THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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"LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING"

Proceeding

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Yogyakarta, 12-13 May 2015

"LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING"

Prof. Dr. Suhardi, M.Pd.
Drs. Rohali, M.Hum.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

Assalamu'alaikum warrahmatullah wabarakatuh
May peace and God's blessings be upon you all

First of all allow me to extend my warmest greetings and welcome to you all to the 1st International Conference on Linguistics and Language Teaching, held by Yogyakarta State University to celebrate its 51st anniversary.

Raising the theme – Linguistics and Language Teaching for Cultural Understanding - this conference is designed to promote the use of languageas a vehicle of cultural understanding, to promote the use of Asian languages as a lingua franca in Asia, and to promote CAFR (Common Asian Framework of Reference for Language)-based learning and teaching. Hopefully, all discussions in this conference can be inspiring and useful for us to improve the quality of cultural understanding.

Ladies and gentlemen
For your information, we will proudly present one keynote speech, four plenary presentation sessions and six parallel presentation sessions. Four outstanding speakers in the field of linguistics and language teaching have been invited. They are Dr. Katharina Endriati Sukamto from The Indonesian Linguistics Community (MLI), Indonesia, Christine Moerman from Institut Français d'Indonésie (IFI), Prof. Sombat Khruathong, Ph. D. From Prince Songkla University, Thailand, Prof. David Reeve from University of New South Wales, Australia, and Nguyen Ngoc huongGiang, M.A. from Hanoi University, Vietnam.

Let me also inform you that 85 presenters from abroad and many parts of Indonesia will be discussing various important issues on linguistics and language teaching in the parallel presentations sessions. Most of them are teachers, lecturers, and undergraduate, graduate, and even postgraduate students.

Ladies and gentlemen
We have done our best to prepare for this conference. So, my highest appreciation and heartfelt thanks to all committee members. As to err is human, shortcomings may occur here and there. On behalf of the committee, I would therefore like you all to accept our apologies.

At the end of my speech,I would like to kindly request the Rector of Yogyakarta State University to officially open the conference.

To conclude, let me wish you a fruitful discussion during the conference and an enjoyable stay in Yogyakarta. Thank you very much for your attention.

Wassalamu'alaikum warrahmatullah wabarakatuh.
May peace and God's blessings be upon you all

Yogyakarta, 12 May, 2015
Conference Chair
Drs. Rohali, M.Hum.

SPEECH BY THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS YOGYAKARTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Assalamu'alaikum warohmatullahi wabarokatuh

Globalization has led changes in all aspects of human's life, including language as a means and product of culture to occur. The language and behaviors of language communities have undergone changes, shifts, mixing, or even replacement as a result of contacts of cultures and languages constituting a consequence of the globalization. It shows how big the role of globalization is in the human's life.

This brief description is actually very extreme because it can be assured that in the language communities the awareness of the importance of self identity of a language community tend to exist. This is identified by the language and the language behavior. From this point the awareness of maintaining, developing, or even preserving a language for the sake of imaging of the self identity of a language emerges– once again as a mode and product of a culture. That language shows who we are has long been believed to be true. Thus, the existence of globalization strengthens the essential position of language to show the self identity of a community (nation) in a multicultural society, a world society. In the global multicultural society's life the understanding of cross culture is getting more crucial. That is why I warmly welcome and extend my highest appreciation to the committee members of the "International Conference on Linguistics and Language Teaching" the members of the organizing committee for their hard painstaking work to bring the issues on linguistics and language teaching for the cultural understanding as the main topic of the conference and develop it into a number of sub-topics related to language, culture, and language teaching including in it curriculum and evaluation. Such issues are crucial to discuss. Sharing experiences among the conference participants will build the understanding, appreciation, and implementation of multiculturalism for realizing a peaceful life of the communities despite the heterogeneous, plural, and global condition.

To conclude, once again in this occasion let me extend my highest appreciation to the committee for organizing this conference. To all participants, I would like to say "welcome to Yogyakarta." Great thanks go to all presenters for their participation. Hopefully, this conference can bring to us benefits. Finally, let me wish you a productive discussion and a fruitful conference.

