. Now, Japan Foundation have 22 representative office in 21 countries. Since 2003, Japan Foundation becomes independent organization.

Focus of Japan Foundation is the culture and art exchange, Japanese language learning overseas and intellectual exchange and Japanese studies. Those programs aimed to create mutual understanding among Japanese and other country society by promoting people-to-people interaction. In the culture and art exchange, Japan foundation creating opportunity for foreign

artist from many countries to held collaboration with Japanese artist in art, exhibition and international network. While in Japanese language learning, Japan Foundation tries to increasing the foreign people knowledge about Japan through language. The activities in this program include Japanese language learning, Japanese language examination, training for Japanese language teacher, providing learning material and survey to fulfilling the need of Japanese language practitioners. In the intellectual exchange and Japanese studies, Japan Foundation aims to increasing common and mutual understanding trough collaborative research among Japanese intellectual and foreign intellectuals. Japan Foundation gives fellowship for foreign intellectual to increasing network and research skill in Japanese studies and improving collaboration to solve global problem. Similar with Goethe Institute, Japan Foundation also providing many Japanese language materials and information by online and free magazine.

### **China: Confucius Institute ([hanban.org](http://hanban.org))**

Confucius Institute was established by Chinese government to promote Chinese language and culture to support China's economic, trade and international relations. The establishment of Confucius Institute also based on the learning toward other countries experiences like UK, France, Germany and Spain which are success to promote their national language. Confucius Institute focus on Chinese language learning while the name of Confucius comes from the name of Chinese philosopher, Kon fu Tse (Confucius) who was placed the basic philosophy of Chinese. However, Confucius Institute is not to promoting Confucianism doctrine, but to promote Chinese language and culture.

Confucius Institute headquarter is in Beijing and the first Confucius Institute established in South Korea in 2004. The main aims of this institution is to promote Chinese language and culture, facilitating culture exchange and provide material learning and training for Chinese language teacher and also provide fund to improving cultural cooperation. Usually Confucius Institute have cooperation with universities or high school from many countries.

Confucius Institute also have some function like develops policy and development of Chinese language learning in all of countries, gives support to Chinese language learning institution in all level from high school to university, develop standard of Chinese language training and provide its material. In 2011, there were 353 Confucius Institute and 473 Confucius Classroom in 104 countries in the world. In its activities, Confucius Institute tries to adapt with local culture and condition and make flexible learning to promote Chinese language in basic, intermediate, and high school, university, society and company. Confucius Institute is under the Ministry of Education and Confucius Institute Headquarter. The Chinese learning activities also supported by some training and course in specific field like tourism, business, finance, translation and traditional Chinese medicine.

Although, relatively new, comparing with Goethe Institute and Japan Foundation, but Confucius institute proves the successful China in language diplomacy. It can be shown in the number of Confucius Institute office and the possibility to establish more than one Confucius Institute in one country, like 6 Confucius Institute in Indonesia. In another context, this successful shows Chinse international relations and its positive image development.

### **Bahasa Indonesia Diplomacy Strategies: Learning from Other Country Experience**

Based on the discussion and observation from Germany, Japan and China experiences, there are some conclusions. First, cultural and language diplomacy is part of foreign policy and gets full support from the government. It is important because it show clear position of this diplomacy among other diplomacy field. Second, besides establishing representative office, the cultural institutions also create cooperation with universities and schools which have program in their language learning. Third, language is the main instrument to promote culture to develop positive image about their country. Fourth, every country has similarities and different points. The similarities are related with the language learning program, promoting culture cooperation, and developing positive image. While the different points are related with the special character of each country that become the identity. Goethe Institute involving global society development in their program and the culture seems very European values as Germany as European country. Japan Foundation have specific program in intellectual exchange and Japanese studies that provide the opportunity to develop collaborative research in science to solve global problem. While Confucius Institute mainly focus only Chinese language and promoting it as world trade language and gets positive responses. Fifth, the result shows that cultural and language diplomacy by their institution creates significant power to gain their national interest. Or in other hand, cultural and language diplomacy have been their soft power. According to those points, the strategies that can be consider for Indonesia are as follows:

#### **Developing Overseas Indonesian Culture and Language Institution**

Actually Indonesia have attention in developing cultural diplomacy. The Ministry of Education and Culture, held many international events to promote Indonesian culture. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also have many programs, including Indonesian Language Scholarship program for student who want to learn culture and *Bahasa Indonesia*. But the problem is that the events seem less integrated and it is like separating each other as ministry program. So, based on Germany, Japan and China experiences, the specific institution is needed, where Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* diplomacy done. The institution is the center of Indonesian ministry and institutions activities in promoting Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia*. I think the establishment of this institution is urgent to develop synergy among Indonesian institutions which concern on cultural diplomacy. It will make the cultural diplomacy more effective and efficient. In the context of *Bahasa Indonesia* promotion, government can make cooperation with domestic institution like Balai Pustaka and other private institution to provide the material and standard. While the international cooperation can be developed by improving international network.

#### **Developing international cooperation with domestic and international universities through Indonesian studies**

According to other countries experiences, the cultural institution creating cooperation with local institution in other countries, like school and university. This way also can be done by Indonesia by creating special program to promote Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia*. One of the way is supporting the establishment of Indonesian Studies in many overseas universities. This effort can be supported by the cooperation between Indonesian universities and their overseas counterparts. So, the Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* promotion can be reach trough educational program.



