

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CLASS: SOCIOLINGUISTICS' VIEW

Muhammad Roda'i*

^{1,2} Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Madura

Email: rodai@iainmadura.ac.id

Abstract:

Language is a means of communication among individuals and it also brings them into relationships with their culture. Even the English language as foreign language involving culture. The result all languages are equally complex because every language is part of the culture that produces it and it is adequate for the needs of the people who use it. Any language, therefore, is as good as any others because it serves the purposes of the particular culture. Seeing this, this paper aims at describing about the important of culture in teaching and learning English in the foreign language classroom. It is hoped that the students realize to have socio-cultural competence with the teacher's help, with the hope, he wishes, not only to teach linguistics (grammar/ structure, pronunciation, etc.) but also sociolinguistics (social and culture). It is very essential to avoid misunderstanding, justification or 'shock culture' so that they can communicate with any English men well.

Keywords: language, culture, socio-cultural competence, foreign language classroom

Introduction

Language is a species specific to a man. Every normal man has acquired one language, his mother tongue, by late childhood, the basic lexicon, grammar, pronunciation within the first ten years of life, apparently without effort and without the requirement of systematic instruction, in contrast to the actual teaching or conscious self-teaching necessarily involved attainment of literacy and the mastery of foreign languages at school. Much that posses among conscientious parents as 'teaching a child to speak' really amounts to the liberate widening of his vocabulary along with his knowledge of the world.

Language (in Sapir, 1921) is the medium for communication among communities who may have different customs, habits, and attitude. When one language is considered to be used in a society for communication, it also mirrors a culture of the society. The closely relationship of language and culture are also appeared in the process foreign language learning as well as teaching. Student's progress is greatly hastened by the use of the language in cultural transmission (one of its

function); the knowledge and experience acquired by one person can be passed on to another in language, so that in parts he starts where he other leaves off. Most teaching, after all, depends in great part on the use of the language; written and spoken. In this connection the importance of the invention of printing can hardly be exaggerated. At the present time the achievements of anyone in any part of the world can be (by translation if necessary) to anyone else able to read and capable of understanding what is involved.

Related to the fact, so a teacher should not only teach the grammar or structure of a foreign language but also its culture purposes, because students may often find the differences between their own culture and the culture of the foreign language they are studying. So the foreign language teacher's understanding should be shared to their students so that the students can use the foreign language in appropriate manner toward the people who speak with the foreign language.

Therefore this paper is going to discuss about how the teacher should teach his/ her students English culture as a foreign

language in the class with the hope they can understand and use it correctly and appropriately.

Research Method

In this paper, the researcher used descriptive qualitative research. It was done by coming to the class to get data and reading some books related to sociocultural documents. The researcher tried to match the read documents about socio-culture and the reality life related to the sociocultural. Of course, observation list was used in this research and interviewed the English teacher to get valid data. It was interesting since the Indonesian culture is different from the English culture. The research is focused to know how the English language as a foreign language is implemented in the class. It is the fact that the English culture influences the language. In the same point student's culture influences to the use of the English language as a foreign language.

Result and Discussion

1. The Definition of Culture

Coupland and Jaworski (1997) state that culture is the total set beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, etc. of the members of a particular society. While Brown (2000) states that culture is a way of life. It is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others. It is the 'glue' that binds a group of people together.

According to Holmes (2001) culture can be identified as behaviours such as using language, gesture, customs, eating habits, family life, and education. It can be the products of a society and its number such as literature, music, dance, art, crafts, and artifacts. Moreover, culture can be religious, beliefs, ideas, values, attitudes, etc.

2. Culture and Language

Before talking more about culture and language, it is better for

us to know the difference between human language and animal language. From this, we realize how important the position of the culture in the language. How does human language differ from animal language? Animals, to communicate with one to another, they bark, rattle, hoot, bleat, etc., and to some extent, these noises serve the same purposes as human language. One difference is that the animals system of communication can produce only a limited number of messages and animals cannot produce new combinations of noises to meet the needs of new situations, as human beings can. Also no animal system of communication makes use of the dual structure of sounds and meaning with its complex relationships that we study as grammar. Another important difference is that animals systems are genetically transmitted. It is suitable with Sapir (1921) that animals are born with capacity to make only those calls and send those messages peculiar to their species, no matter where they are found. For example, a kitten growing up among puppies does not learn to bark. Human language, on the other hand, has to be learned a new by each speakers and is culturally transmitted, i.e. each speaker learns the language to which he is exposed, not necessarily the language of his parents. It is quite different from the animal language.

Furthermore, Brown (2000) states that culture and language is closely interrelated because language is a behavioral residue of a culture. Language is a part of culture. In practice, they meet each other at the attitudes of the owner of the culture toward his/her language. For example, the concept of *tense* does not exist in Indonesia, but exist in English. Therefore, the Indonesian attitudes towards time is

completely poor. In contrast, the people in the English speaking countries, for instance: Europe, United State of America and so on who have the concept of *tense* respect the time greatly as for them, time is worth doing. They say: "Time is money" that means each single minutes is very important. In the same line Coupland and Jaworski (1997) state the following:

Culture is a key term in sociolinguistics generally,...there is an intimate link between the concepts of language and culture, and that the one cannot be studied without the other. The influence of language on culture, he felt, could only be studied with reference to the effect that habitual linguistic behavior has on habitual thought...examples, described in...how *time* is conceptually represented by English...

