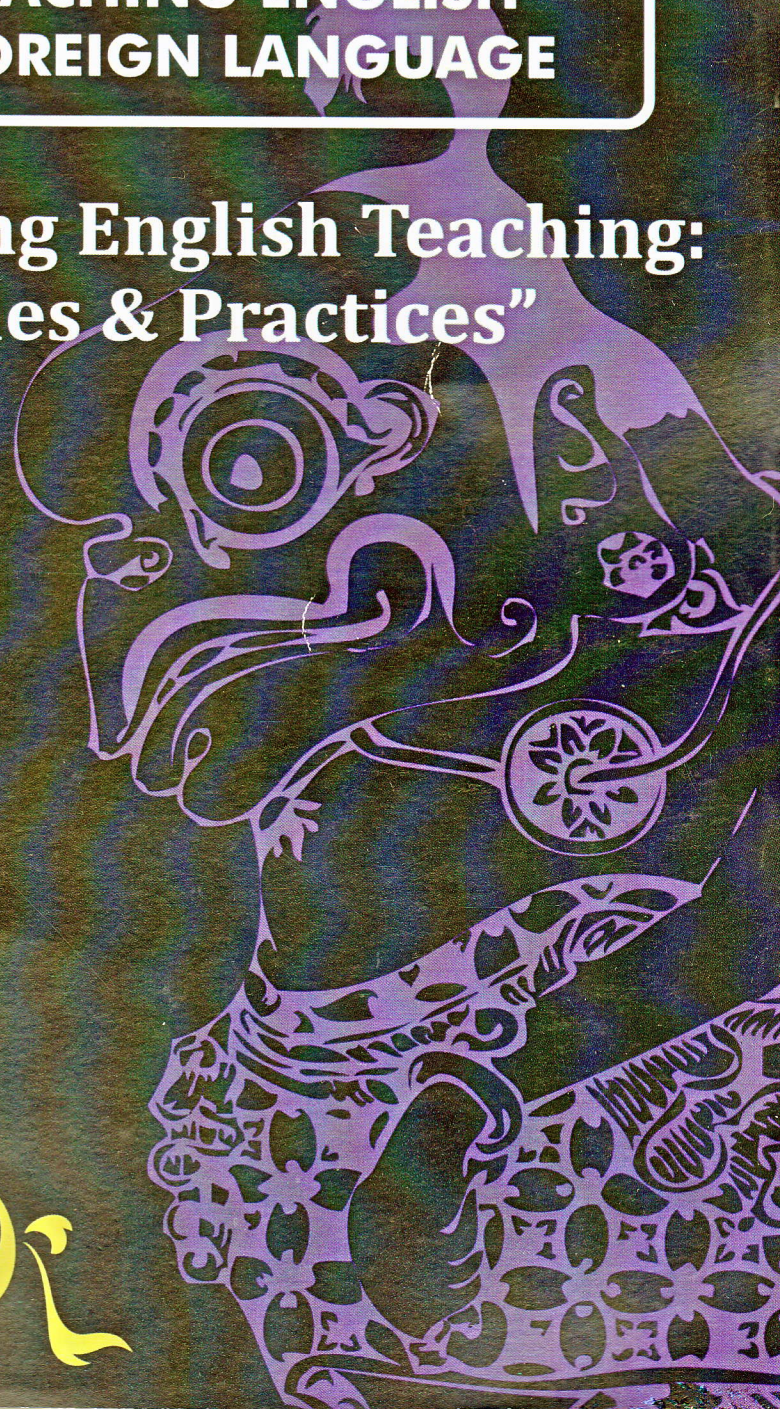COTEFL
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
Conference on Teaching English as A Foreign Language

Proceeding
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

"Redefining English Teaching:
Policies & Practices"

PREFACE

It is such an honour for University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto to host the 5th International Conference on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (COTEFL). It gives me great pleasure to write few words of welcome to presenters and the participants from different cities in Indonesia and different countries in Asia and Australia.

