Maintaining Students' 'Indonesian Identity' with a Multicultural Teaching Approach

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Abstract

Experts agree that using English as an International Language (EIL) has directly and indirectly shaped the speakers' ways of thinking which may finally shape their identity. This paper theoretically examines impacts of learning English towards students' identity, i.e. Indonesian identity. First, it explains the possibility of Indonesian students' changing identity as learning English in school. Then, it recommends what teachers should know about their students in order to reduce negative impacts of English to the students' national identity. Finally, the paper purposes the notion of a multicultural teaching approach when teaching English.

Keywords: EIL, Identity, Multicultural Teaching Approach.

Kachru (1985) described the spread of English into becoming today's International language (EIL) by using the three circles model: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. According to him, the inner circle refers to native English speaking countries, such as USA, UK and New Zealand. The outer circle represents the non-native varieties (ESL) in the countries that experienced periods of British colonization in the past such as India, Philippines, and Malaysia. The expanding Circle includes the countries, such as China and Indonesia where English is used and taught as a foreign language (EFL). In fact, the notion of the circles model implies that it is speakers' nationality, skin color, and so on which 'acted as symbolic markers of the politicized construct of 'native speaker" which is actually no longer considered due to the fact that the focus in the EIL paradigm today is on communication (Sharifian, 2009). However, using English as an EIL has directly and indirectly shaped our ways of thinking which may finally shape our identity (Ha, 2008). With regard to this tension, this paper examines impacts of learning English towards students' identity. More specifically, it explains the possibility of Indonesian students' changing identity as learning English in school and recommends what teachers should know about their students in order to reduce negative impacts of English to the students' national identity. Finally, it purposes the notion of a multicultural teaching approach when teaching English.

Students' Identity Construction

Identity construction is as a result of one's interaction with the world. In other words, identity is indeed fluid and changing (Ha, 2008; Andersen, 2009). This is in line with what Andersen (2009) believes that identity construction never stops but keeps changing due to the influence and experience of interaction

with other people. This is to say that one's identity is affected by with whom he interacts and most of which by his experience. Thus, in Indonesian context, students' relationships, such as with their family, friends and colleagues are culturally considered valuable and impact one's identity. In addition, their experience of learning English affects the way they think of Indonesian comparing to English.

Ha (2008) argues that when one uses English as an international language (EIL), it directly and indirectly shapes his ways of thinking which may finally shape his identity. Most people know that as an international language, English is the most used language in the world and, thus, makes them perceive the 'importance' of learning it. Indonesian students, therefore, might think the same way. This is supported by the fact that teenagers are now much affected by the development of internet and technologies which make them familiar with English every day. This slowly shapes the way they think of English as number one language. They might feel that using English can show their prestige and that they are proud of using English. What is more, most teenagers today mix the use of Indonesian language with English in an inappropriate way. They even sometimes speak Indonesian in "English accent". Moreover, not only the language they admire, but also the culture such as the way Western people behave and dress and so on. This may slowly shape their identity; their identity as Indonesian students (i.e. Indonesian people) has changed.

In the school context, particularly in learning English, one's identity is constructed either during the learning (i.e. English) or outside the classroom when interacting with friends. As students go to school, they started learning and participating in English, which influences their identity (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). They learn English which automatically means learning the culture and practice it during and probably after the class. Although English is indeed learnt as a foreign language which gives them fewer opportunities to use

English outside the class than those learning ESL, their experience in learning EIL will slowly shape their way of thinking (Ha, 2008). For instance, they might feel prouder when using English which is a number-one language in the world today. This creates such tensions, in some context, that they will be prouder using English than Indonesian or that they admire what comes from native English speaking countries than those from Indonesia and so on.

What Teachers Should Know about Students

There is a need to reduce such negative changes of students' identity, therefore. As teachers who have important position as a factor of forming students' identity, there are several things they should recognize. They should be aware of how much cultural identity influences the education of the students (Savage, 2005). He further explains that students' cultural identities are constructed from their experiences with the 12 attributes of culture: ethnicity/nationality, social class, sex/gender, health, age, geographic region, sexuality, religion, social status, language, ability/disability, and race. Here are the attributes in details:

a. Ethnicity/ Nationality
Ethnicity also known as an ethnic group is a group of humans whose members identify themselves with each other, usually based on lineages that are considered equal. The ethnic identity is characterized by recognition by others regarding the group's characteristics such as similarity in culture, language, religion, behavior, and biological characteristics.