Another fact that shows the interrelation between culture and language is from the vocabulary inventories of the language. The language vocabulary reflect the cultural facets of the language. For example: the terms of *ge-segeh*, *beras*, *malokok*, *bu'u'*, *nasek* and *rak-karak*, only exist in Madurese, because the Madurese people have the culture of eating rice (*ge-segeh*) as their staple food. On the other hand, the Australian or American, for example, are difficult to find the equal terms for those Madurese terms, except rice because those terms do not exist in their culture.

3. Culture and Foreign Language in the Classroom

Each culture develops a language to meet its specific need, including in term of learning of a foreign language. Basically, learning a language will not be successful without learning the

culture of the language. Learning the culture of the language will help the learners master the language if the purpose of the learning is for communication. It will be very advantageous for language learners to learn the culture of the foreign (target) language because it will help them to communicate in the target language in appropriate manner, with appropriate grammar and vocabularies in the appropriate situation and condition.

It is supported by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995) that in order that students can have communicative competence, they should master linguistic competence, because communication is not a series of rule. So it is important for the teacher teaches not only linguistic competence like grammar but also other competences like actional competence, strategic competence, especially socio-cultural competence.

Socio-cultural competence covers the students' ability to use the language received in the context of English culture, like: thank you, sorry and please. These words have the same meaning with Indonesian words, but the frequency and the usage context is different in English language. Therefore, it is not enough for students to know the meaning of the words only if they want to communicate with any native speakers or westerners correctly. In the case, the students should have socio-cultural competence in communicating so that they know 'when' and 'how' the words are correctly-used. The fact that the language can be analyzed, described and taught as a means of expression has radically

affected the ways of language teaching.

Practically, the foreign language teacher is teaching, she/he should not only teach its grammar and its vocabulary, but also the culture of the foreign language. For instance, an English teacher in East Java, Indonesia ask his/her students, "Can you open the door, please?". Then the student will open the door which the teacher means. Five minutes later, the class is still hot, the teacher asks another teacher who is older than her to open a window by saying, "Pak, would you mind opening the windows?".

Related to the situation happening in the class, one of the students asks their teacher why he/she uses different utterances: "Can you....and Would you....". For the same purposes, the meaning of the two utterances is to ask someone to open a door or some windows. In this reason, the teacher should not only explain it grammatically but also culturally. First according to the pattern or structure of the sentences, both are right. However both have different culturally understanding, that is, "Can you...?" is appropriate used for his/her students who is younger than the teacher, in contrast, "Would you...?" is appropriate used the man who is older than the teacher. And the teacher may explain other culture understanding expressing formality on informality, showing the social distance between the participant relationship (social distance, status) etc.

In the classroom in Indonesia, we may find differences dealing with language and culture of English native speakers or westerners as described by Lestari (1997). To make it clearer, below are the differences between Indonesian and English culture happening in the classroom:

No	INDONESIAN	ENGLISH
2..	Exchanging greetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only to the teacher/administrator • Tend to be very formal (good morning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To anybody (teacher, administrator, friend) • Can be informal (Hi, Hello)
3.	Expressing compliment and rejoinders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to be very stingy except for something extraordinary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generous to anything which has been done (appropriate any effort)
4.	Ex: T: This is very good paper S: I did it in one hour only, or	T: This is very good paper S: Thank you
5.	My sister helped me	Eye contact between students and teacher are something common when both parties are speaking.
6.	Students tend to avoid eye contact with the teacher when speaking, especially when they feel they have done something unpleasant	Avoiding eye contact can be considered as impolite (not paying attention)
7.	Responding questions	Lively or active and competitions
8.		
9.		
10		
11		

<p>Tend to be passive, only answer when they are asked Chatting and looking around in the class during class session acceptable in some cases Term of address Pak/ Bu + name Unresponded offers No responds means OK. Students only ask questions if they think that the questions are not silly ones Late comers can be tolerated if explanation is acceptable: knock, smile and explain Trying to be absent and even escaping from the class to avoid the assignment Cheating during the examination can be tolerated and it is still considered to pass Punctuality Delays are tolerated</p>	<p>Cannot be tolerated and it is very impolite</p> <p>First name only or title + surname</p> <p>Students are very attractive No silly questions</p> <p>No knocks, no smile, no explanation, go straight to the seat</p> <p>Trying to be present and even asking the assignment if he/she is absent</p> <p>Doing this cannot be tolerated and it is exactly-considered not to pass</p> <p>Punctuality is important</p>
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4. The Implementation of the English Culture in the Real Context in the Class

It is primary importance for the English teacher to tell about the way to speak to a native speaker in order that students realize if most Westerners have a different culture than Indonesia. Really, that is a good way to practice English by speaking to a native speaker or tourists or Westerners. But, the English teacher should give his/her students a few hints about how to approach or to speak to a Westerner so that both of them can have an enjoyable conversation.

