AN ETNOLINGUISTICS STUDY: DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND RESPONSES OF LOCAL WISDOM IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

As the students coming to senior high schools becomes more diverse, English teachers will bear a larger responsibility to perform a better teaching with different cultural backgrounds. This research illustrates how ethnographic studies with awareness and responses of local wisdom are implemented and performed by the English teachers during teaching and learning process in the classroom. The research investigates how teachers perform their awareness and responses of local wisdom in their teaching English with three specific purposes: 1) to explore how the teachers perform communicative language teaching with their awareness and responses of local cultures; 2) to explore the objects of awareness in their teaching services that could help the learners develop their communicative competence; and 3) to explore the ways the teachers respond to the learners during the teaching-learning process. The researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method that aims at exploring and describing the current issues that may probably occur while conducting the research. To gain the data, the researcher uses observation and semi-structured interview.

Key words: Ethnolinguistic, awareness, responsive, and local wisdom

1. INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language has been widely used in the various reasons in certain communities in Indonesia. The phenomenon creates a certain condition which leads to the fact that some people use it in their daily communication. For example, in the academic level, some of the scholars use it as the minor means for their interaction. Another fact shows that the people involved in the main

level of management also use code mixing and code switching as media that relate to their occupations. The role of English seems to be regarded as one of the most prominent foreign languages since it is established as the international language and the language of science and technology. People who do not want to be left behind by the fast development of science and technology recently have to begin to think of the importance of being able to understand and to master English.

In fact, most of the Indonesian students are still very poor of mastering English. It is, however, evident that they are very hard to have a good command of spoken and written English. Recently, the English teaching process is still unable to achieve the declared goals. A Layman's observation indicates that the secondary school graduates who have studied the language for six years with nine hundred hours of school teaching are unable to use this language for communication purposes. This phenomenon can also be observed among senior high school students or even university graduates. Why does the English teaching process not produce the appropriate competence of students? Are there other aspects that need to improve?

Indonesia, a country with hundreds of ethnic groups and subcultures, automatically has multicultural societies found in the daily life of the people ranging from various informal social encounters up to formal communication in national events. Within the classroom situations, specifically in teaching-learning English, the multicultural encounters take place among others in the use of their communication. Besides, a lot of differences are also performed by the students from different subcultures, such as attitude, behavior, motivation, and etc. The multicultural encounters range from positive to negative impacts that can lead to their appreciation and attention on learning activities. The positive side of this multicultural encounters brings about the teachers' creativities to carry on the conducive classroom management which is very beneficial for the students' learning activities in the teaching-learning process. The negative side might become the social and psychological constraints of both teachers and students which might be harmful to the English-teaching process. Both teachers and students are lack of creativity and innovation in the teaching-learning process that can lead to the unconducive classroom management. The appropriate measures should be taken into consideration to prevent and to overcome the negative impacts, otherwise, the goals of English teaching at schools might not be achieved.

Awareness of local wisdom in teaching English contains policies or points of view in teaching

performances specifically intended not only to build the communicative language teaching but also to shape students to be wiser in undergoing their lives. In Indonesia, awareness of local wisdom is not only necessarily applicable for local or ethnic context but also cross-cultural or cross ethnical culture to establish national cultural values, such as character and identity.

The critical study has paid considerable attention on a larger responsibility of English teachers to perform sufficient awareness of local wisdom in teaching services in which there have been occurring the current issues dealing with a great destruction of local culture as the character traits of Indonesia. English teachers are expected to be capable of maintaining local cultures by integrating the subject matters and teaching performances which support local wisdom policy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Description of Ethnolinguistic Study

Ethnolinguistics (sometimes called cultural linguistics) is a field of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world. It is the combination between ethnology and linguistics. The former refers to the way of life of an entire community, i.e., all the characteristics which distinguish one community from the other. Those characteristics make the cultural aspects of a community or a society.

Ethno linguistics examines how various features of human languages encode cultural conceptualizations, including cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors. In this case, language is viewed as deeply entrenched in the group-level, cultural cognition of communities of speakers. Thus far, the approach of Cultural Linguistics has been adopted in several areas of applied linguistic research, including intercultural communication, and second and foreign language teaching and learning.

2.2. Trends that Effect Teaching English

Despite a wide range of student differences, there is an increased emphasis to have all students reach the same academic goals and standards. This perception has led to the idea that whatever standards or educational goals are set should be uniformly applied to the vast majority of students and particular attention should be given to historically underperforming groups (Bennett, 1975).