With the aim of promoting academic research and teaching in English, this conference is meant to create critical interest and debate in issues relevant to ELT in different areas and regions.

We feel privileged with the opportunity to organize this prestigious conference and we have done our best for the smooth run of the programs. I would like to extend our sincere gratitude especially to the keynote speakers who have been willing to come to share their knowledge and experience and all presenters and participants who have come and participated in this conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank to all the sponsors for their assistance and I would like to express my particular appreciation and thank to all the committee for all their excellent work they put in to make this event possible.

We hope that through this conference, there will be a stronger bond amongst academics, especially those with the expertise of ELT and there will be better networking among scholars of ELT. Last but not least, I wish you have a wonderful conference and all pleasant stay in Purwokerto.

Santhy Hawanti, PhD

Chair of 5th COTEFL Committee, University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

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BRINGING STUDENTS' CULTURE IN THE PROCESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

The success of English language teaching and learning is determined by a great number of factors one of which is students' culture. This relies on the fact that students come to the class with a diverse array of experiences and ideas gained from their native culture. This implies that teachers or lecturers of English have to take into account the importance of students' culture in planning the English lessons and implementing the process of English language and learning on the grounds that students construct the meaning of learned language by relating new information to the concept that they have already been familiar with. For example, in discussing nutritious food, students might talk about the different kinds of food available in the English speaking country and students' own country, why different foods might be available in different countries, and how this affects people's diets. Such a way of integrating students' culture in English classroom practices is of great importance for students to minimise misconceptions of use of language in different contexts and to adjust the cultural barriers. With regard to this issue, this paper attempts to explore the theoretical justifications of bringing students' culture in English classroom and describe some practical issues of integrating students' culture into the process of English language teaching and learning.

Keywords: home culture, target culture, English language teaching.

Introduction

Currently, there has been a hot debate on the integration of the local culture in the process of English language teaching and learning. Some scholars state that in the process of English language teaching it is not necessary for English teachers of secondary school levels to integrate the local culture as it confers unreal contexts of the target language. Therefore, in the process of English language teaching and learning, English teachers must primarily rely on the culture of the target language on the grounds that students as the second language learners would capture the comprehensive use of the target language by looking at any aspects of the culture of the target language (Turkan & Celik, 2007). This suggests that all English materials used in the process of English language teaching and learning should be taken from the cultural context of the inner-circle English speaking countries, which include America, England, Australia, Canada, and others. Byram as quoted by Turkan & Celik (2007) states that the utilisation of meaningful and culture-based content is essential to

teach the target language as it would facilitate the learners to appropriately use the social rules of the target culture.

The integration of the target culture in English language teaching can be manifested in selecting English materials which deal with symbolism, values, authority, order, ceremony, love, honour, humour, beauty, and spirit. Added to this, second language teachers should take into consideration for some other cultural aspects of the target language such as the life style, uniqueness, common sense, religion, and family values of the speakers of the target language (Brooks in Turkan & Celik, 2007). This suggests that the cultural aspects above should be the main concern of selecting and developing English materials when second language teachers are involved in the process of English language teaching and learning.

In relation to the above issue, the exclusive use of the target culture serves a determinant factor to maximally acquire the target language. Sysoyev and Donelson (2002) advocate that the study of the target language should include the study of the cultural components

of the target culture. Therefore, second language teachers have to change their paradigm from language form-based teaching to a cultural-based one on the grounds that it facilitates students to deeply comprehend the nature of the target language (Pulverness, 2003). Teaching the target language without target culture seems to be inaccurate and incomplete. It is ironic that second language learners only rely on the study of the language form knowing nothing about how English native speakers use English and how the English speaking countries look like. Bada (2001:101) strongly urges that 'the need for cultural literacy in English language teaching (ELT) arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significantly hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers'. This suggests that the inclusion of the target culture becomes the main concern in ELT.

