THE ROLE OF CCU IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Language cannot be separated from culture, so if we teach a language, we also need to correlate it with culture. It implies that to teach language means to also teach the culture. Since English now belongs to the world as *lingua franca*, used by different nationalities, number of students who learn English increases around the world. The increase of students who learn English in countries with various ethnics make multicultural education in 21st century. This phenomenon happens especially in diverse country such as Indonesia that has thousands of ethnics, languages, religions, and cultures. Language and religious diversity is also increasing among the nation’s student population (Dilg, 2003). In an EFL country such as Indonesia, teaching cross-cultural understanding (CCU) is extremely needed in order to understand the language taught. This paper will discuss the use of CCU in English classroom especially in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** culture, CCU, multicultural classroom

Introduction

As International language, English is taught around the world. Inner circle countries such as The Great Britain, USA, and Australia learn English as the primary language or the first language. Outer circle countries such as India, Malaysia, and others learn English as a second language. Indonesia, however, as an expanding country considers English as a foreign language.

The different use of English makes English teaching and learning different among countries in the world. People in England might find it easy to learn English because it is their own language, while in Indonesia, people find it very difficult to learn English. Many of the difficulties faced by Indonesian students deal with the social and cultural factors that they have in Indonesia, but Inner circle society does not, or things that exist in Inner circle countries, but do not in Indonesia.

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diversity is also increasing among the nation’s student population (Dilg, 2003). According to US Census Bureau (2000), sixteen percent of school-age youth lived in homes in which English was not the first language in 1990. Most teachers now in the classroom and in teacher education programmes are likely to have students from diverse ethnic, racial, language, and religious groups in their classrooms during their careers.

An important goal of multicultural education is to improve race relations and to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in cross-cultural interactions and in personal, social, and civic action that will help make the nation more democratic and just.

Multicultural education is where a study is designed to equity in education for all students. The contents of the study have to be appropriate to be taught in a multicultural society. The social and behavioural contexts have to be applicable for any ethnic or social paradigms.

In this paper, the writer will describe teaching English in multicultural classroom in Indonesia.

**Literature Review**

Culture is the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time (Cambridge Dictionary). Martin and Nakayama (2010) consider culture as the core concept in intercultural communication. While Kluckhohn and Kelly in Valdes (1996) define culture as all those historically created designs for living, explicit or implicit, rational, irrational, and non-rational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behaviour of men.

Learning cross-cultural understanding is very important since communication, language, and culture cannot be separated (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993). If we do not understand culture, we will not be able to understand text fully (Sadtono, 1999). Shaules and Abe (1997:24) suggest that ‘learning to speak another language is also learning how to change our way of looking at the world, and our way of thinking and interacting.’

In foreign language situations, the hundreds of thousands of learners of English tend to have an instrumental motivation to learn the foreign language (Broughton et.al, 1980). Language and religious diversity is also increasing among the nation’s student population (Dilg, 2003). Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) refers to teaching English to students whose first language is not English. TEFL usually occurs in the student’s own country, either within the state school system, or in private institutions. TEFL teachers may be native or non-native speakers of English (Rohmah, 2013).

**Culture and cross-cultural understanding**

As we can see from categorisation that culture is complicated. The simple kind of culture consists of material culture (human’s products), social culture,
and ideological culture. It is categorised more complexly into hidden (unnoticeable culture), deep culture (values), time oriented culture, gender-oriented culture, involvement culture and context culture.

**The need of studying CCU for language learners**

It is a well acceptable fact that language cannot be separated from culture. In order to be able to communicate fluently, cultural and linguistic aspect should be considered. In fact, if we want to learn a foreign language, we need to learn the culture too. For example, when we learn English vocabulary such as Thanksgiving, Barbeque, Halloween, etc., we will not understand them all unless we know what they are according to English culture. In Indonesian classrooms, as the alternative, the teachers might compare those cultural things in accordance to Indonesian cultures, i.e. Sedekah Bumi as comparison to Thanksgiving, Satai to Barbeque, and Bekakak to Halloween.

Moreover, cultural patterns, customs, and ways of life are considered as parts of language expression. When we read a text in another language, we are also learning that culture. As the consequence, when we do not understand the culture, we will not be able to understand the text deeply.

