

INTEGRATING LOCAL CULTURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE LEARNERS' EMOTION TO SPEAK ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT: *Integrating local culture in English language teaching (ELT) is increasingly practiced in non-English speaking countries. There are many studies on local cultural integration in ELT however study on emotional impact is rarely researched. This research therefore aimed at exploring how local culture plays its function to enhance learners' emotion to speak English. This research was carried out at Pharmacology Institute of Makassar. The method used was a survey study. The samples were selected purposively based on their cultural backgrounds. The data that collected through observation and interview were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The result revealed that local culture functions as the ice breaker to reduce the anxiety in ELT. It also generates learners' emotional experience then provides fun and cheerful atmosphere in learning. The learners had willingness to speak English since most as they were familiar with cultural input.*

KEYWORDS: Local Culture, Emotion, Speaking.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural content is a crucial issue in ELT in multicultural context. The integration of local culture in ELT is increasingly practiced particularly in non-English speaking countries. Local culture is not regarded as the obstacle in foreign language learning; it is however seen as the tool that helps language learners to acquire a new language. Vygotsky (1978) states that each culture functions as learning tool to develop mental function in learning. In this perspective, local culture is the medium to familiarize English to learners' cultural context. The foreignness is reduced by exploring the familiarity of the local culture of the learners. Integrating local culture challenges English how to select the cultural contents to meet the learners' ability in English. Local culture is still broad concept; on the other hand learners' contexts are various. The appropriate selection of cultural content has great impact on learners' willingness to learn and speak English.

The aspects of culture that integrated in foreign language learning are cultural facts, practices and values that should matched with learners' ability and characteristics. Holliday (2013) stated that foreign language has flexibility to immerse itself in any cultural context. In addition, learners have ability to learn a foreign language. Many studies have been done on cultural integration however which aspects of culture that really affect learners' emotion and willingness to speak English is rarely done. Learners' willingness to learn and to speak English has great affect in foreign language learning included English. This is the reason this research study done to explore which cultural aspect that encourages learners' willingness to speak in English.

The stigma of English as the most difficult subject cause negative attitude toward English. It was found that some learners do not want to go school because they have English class. It

means that psychologically the learners are under pressure in learning English. This traumatic experience last during their learning for years. The concept or negative perception leads the learners not to be motivated in learning English. This phenomenon has been for years. All the language practitioners of English have been developing various techniques and strategies to make the learning more interesting. It however does not eliminate the stigma and negative attitude towards English. In this case this research comes to reveal the problems in English teaching practice from different perspective. It seems that local culture and local and context should be integrated in English language to create a friendly learning for Indonesian learners.

The studies on local culture in foreign language teaching have been done however the impact of cultural input towards learners' emotion is rarely searched specifically. Therefore this current study investigated how local culture function to generate learners' emotion in learning and using English as foreign language.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

There are some theoretical backgrounds that become the basis of integrating local culture in foreign language teaching. In order to have full understanding of cultural integration in ELT, the relationship of language and culture are also reviewed in context of foreign language learning.

The relationship of language and culture

A consensus has been reached by the scholars that culture and language are fundamentally linked (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Newton et al., 2010; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Witte, 2014). The importance of the relationship is translated to a belief that learning a language means learning the culture. Language learners risk to becoming a fluent speaker if they do not learn about its culture (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003, p. 237). However, due to the complexity of the notions of language and culture, scholars have different proposals for the inextricable and interdependent relationship between language and culture. Kramsch (1998) describes the relationship in three ways: 1. Language expresses cultural reality: language allows people to express facts and ideas but also reflect their attitudes 2. Language embodies cultural reality: language allows people to give meaning to their experience through the means of communication 3. Language symbolizes cultural reality: language allows people to use language as a symbol of their social identity).

In context of foreign language use, Risager (2007) stated that sociologically language and culture are separable. The first language and culture can be transferred in foreign language use. Foreign language functions as tool of communication. The foreign language is used as tool to express the speaker's culture. In this perspective, using a foreign language is not necessarily related to its culture. In foreign language learning the learners bring their own culture and the language brings its culture. Risager (2007) then further stated that target language is not isolated but always exist in a local interplay with other languages. Local culture integration therefore is necessary in ELT.