The exclusive use of the target culture in ELT is questioned by some scholars (Margana, 2009). This relies on the fact that second language learners come to the class with their own culture which has been attached on their mind. This suggests that the exclusive embedment of the target culture in ELT should be reformulated as the exclusive integration of the target culture in the process of ELT is potential to discourage students to appreciate their own local culture and to some extent can create a polarised society leading to rising social problems. Post and Rathet in Margana (2009) state that the use of the home culture as students' background knowledge provides positive impacts on making sense of the materials generated from the target culture. This is in line with a statement presented by Jenkins in Margana (2009), advocating that the students' background knowledge in the form of content familiarity of the English texts obtained from inner-circle English speaking countries facilitates them to capture and validate the sense of the texts. In other words, English teachers should not only embed the target culture but also integrate the home culture in the process of English language teaching and learning on the grounds that the home culture assists second language learners to express their ideas, feelings, thoughts, experiences, and the like.

More specifically, the use of the home culture drives second language learners to activate their background knowledge to accomplish the tasks as manifested in four macro-language skills which include listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Renner in Margana (2009:127) states that the process of English language teaching is meaningful and successful when English teachers collaborate two types of culture which are utilised in a series of English language teaching activities.

In relation to the above issue, this paper deals with bringing students' home culture in the process of English language teaching and learning. This paper mainly attempts to explore the theoretical justifications of bringing students' culture in English classroom and describe some practical issues of integrating students' culture into the process of English language teaching and learning.

Language and Culture

Anthropologists and linguists have made an attempt to recognise that the forms and function of a particular language perform the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003) on the grounds that mastering the only linguistic competence does not guarantee second language learners to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999). This suggest that they need to be aware of the culturally appropriate ways of communication practices, for example, addressing people, expressing gratitude, making requests, and agreeing or disagreeing with someone. They should also be aware that behaviours and patterns of segmental and supra-segmental elements which are appropriate for their own speech community may be perceived differently by members of the target language speech community. Added to this, second language learners have to realise that language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behaviour in order to gain effective and efficient communication. In short, learning a target language should be collaborated with the target culture.

The embedment of the target culture in the process of English language teaching and learning relies on the theory which claims that language and culture are intertwined in nature in the sense that both cannot be separated each other (Margana, 2009). In support of if, Brown (2010) states that language and culture are intricately interwoven so that both

cannot be separated each other on the grounds that a language is part of culture and culture is part of language. This suggests that learning a language is not just concerned with learning the aspects of language pronunciation, lexico-grammar, and the meaning of language it self. Learning a language should deal with learning cultural aspects, namely a particular system of cultural meanings which include feelings, memories, experiences, values, customs and beliefs (Tulia et al., 2009).

In relation to the above claim, second language learners have to understand how the native speakers of English behave, think, and communicate with the use of English to deeply acquire the target language. This suggests the culture should become the concern of the process of English language teaching and learning as fluency in a foreign language does not guarantee the success of English communication practices when the interlocutors lack the cultural knowledge of the language which is potential to create misconception of the use

of language in context. It implies that culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only deals with who talks to *whom*, about *what*, and how the communication proceeds but also assist interlocutors to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Therefore, culture serves as the foundation of communication (Samovar, Porter, & Jain as cited in Abisamra, 2009). This means that the inclusion of the target culture in learning the target language is a must in order to facilitate second language learners to capture a comprehensive understanding of how the target language is used in different contexts.