Wassalamu'alaikum warohmatullahi wabarokatuh
Yogyakarta,
Dean,

Prof. Dr. Zamzani, M.Pd.
NIP 195505051980111001

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE TEACHING : PERPLEXING PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH LEARNING AND TEACHING

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Abstract

Language and culture are interwoven, consequently learning a language means also learning a culture. When people learn English as a foreign language (EFL) for example, they have to be familiar with the culture of the people whose language being learnt. However, as English now belongs to the world as its lingua franca, spoken by several different nationalities, the problem of introducing culture into EFL learning and teaching is perplexing. The question of whose cultures which are going to be taught becomes very important to answer due to the fact that English learners will not only speak to English native speakers but also to non-English native speakers. Non-English native speakers will bring with them their own cultural background when they speak in English. The second problem is that the availability of the teachers who are culturally competence so that they could behave in the target culture. Finally, material recourse might also be a problem when introducing culture in an English learning and teaching process. Those problems of language and culture teaching will be the main discussion of the article.

Key words : culture, foreign language learning and teaching, English as foreign language

1. Introduction

Many scholars are convinced that language and culture, to some extent, cannot be separated, thus learning a certain language means also learning a certain culture. This is because language is inseparable from its culture (Sadtono, 2000; Dobrovol'skij, D and E.Piirainem, 2006; Williams, 2010, Sultana, 2011). Hence teaching language means also teaching culture and only by understanding the culture of the target language (TL) will a language learner be able to function properly the language being learnt. Dimitrious Thanasoulas (2001) claimed that foreign language teaching means foreign culture teaching and in one form or another, culture has, even explicitly, been taught in the foreign language classroom. What is debatable at the moment is that since English belongs to the world as its lingua franca; spoken by different nationalities with different cultural backgrounds; the teaching of whose culture to be taught in English as Foreign Language (EFL) become perplexing. It is not wise to introduce only British, American, New Zealand, and Australia cultures due to the assumption that these four countries are considered the English speaking countries.

As lingua franca, it is unavoidable that now there are more English non-native speakers rather than English native speakers in the world. This means that English learners have to be ready to communicate in English with people coming from non English speaking countries (America, England and Australia). That is why, knowing the countries the learners want to visit could make the teaching of culture more visible. Unfortunately, this is difficult to do as the English learners in a foreign language context might not have a specific country to visit or even they never imagine whether or not they have to go to another country.

Another problem of culture and language teaching is the question of availability of the teachers who are able to incorporate culture into the English language teaching. This is because most English teachers in a foreign language context are not native speakers of the target language. As consequence it might be difficult if not impossible for them to understand fully the culture of the people whose English being learnt.

2. The Meaning of Culture

Defining culture is complicated as different writers have defined culture differently and consequently there are some possible definitions of what culture is. According to Trifonovitch (cited in Croft, 1980), survey reveals over 450 diferent definitions of the word or concept of culture available in literature. To a certain extent, these findings underline the difficulty of defining culture as there are lots of difinitions of the culture. However, all the definition of culture is always related to the way of life of a certain group of people because culture is a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life. Seelye (1993) and Brown (1987) defined culture as the ideas, customs, skills, arts, tools which characterizes a given group of people in a given period of time.

In *Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995)*, it is stated that culture is the way of life, especially general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time, and the continuing traditions of art, music, literature, etc. of a particular society or group within society. These definitions reveal that culture and society cannot be separated since culture is the way of life of a certain group of society. According to Robinson, cited in Sadtono (1999), culture consists of three elements, they are products (literature, folklore, art, music, and artifacts), ideas (beliefs, values, institutions), and behaviors (customs, habits, dress, foods, and leisure).

Other writers, Tomalin and Stempleski (1998) propose two categories of the definition of culture. For them, culture can be categorized as big-C culture and little-c culture. Big-C culture, also called "achievement culture" comprises history, geography, institutions, literature, music and the way of life. Little-c culture which is also called "behavior culture" mainly deals with behavior, including culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions, especially as expressed through language and cultural behavior that affect acceptability in the host country. Another writer, Weaver (1986) divides culture into internal and external culture. He says that internal culture, being a subjective knowledge, is the culture that can be learnt implicitly and unconsciously. While external one, being an objective knowledge, is the culture which can be learnt consciously and explicitly. The internal culture is usually difficult to change, such as values and thought patterns while external one could change easily, such as behavior and language.

