

INSTILLING THE LOCAL WISDOM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH INDONESIAN TRADITIONAL GAME

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Abstract

It is common among the experts and practitioners, up to the recent trend, that teaching a language is best conducted by having the authentic materials and situation. The teachers as the practitioners who deal with the real teaching and learning situation are suggested to employ the teaching materials which closely represent the actual situation where the target language is used in the conversation. They involve the cultural ambiance of where, when, and how the conversation truly takes place. This phenomenon, if continues happened, causes a concern that it will bring some harm to the learners' character. The concern here is that when the learners are exposed to the foreign culture intensively when they study a language, they will take the foreign culture in to account and consider their original culture to be less and less meaningful. In the long shot, it will threaten a nation integrity. One selection of the solution is inserting the local wisdom in the language teaching. This study focuses to the English Language Teaching (ELT). The particular study attempts to provide reasoning why the local wisdom is important to be inserted in English language teaching. The study also provides the teaching strategy which involves the traditional games, cublek-cublek suweng from Java and cuk-cuk bimbi from Kalimantan, Indonesia, to instill the local wisdom to the learners in English language teaching. The reflection and pedagogical implication provided in this study will support and also encourage the teachers as practitioners to insert the local wisdom in their practice.

Key words: local wisdom, traditional games, ELT

Introduction

Teaching a new language is possibly to be quite challenging for the teachers. It is believed that ideally the language teaching and learning process solely involve the authentic materials which represent the actual condition of where, when, and how the conversation with the target language (the language is being learnt) truly take place. The teachers as the leading roles to deliver the new language to the learners are busy finding the teaching materials that meet the requirement of authenticity and most of the time they do not screen the materials for their cultural biases (Sudartini, 2012:4). The particular phenomena start to cause a concern that it will eventually harm the learners' character.

Language and culture are inseparable since language itself is a product of culture and culture cannot be expressed or communicated, therefore cannot be transfer to the next

generation, without language. By all means, teaching a language means also teaching much more things, including the culture where the language is originally from. The similar idea had been proposed by Brumfit (2001:3) who stated that language is central to education; linguistics is the discipline devoted to the study of language. But the study of language within the educational process takes us far beyond linguistics alone. It is safe to settle that learning a language is not merely learning the language, but also learning the aspects around the language itself.

The complexity happens when the culture of the language learnt gains a lot of attention during the language teaching and learning process and overpowers the original culture of the learners. Learners are fragile, when they are exposed to the foreign culture intensively during their study of a new language, they will take the foreign culture in to account and consider their original culture to be less and less meaningful. In the long shot, it will threaten a nation integrity. One selection of the solution is inserting the local wisdom in the language teaching. The local wisdom is the content of language teaching which is related to tradition and culture of the learners.

This study focuses to the English Language Teaching (ELT). The particular study attempts to provide reasoning why the local wisdom is important to be inserted in English language teaching. The study also provides the teaching strategy which involves the traditional games, cublek-cublek suweng from Java and cuk-cuk bimbi from Kalimantan, Indonesia, to instill the local wisdom to the learners in English language teaching.

Wisdom in English Language Teaching (ELT)

The intelligence in balancing various kinds of interests, like self-interest (intrapersonal), self and others interests (interpersonal), and other interests involving in someone's life (extra personal) is the definition of wisdom (We, 2006). In other words, wisdom is the skill to be able to put oneself in any situation gracefully without causing any harm what so ever. In Indonesian context, English is the foreign language. It makes the language exposure for the learners is limited to the school or classes basis only. This lack of access to the language results the high expectation from the learners when they learn English. This enthusiasm leads the students to appreciate more the culture which is brought by the language they are learning since it is different from their original culture.