Comprehensible input in language learning

In foreign language learning, input plays very significant role in teaching and learning process. The role of language input in language learning has been of foremost importance in much SLA

research and theory. Krashen (1987, p.28) formulated his hypothesis $i + 1$ that i refers to current level of learners' ability and 1 refers to a little bit higher input than current level. This formula refers to cognitive aspects. It brings the implication that language input should be understood by learners. In this case, this hypothesis focuses on comprehensible input. Incorporating local culture as input in foreign language learning means that input is not only comprehensible but also emotional. Cultural input generates emotional experience to encourage learners to use the language in real life.

Culture and Emotion in communication

Humans are emotional creature. Emotions play a central role in interpersonal relations. Cowie and Cornelius (2003:11) has described that hardly any act of communication takes place without the involvement of emotions. It is well known that in order to understand messages in verbal communication it is important to pay attention not only to what is said but also to how it is said. Accurate recognition of the emotional intentions of others contributes to the efficiency of communication by enabling better prediction and interpretation of the behavior and emotional states of others, as well as better formation and maintenance of social bonds. This makes the production, perception, interpretation and response to emotional signals an important element of our interpersonal lives (Soto and Levenson, 2009).

There is more than one way to communicate an emotional message. In parallel with the words actually spoken, emotions are communicated by body movements, facial expressions, changes in voice quality, and so on. If one can see the speaking person, comprehension may be relatively easy, yet there are various situations where emotion has to be guessed from vocal cues only. Moreover, it is important to be able to interpret vocal emotions even if the emotional meaning of the words differs from that conveyed by the tone of voice (Cheang and Pell, 2011).

Emotion is affected by environment and social interaction. Language development is affected by social interaction in a cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). The implication is that foreign language teaching should be done in context of learners' culture at the beginning stage. Social interaction in learning a foreign language takes place in learners' cultural context, so automatically learners' environment and their culture are necessarily involved to build learning emotion to use the language in their daily context.

Research method

The method used in this research is survey qualitative study. Participants were selected from their different cultural backgrounds. The data was collected through observation and interview. Observation was done to find out the learners' enthusiasm and participation during the classroom learning activities took place. The interview was done after all sessions of learning were done. There were twenty learners interviewed. Interview technique was used to get learners opinions and attitudes how local culture affected them in learning English. The interview was recorded. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in three main themes as follow;

Local culture reduces learning anxiety

The learners in the interview stated that integrating the local cultural terms in English class can reduce their anxiety since the learning input was taken from their surroundings. Many local terms of their culture aid them to speak English. Most of interviewers expressed how local culture facilitated them to learn English more easily.

One of the participants said ,’ *In fact, to speak English using some local terms from our culture is easier. For example...I like Palu Basa Makassar (typical food made from beef mixed with local ingredients). I think it is very easy because I sometimes eat Palu Basa, it is my favorite food*”. Similarly another said,” *If I mix with some words from our culture, I think It is easier than using all new words from west. Sometimes I do not know how to pronounce the words such as hamburger. But If I say I eat Sinonggi (typical food from Palu), it is easy. Sinonggi is local food in my village. Everyday people eat it.*” Others said,” *If I talked about the local places or events, the names of places or events aided them to speak English easily. I have some sweet experience in those places. A student said,*” *Every day I go to campus by bentor to Pasar Senggol.It is easier to speak in English. Other learners said,*” *We have Rambu Solo...a very big party in Toraja and I can talk because I have experience in this party.*

The complexity that put the learners in difficulties to speak is reduced by having some local input. Learners are assisted in vocabulary and pronunciation. The local words are easy for them to pronounce them. By integrating learners’ culture and context, the learners feel easier to speak English about their real world. Things that easily mentioned by learners are related to food and drinks that found in their environment. Learners are introduced with learning content that learners are familiar with them. The use of local terms in English leads the learners focus on the new forms in English. Some vocabulary is picked from their local terms. The facts show that there are many words that are unnecessary to be translated in speaking English. The local terms that integrated in ELT mean that the learners are familiar with their pronunciation so they help learners to be more fluently. As vocabulary is the main input for any language skills, the contribution of local terms aids the leaners to develop their fluency in English. One of the he main problems in speaking English is lack of vocabulary. Due to this, the learners can use their local terms to express their experience in their own context. In this sense cultural contents encourage learners to use English not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

