TOWARDS LOCAL CULTURE INTERGRATION IN EFL CLASSROOMS IN INDONESIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of culture in EFL classrooms has become a somewhat hot issue attracting an endless debate among language researchers, methodologists, and designers. This trend could be rooted from two phenomena. On one hand, foreign language learning has undergone a shift from teacher-centered approach to learner-centered one. This has resulted the shift of teaching focus as well. The teaching of foreign language, including English is nowadays more oriented toward learners' need. As such, the English syllabus should be designed in such a way to cater what learners would like to study, not what they should study or what should be taught to them. On the other hand, due to the fact that every learner is born and formed by his/her own local culture, the influence of his/her local culture when learning a target or second language including English is inevitable. In consequence, the inclusion of learner local culture to the English curriculum is a must (see also; Sowden 2007; Byram, 1997; Byram and Flemming, 1998; Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996; Alptekin, 2005; Jenkins, 2005); Seidlhofer, 2001; Joseph et al, 2006; Morrow and Torres, 2007, Jabeen, et al. 2013). Furthermore, the debate goes on questioning the necessity to teach target language culture, English culture, in EFL classrooms.

The paper discusses the integration of learners' own culture context in EFL syllabus in Indonesia. However, I do not aim at an exhaustive coverage of the phenomenon. Rather, it will be simply geared towards discussing the merit and shortcomings of the inclusion of learners' own local culture context in their English syllabus and the teaching of target language culture as well.

2. IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The use of culture in EFL classrooms has triggered an endless debate among language teachers, language researchers, syllabus designers, and sociolinguists. The followings are some different views on the inclusion and the exclusion of both local and target language culture contexts in the syllabus of EFL/ESL classrooms.

The first view is those who refused to teach the target language culture in EFL classrooms (see, Kachru, 1986; Kachru and Nelson, 1996; Canagarajah, 1999, Jabeen et al, 2005). The second view argues that the teaching of English should be carried out free from culture context because English as 'lingua franca', the language for all people regardless the ethnicity (see, Seidlhofer, 2001; Alptekin, 2005; Jenkins, 2005). The other view is those who pointed out that the teaching of English should be conducted parallel to the teaching of the culture underlying the language as this could enhance the learners' acculturation process towards the English culture (see Byram, 1997; Byram Fleming, 1998; Ho, 1998, and Ilter and Guzeller, 2005). Next view is those who regard target language culture with suspicious and as an attempt to change the local culture. This is especially the case in many Moslem countries where the target culture, English, is seen as contrary to their religion (see, Argungu, 2002; and Mahboob, 2009). The last view is those who pointed out that the teaching of English should involve the learners' own local culture (see, Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996).

Whatever the view we hold, however, it is important to know that culture is not a static whole as it affects many aspects of life in a community. The influence of target culture in learning foreign language is inevitable. As such, the choice between inclusion and exclusion of target and local language culture in EFL classrooms should be conducted in a very careful manner to yield a somewhat effective teaching-learning outcome. Owing to Wei (2005:56) who advocated that language has a dual character, both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture, and likewise Gao (2006) who pointed out that language learning is a cultural learning, has obviously asserted the necessity to include both L1 and L2

culture in a foreign language learning syllabus, including the teaching of English in Indonesia.

Based on these postulates, I should like to say that the EFL classrooms in Indonesia should acknowledge both L1 and L2 culture in their syllabuses in order to achieve an effective learning outcome for the learners. The followings are some accounts on the positive and negative aspects of the inclusion of local and target language culture in the syllabus of EFL classrooms in Indonesia.

3. POSITIVE & NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF LOCAL AND TARGET CULTURE IN EFL CLASSROOMS

The inclusion of learners' local culture contexts in EFL classrooms could provide benefits for learners in terms of among other things are as follows:

Firstly, they will learn the local indigenous consisting of norms and values, beliefs, and all moral imperatives prescribed in their local culture. All of such moral imperatives will serve as an effective tool for strengthening their own identity, character, and mindset. As such, automatically, the learners could of course be able to distinguish the contributing aspects from the harmful aspects of target language culture contexts to their own local culture when learning English.

Secondly, such an inclusion of learners' local culture becomes one of somewhat effective and useful tools for preserving their own local culture, including the local indigenous.

Next, the inclusion of learners' local culture in EFL syllabus has a positive effect on the learners' integrity.

Lastly, as prescribed by the objective of national education of Indonesia, the inclusion of learners' local culture contexts could produce not only a more intelligent learner but also a learner who possesses a noble character.

However, when such an inclusion is not accompanied by the teaching of target language culture contexts, the learners seem to have a defect competence in using the target language communicatively. In other word, they cannot use English to communicate in real situation. Hence, it leads to the attempts for

incorporating learners' local culture in target language teaching through textbooks and ELT materials.

The positive aspects of the teaching of the target language culture context in EFL classrooms are among other things, to enable L2 learners to communicate communicatively in the target language, to improve social attitude and a positive viewpoint towards the target language community. All these aspects will obviously lead to a better understanding of not only the language itself but also the socio-cultural aspects of the target community L2 learners need when aimed at intermingling with the target language community one day.