The lineage of members of an ethnic is generally determined according to the lineage (patililinial) such as suku Batak, according to the maternal lineage (matrilineal) like suku Minang, or according to both like Javanese or suku Jawa. There is also another one determined according to the religion, as Malay in Malaysia for Muslim bumiputera people,

suku Muslim in Bosnia, suku Moro or Moro people in the Southern Philippines, and so on.

b. Social Class

Social class or social group refers to hierarchical differences (or stratification) between human beings or groups of people in society or culture. Usually most people have social groups, but not all people have the same types of social groups. Based on the characteristics of social stratification, we can find several class divisions or groups in society.

c. Sex/ Gender

Gender is a set of characteristics related to, and distinguishes between, masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics can include sex (i.e. biological gender) (i.e., circumstances to be male, female, or intersex variations), gender-based social structures (i.e., gender roles), or gender identity. Traditionally, people who identify as male or female use binary gender systems while those outside these groups are under the "non-binary" terms. Some cultures have specific gender roles that differ from "men" and "women," such as hijras in South Asia. This is often referred to as the third sex.

d. Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "a state of physical, mental and social well-being. Thus, it is not merely the absence of infirmity or disease." This definition is subject to controversy, because it may have limited value for implementation. Health can be defined as the ability to adapt and manage physical, mental, and social challenges in life.

e. Age

Age is one of the attributes of culture that mean students' age, in this context. Indeed, age or aging is an accumulation of changes in humans over time, including physical, psychological, and social changes. Aging consists of changes in human time, physical, psychological, and social changes. The reaction time, for example,

may slow down with age, while knowledge of world events and conversations can be widespread. Aging is one of the biggest factors known to most people: of the approximately 150,000 people who die every day around the world, around two-thirds are caused by the age-related causes.

f. Geographic Region

Regions in geography are areas that are broadly divided by physical characteristics (physical geography), human impact characteristics (human geography), and human and environmental interactions (environmental geography). Geographical regions and sub-regions are largely described by imprecise boundaries, and sometimes temporary, except in human geography, where jurisdictions such as national borders are defined in law.

An area or a region has its own characteristics that cannot be moved. The first nature is its natural environment (landform, climate, etc.). The second nature is the complex physical element that was built by people in the past. The third nature is a socio-cultural context that cannot be replaced by new immigrants

g. Sexuality

Sexuality can be defined as the way people express and experience themselves sexually. This involves biological, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual feelings and behavior. Since it is a broad term, which varies from time to time, it does not have the right definition. The biological and physical aspects of sexuality mostly concern human reproductive functions, including the cycle of human sexual response. A person's sexual orientation can affect the person's sexual interests and interests for others. The physical and emotional aspects of sexuality include bonds between individuals expressed through deep feelings or physical manifestations of love, trust, and attention. The social aspect deals with the effects of human society on one's sexuality, while spirituality concerns the individual's spiritual relationship with others. Sexuality also influences and

is influenced by cultural, political, legal, philosophical, moral, ethical, and religious aspects in life.

h. Religion

There are around 10,000 different religions in the world, but around 84% of the world's population is affiliated with one of the five largest religious groups, namely Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or forms of popular religion. Non-affiliated demographic religions include those who do not identify with a particular religion, atheist, and agnostic. Also, there are many religions in Indonesia. Islam is the one that has the most adherents. Others are like Christian, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. Therefore, students in a class might have different religious background, thus, teachers must be aware of this in teaching.

Religion is a cultural system consisting of behavior and practice, morals, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, predictions, ethics, or organizations, which connect humanity with supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements. However, there is no scientific consensus on what exactly is meant by religion. Different religions may or may not contain various elements ranging from divine, sacred things, faith, supernatural beings or supernatural beings or "a kind of ultimation and transcendence that will give norms and strength for the rest of life".

i. Social Status

Social status is the level of respect, honor, competency that is considered, and respect given to people, groups, and organizations in a society. Some authors also refer to socially valued roles or categories that a person occupies as "status" (e.g. Becoming a criminal or mental illness). In essence, status is about who is believed by community members to have more or less social values. By definition, this belief about who is more or less valued (e.g. honorable, smart) is widely shared among members of the community.

j. Language

Indonesian is indeed the national language that is formally used at schools. However, students may also use their local languages to talk with their friends, such as Javanese, Madurese, etc. Language is a system consisting of the development, acquisition, maintenance, and use of complex communication systems, especially the ability of humans to do so.

k. Ability/ Disability

Every human has his own uniqueness and talent or ability. Thus, teachers are to be aware of the students' ability and disability. One student might be good at English, others might be good at Mathematics and other might not be good at either but are good at non academic ones.

l. Race

Race can be defined as a grouping of people based on physical or social quality together into categories that are generally viewed differently by society, e.g. ras Melayu Mongoliod, ras Negroid, etc. Modern views regard race as a social construction, an identity given based on rules made by the community. While based in part on physical similarity in groups, race is not an inherent physical or biological quality.