Bernnett, Bennett & Allen (2003: 237) claim that 'the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool'. This suggests that English teachers are encouraged to include culture in the process of Eng-
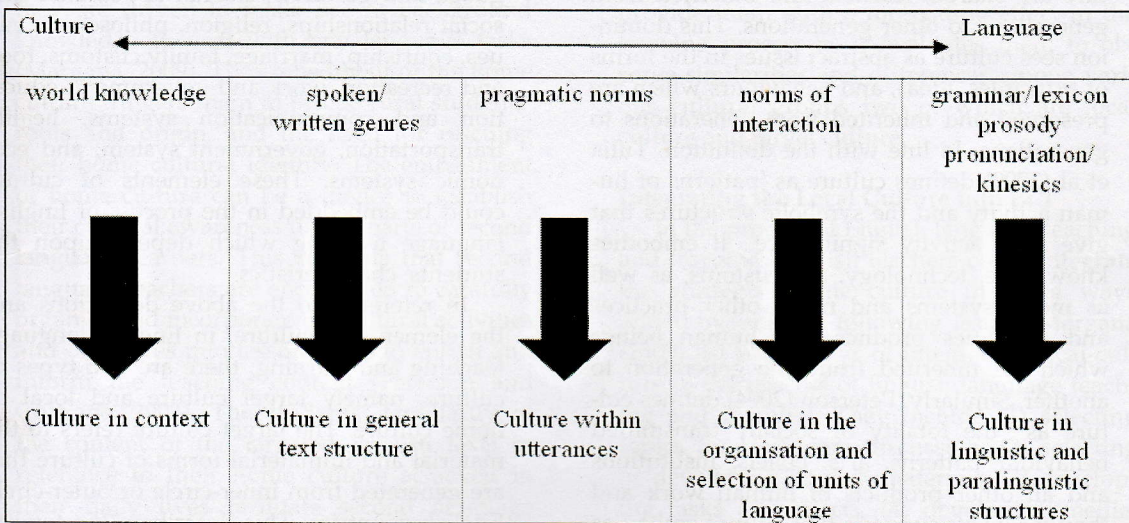
Fig. 1: Points of articulation between culture and language (Liddicoat et al., 2003, p. 9)

In reference to the above figure, language and cultural are interrelated each other. Therefore, learning the target language does not only deal with learning the systemic knowledge but also concern the schematic knowledge one of which is socio-cultural knowledge of the target language (Hedge, 2008; Margana, 2009; 2012). In other words, second language teachers should be concerned with integrating the target culture into second language learning. However, it should be noted that incorporating target culture in

the process of ELT does not mean to impose target cultural values or to change the students' value systems in reference to what English native speakers behave. Rather, it is targeted to establish cultural awareness among students as part of a diverse community to gain cultural flexibility and tolerance. This is in line with Valette as quoted by Prodromou (1992) who claims that there are four main goals of integrating the target culture in ELT. Those include (1) developing a greater awareness of and a broader knowledge about

the target culture, (2) acquiring a command of the etiquette of the target culture, (3) understanding differences between the target culture and the students' culture, and (4) understanding the values of the target culture. The cultural awareness about the socio-cultural differences between the target language and students' home culture assists them to succeed in acquiring the target language and being involved in a real-life language setting. To achieve this end, English teachers must include socio-cultural components in the process of ELTL (Saniei, 2012).

The Notion of Culture

The term *culture* has been successfully defined by many scholars. However, the definition of culture varies in nature as they have different perspectives in defining it. For example, Mesthrie et at. (2009:28) states that culture refers the way of lives, a set of ideas, and a pattern of habits owned by a group of people who live together. Those three aspects of culture are shared, learned, and inherited from generations to other generations. This dominion sees culture as abstract issues in the forms of principles, ideas, and behaviours which are preserved and inherited from generations to generations. In line with the definition, Tulia et al (2009) defines culture as 'patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance'. It embodies knowledge, technology, art, customs, as well as moral systems and many other practices and capacities produced by human beings which are inherited from one generation to another. Similarly, Peterson (2004) defines culture as "the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought." This suggests that culture embodies abstract and concrete things as the products of human beings.

In terms of its types, culture can be divided into some aspects depending on the perspectives applied. Appelbaum in Margana (2009:126) categorises culture into two, namely material and immaterial culture. The former refers to 'all physical objects created by the members of a particular society to shape their lives. The examples of this type of culture include consumed goods, the places of worship, types of cuisine, offices, stores, transportation devices, technological devices, statue, artefacts, and others. Those aspects of culture are

concrete in nature. By contrast, immaterial culture refers to the human beings' creations which are abstract in nature. The examples of immaterial culture embody language, values, beliefs, customs, habits, rules, conventions, institutions, organisations, and the like.