Satisfactory definition of culture might never be met as culture embraces so many things, tangible and intangible and it is also dynamic which means cultures change in time and place and much of culture can be seen as a series of dynamic tensions (Martin Cortazzi, 2000). According to him, such tensions are seen in most places now between tradition and innovation, between stability and change and between centripetal forces which pull people together, and centrifugal forces which fling people apart. In addition, Vallete in Valdes (1986) divides culture in general into two major components: anthropological or sociological culture and the history of civilization. The first component includes attitudes, customs, daily activities, ways of thinking, values and frame of reference of a people; and the second component comprises geography, history, and achievements in science and

technology, the social sciences, and the arts. In this case, language belongs to the first component as it is a tool to understand and appreciate the concerned society (Sadtono, 2000).

It is also said that culture consists of the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation (Linton in Mesthrie et al, 2009). This means that culture also functions as "design for living" which gives meaning to the way and the form of habits considered appropriate and acceptable within community group, while language is treated as "cultural domains" (Shafirian and Palmer, 2007). Though it is not easy to make satisfactory definition of what culture is, by synthesizing all those previous definitions, it could be drawn that culture is a way of life of a certain group of society which has some essential ideas. First, culture is related to society, and it reflects how the society thinks, feels and communicate to each other. Second, culture has system that is why it has certain patterns which could be different from other cultures. Third, culture is a product of human life and finally culture is learned.

In short, culture will cover everything that is learnt, which shapes *a way of life*. It influences the way people think and how they express that thought through a language (Rizvi, 1990). Salikin (2014) cited Wardhaugh who claims that culture is whatever a person must know or believe in order to function in a particular society. The society always uses a language as a means of communication. That is why language and culture cannot be separated. When the learners learn a language without reference to its culture, they just learn words/expressions in isolation. As the consequence, misunderstanding might happen due to different concepts of looking at the same thing

3. Language and Culture

It is a common knowledge that language and culture, to some extent, cannot be separated. The idea of American Linguists, Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, could be the basic concept when talking about language and culture. The hypothesis consists of two versions: strong and moderate versions (Sampson, 1980). Strong version claims that the way people the world is completely determined by the structure of their native language and the moderate one argues that the way people view the world is determined partly by the structure of their native language. The strong version has less support compared to the moderate one since there are some areas which are culture free such as biology, math and chemists. Hence this paper applies the moderate version.

Language is not autonomous construct but social practice, meaning that language and culture (as a part of social practice) cannot be learnt separately. In other words, language cannot be learnt in isolation from its culture. Salikin (2014) cited Tomassouw who states that when people learn a new language, they have to look at the culture of the people whose language they are learning. Salikin (2009) states that even as simple as colors, different cultures have different views. Madurese (one of the tribes in Indonesia), for example, does not have "green". Instead, they use "blue" for both green and blue. For them the color of the leaf is not green but blue. So it is common among Madurese when they say in Indonesian a blue leaf instead of a green one. This could be because people sometimes cannot directly translate color terms from one language to another (Wardhaugh, 1987). In other words, every language has its own way in describing colors.

One of the misconceptions that have permeated language teaching is the conviction that language is merely a code.

People can learn a new language without touching the cultural aspects of the language being learnt (Kramsch, 1993). This idea is hard to accept due to the fact that foreign language learning mean also foreign culture learning. There are so many misunderstanding existing in communication not because of grammatical errors but cultural problems. The following story could be an illustration of the importance of understanding the relation between language and culture. There was a car accident between Kobayashi, a Japanese woman visiting United States, and Keller an American in a busy intersection. Kobayashi was understandably surprised when Keller turned left without signaling. Keller bumped in her car. A police officer who did not see the accident overheard Kobayashi saying to Keller "I am very sorry". The police gave Kobayashi a $40 ticket but Keller was not cited (Irving cited in Salikin , 2014). Why did the police give Kobayashi not Keller a ticket ? This is because of cultural differences in the perceived meaning and contextual appropriateness of "I am sorry". In this case, the police interpreted her response as admitting blame for the accident because in the United States when one says "I am sorry" this means that the person is accepting responsibility. Conversely, in Japan, "I am sorry" means I am sorry this happens without admitting any blame.

Furthermore, Salikin (2014) cited Susan's story in Tomalin and Stempleski who claim that language and culture cannot be separated. Susan is an American woman and stayed overnight for the first time with Japanese family in Japan. After dinner, his hosts invited her to take a bath but Susan rejected by saying that she was not in a hurry to do so. In Japanese culture, a guest staying with a family is honored and even in taking a bath, the guest will be invited first and the members of the family will do later and they will never do first. Susan could speak Japanese fluently but she committed a critical accident, that is a cultural blunder or a situation where there is a communication problem between people of different cultures. In fact, Susan failed to realize that her hosts actually hinted that it was bedtime and in Japanese culture one should take a bath before bedtime. As a guest, Susan should take a bath first so that the members of the host family could do after her. In this accident, Susan was proficient linguistically, but culturally poor.

