Multilingualism has been excessively discussed and often linked to the ability of an individual or a community of speakers to use multiple languages. To appreciate language diversity, most nations have designed their language policy to reflect and accommodate their multilingual nature. This in no way gives equal status to all the languages that exist in that society because national identity, nationalism and education are given much consideration. As a result, multilingualism has remained a complex phenomenon. There are a number of challenges that affect multilingualism. Language policy and globalization, although being the main catalyst for the promotion of multilingualism, also affect multilingualism in many ways. In many schools and societies, multilingualism has been emphasized but the result has not been positive since only the national language is promoted. Therefore, as part of the effort to explore them, this paper reports the observation about the impact of nationalism on multilingualism in Indonesia and how it affects foreign language teaching.

Indonesia is a multilingual society with over 700 hundred indigenous languages. Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) is the national language used for communication, education and for all government affairs throughout the archipelago. Other indigenous languages are neglected and usually used in the villages for no official purposes. The nationalist stance to strengthen the Indonesian language has led to a recent proposal by the Ministry of Education to stop teaching English in primary schools starting this year when the new curriculum is implemented. Since 1955, Indonesia has embraced English as the first foreign language taught at all levels of education. The proposal, if implemented, will have grave consequences to multilingualism and foreign language teaching in the country.