However, the teaching of target language culture context in EFL classrooms has some negative effects as well. Firstly, target culture invasion to learners' life is inevitable. This can be done not only through language learning but also through movie, music, fashion, and even lifestyle. As such, such an invasion could form and affect L2 learners' own character. This could of course hinder their own character. The learners are more likely to be taken off from their own culture base. Next, the teaching of target language culture in EFL classrooms may also corrode the L2 learner's local culture tradition. This could eventually risk the learners' appreciation to their national identity. Finally, as pointed out by Alptekin (1993) that teaching target language culture may hinder learners' understanding of language as they have to cope with unfamiliar vocabulary items as well as cultural items which are alien to them.

4. L1 AND L2 CULTURE AMALGAMATION APPROACHES

The followings are some foreign language teaching approaches, which empirically prove to be effective in EFL classrooms as far as the teaching of both learners' own local culture and target language culture is concerned.

1. Blended Learning Approach/Blended Cultural Model

Blended learning approach is an EFL teaching approach, which allows the teaching of local culture contexts incorporating with the teaching of the target language culture. It is believed that on one hand, the approach is effective in improving L2 learners' communicative competence as learners not only learning the systemic aspects of English such as linguistic structure of English

but also the schematic aspects of English, including the English culture. As such, owing to this competence, they could use the language to communicate in real situation. On the other hand, the approach could strengthen L2 learners' identity and character as the syllabus also provides rooms for the learners' own local culture to be explored.

2. **Ethno-pedagogic Approach**

This approach is based on the fundamental value of local society, and views local indigenous as source of innovation and skills, which could be intensively explored for society prosperity. The main objective of the approach is to provide L2 learners with a vivid cultural foundation and as such the approach keeps the learners not to be taken off from their own culture base. This can be done by exploring learners' local culture to discover the forms of their local indigenous, which are later integrated to the EFL syllabus and materials.

3. **Intercultural Approach**

The approach was developed in Europe in 1990s. The learning is oriented towards providing L2 learners with not only such aspects as related to linguistic competence and socio-pragmatics but also and most importantly to enable learners to understand and to adapt to their interlocutors' culture called intercultural competence. The approach marked the teaching shift from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism. The former is marked by denial, defense of cultural differences, and dichotomy 'us' and 'them'. The latter could be identified as acceptance, adaptation, and integration of cultural differences.

The approaches mentioned above share similar views. They all proclaimed the necessity to teach both the target language culture and the learners' local culture context to yield an effective teaching-learning process in EFL classrooms as the two cultures complement one another to reach the learning target. This is in line with Adaskou et al (as cited in Nation and Macalister, 2009) who asserted that learners are more motivated when they learn target language with reference to their local culture. Similarly, Kramsch (1993) argues that target language culture and learners' local culture should be placed together in order for learners to

understand a foreign culture. Moreover, it could be said that one of the most crucial contribution of the above approaches is that the approaches enable to preserve the learners' own local culture.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL CULTURE INCLUSION IN EFL SYLLABUS

I found that it is not an easy job to figure out a somewhat practical method in integrating learners' own culture contexts in EFL classrooms. It might be the reason that I haven't found any single publication, which cater such a practical method so far. Hence, in this regard, I could simply touch the issue in a somewhat global account by employing a classic framework for management; planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation.

Planning comprises the steps as follow:

- Get all the concerned party such as language policy makers, educators, and government to come together to figure out a master plan on how to develop EFL materials incorporating local culture contexts in it.
- Review and revised the master plan, when necessary
- Collect the local culture content from any forms of literary works (oral and written forms) such as novels, poems, and any other publication like article and the likes.
- The gathered content has to be carefully catalogued, edited, and selected for practical use and put these massive data as a content corpus for allowing an easy access.
- Integrate the local content as prescribed by the master plan.
- The step will end with an output in a form of couples of EFL materials, which involve learners' own local culture context.

Implementing comprises the steps as follow:

- Select some teachers randomly from any schools.
- Train them in how to use the materials.
- Try out the materials in some selected schools

Monitoring comprises the steps as follow:

- The assigned committee monitors every single step of the implementation of the try-out.
- Jot down anything necessary for the improvement of the materials; both the strong and weak points

Evaluation comprises the steps as follow:

- Based on the data obtained from the previous step, the committee makes a revision of the EFL materials.
- The committee has now a revised and final version of the EFL materials, which are ready for use in a massive sense.
- Of course, monitoring and evaluation have to be carried out anytime by the committee in order to produce effective and useful EFL materials.

6. CONCLUSION

It is much clearer now that the role of both target language culture and learners' own culture play important part in EFL classrooms. The two cultures work side by side to reach the learning target of EFL syllabus. The teaching of target language culture could enable learners to use the language to communicate in real situation, as they understand well and adapt themselves to the target language culture. At the same time, the inclusion and teaching of learners' own culture in EFL classroom could provide learners with an effective and useful foundation for among other things building and strengthening their own character as well as moral value in order to avoid being taken off from their own cultural base when learning English as foreign language.

7. REFERENCES

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