Different from the above categorisation of culture, Hofstede in Jandt (2003:7) proposes four elements of culture. They are (1) symbols, (2) rituals, (3) values, and (4) heroes. The term *symbols* means verbal and non-verbal language. The second element is *rituals* which refer to 'the socially essential collective activities within culture'. *Values* refer to perceptions which are not limited to discussion within a culture about what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, normal or abnormal which are present in a majority of the members of a culture. The term *Heroes* refers to 'the real or imaginary people' who become the behaviour models of the members of the society.

More specifically, Jandt (2003:10) classifies culture into many elements which include language and gesture, personal appearance and social relationships, religion, philosophy, values, courtship, marriage, family customs, food and recreation, work and government, education and communication systems, health, transportation, government system, and economic systems. These elements of culture could be embedded in the process of English language teaching which depend upon the students' characteristics.

In reference to the above definitions and the elements of culture, in English language teaching and learning, there are two types of culture, namely target culture and local or home culture. The target culture refers to the material and immaterial forms of culture that are generated from inner-circle or outer-circle English countries. This describes "the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought" (Peterson, 2004) which are derived from English speaking countries. On the other hand, local or home culture is defined as "inherited behavioural customs remain practiced in the society, coming from the judgements or assumptions that everything formerly exist is the right ones (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2005:1208*). In this context, the local culture is part of second language learners' life as the products of civilisation of Indonesian society. Anderson (2006:6) states that local culture can be seen as

the manifestation of society's personality as reflected in the orientation of the society's ways of life and belief that commonly used to see and face the outside world reflected in their daily behaviours. Sowden (2007) urges that English teachers should be aware of using the cultures of their students and their environment in the classroom practices. This means that culture of learners serves an important role in the language learning environment and it has to be addressed for effective learning to take place.

Theoretical Justification of the Embedment of Local Culture ETL

The embedment of local culture is of great importance for second language learners as it confers some convincing advantages. In relation this issue, the following presents some theoretical justification of it. The integration of the local culture into the target language learning facilitates second language learners to easily acquire communication practices as they are driven to make use of background knowledge to deal with any language tasks (Margana, 2009). The embedment of the home culture triggers them to rescue rural students' roots and origin, and the need for rescuing their home cultural identity. The embedment of home culture can be a device to establish their cultural awareness on the parts of second language learners. This suggests that second language teachers are encouraged to carefully organise and incorporate the cultural activities and objectives into lesson plans to enrich and inform the teaching content (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003). The students' familiarity of the content of the targeted English texts in reference to their home culture achieved in their daily lives facilitate second language learners to make sense of the English texts. In the same spirit, the inclusion of local culture in ELT would make learning easier and more meaningful for second language learbers (Dubbash and Bilal, 2011). Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000:194) advocates that thematic content of the target language should expose students to situations, texts, or discourse types which are relevant to students' interests and experiences in order that they can capture the intentional meaning as performed in the English texts.

The integration of the local culture is fruitful for students in the sense that it can be used to make a link between the concept of the home culture and the target culture in order to capture the differences and similarities which can be used to enrich the understanding of the various cultural types to establish the intercultural awareness on the part of the students. The term *intercultural awareness* is defined as a "gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ. Such awareness can broaden the mind, increase tolerance and facilitate international communication." (Tomlinson, 2001:5). Such understanding can be used to mediate the communication barriers due to the cultural differences. Added to this, the embedment of the local culture in ELT can establish local wisdom (moral and living values) on the part of students which is of great importance in mentoring character buildings. In support of it, Genc and Bada (2005:75) advocates that bringing students' local culture classes humanize l2 learners and provide them with a motivating effect in the learning process as it facilitates them to observe similarities and differences among various cultural groups two of which are local culture and target culture.