Students' cultural identities are defined by these experiences, and they learn these identities within a culture through socializing agents (Campbell, 2004). Therefore, teachers must understand that these cultural identities define who the students are.

Furthermore, teachers should engage the students in the learning by making them aware of their own culture. In other words, teachers need to develop lessons that highlight students' cultures (Campbell, 2004). In this way, an awareness of the cultural identity of students affects how well the students interact with the teachers and friends. One example is the students can write projects in English that focus on their own cultural heritages in order to discover and share their cultural identities (Savage, 2005). This makes the students become

aware of the rich Indonesian culture and, thus, perceive to have and to belong to the culture. This is important that the students perceive to belong to a certain group since they provide a sense of cultural identity (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Moreover, Campbell (2004) states that students of all ages have a strong need to belong to groups, because groups provide a source of motivation. Thus, when students perceive to belong to Indonesian culture (i.e. groups of Indonesian), such motivations strengthen the Indonesian identity.

The One Flouted Maxim

The one flouted maxim involves the utterances of the main character in The age of Adaline movie subtitle that flout only one of the four types of maxims. This sub-chapter will be divided into four types, including the flouted maxims of relation, flouted maxims of quantity, flouted maxims of manner, and flouted maxims of quality. Each of them is discussed as follows:

How a Multicultural Teaching Approach Maintains Students' Identity

Students come to class with a set of behaviors and characteristics of their own. This makes them unique and affects their academic achievement (e.g. in learning English). Thus, in the process of teaching and learning English, teachers should maintain the students' cultural identities to avoid bad changes of identity that might be affected by their learning English. "Teachers can help students feel comfortable with their cultural identity and assist them in learning by using a Multicultural teaching approach that embraces diversity in the classroom" (Savage, 2005). It is the one that provides the students with relevant teaching by considering the students multi-culture (Indonesian culture in general) when learning in the class (i.e. English). Thus, students not only learn English language along with its culture, but also unconsciously strengthen their 'recognition' of Indonesian rich culture.

Moreover, Campbell (2004) wrote, "Multicultural education should assist students as they learn and explore their changing identities". Teachers having a multicultural perspective, therefore, can help students through culturally relevant teaching. In the context of teaching and learning English, teachers with a multicultural perspective can help students through teaching which is relevant to their culture in order to reduce the negative impacts that English might bring because when one changes a language, his identity changes as well (Norton, 2000). Thus, teachers are recommended to provide the students teaching English which involves Indonesian culture. This shows that the teachers have a multicultural perspective.

The multicultural perspective is what Gay (2000) defined as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them". Culturally relevant teaching starts by teachers getting to know students on a personal level, building teaching around the students' interests when possible, and using them as teaching tools. According to Bennett (2003), culturally relevant teaching has three underlying principles: "students must experience academic success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a 'critical consciousness' through which they may challenge social injustice". This is to say that teachers must empower students to succeed by providing them with a learning environment which respects the students' culture. Thus, they may learn a foreign language (i.e. English), but they always perceive that they belong to Indonesian culture and that Indonesian is as their national identity.

Conclusion

After It is worth noticing that identity is fluid and changing. Thus, in learning English, it is possible that Indonesian students experience

a changing identity. As mentioned previously that identity construction never stops. It keeps changing because of the influence and experience of interaction with other people. The interaction can be with family, friends, colleagues and so on. Thus, as students go to school, their identity is much influenced by their teachers and peers and so on through having an interaction. In addition, it is also much influenced by their experience in and outside the classroom. In this case, they experience the learning of English as an International language (EIL). This might shape the way they think of Indonesian comparing to English. They might slowly think that using English is somewhat of precious. In other words, they want to show their prestige by using English which is the most used language in the world. This shows that English has shaped the way the students think and, later, may slowly change their identity as Indonesian students. They might no longer be proud of either being an Indonesian or speaking Indonesian. Rather, they use English for speaking or mix Indonesian with English. What is more, they might admire what comes from native English speaking countries rather than those coming from Indonesia. To avoid such tension, teachers should provide the students with relevant teaching which encompasses the Indonesian culture in the teaching. This is termed as 'multicultural teaching' where the teaching considers the students' culture in the activities. In English context, teachers who have multicultural perception will provide students with the teaching of English which involves Indonesian culture in the teaching, more specifically involving students' multi-culture. In this way, the impacts of English towards the students' national identity might be reduced.

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