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Developing Intercultural Awareness in ELT class through Text Selection

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Abstract
Language is a means of communication and is used in a community that has certain culture. To be able to communicate with other community someone must be able to use the language of the community and understand the culture of that community. A communication problem may happen if someone is able to speak the language without understanding the culture. For that reason, understanding other culture is important and must be taught to students learning a certain language. Developing intercultural awareness is the first step to build communication. Indonesian English teachers can do that using texts containing English culture to make the students aware of the culture differences.

1. Introduction

Every community lives with their own culture. People living in a certain community understand each other well because they share the same culture. However, people communicate not only with their community. People need to communicate with people from other communities whose cultures are different from their own. Understanding others' culture is needed in order that the communication runs well without any misunderstanding. For ELT students, understanding the English people culture is very important. It will support them in learning English and communicate with it appropriately

Learning a target language cannot be separated from learning the culture of the target language. Richards and Schmidt (2010:151) state that culture and language combine to form 'discourses'. They are ways of talking, thinking, and behaving that show the social identity of someone. It is obvious that to understand the way people talk, think, and behave in a certain language one needs to understand the culture of that people.

Understanding other culture or cross-culture understanding will be much easier to do by living in the community of the target culture. English teachers will be able to introduce English people culture to their students when they once stay in England, for example.. Unfortunately, not all Indonesian English teachers can do that. Many Indonesian English teachers have not stayed, studied or even visited the English speaking country. However, it does not mean that they cannot introduce culture to the students. Nowadays, abundance facilities are available. With the coming of internet it can be done. As far as teachers are willing to, they can find information, model, examples, and anything related to culture in the internet. English teachers just need to be diligent and creative if they want to promote intercultural awareness in their classroom.

This paper will describe how to develop intercultural awareness in ELT class. Some steps to do it will cover the decision making of the culture content that will be introduced, the selection of the appropriate materials/text to introduce the culture, conducting activities in which the students learn the culture by asking them to compare with their own culture, and the last step is highlighting the language focus in the material/text. The discussion will be preceded with explanation related to language and culture.

2. Language and Culture

According to Corbett (2003:1), the current 'communicative' methods of second language learning defines language as a means of bridging a communication gap. It does not mention anything about culture. Meanwhile, based on several definitions, Brown

writes a summary that defines a language. Among the summary states that language is a means of communication and that language is used in a group of language community or culture (2007:5). Brown's latter point of the summary is closer to what a language is for. In fact not only the language that bridges the communication gap but also the understanding of the culture of the target language.

The ultimate goal of learning a language is that the learner will be competent user of the language in communication. To be successful in communication, understanding language should be accompanied by understanding the culture of the people having the target language. Otherwise, misinterpretation or misunderstanding that block the communication will happen. Someone may communicate using correct target language inappropriately because he does not understand the culture of the people speaking the language. If it happens the communication will encounter problem. Brown (2007:64) believes that' language and culture are intricately intertwined'. It means that when someone teaches a language he/she also teaches a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. In addition, Brown says that in second language learning contexts, the success of the learner in adapting to the new cultural milieu will affect their language acquisition success and vice versa.

2.1. Intercultural encounters

Intercultural encounters take place in the classroom when there are two or more different cultures brought by the learners or the teachers. In an Indonesian English class, the encounters may happen among the students who learn English with different cultural background. It may also happen between the teacher that is a native speaker of English and the students. Whether or not a native English teacher exists in the English class, intercultural encounter takes place in the English classroom because the students have to understand the English culture when they learn English.

The intercultural encounter may cause problems. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2011:393) illustrate the intercultural encounters in schools distinctly. First, they give an example of an American teacher at a foreign language institute in Beijing that exclaimed in class, "You lovely girls, I love you." This exclamation has made the students terrified. The second example is about an Italian professor teaching in the United States who complained bitterly because the students were asked to evaluate his course. It is difficult for him to understand that the students are the judges of a professor quality. The two examples show problems caused by different cultures that are not understood.

The understanding of other culture then is very important to avoid problem or conflict in communication. Therefore, intercultural awareness should be developed as the basic step leading to a good communication.

2.2. Building intercultural awareness

Intercultural awareness is the first step in the acquisition of intercultural communication. Hofstede et al (2011:419) state that there are 3 phases to acquire intercultural communication abilities consisting of awareness, knowledge, and skills. Before becoming a skillful communicator, someone has to be aware first of the intercultural existence.

In the English class it is the job of English teacher to make the students aware of the intercultural existence when they learn English. Being aware is recognizing that everyone carries different mental software because he/she was brought up in different environment (Hofstede et al, 2011:419-20). Although awareness is the basic step, it is fundamental. Without having awareness it is difficult for the students to accept and learn the culture differences. The English teacher can develop the students' awareness by facilitating and providing students with texts containing cultural content.

2.3. Texts

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010:594) a text is a segment of spoken or written language comprises four characteristics below.
1. Normally made up of several sentences that together create a structure or unit such as a letter, a report, or an essay.
2. Having distinctive structural and discourse characteristics.

3. Having a particular communicative function or purpose.
4. Can be fully understood in relation to the context in which it occurs.