Local culture involves emotional experience

During the interview most of the learners stated that they found it easier to learn to speak English since they talked about themselves, their experiences and their environment. A participant who comes from Papua, said, “ *It is easier for me to talk about Sorong than Jakarta I choose Sorong because I never go to Jakarta. Sorong is my home town. I grew up in my Village, My parents live there too...Oh my god..I remember my family, Sorong has beautiful view and many traditions, especially traditional parties and dances.*” While a student who comes from Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi said,” *I love my village ...there is a beautiful beach there. Now we have harvesting season there and many parties. At party every family brings food and we share food. It is very unforgettable moments in village...*”

The cultural contents that learners were familiar with connected with learners' emotional experience. The learners recalled their personal experience to help them to speak in English. In this case, language classrooms are exposed with teaching materials that touch their emotion as they have emotional experience on the materials presented. When the learners were introduced with the familiar things in English they had emotional reactions such as laughing, giving comments. This happened since they had emotional relationship with teaching materials. Some learners expressed that learning English using the surrounding was fun and easier. They did not get bored since they had to play and talk on something that they experienced it. The learners were actively involved since they were the source of culture.

Local culture provides sense of humor

The learners stated that the integration of the local culture resulting cheerful and fun learning atmosphere. The local culture used as materials in English speaking class unconsciously enabled sense of humor and relaxed the learners. All learners had fun and laughed. When they had to say something in English and they used some local terms that they picked from their local language they felt sense of fun. The learners' opinions are presented as follow;

One of the participants from Makassar said," (Smiling)...I like (laughing)... (pause)...*Barongko* (typical cake made from banana) ... (laughing)...I feel very funny." Similarly a student also said," Sinunggi (typical food made from cassava)... (laughing)...is my favourite food...(still smiling)..is it possible to say that in English?" Another student said," (laughing)...*Kapurung* (typical food made from sagu flour)... (laughing) kapurung is delicious ...I like it. I think we must translate it (kapurung).. A student said," I like *gado-gado* (a mixed food from rice, vegetable and beef)... (laughing). I think if we speak English we must use English words. It is very funny when we use local terms. It sounds strange.

At the beginning most of learners felt reluctant to use their local terms picked from their own culture. They questioned if using the local terms were allowed in speaking English or not. They thought that English as foreign language could not be mixed with local terms which referred to the traditional items. They regarded it strange since they had never heard people use it. They had an assumption that a foreign language could not be blended with local terms. They also thought that English learning was a monolingual act. That was the reason why some learners felt guilty of using their local terms. As a result learners tended to translate all the local terms into English. It however put them in complicated situations since there was no direct translation of every single term of local culture into English. The learners often paused when they came across the local words in their speaking since they were unsure whether it was allowed to be used or not. After having said it several times in their meeting, they had no doubt to use the local terms directly.

DISCUSSION

The finding reveals that local culture as learning input psychologically has great impacts on learners' emotion in learning. As mention above that local culture reduces learning anxiety, generates emotional experience, then provides fun learning atmosphere.

Learners' anxiety is reduced then they gain confidence

As optimal learning input in ELT, local culture is not only comprehensible but also emotional. The emotional content of input generates learners' personal experience to speak English. Learners' local culture and their surrounding provide them many local terms that enable them to speak fluently. Since the complexity of ELT reduces by having some local terms, the learners do not have high anxiety. The learners can pick various local terms that help them to speak quickly. Local terms reduce the complexity in vocabulary choice and pronunciation. Local culture significantly functions as a cognitive tool to recall learners' existing knowledge to be used (Vygotsky, 1978). The learners tend to speak about the existing objects and practices in their environment. The local culture provides comprehensible and relevant input to be used in their daily context (Krashen, 1987). Items that are easily mentioned by the learners are commonly related to facts found in their environment and local habits practiced in daily life. The use of local terms in target language are appropriate in developing learners fluency particularly learners in low levels. Local culture in addition is one of the controlling domains to endorse bilingual teaching by which learners can learn a new language easily. Furthermore, Wang (2017) states that learners' critical language awareness towards both in target language and their native language is developed. In this respect, terms from the local culture used in their expression play a significant role in generating their utterances in English. In this view, local terms have a capacity to control and help generate desire for expression. The new words from local culture have capacity to break the 'foreignness' of the new language. Further to that, Local culture reduces the cognitive load since part of the content is drawn from learners' own culture. Learners also develop self-confidence to express themselves in English freely.