2.3. Teacher Pre-service Needs

What do English teachers in Indonesia need to become effective multicultural teachers? First, pre-service teachers need to become reflective practitioners. Reflective practitioners apply observational, empirical, and analytical skills to

monitor, evaluate, and revise their own teaching practices (Irvine, 1990). Second, pre-service teacher must gain cultural competence, that is, the ability to function comfortably in cross-cultural settings and to interact harmoniously with people from cultures that differ from their own. Third, the future teachers need to become effective cross-cultural communicators. Effective cross-cultural communication skills help teachers create a classroom environment that encourages good interpersonal relationship (Halliday, 2014). Fourth, pre-service teachers should understand the interrelationship between language and culture. Language promotes group identity and individual membership because language is a function of culture that reflects the conventions and values of its speakers. Fifth, future teachers need to recognize the cultural roots of cognition and its close link to language. Logical reasoning and discourse styles evolve within a cultural context; consequently, they are culture-specific and not universal.

2.4. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Given the pervasive manner in which culture influences thought and behavior. It is not hard to imagine that it plays a significant role in the learning process. In fact, almost every aspect of the teaching and learning process is culturally influenced. While student diversity provides a rich educational resource, it also adds to the complexity of teaching in a standards-based context.

2.5. Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is a practical teaching strategy which was based on the premise that when academic knowledge and skills are taught within the student's frame of refference and lived experiences, they are more personally meaningful to the student, have higher interest and appeal and are acquired more easily and thoroughly (Celce, 1999).

2.6. Cultural Competency of Teachers

The act of raising their awareness on their cultural perspective gives teachers insights about expectations and behaviors underlying cultural assumptions (R. Carter, 2006). Being aware of their backgrounds/experiences and prejudices enables teachers to be more sensitive towards different groups and accept differences as well as helping them to realize how these affect teacher-student relation, class management, educating-teaching processes, and evaluation.

A profitable teaching English should incorporate local wisdom which enables students to be aware of their characters by sticking to what they have already learnt. It is mainly intended to prepare students with the proper knowledge to fight against the negative impacts of modernization and globalization. Banks (2004) stated that teaching with multicultural

perspective requires that the link between learning and social life be formed and that knowledge be directly adapted to and practiced in the daily lives of students. Schools need to individually empower students who will impact social change through strong knowledge and shared effort (Saint, 2005). In such approach, teachers are agents of change that empower their students and support democratic values.

2.7.   Classroom Management

Classroom management is complex set of skills that includes much more than being able to influence and control student behaviour, there remains an overall impression that classroom management is primarily about 'discipline' (Kaur, 2012). Managing the classroom is a critical element in successful instruction and requires good organizational ability and consistency, and three phases of classroom management and discipline: a) planning before school begins; b) implementing plans; c) maintenance. Classroom Management is not a content area that is only focused on an hour out of the day school, it refers to all of the things that a teacher does to organize students, spare times, and materials so that instruction in content and student learning can take place (Wong, H. K., & Wong, 1998).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the researcher attempts to use a qualitative paradigm with descriptive qualitative method to describe and explore the factual condition of teachers' teaching specifically related to the implementation of local wisdom awareness. This assumption is supported by some theorists that state about the qualitative research.

3.1.   Methods of Collecting Data

In this research, sources are obtained from the participants' own accounts of taking several weeks to get along with them to reach the required data. It is essential to conduct because taking the required data relates to experiences of some personal significance in teaching performances.

In this research, the researcher uses multiple data collection methods to gain more holistic and balanced understanding (Willig, 1998). First, the researcher collects the data through participant observation. Participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing the teachers' performances in teaching-learning process. The second, the data are obtained through semi-structured interview with the teachers. The researcher uses semi-structured interview through one-to-one interview. It is intended to take an opportunity to express personal ideas.

Data collection does not set out to test hypothesis, and this stance is maintained in data analysis. The

analysis reflects upon his or her own preconceptions about the data and attempts to suspend these in order to focus on grasping the experiential world of the research participant. Transcript are coded in considerable detail with the focus shifting back and forth from the key claims of the participants to the researcher's interpretation of the meaning to those claims.

3.2.   Methods of Analysis Data

Data Analysis is conducted to be 'bottom-up'. This means that the researcher generates codes from the data, rather than using pre-existing theory to identify codes that might be applied to the data. It encourages an open-ended dialogue between the researcher and the participants and may, therefore, lead us to see things in a new light.

After transcribing the data, the researcher works closely and intensively with the results of participants observation and interviews, annotating it closely (coding) for insights into participants' experiences and perspective of the world. As the analysis develops, the researcher catalogues the emerging codes and subsequently begins to look for patterns into the codes.

3.3.   Participants

In this research, taking the participants concerns with in-depth examination of the particular sample sizes that tends to be an assumption of homogeneity because the researcher will be trying to a sample for which the research questions will be meaningful.

The researcher plans to select three English teachers of Senior High School in Tasikmalaya City who are presummed to represent the qualification of respondents.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interview and direct observation of teaching in the classroom regarding the awareness of local wisdom in teaching English, I found several research findings which will be described in this section. In general, English teachers do not wholly understand the primary principles of teaching English with the awareness of local wisdom seen from their performances in teaching-learning process in the classroom. In other words, they have insufficient knowledge which concerns with the implementation of awareness of local wisdom in teaching English, and less knowledge of local culture.