Borrowing the term from Sudartini (2012) that the English teachers are the cultural agents, they are better to grow some awareness of this kind of blind foreign culture appreciation. If wisdom is defined as the application of knowledge to goals that are derived from a balance of self- and other-interests, then there is no reason to believe that wisdom cannot be taught and learned (Halpern 2001: 255). As the cultural agents, the English teachers should wisely nurture the students to equally appreciate all the cultures involved in the English Language Teaching.

Local Wisdom in English Language Teaching (ELT)

There are two levels that need to be considered when it is arguing about language learning, namely the functional/communication and educational level (Cook, 1983). The Functional/ communication level is when the learners acquire the skill to use the language outside the classroom, while the educational level is when the learners broaden their

knowledge related to the language they are learning, including the culture where the language is served in communication. One of the four main content areas in language teaching proposed by Stern (1992) “The General Language Education” is also talking the same ideas with Cook’s educational level.

For a long time, much of English language teaching has been on the margins of education, indeed, some teachers will actually say that they are only responsible for teaching the language, and not for the general educational development of the student. This, however, is an illusion. Whether we are aware of it or not, students will always learn more in their language classes than just language (Littlejohn, 1997). It is clear now that culture and teaching language go hand in hand harmoniously. The question emerges, ‘Which culture should be taught?’. In ELT context, the English culture will automatically be transferred to the learners during the language teaching and learning process. Then, the next question follows, “Should we neglect the Indonesian culture during English Language teaching?”. The answer for later question is negative. The Indonesian culture should be inserted in the English language teaching to instill the local wisdom to the Indonesia learners.

Inserting the Indonesian culture into the English language teaching is in line with Davis’ (1996: 233-234) motion that stated the student’ daily lives, cultures, environments, hopes and fears, and needs must be involved in what is happening around them in the class during the teaching-learning process. In accordance with Davis, Evertson & Weinstein in Trumbull & Rothsten-Fish (2009: 326) asserted that if the language teachers wish to establish in their classroom “inclusive, supportive, and caring environment” that facilitates students’ learning, then they must attend to culture.

Indonesia is prosperous for its cultural diversities. There a lot of tribes with different cultures to carry on. One of the culture characteristics is that the culture is learned. It means that the culture is not inherited from one to another generation. The culture passing is not commonly taught and learnt consciously. However, in teaching and learning paradigm, the culture teaching and learning is approved doing to increase the learners’ awareness of their original culture, which at the end of the day, it will make them appreciate their culture more and eventually strengthen the Indonesia integrity as a state unitary republic. The fact that the nationality is something really essential matter in order to maintain the nation identity and integrity. Anderson (2006) views that nationalism not only as an imaginary phenomenon (but not imaginative), whose existence always requires to be continually reconstructed and maintained by the whole society, including the learners as the next generation of the nation. It is safe to state that inserting the local culture in the English language teaching is very beneficial to prepare the learners’ cultural background and identity which will positively strengthen their nationalism awareness when they are exposed to the foreign culture and ideology internalized during the English teaching and learning process.

Traditional Games to Introduce the Local Wisdom in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Brown in Richard and Renandya (2002) claims that whenever you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of

thinking, feeling, and acting. The claim is a self-explanation to understand that cultural influence will be always exists within the language teaching and learning, as in ELT this study. In order to preserve the learners' understanding toward their original culture, the teachers, as the practitioners who deal the real situation of teaching and learning process, need to be smart to promote the local culture during their practices.

Teaching is actually a performance of art. In a classroom framework, the teacher has the responsible to communicate as well as to entertain and engage the learners toward the material being taught. Related to local culture insertion in English language teaching (ELT), teachers in Indonesia can make the best use the traditional games to instill the local wisdom as well as to entertain and engage the learners in learning English. Traditional is a form of attitude or a set of ways of thinking and acting that always stick to the inherited norms and customs (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2005). Taking the definition previously in to account, the traditional game is the game that reflects the attitude, ways of thinking, and acting which follow the norms and customs.