Today, Indonesian government provides Indonesian scholarship for foreign student to learn Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia*. But in other hand, the Indonesian studies in other countries still limited and usually as temporary program such as yearly exhibition. The overseas Indonesian studies program should be improved and Indonesian government have to involve Indonesian universities by including the program inside their intellectual cooperation. Indonesian government can also invite Indonesian people in foreign countries like Indonesian businessman, student and worker to support this program, including the involvement of private sector.

### **Improving Economic and Political power to support Indonesian Culture and Bahasa Indonesia diplomacy**

The next question is how to attract other country interest to learn *Bahasa Indonesia* and Indonesian culture? The important answer is improving the “importance” of Indonesia. The improvement of Indonesian economy and politics in international relations is important key to lift the importance of Indonesia. Economically, the improvement on trade and investment can be justification to make *Bahasa Indonesia* important at least in the region. Economic development should involve the effort to promote *Bahasa Indonesia* as trade language in the region. This effort can be implement by develop *Bahasa Indonesia* for business program and *Bahasa Indonesia* training for foreign businessman and expatriate.

While in political side, Indonesia position as the biggest democratic country in the region and the biggest Moslem country are the potential to improve Indonesian political influence in international relations. It is also as potential tool to support Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* diplomacy. Indonesia can promote *Bahasa Indonesia* as tool to learn Moslem in Southeast Asia that have specific character. If in economic side, *Bahasa Indonesia* have potential as trade language in the region, in political side, *Bahasa Indonesia* can be promoted as the language of research to learn of Moslem in the region.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Opportunity and Challenge**

Indonesia position as the biggest country in the region, both geographically and from population, and as emerging economy and political power in international relations bring opportunity and challenge for developing Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* diplomacy. It is an opportunity because by those position, many countries interest to make and increasing cooperation with Indonesia. It should be viewed as the invitation to play *Bahasa Indonesia* as tool of communication with Indonesia. But, in the other hand, the challenge also be found if Indonesia cannot take benefit of its position. It means that Indonesia should to develop comprehensive strategies to improve its diplomacy. Learning from Germany, Japan and China experiences, the cultural diplomacy institution like Goethe Institute, Japan Foundation and Confucius Institute, is very important and urgent to be established by Indonesian government, at least in the Southeast Asia region. However, this institution has to well managed to avoid the overlapping activities among ministry and Indonesian organization.

**Bahasa Indonesia Diplomacy: What is the special?**

Learning from other country experiences doesn't mean that we have to follow their ways. But we should to learn the positive side, and modifying it to fit with our condition and resources. The most important point is how Indonesian government and people develop the vision of Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* diplomacy. It is important to make specialization to distinguish it with other country. Indonesia have to looking for the specialization of *Bahasa Indonesia*. Indonesia should improve its characters, leadership, values, tradition and culture to develop the importance of *Bahasa Indonesia*. That is one of Indonesia biggest homework today. Indonesia should to answer the question from the foreign people, why should I learn *Bahasa Indonesia*? In this context I propose one suggestion that when Indonesian economic and politic become better and more influence in the region, so *Bahasa Indonesia* can be potential as the language of the region. So the answer is: Because *Bahasa Indonesia* is your gate and tool to learn and feel the Southeast Asia.

The other suggestion is to develop *Bahasa Indonesia* learning program. Some suggestion that may be considered are:

1. Develops special curriculum for *Bahasa Indonesia* learning overseas and specific purpose. It is included the material, teaching method and examination system that can be created like TOEFL, IELTS, HSK (Chinese) and EJU (Japanese).
2. Increasing supports for university international cooperation to develop Indonesian studies in foreign university partner.
3. Improving people-to-people exchange by collaborative research, artist exchange, and intellectual exchange, international conference, workshop and discussion about language and culture.
4. Improving access availability for people from other country to access information about Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* thorough internet and provide free newsletter and magazine.
5. Increasing the public involvement in the Indonesian culture and *Bahasa Indonesia* diplomacy.

**REFERENCES**

- Barston, R.P. 1997. *Modern Diplomacy*. England: Pearson Education
- Berridge, G.R, 2002. *Diplomacy : Theory and Practice*. New York: Palgrave
- Bakker, J.W. 1984. *Filsafat Kebudayaan: Sebuah Pengantar*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia
- Holsti, K.J. 1978. *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis, third edition*. New Delhi: Pretence Hail of India
- Jemadu, Alexius. (2014). *Politik Global dalam Teori dan Praktik, Edisi 2*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu
- Mellisen, Jan (ed). 2005. *The New Public Diplomacy : Soft Power in International Relations*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan
- Morgenthau, Hanj J. 2013. *Politik Antar Bangsa*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor
- Perwita, Banyu. 2005. *Pengantar Ilmu Hubungan Internasional*. Bandung: Rosda Karya
- SL Roy. 1995. *Diplomasi*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo

Warsito, Tulus & Kartikasari, Wahyudi. 2007. *Diplomasi Kebudayaan: Konsep dan Relevasinya bagi Negara Berkembang (Studi Kasus Indonesia)*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak

Yasushi, Watanabe & Mc. Connell, David L, (eds). *Soft Poer Superpower : Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*. London: East Gate Book, M.E Sharpe

**Internet:**

[www.jpf.or.jp](http://www.jpf.or.jp)

[english.hanban.org](http://english.hanban.org)

[goethe.de](http://goethe.de)