Generally, the Sundanese people are very popular for their wisdom, friendliness, and familiarity in the process of communication. To smile in getting in touch with other people is also a sign of Sundanese people including giving responses of communication. These specific features of local culture are not totally performed by the English teachers in the teaching-learning process whereas the teachers themselves are Sundanese people. While

communicating with the students and explaining the material as well as giving responses to the students' questions, they perform less responsive teaching to local culture. The specific features of Sundanese culture mentioned previously are not wholly presented by the English teachers which can be transcribed in the following conversation/oral communication during the class interaction, as follows:

1. Teacher: *Why don't you pay attention on the material*?
   ('The teachers talk to the students angrily').
   Student: *We are sorry.*
   ('The students are in deep pressure to respond it'.)
   In this case, being angry with the students because of their bad habit or behaviour in the class is contradictive with the specific features of Sundanese local culture;

2. Teacher: *Don't talk too much in answering the question! I want you to respond like what I have given you an example*.
   ('The teacher informs the students the instruction rudely without getting smile at all'.)
   Students: *Alright.*
   ('They nod without purity.')
   Such case shows that teacher is authoritative which tend to build insufficient communication between teacher and students. It is wholly contradictive with the

indigenous Sundanese local culture;

3. Teacher: *Ok. Who will answer the first question*?
   Students: *Alright.*
   ('One of the students tries to give a response to the question.)
   Teacher: *No, your answer is wrong. Who else*?
   ('He/she responds it without appreciating the student's bravery.')
   Teacher's comment toward the student's answer like the statement above should not happen while teaching-learning process. It will psychologically influence the student's inner drive to be motivated in the classroom interaction. The indigenous Sundanese local culture does not teach such attitude or behaviour.

Based on the perspective of classroom management, I identify weaknesses of teacher's performances dealing with promoting local culture in the teaching-learning process which will be described, as follows: (1) teacher is less familiar to get in touch with the students due to a lot of tasks the teacher has to do with full working hours; (2) teacher often builds an unproductive classroom communication with the students by sitting on the chair with the soft voice in explaining the material and giving questions as well as strengthening the feedback which cannot be heard clearly by the students particularly those who are sitting at the back of

class; and (3) teacher's movement around the class to provide the similar attention to all students is rarely to do. It is presumed to make the student unsatisfied with it.

4. The agent factors for such problems are (1) the existing curriculum does not clearly integrate the awareness of local wisdom in which the English teacher has difficulties to implement it in the teaching-learning process; (2) the shifts of educational policy, such as changing curriculum, are regarded as the greatest factor confusing teachers in implementing local culture in the teaching-learning process; (3) Less guidance and special training provided by the government are also the dominant factors which contribute the problems in applying awareness of local wisdom in teaching-learning process; and (4) instrument of teaching, such as students' worksheet, is still under the Central Government Policy so that the contents of books do not entirely reflect the local wisdom.

5. CONCLUSION

Generally, the indigenous Sundanese culture is the local culture of the community in West Java Province Indonesia which has its own feature of culture probably different from other places. Since few years ago, Sundanese ethnic is very popular for their friendliness, familiarity, friendship, kindness, and togetherness which has characterized the people who live in this region and has influenced in almost all sectors of human's lives including the teaching-learning process.

Talking about awareness of local culture in the teaching-learning process in this research is mainly focused on teacher's performances many factors, such as norms, ethics, attitudes, and behaviors in giving responses, communicating with the students, and teaching services if classroom management which may characterize the indigenous Sundanese local culture.

In my assumption that applying awareness of local wisdom, especially in teaching English, is one of the strategic programs which essentially requires the equal commitment from all sectors, specifically the educational system, policy makers, and stake-holders due to the fast development of globalization and modernization. Seeing the factual condition of living condition in the community, awareness of local wisdom should be taken into consideration in the national educational system since the socio-cultural paradigm has indicated the shifts colouring almost all sectors of human's lives. The impact of globalization and modernization of science and technology does not always positive things which kill the indigenous local culture. In this case, the educational role is very powerful to maintain and preserve the local

culture as the precious cultural inheritance.

The research finding indicates that in general, English teacher in senior high school has been facing obstacles to perform and integrate indigenous local culture in the teaching-learning process in the classroom. In other words, the impact of globalization and modernization of science and technology has influenced teacher's way of life with the negative indications contradictive with his own local culture. Specific features of Sundanese culture as precious indigenous inheritance are not wholly reflected in the teaching-learning process.

The agent factors disappearing local cultures are fundamental aspects which should be taken into consideration by all sectors, such as central government, local government, and civil society organizations. The shifts of national curriculum which often happen dealing the changes of politics is one of the greatest issues that make teachers very hard to focus on standardization of teaching. The shifts of national curriculum must surely bring the new principles of teaching-learning which often confuse the teachers and take much time and processes to adapt with the new system.

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