Despite the best efforts of Kobayashi's and Susan's English teachers, they (like some English learners in a foreign language context) might be more familiar with the structure, pronunciation, stress, and intonation of the English language than with the more abstract things which are very important in a particular cultural context. It is not exaggerated to say that English teachers must be trained to make the learners able to successfully communicate inter culturally. If culture embodies language, it is inevitable that teaching language means also teaching its culture

4. The Proponents and Arguments *Against* Teaching Culture: Perplexing Problem

It is evident that incorporating culture in an EFL learning and teaching is inevitable. This is because a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language and the two are intricately interwoven, meaning that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 1987). Since language and culture are inseparable, language teaching means also culture teaching (Valdes, 1986). However, the practice of teaching culture in language learning is quite perplexing. When students are learning English as foreign language, for example, the problems of incorporating culture becomes apparent due to the fact that now English is the world lingua franca which is spoken by different nationalities. The question of

whose culture is going to be taught becomes very important to answer.

Despite the fact that language and culture to some extent cannot be separated, scholars have their own arguments on whether culture and language teaching can be incorporated. Those who argue that teaching culture in foreign language learning is a must claim that without incorporating cultural aspects of the people whose language is learnt cultural miscommunication when talking with other people from different cultural background is unavoidable. There are lots of communication breakdown not because of grammatical problems but cultural misunderstanding. And those who are not in favor of teaching culture in language learning and teaching argue that teaching language and culture at once seems difficult to do in a foreign language context. This is because of the status of English as the world lingua franca; spoken by many different nationalities. It goes without saying they will bring them their own cultures.

4.1 The Proponents of Teaching Culture

As culture and language, to some extent, cannot be separated, teaching language means also teaching culture because language and culture are two inseparable entities. When people teach language without incorporating at the same time the culture in which it operates, they are teaching meaningless symbols to which the student could attache the wrong meaning. This is because cultural differences are the main issues in cross-cultural communication. Without recognizing differences in traditions and habits among people of different ethnics, religions, localities, regions, countries and nations, confusion and misunderstanding will continually recur in communicating with other communities. In a foreign language context for example, cross-cultural understanding should be taken into account since it is very rare that the language learners are successful communicating culturally. That is why incorporating culture in English language teaching and learning is a must as the goal of teaching culture is to help students acquire attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to successfully function within their own micro-culture, mainstream culture, and global community (Sinagatullin, 2003).

There are some fundamental reasons why teaching culture in the EFL context cannot be avoided. First, language and culture to some extent cannot be separated; they are intertwined, Thus, it is unavoidable that teaching language must also involve teaching culture of the people whose language being learnt. Salikin (2014) cited Brown who states that language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language, the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. One's mastery of the linguistic elements of language does not guarantee a person can communicate through it. Previous examples of Kobayashi and Susan stories show that linguistic competence does not guarantee that one could communicate in a certain language successfully.

The second reason for the inevitability of teaching culture in the EFL learning and teaching is the fact that language teaching means also culture teaching. Valdes (1986) states that every language lesson is about something and that something is cultural. Buttjes (1990) explains how language teaching is culture teaching. It is said that language code cannot be taught in isolation without becoming aware of the complex and numerous processes of intercultural mediation that any foreign language learner undergoes. He also remarks that learning another language and culture should shape our subjectivities, improve our social experience, challenge our

cultural assumption, and change out mood of thinking. Susan and Kobayashi prove that linguistic facility alone does not guarantee effective communication. In addition Morain cited in Sadtono (1999) suggests in order to really understand a message, we must be able to hear the silent message and read the invisible words. These silent messages and invisible words are reflected in the culture.

The third reason why introducing cultural matters into the EFL learning and teaching is important is that major goal of a foreign language program is the mastery of communicative competence. In order to communicate successfully with the speakers of another language, one needs a sound grasp of the background knowledge of the target culture. Long time ago, Pilitzer (1959) claims that if we do not teach language as well as its culture,we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the learners attach the wrong meaning. Thus, a FL learning is, to some extent, a foreign culture learning. In short, those who are in favor of teaching culture in the EFL context believe that introducing culture is obligatory as it could help the learners minimize misunderstanding when communicating in the target language (TL).