Learning another language also means that we learn how to look at the world, putting aside our way of thinking and interacting. A person who is expert in many cultures will be more acceptable in any circumstance and environment. That makes the person easy to communicate with the society, so the language acquisition is far more achievable.

It is approved that to study a language, we also need to study the culture. To study the culture, we cannot describe it in another culture, which means it can only be understood on its own term. In other words, there is no single culture that is acceptable to universal perception. For example, in Jordan, family members can kill one of them to protect the honour of the family (Time, 1999). This sort of culture or belief or value of course cannot be accepted by some other cultures such as Indonesia.

**Goals of CCU**

The role of CCU in TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language) has a significant influence. There are at least four goals of CCU for Indonesian learners, namely:

- For those who are going to become teachers of English
- For those who are going overseas to live or study for a lengthy period of time
- For those who are going overseas to live or study for a brief period
- For those who will never go overseas but they will mainly read English materials or work in a company where they have to deal with foreigners.
Problems for learners of EFL

As lingua franca, English now is spoken and written by various nationalities in the whole world, so it cannot be claimed by any speaker of particular nationality. The question now is “what culture do the learners have to learn when learning English?” If they plan to visit a certain English speaking country such as Britain, the answer will be very simple. However, most students in Indonesia do not know or perhaps do not plan to visit any of those countries. Some will probably visit non-English speaking countries instead.

In reading, however, the biggest problem dealing with CCU is understanding terms that come from cultural aspect and do not exist in the learners’ first language. Learners with little knowledge of CCU will find it very difficult to recognise the words.

Another problem in CCU is different style of communication. In the USA on Monday mornings, people usually ask about how we spend our week-ends, for example "Did you enjoy your week-end?" In Indonesia, in contrast, it is hard to find people asking such a question. In Javanese culture, people usually ask 'Where are you going?' when other people pass their houses. That question will be probably considered impolite and nosey in USA. Another feature is idiomatic style. Words such as "malu-malu kucing" in Indonesian culture, for example, will be translated as "shy-shy cat", and "buka puasa" which is generally used by Muslim students as “open fasting”.

Other important problems in cross-cultural communication are the verbal patterns as follows:

- rules of style and speaking (formal, semi-formal and formal)
  
  In Sundanese culture (one of the ethnics in Indonesia), people also know the divisions of communicating styles as in English. They recognise the term “basa alus” as formal, “basa loma” as semi-formal, and “basa kasar” as informal. The difference between English and Sundanese style, however, is in the way the style transforms. In English, people speak formal when they say please, would, could, etc., while in Sundanese, people tend to have different vocabulary for each level of formality.

- criticising
  
  In general Indonesian cultures, people are not supposed to criticise what other people do, even when it is wrong. Instead of giving critics about someone, Indonesian people had better to “lie”, saying everything is fine and good.

- refusing (food)
  
  When someone offers some food, Indonesian people will commonly refuse it by saying “Iya, silakan”, or “Monggo” in Javanese and even “Mangga” in Sundanese which is translated into “Yes, please” in English. However, if someone says such a thing in English, it means he/she does not refuse it, but accepts it.
Having different cultures in learning foreign language is less severe than having different structures. This difference will cause many complications when learners read English writing. If they feel difficult in grammar, they can check it in grammar book. Differently, there is nothing to do when it comes to different cultures. There is not any reference to refer to.

There are still some problems that the learners face when learning foreign language, such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and space. Those problems deal with deep culture.

**Conclusion**

Since English now is international language, it is very important to teach students around the globe, whose first language is not English, cross-cultural understanding. This is because culture is considered as the core of language. It means that when we learn a language, we need also to learn the culture of the speakers of that language.

Furthermore, the writer presents some problems that we need to consider in CCU classroom in TEFL. Many learners are still confused while studying CCU. As non-native English speakers, it is hard to identify the cultural aspects that the learners might find while they are learning English. The best alternative to that problem is to compare some cultural words in English into things that they might be more famous to them. Then, in what aspects of language the learners should be involved in? To answer this question, we need to analyse their needs that can be divided into: to be English teachers, to live in countries where English is spoken in, to travel, and the need to study in which English textbook is used.
References