Emotional experience encourages learners to speak

Personal experience in language learning motivates learners to speak in English. Dörnyei (2001; 76) states that a personal element is necessarily employed in learning content. There is something inherently about learning everyday life of the learners. Garcia (2011:22) states that the learners' environment is rich of culture and languages that needed to be integrated in foreign language teaching to connect their identity and heritage. In this view learners can learn a new language with all things that they are familiar with which can help them to construct their ability to use and share their personal experience to others in a new language. The familiarity of content has power to lead emotional engagement in learning. The data shows that having limited knowledge and experience on the culture resulted in limited expressions. Cultural input encourages learners to express what they undergo. The learning topics that closely connect to learners' world life bring enthusiasm for learners to learn a new language in classroom. Their spontaneity and self-expressions appear as they listen to the familiar topics. The topics such as home town, traditional parties and family reveals learners' own personal and emotional experiences. As Cowie & Cornelius (2011:11) describe that communication activity in any language take place because of the involvement of personal emotions. In addition, Baider & Cislaru (2014; 4) state that emotion is experienced that function as a tool to structure language. In this respects, learning input in language class requires the reflection of the reality of learners' life world. Learners also feel enthusiastic to share their culture to others. The familiar contents of their local culture lead their motivation to learn to speak English. Jenkin (2009) and Matsuda (2013) explain communication takes place if the learners are emotionally able to adjust their own linguistic resources and negotiate meaning according to the context of situation and its purpose. In this sense, learners' knowledge and experience significantly influence learners to speak. Learners' cultural context as they do social interaction begins with their native culture.

This is the first cultural experience and zone they are familiar with. Learners then move to a broader zone as called regional culture and third zone is national culture that belongs to all Indonesian learners. In second language acquisition perspective, cultural input that integrated in ELT can be selected based on learners' familiarity. The individual differences in language learning are the challenges that can be overcome by foreign language teachers through the integration of learners' local culture.

Learning atmosphere is fun and cheerful

The local culture integration in ELT has a positive impact in providing sense of humor in the classroom. The learners spontaneously responded when they heard contents from their local culture. The learning becomes interesting and cheerful. The local terms are ready for language use. In this view, the classroom as a formal setting necessarily presents all the content found in an informal setting to get the learners familiar in using them. As Vygotsky (1978) states learners have a capacity to associate with everyday cultural experiences. It confirms that English is not the only sole carrier of meaning. It does not 'privilege' English as the only valid form of making meaning; however learners are expected to use their local words to create their own meaning in English in their context of communication. In some respects, local culture in ELT reveals that the local culture contributes new linguistic terms in English and at the same time English functions to globalize those terms. Consequently, 'blending' culture in a foreign language teaching brings impact of natural use of the local terms in a foreign language use (Garcia, 2011). In addition, the current phenomenon of multilingual society enables the mixed terms in verbal interaction.

CONCLUSION

In this study the learners' perspectives demonstrate that the local culture has significant influence on a classroom atmosphere in learning English as foreign language. The classroom becomes a cheerful situation for them. The learners' anxiety reduces and they get confidence to learn to speak English. They also have great desire and motivation to speak in English. They found it easier learning to speak English based on what they have in their surroundings. The local culture encourages the language learners become more creative and productive in target language by involving their existing knowledge and modality that they have in their first language and culture. In addition this study revealed that integrating local culture reduces learners' cognitive load in ELT since some linguistic input has been already known. In this case the complexity is reduced. Due to this, learning becomes a personal experience by exploring cultural facts and practices that act as a bridge to less familiar cultural content associated with the target language and cultures of English. In addition, learners learn to construct their personal meaning using the familiar contents and new language forms. In addition, Local culture can act as the ice breaker by creating humor, fun and stimuli for learners to engage in language learning activities. Language teachers normally think over how to create cheerful classroom to make learners feel comfortable in the classroom and motivate them to persist with the class. In this point, learners' local culture assists English teachers as they share some sense of interest and humor. In addition local culture functions to stimulate learners to be more productive in speaking since they feel comfortable to speak.

Suggestion for Future Research

Since local culture is various and dynamic, the next research is expected to explore on the foreign language use and its impacts on cultural identities.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology of Indonesia that provided some fund to do this research.

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