4.2 Arguments *Against* Teaching Culture

It is true that the first argument against teaching culture in the EFL context is the fact that English is now a global language, spoken widely by people from different cultural backgrounds and thus whose culture to be taught is dubious (Sadtono, 2000). It goes without saying, it is not easy for EFL teachers to decide whose culture should be incorporated in the EFL learning and teaching. In fact, the English native speakers from UK, America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand rightfully claim to have their own cultures. The problem of whose culture to be taught might be resolved when the learners have already decided to visit a certain particular country. The culture of this definite country must be prioritized to be incorporated in the EFL context. However, to do so might not be practical in foreign language context as most of the countries in which English is taught as a foreign language usually have a large class (too many students in one class so that too many target countries).

Another argument of those who are not in favor of teaching culture in the EFL context is the fear of cultural and linguistic imperialism. The general term of cultural imperialism is linguicism. According to Kramsch (1993), linguicism is ideologies, structures, and practices which are to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and unmaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language. The total form of cultural imperialism is called "totemization" as the phenomenon when one language supplants others through centralized deliberate planning or diffuse societal force. The cultural and linguistic imperialism of English for example can have some effects. It has become the language of power and prestige in many countries, thus acting as a crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress, its widespread use threatens other languages. Besides, its use in particular domains, especially professional, may exacerbate different power relationships and may render these domains more inaccessible to many people, (Pennycook, 1994).

The next problem of teaching culture in the EFL learning and teaching context is the fact that in this context, most of the English teachers are non-English native speakers. Consequently it is very hard (if not impossible) for them to behave in the target culture which is still not clear. Furthermore, the availability of the teaching resources could be very serious problems in teaching culture. The current materials which are used in the learning

and teaching process are based on the culture of people from English native speaker countries. However, at the moment, as the world lingua franca, English is spoken by more non-English native speakers rather than English native speakers. In this case, incorporating the target culture seems very difficult to manage.

In addition, those who are against teaching culture claim that English of science and technology is free from cultural background. Kaplan cited in Salikin (2014) states that English of science and technology is more closely affiliated with science and technology than with culture of any national society such as America, British, Australia, and New Zealand. According to him, scientific and technical written text has developed a separate culture of its own. Although this scientific culture tends to be expressed through English at the present time, it is in no way inextricably bound to English and in this case English is free of the culture of a particular society.

The last problem of teaching culture is the issue of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is defined as the theory that culture can only be understood in its own term. That is why, standards, attitudes, beliefs from one culture should not be used in the study or description of another culture (*The Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*, 1997). People should not judge other cultures based on their own as every culture is right in its own way. This means that teaching culture in foreign language learning and teaching could be problematic since different learners might react differently to the different cultures incorporated in language learning and teaching.

In short, those who are not in favor of teaching culture are convinced that introducing culture of the people whose language is learnt in the EFL context is not a simple matter. There are several things which should be taken into consideration when teaching culture in language learning and teaching. The problems could be the question of the appropriate culture to be taught, the fear of linguistic and cultural imperialism, the questions of English for science and technology, and the problem of linguistic relativism. Teachers and teaching resources are also problems when teaching culture in the EFL teaching and learning. These all problems might not be easily coped with in the EFL learning teaching context.

5. Conclusion

Looking at the fact that, to a certain extent, language and culture are inseparable, teaching culture in the EFL context is unavoidable. This is because it is very often that miscommunication happens not because of linguistic problems but cultural ones. However, teaching culture in the EFL context is not easy to do due to some perplexing problems. The question of whose culture to be taught is not easy to answer as English is a global language spoken by many different nationalities with different cultural backgrounds. Teachers availability and teaching recourses could also be problems of teaching culture in EFL learning and teaching.

There are two unavoidable arguments related to the difficulty of teaching culture in the EFL context: those who agree and disagree. These two groups support their arguments with academic and reasonable reasons. Those who are convinced that teaching culture in the EFL learning and teaching should be done, argue that people cannot be fluent in a certain language without understanding the culture of the people whose language is learnt. While those who are not in favor of teaching culture claim that teaching culture in the EFL context face some problems such as whose culture to be taught, teachers availability, and teaching recourses.

It is true that language and culture, to some extent, are inseparable. That is why learning a language means also teaching culture. However, the practice of teaching culture in the EFL context still have some problems which could be difficult to be solved.

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