The first traditional game that is proposed in this study for instilling the local wisdom in English language teaching (ELT) is Javanese traditional game named Cublak-Cublak Suweng. This game was invented by Sunan Giri, one of the Wali Songo. Wali Songo was the nine special scholars who are the responsibility was spreading Islam in Java. Sunan Giri was a powerful scholar as well as a great man. Preaching, but not pushy but it makes sense to drift inside. This method turned out to be very powerful to make the appeal of Java people towards Islam. Through art and culture in the form of gamelan, song, or other literary works made Sunan Giri as an admired figure until now. One of his works is Cublak-Cublak Suweng. The lyric of the song in this game is written in the following sentences:

Cublak Cublak Suweng,
Suwenge ting gelèntèr
Mambu ketundhung Gudel,
Pak empong lera-Lere,
Sopo ngguyu ndelikkaké
Sir sir pong dele kopong,
Sir sir pong dele kopong.

Cublak-Cublak Suweng, has a very deep meaning which was the reflection of the intelligence. The details about the song's meaning is in the following explanation: Cublak means place. Suweng is women's jewelry earrings Java. So, Cublak-Cublak Suweng, means that there is a precious treasure. Suwenge gelenter teng means the true treasures in the form of true happiness is already there scattered around humans. Mambu ketundhung Gudel. Mambu means smelled. Ketundhung means intended, and Gudel means a calf. Meaning, a lot of people trying to find the true treasure. Even fools (likened Gudel) seek the treasure with lustful ego, corruption and greed, in order to find true happiness.

Mr. empo lera-lera, Pak empo means the toothless male man. Lera-lera means look left-right. People are stupid like a toothless old man bewildered. Despite his wealth is

abundant, it turns out it was a fake treasure, not treasure the True or true happiness. They are confused by being overtaken by its own greed lust.

Sopo ngguyu ndhelikake, Sopo ngguyu means who laughs, Ndhelikake means hiding. This line illustrates that whoever wise, it was he who found the treasure place True or true happiness. He was the one who smiled-smile through each state of life, even though being in the middle of the lives of those who are greedy.

Sir-sir pong dele hollow, Sir means conscience, dele pong hollow means empty soy without content. This means that in the conscience empty. Meaning that to get to the place Hidden Truth (Cublak Suweng) or true happiness, one must break away from the love of earthly possessions, emptied himself, humble, humble fellow, and always wear taste and hone the sharp sir his / her conscience, The conclusion of this song more or less as follows: In order to look for treasure do not indulge but everything is back to a clean conscience. Not influenced by lust. With conscience will be easier to find it, do not get lost the way to forget the hereafter.

How to play Cublek-Cublek Suweng is: (1) Make a hum-pim-pah so put one person who is losing the hum-pim-pah and the other is a party that rose. (2) The player who lost the humpimpah sit cross-legged and invert the whole body to the floor. (3) All players are up to lay their hands on the backs of players who spoke, palms facing upwards in the position. (4) One player who rose to be a "leader" of the game and there is a bar of "undas" hand. (5) The leader of the game will recite the song. (6) While reciting, the players move the "undas" from one palm to another. (7) When the song ends, the player who inverted rise and try to guess in which hand the "undas" is. When the guessing is correct, the person who hold the "undas" will have his/her turn to be inverted in the center of friends. But when the guessing is wrong, the same person who guess poorly will have another round to be inverted in the center of friends.

By having Cublak-Cublak suweng in English language class, it is both entertaining and informative. Let the students practice the game and after that the teacher can invite them to discuss about the moral value of the game. Besides discussing the moral value, through Cublak-Cublak Suweng, the English language learners can also learn the other aspect of English, such as grammar.

The writer of this study happens to live in Kalimantan and spent her whole childhood there. It makes her notice that in Kalimantan there is a traditional game that is similar to Cublak-Cublak Suweng called Cuk-Cuk Bimbi. The mechanic of how the game played is the same. The only difference is the song recited when playing the game. The song for Cuk-Cuk Bimbi is:

Cuk-Cuk bimbi
Bimbiku dalam sarunai
Tacucuk takulibi
Muhanya kaya Panai

Cuk-Cuk Bimbi is a game of the people of Banjar area and not it is endangered because some people are less familiar with the game and replaced by modern games.