The term of 'Westerner' is a person from Europe, the United State or Australia. This is a common term just a people from Asian countries are often called the 'East'. An important cultural difference is that in Western countries the 'individual' often takes precedence over the 'community', while in Indonesia it is exactly the opposite. What this means for students is that often Western tourists like to be 'alone', Individual privacy is very important to them.

Tourists often go travelling and come to Indonesia to relax and be alone. A common complaint from tourists in Indonesia is that there are too many people who always bother them by wanting to talk to them. This is due to cross-cultural misunderstanding. So, it is a good problem for the teacher to teach how can the students practice their English when the native speaker wants to be alone and not be bothered by people? It is true that the tourist is in Indonesian culture and therefore should try and appreciate Indonesian customs. But it is also true that Indonesian should try and respect their culture. What

would be best is to find a balance between Indonesian culture and the foreign culture.

According to Cline (1992) that there are a few concrete examples and steps about how to practice English with a tourist without bothering them. In this case, the English teacher must tell or explain the foreign culture to his/her students because it is very important for them to know to avoid 'shock culture' or justifications. The teacher can also ask the students to make dialogue and practice related to the foreign culture, that is the way to approach or to speak to western tourists.

Below we try to deduce it from what he states in his course book and it can be as a consideration for the English teacher when she/he wants to teach speaking skill related to English culture.

First step: Look at the Situation

Before approaching a tourist it is best to look at the situation. Ask ourselves these questions; Is the tourist alone? Talking with Western friends or Indonesian? Is the tourist busy? Reading? Writing? Sleeping in the sun? Does the tourist look friendly? Angry?

It is not good idea to approach every single tourist that we see. If the tourist is busy, most likely it is not good idea to interrupt them. We know that they are busy if they are doing something like reading, writing, sleeping in the sun or talking with Western friends. It may be OK to approach a tourist if they are alone, do not seem busy, or seem to be in a good mood (happy)

Second step: Ask First

When we approach a tourist it is often a good idea to ask if we are bothering them or if we can speak with them. Do not ask "May I practice my English with you?". We should want to have a conversation so

that we can learn about the person, not use the person as an English teacher.

It is a good idea to begin with a polite introduction like; "Excuse me", "Pardon me", "Are you busy". Then we may follow by asking one of these: "May I speak with you?", "Do you mind if I speak with you?", or "Is it alright if I speak with you?". We can also change the verb from "to speak with" to "to bother", for example; "Do you mind if I bother you?".

Westerners will most likely appreciate such a direct and polite request and will tell us truthfully if they are busy or if they are willing to talk with us. If they say that they are busy or decline our invitation to talk, tell them thank you and then leave. We will be saving ourselves and the tourist from any further problems. But, if the tourist says they would like to talk with us, we can continue to the next step.

Third Step: What to Talk About

Now that we have a real native English speaker to talk to students want to make sure they have a good conversation. It is a good idea to introduce ourselves before going on.

The most important thing to remember is that Indonesia conversations are often very different from Western conversations. To have a good conversation, we may not translate Indonesian questions into English. Instead, we must think up new questions. Remember that Westerners like to have privacy. This means that many Indonesian questions are too personal and should not be asked. It is better to ask about what job the tourist has, how they like Indonesia, and other things.

Here is a quick list of things that the teacher should tell to the students if things can talk about and things we should not talk about.

We can ask or talk about their country ("What country are you from?", "What is it like in your country?", "How

does it compare to Indonesia?") differences between Indonesia and their country, "How long have you been here?", when they have been in Indonesia. A good question to ask is; "What do you do in your country?" to find out about their job or if they are a student. We then can ask further questions ("What exactly do you do?", "How do you like doing that?", "How long have you been doing that?") We can also ask about current events if we are truly interested in discussing them. The main point is to ask questions to show that we are interested in the person.

We should not ask or talk about: Money, (eg. Salary, price they paid for a sarong or clothes), family (don't ask "Are you married?"), sexual objects, "Where are you going?", also don't bring up personal characteristics like their age or weight. These are all considered personal questions and are not usually discussed the first time we meet someone.

Now it is important to remember that each person is different and some may be willing to discuss some of the "Don't" list. If the person gives us information freely, like she tells you that she is married, then we can ask questions about the topic, like we could ask if they she has any children.

Fourth Step: How to Say Good-bye

When we are ready to leave or it seems that the tourist is ready to end the conversation it is good idea to say "thank you" and it is added by, "It is nice to speak with you," or "I'm very happy to speak with you," and other kinds of utterances. But we may not say 'enough' to end our conversation, like: "I think it is enough to speak with you," because this term means that we do not want to talk to him/her anymore. Then say, "Good bye" if we do want to close the conversation.

Conclusion

In short, language and culture are integral part and complete each other. Socially, language is a medium of what people want to say or what people want to communicate to others. And the way people express by using a language cannot be separated with the culture of the language. This knowledge is also important to be taught or explained to the students who are learning a foreign language which has different culture with their own one. Moreover, learning a language will not be successful without learning the culture of the language because learning the culture of the target language will help learner master the foreign (target) language.

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