Based on the characteristics above, it is clear that texts can be used to introduce culture. Using text learners will learn certain communicative function and learn the context in which the language is used. They are all closely related to a certain culture.

2.4. How to use a text as a medium to develop intercultural awareness

Some steps to use texts in teaching English as well as building students' cultural awareness are proposed here. The steps comprise the following activities.

1. Deciding the culture content

In this first step the teacher decides the culture content that will be introduced. It can be based on the one that often creates misunderstanding or misinterpretation, the one which is considered related to daily life activity, or other considerations. By deciding the culture content first, the teacher will focus on certain culture. For example, teacher can decide to introduce how English people address each other, how to greet, how to complain, etc.

2. Selecting the learning material/texts

When the decision of culture content has been made, the teacher continues the step by selecting texts based on the decision. The text can be in the form of a dialogue, monologue, audio, video, etc. The most important thing is that it contains the culture to be introduced.

The teacher can find the text from various sources. He/she can find it from the printed media or electronic media. He/she has to select the most appropriate text for the students.

3. Conducting class activities

The class activities are divided into three phases; pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching. In pre-teaching phase the teacher reminds the students there are different culture in different community. English people culture is different from Indonesian culture. Then the teacher focuses on the English culture they will learn.

In the second phase, the teacher exposes the students to the text selected. The students study the text and the teacher facilitates, helps, and learns together with the students. The teacher can help the students by directing to the English culture points. The teacher also shows how language/expressions are used in the text. When the students feel confident, the teacher will ask the students to compare the English culture they learn with the culture of their own. The students can work in pair to improve understanding. The teacher then can ask the students to share with the class their findings of differences among the different culture. This is the step in which an intercultural awareness emerges.

An example of learning material/text (taken from Project Britain- British life and culture).

The teacher brings into the classroom DOs and DON'Ts in England. It tells what the English people may and may not do.

THE DOs
- Stand in line
  In England people queue orderly and wait patiently, for example when boarding for a bus.
- Take the hat off when going indoors
  Men are considered impolite to wear hats indoor, especially in the church.
- Say "Please" and "Thank you"
  Saying 'please' and 'thank you' is good. Otherwise, one will be considered rude.
- Cover your mouth
  In England, people their mouth when yawning or coughing.
- Shake hands
  When you meet someone at the first you are introduced to, shake his/her right hands with your right hand.
- Say sorry
  Say sorry when you bump into someone

The DON'Ts

- Don't greet people with kiss
  In England, people kiss only close friends and relatives
- Don't ask a lady her age
  Asking the age of a lady I considered impolite.
- Don't pick nose in public
  English people will be disgusted by this. It must be done by using a handkerchief.
- Avoid doing gesture (e.g. backslapping and hugging)
  Backslapping and hugging are only done among close friends.
- Don't spit
  In England spitting in the street is a very bad manner.
- Don't pass wind in public
  Passing wind should be done in a private place. However, if it cannot be stopped, say 'pardon me'.

The last phase is post-teaching. In this phase the teacher and the students will highlight together the differences among the culture of English people and Indonesian people. The teacher needs to emphasize that the students have to understand the differences so that they can communicate in English appropriately.

3. Conclusion

To learn a language is also to learn the culture of the target language. Learners must learn and know the culture in the target language. Otherwise, they will get difficulty in communicating with the owner of the language.

Although many English teachers in Indonesia never stay in English speaking countries, they can introduce the culture of English people for now there are facilities that enable them to find rich sources of culture. One of the rich sources of culture is texts that can be found easily in the internet. Texts have various forms and usually contain culture. Teachers need to decide and select suitable texts to teach culture. In that way, the students will be aware that there are culture differences accompanying different languages.

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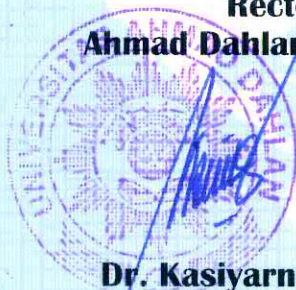
Dra. Umi Rokhyati, M.Hum.

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HASIL PENILAIAN SEJAWAT SEBIDANG ATAU *PEER REVIEW*
KARYA ILMIAH : *PROSIDING*

Judul Makalah	:	Developing Intercultural Awareness in ELT Class Through Text Selection
Penulis Makalah	:	Dra. Umi Rokhyati, M.Hum.

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Hasil Penilaian *Peer Review* :

Komponen Yang Dinilai	Nilai Maksimal Prosiding 15		Nilai Akhir Yang Diperoleh
	Internasional ☑	Nasional ☐	
a. Kelengkapan unsur isi tulisan (10%)	1,5		1
b. Ruang lingkup dan kedalaman pembahasan (30%)	4,5		3
c. Kecukupan dan kemutahiran data/informasi dan metodologi (30%)	4,5		3
d. Kelengkapan unsur dan kualitas penerbit (30%)	4,5		4
Total = (100%)	15		11

Yogyakarta, **23-04-2015**

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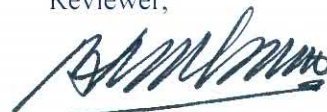   c. Tahun Terbit   : 2013
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d. Kelengkapan unsur dan kualitas penerbit (30%)	4,5		4
Total = (100%)	15		13

Magelang, 17 April 2015

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