The inserting of this local wisdom in English language teaching is basically is in the same degree with Cublak-Cublak Suweng. The detail about teaching procedure using the traditional games will be elaborate in the following discussion.

Teaching Procedures

Good English language teachers should be teachers who “will work to create classrooms that are places where people can think, question, speak, write, read critically, critique freely, work cooperatively, consider the common good, and link consciousness to conduct” (Ayers 1995, cited in Irwin-DeVitis and DeVitis 1998: 270). Those criteria of good English teacher can be reached by inserting the local wisdom, in this particular study: the traditional games.

Scenario 1

In English language teaching, the implementation of the traditional game can simply by having the students perform the game. Then, using English, they share their experience about playing the traditional game, such as Cublak-Cublak Suweng. The teaching ends with learners’ (local) cultures and English functions as a means of communication (Madya, 2004). Here the traditional games will be the topic which is closely related to the learners’ daily life, and English accommodates the need of communicating the experience in performing the traditional games.

Scenario 2

It is more suitable to the higher classes of learners to try investigate the moral values within the traditional games they perform. This activity needs more than the vocabulary. This particular activity forces the learners to use their high order of thinking. When the learners are able to do this activity, they will have sense of accomplishment, and eventually will be more motivated in learning English.

Scenario 3

The traditional games can be a media for the language learners to have grammar practice. Here are the steps:

- 1) The Teacher asks the learners to perform Cublak-Cublak Suweng or Cuk-Cuk Bimbi.
- 2) After the song recited, instead of just guessing like the original version of the game, the learners can have a drill about expressing opinion and make clarification.
- 3) The learner who got the turn makes a sentence in expressing opinion. “I think Maria has the stone” And then Maria makes one clarification statement whether she has the stone or not. “Yes, I have the stone” or “No, I do not have the stone”
- 4) The teacher allows the particular learner to express the opinion twice.
- 5) When he/she gets a Yes for the clarification, it means the learner who has the stone will replace him/her to get the turn. If both of the clarification statement are “no”, it means he/she will do the turn for another round.
- 6) The song in performing these traditional games can be change into an English song.

Reflection and Implication

It is still argued about whether the local culture of the learners should be involved in English language teaching. Still there is a risk to lose the learners' original culture and character if there is no anticipation made to stop it. The advantage in inserting the local culture and instilling the local wisdom in English language teaching practice is that the teachers are both teaching English for what it is and preparing the learners' cultural background and identity which will positively strengthen their nationalism awareness when they are exposed to the foreign culture. However, like an expert said, "To a certain extent, teachers seem to be 'consumers' of research, who take away the 'products' (results) rather than focusing on the 'ingredients' (premises) and processes (Widdowson 1990). This statement implies that the application of the same teaching strategies in different conditions and needs may result different output. Teachers need to know how to modify the materials and how to attract students' attention or to involve them in interaction. Students' motivation and interest for different tasks can vary in different classrooms. The future inquiry is highly suggested in replicate this study or truly apply this conceptual framework in English language teaching classes.

Conclusion

Learning a new language is always closely related to learning the culture of the language itself. The culture is neither good nor in general, but rather embodies values that have grown out of historical and social condition and necessities. The teacher's responsibility to engage the learners to be more aware of cultural diversities without losing their own original culture and values.

If each student's (local) culture can be identified, explored, and elaborated, there will be cultural understanding among the students attending the class. They will know more their classmates' cultures and understand that each (local) culture has moral values, living values, and wisdoms. If the lecturers/ teachers are able to do so, nation characters can be built and nation characters are completely important for life sustainability and its nation life, Indonesia (Suyata, 2011: 12).

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