

IN MEMORIAM : SOENJONO DARDJOWIDJOJO (1938-2009)

Yassir Nasanius
Atma Jaya Catholic University

The linguistic community in Indonesia lost one of their most distinguished linguists, Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo on September 22, 2009, due to complications of heart and liver diseases. Born on July 24, 1938 in Kajen, a small village near the Central Javanese town of Pekalongan, the late Professor Soenjono served as one of this journal's editorial boards. During his life, Soenjono had significantly contributed to the field of linguistics as well as English language education. To be specific, he was a scholar in a wide array of fields within linguistics, including child language acquisition and psycholinguistics. Among his many publications, he was internationally known as the author of *Sentence Patterns in Indonesian* (1978, 1993) and *Vocabulary Building in Indonesian* (1982), two standard textbooks used for teaching Indonesian in many universities in the US and other western countries. He also wrote *Psikolinguistik: Pengantar Pemahaman Bahasa Manusia* (2003), a textbook of psycholinguistics which has been translated into Malaysian Malay (2007) and is widely used for teaching psycholinguistics to undergraduate students in various universities in Malaysia. He also wrote *Echa: Kisah Pemerolehan Bahasa Anak Indonesia* (2000), a book detailing the acquisition of Indonesian by his granddaughter, Echa, from the age of one year to five years old. Recently, just before he passed away, he published *English Phonetics and Phonology for Indonesians* (2009), a unique textbook of English phonetics and phonology which he wrote with special consideration of the particular difficulties faced by Indonesian learners. These contributions won Soenjono international's recognition.

Rememebring his scholarship, Haigh Roop, a linguistics professor at the University of Hawaii, has this to say:

“ ... Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo will continue to be more widely remembered as an extraordinarily productive scholar of linguistics and the Indonesian language. His passing is a real loss for all of us who knew and worked with him,” said

Two years after earning his Ph.D. in applied linguistics from Georgetown University (1966), Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo taught at the Victoria University, New Zealand. He then moved to the University of Hawaii to join its faculty in 1970. While at the University of Hawaii, he was

elected the Chair of the Department of Indo-Pacific languages for two periods and received his full professorship there.

“ ... A happy time we remember, when our department was starting to grow and achieve world-wide notice in our field, under Pak Njono’s guidance. If we are today a department with some importance, it is due in no small way to his efforts ... ,” recalled Steve O’Harrow, a linguistics professor at the University of Hawaii.

After spending 12 years at the University of Hawaii, despite the prestigious status he had achieved, Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo decided that it was time for him to return to his beloved country, Indonesia. Part of his reason for returning to Indonesia was his wish for his two children to become “Indonesian” rather than “American”. In 1982 he officially joined Atma Jaya Catholic University. A year later he was entrusted with two high-ranking positions at the University, namely the Director of the Atma Jaya Language Institute and the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. He also held other various administrative duties throughout his career at Atma Jaya Catholic University. Through his devotion and contribution to the university as an administrator as well as a scholar and lecturer, Atma Jaya Catholic University has become one of the best private universities in Jakarta. In 2010, at the commemoration of Atma Jaya’s golden anniversary, the university acknowledged his great devotion and contribution by naming him one of the very distinguished people of Atma Jaya Catholic University. The posthumous award was received by his wife.

“Pak Njono knew exactly in which direction Atma Jaya Catholic University should be taken. He was hardworking, responsible, productive, and efficient,” said Mariana Setiadarma, former Rector of Atma Jaya Catholic University.

“In 1983 when Soenjono Dardjowidjojo was appointed Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, universities in Indonesia had to apply the semester credit system. Because of his familiarity with the higher learning systems in New Zealand and the United States, he was the man behind the success of the application of the semester credit system at Atma Jaya Catholic University. During this time many universities in Indonesia took the semester credit system at Atma Jaya as a model and they requested Atma Jaya to help them develop the semester credit system at their institutions,” noted Bambang Kaswanti Purwo, a close friend and colleague of Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo.

Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo did not only maintain an active role as a university professor and administrator. Driven by his earnest desire

to help the advancement of linguistics in Indonesia and his deep concern for the state of knowledge of his fellow linguists in Indonesia, Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo chose to participate actively in MLI (*Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia* “the Linguistic Society of Indonesia”), serving as its president for three periods, namely 1982-1985, 1999-2003, and 2007-2009. He tirelessly encouraged the members of the MLI to conduct linguistic research and to have their research results published in *Linguistik Indonesia*, the linguistic journal published by MLI. He also organized the conferences held by MLI, in addition to becoming a speaker at these conferences. The conference was formerly called KLN (*Konferensi Linguistik Nasional*), held every three years. Since 2005, it has been held every two years. In 2009, the MLI was granted funds by DIKTI to hold an international seminar. In that year KIMLI (*Konferensi Internasional Masyarakat Linguistik Indonesia*) replaced KLN.

“Stop talking and start writing,” recalled Hasan Alwi, former head of *Pusat Bahasa* (Language Center, Department of Education). “Pak Njono continually addressed this sentence to the linguists in Indonesia. Because of this challenge, we have witnessed that more and more Indonesian linguists have contributed to the advancement of linguistics in Indonesia,” he added.

In 1985 Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo initiated a national seminar on linguistics and language teaching at Atma Jaya Catholic University. The “experimental” seminar, which he had not given a name yet, featured eight presenters who had minimally a doctoral degree in linguistics. This seminar turned out to be a major attraction for Indonesian linguists. Two years later in 1987, a similar seminar was held and named PELLBA (*Pertemuan Linguistik Lembaga Bahasa Atma Jaya*), which was held regularly every year. Since 1997, due to the organizational change at Atma Jaya Catholic University, PELLBA changed its name into PELBBA (*Pertemuan Linguistik [Pusat Kajian] Bahasa dan Budaya Atma Jaya*). Starting in 2006, PELBBA has been held biennially instead of annually. The decision was made because of other additional linguistic seminars held regularly at Atma Jaya Catholic University. First, in 2003 Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo initiated a linguistic conference which he named KOLITA (*Konferensi Linguistik Tahunan Atma Jaya*) and in 2004 CONEST (Conference on English Studies). Although PELBBA was meant to be a national seminar, PELBBA has become to some extent an international-scale seminar because of the presence of linguists of the highest caliber, such as Bernard Comrie, Sandra Chung, James T. Collins, Bernd Nothofer, and Barbara F. Grimes.

“Seonjono built a bridge between linguistics in Indonesia and linguistics in the world at large. He brought back his training at the

University of Hawaii in order to strengthen linguistics in Indonesia, including the study of Indonesian in all its domains, from grammatical description and analysis to psycholinguistics,” said Bernard Comrie, Director of the Linguistics Department, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

In his well-conceived plan to advance the discipline of linguistics in Indonesia, Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo was also active in developing linguistics as an academic study. In 1992, thanks to him, Atma Jaya Catholic University established the Graduate School, with Applied English Linguistics as its first M.A. program. Ten years later in 2002 he led a small team to write and defend a proposal for opening a doctoral-level program in Applied English Linguistics. His efforts bore fruit and the doctoral-level program officially started in the academic year 2002-2003. Despite his poor health, Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo took part actively in preparing the doctoral program for its accreditation by the *Badan Akreditasi Nasional* (National Accreditation Board). Although he was not able to enjoy the fruits of his toil, the doctoral program was officially granted the “A” accreditation on October 16, 2009. Thanks to his breadth of vision, the doctoral program in Applied English Linguistics is unique because it has remained the only doctoral program held by Atma Jaya Catholic University as well as the only program in Indonesia that offers a doctoral degree in Applied English Linguistics.

“The arrival of Professor Soenjono at Atma Jaya Catholic University in 1982 heralded the continuous quality improvement of the university. His presence for more than a quarter of a century at the university, without doubt, has made Atma Jaya Catholic University a leading university in linguistics in Indonesia,” said Anton M. Moeliono, one of the founders of Atma Jaya Foundation and a well-known Indonesian lexicographer and grammarian.