Integrating the Local Culture into ELT

In the process of English language teaching and learning, English teachers could integrate the students' home culture in some ways which include the following issues. Margana (2009) list some ways of integrating local culture in the process of English language teaching and learning. They include (1) selecting topics for classroom discussion, (2) selecting or developing English materials, (3) developing tasks or projects, (4) developing media, and (5) developing assessment. The integration of students' home culture can be done in dealing with the macro-language skills which include listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The following presents the way of the integrating the home culture in teaching English focusing on reading.

In teaching reading, English teachers may activate students' home culture in some stages of teaching from pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching. When English teachers are interested in using genre approach as proposed by Fees and Joyce (1998), they could integrate students' home culture in

a series of genre approach which consists of five stages, namely (1) building the context, (2) modelling and deconstructing the text, (3) joint construction of the text, (4) independent construction of the text, and (5) linking related text. In the first stage, English teachers may build students' knowledge of the field by relating the topic and the students' background knowledge with regard to the texts which students find in their daily life. This is of great importance to create students' readiness to do the tasks that are given to them. The integration of the local culture can be also utilised when English teachers come to the modelling stage. In this stage, English teachers could provide some models of texts which are first generated from the home culture to the target culture of outer-circle English speaking countries and inner-circle English speaking countries. In the third stage, they could embed the students' home culture by providing students with a number of texts which are obtained from different cultural contexts as mentioned above. This also happens in the fourth stage which focuses on the target culture context rather than home culture context. In the last stage of genre-based approach, English teachers may ask students to further explore the target culture context derived from outer-circle English speaking countries and inner-circle English speaking countries.

The integration of the home culture can be also carried out in teaching listening. To do so, English teachers are encouraged to activate the home culture to generate ideas through relating their experience that they have gained in their social and physical environments. This can be accomplished through guiding students to do with brainstorming practices which are related to real life experience to establish the background knowledge before they complete the complicated task. The integration of the home culture in teaching listening can be done in selecting the topics, materials, and teaching media. It is also manifested in a series of teaching practices depending on the techniques selected in the process of English language teaching.

In handling speaking, English teachers could also embed students' local culture as a way of conducting scaffolding in order that second language learners could activate their background knowledge before they accomplish the English tasks provided by English teachers. English teachers also select the topics and materials for speaking practices which deal with the local culture as found in daily life before they proceed to studying the culture derive from outer or inner–circle English speaking countries.

The integration of the home culture can be also carried out in handing teaching writing. To do so, English teachers are encouraged to activate the home culture to generate ideas through relating their experience that they have gained in their social and physical environments. This can be accomplished through guiding students to do with brainstorming practices which are related to real life experience to establish the background knowledge before they complete the writing tasks generated from the target culture.

Final Remarks

In reference to the above explanation, integrating culture into English language teaching is, by no doubt, a way to facilitate second language learners to successfully acquire the target language on the grounds that second language learners of English are able to act flexibly and sensibly along the lines of cultural norms that they encounter within the target language culture. In addition, the embedment of culture in English language teaching is necessarily conducted to bridge students' understanding of the real use of the target culture in communication practices. However, it should be noted that English teachers should not integrate the target culture exclusively as second language learners come to the class with different home culture which can be used as a bridge of acquiring the target language. This suggests that the embedment of students' local culture should be taken into consideration in the process of English language teaching as it can be a way of rescuing rural students' roots and origin, and the need for rescuing their home cultural identity.

To integrate the students' home culture, English language teachers may conduct the following issues which include (1) selecting topics for classroom discussion, (2) selecting or developing English materials, (3) developing tasks or projects, (4) developing media, (5) developing assessment, and (6) carrying out the teaching and learning process as reflected in the stages of teaching. The embedment of the home culture could be realised in teaching macro-language skills which include reading,

listening, speaking, and writing.

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