

Academese of Intellectuals and Language Acrobats

The campus community was shocked by the article entitled "The Curse of Science: Many Academics Focus More on 'Sounding Smart' than Grounding Science in Society" by Ahmad Junaidi at The Conversation (17 June 2021). Junaidi highlighted the passionate desire of Indonesian academics to publish their articles in reputable international journals. This is to raise the image of Indonesian research in the eyes of the world. Based on the ranking of scientific journals by Scimago, in 2020, Indonesia's research productivity is at number 21 in the world, up 15 places from 2017. Writing in scientific journals is no longer about efforts to spread knowledge but chasing quantification records. For lecturers, successfully publishing their articles in internationally reputed scientific journals will get incentives in the form of a reasonably large honorarium from the campus (of course, each campus is different). This program is massively promoted.

Therefore, they are competing to make their articles pass the selection even though by legalizing all means. Writing in reputable international scientific journals is quite tricky, takes a long time, and some lecturers consider this a barrier. They use the services of brokers (illegal) so that the manuscript is published immediately. They are willing to pay a high price to directly get recognition as a reputable lecturer (one of which is shown by having a Scopus number [id]). Of course, not all lecturers do such superficial work, but not a few also take that path. Vit Machacek and Martin Srholec, through their article entitled "Predatory publishing in Scopus: evidence on cross-country differences" (2021), stated that Indonesia is one of the countries that produce articles in predatory journals (16.7%, slightly below Kazakhstan as the champion with 17%). Predatory journals are journals oriented towards financial gain, not scientific development, attracting extraordinary amounts of money to authors. The unique thing is that these journals are still affiliated with Scopus (a reputable journal rating agency in the world).

Academese and Indonesian

Efforts to keep racing so that research papers are continuously published in journals are no less complicated issues. The success of publishing articles in scientific journals is not accompanied by efforts to ground his research to the community itself. As a result, the public is often unaware of new findings in various fields. One of the reasons is the reluctance of our academics to use and convey it through sound, correct, and easy-to-understand Indonesian. There is a form of self-arrogance. To be called an expert, the style of language used must follow "journal standards," must be scientific, complicated, even by multiplying particular vocabulary that is unusual and difficult to understand. Such a phenomenon by Steven Pinker (citing Junaidi's article) is referred to as "academese".

Academese has been lasting within the walls of the campus. Indonesian is no longer a bridge in conveying new ideas, concepts, or findings but becomes a form of "showcase" so that the writer is considered intellectual. Their writing is full of jargon, let alone understanding the meaning, spelling, and reading it isn't easy. The paper seems to be only able to be accommodated in scientific journals with minimal readers. Ironically, many academics have difficulty writing in popular mass media

(newspapers and magazines, both print and online) because their mindsets are already complicated. Meanwhile, the nature of popular mass media puts forward the communication side that is fluid, simple, and easily understood by the public. Efforts to ground the research results from the perspective of ordinary people have become dreams that have never materialized.

Simplifying something complex is not easy. Such a phenomenon affects many of our academics. Even using complicated language has become an addiction. Through his writing entitled "Consequences of Erudite Vernacular Utilized Irrespective of Necessity: Problems With Using Long Words Needlessly" (2016), Daniel Oppenheimer stated that more than 85 percent of research respondents deliberately used complex vocabulary to make it read more scientifically. The habit and necessity of writing in a journal with the style and attraction of language soared as a benchmark. Not a few use a "language dictionary" (thesaurus) to look up words rarely understood. These symptoms indicate that language is no longer a medium in conveying messages, but language (the medium) is the message itself. Implies about the existence and self-esteem of the author. Through language, they try to position themselves differently from ordinary people regarding caste, position, rank, and title. Unfortunately, this widens the distance between the public and the world of campus, where knowledge and research results are not communicated more openly, aka only understood and enjoyed by a few people. As these journals are not widely read, only become a kind of reference for writing in the following journal.

It is not enough to speak Indonesian correctly, but it must also be easy to understand. Academese symptoms also occur in official government institutions. In the column for Kompas daily Readers' Letter (June 21, 2021), Samesto Nitisastro criticized official announcements from the government that often did not use good Indonesian language rules. This is not only happening at the village level but also the ministry level. Let alone on the substance or message to be conveyed. Elementary errors are still encountered. Such as the use of semicolon that is not in place, inconsistent upper and lower case letters, which words that must be separated or coupled are still turned upside down.

Nitisastro's opinion was also strengthened by Akmaludin through "The Reality of Using Written Indonesian Language at the Office of Government" (2018), focusing his research on official letters issued by the government. As a result, most are still not able to apply the rules of language perfectly. The use of language has not succeeded in bridging communication more effectively and efficiently. The government is still carrying old dogmas, placing scientific journal-style levels as a reference, releasing the understanding held by ordinary people. One of the reasons is that there is a tendency to make the simple seem complicated so that usual problems feel urgent. Language acrobatics who pretend to be scientific and academic has thus become plural and common phenomenon.

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