

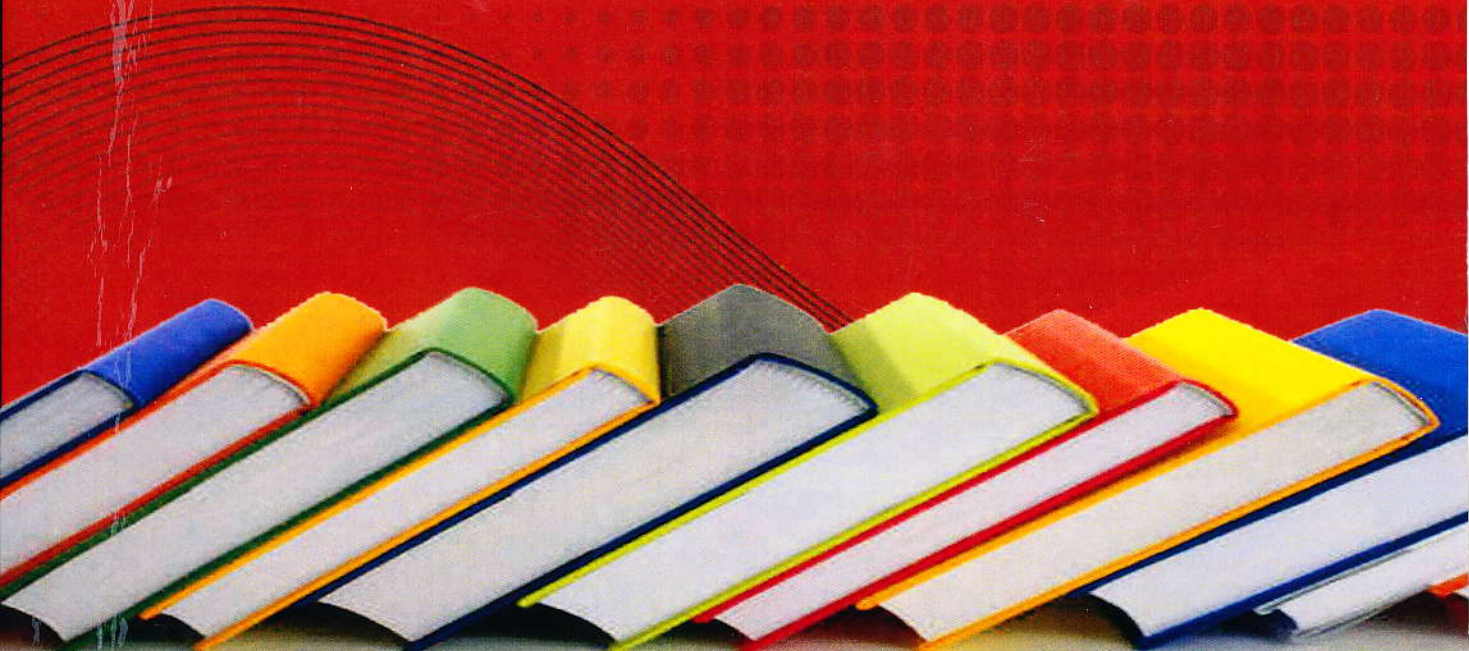


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CRITICAL REFLECTION ON A SPECIFIC TEACHING CONTEXT

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to critically reflect the use of target language in the classroom can improve students' proficiency of the language as they will more familiar with the sound and the linguistics features. And also that the students' mother tongue could be used as resources for teaching and learning because English is taught in classes where the students and teachers share the same mother tongue. This Paper will answer questions about should we use of mother tongue in EFL classroom? Should we teach English as an international Language or English as Foreign Language? And Should English taught by grammar translation approach or using communicative approach?

Key words: Mother tongue, Target language, EIL, EFL, communicative approach

Should L1 use in L2 classroom?

Direct method approach is one method of learning which is avoiding using L1 or mother tongue in language teaching (Flowerdew and Miller 2005). Many teachers believe that the using of target language in the classroom can improve students' proficiency of the language as they will more familiar with the sound and the linguistics features. However, other argues that the students' mother tongue could be used as resources for teaching and learning because English is taught in classes where the students and teachers share the same mother tongue (Prodromou 2002). In this first debate seek to prove that mother tongue can be used in teaching and learning English.

One of the reasons to avoid using L1 is that the use of L1 would limit the opportunities for exposure to L2. The learning process should be focused on engaging students in a learning that promotes maximum L2 use. Language is learned by practicing them. When the students consistently using English during structured activities, they try to discover a whole new word and new ideas in L2 both using social language or academic language their capability of using language would be improved. The more English is used in class the more input the students will be got. To use the mother tongue will eliminate opportunities of the students in getting used to English. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language therefore all opportunities to expose students to the target language should be

fullest. Another reason of Using L2 in the classroom is to improve the teacher qualification. The teachers who teach English must be qualified teacher who should not only be able to speak the language but should also be able to explain how and why the language works the way it does. By using L2 in teaching and learning would encourage teacher to have appropriate knowledge and responsible for achieving professional standard of teaching. However, the research suggests that the use of students' native language will not be completely eliminated from the classroom. This is an important point for the teacher to recognize and diminish some of the frustration and misperception that may exist.

On the contrary, those who prefer to use mother tongue or L1 in classroom argue that the using of L1 could improve the quality of learning as well as preserve the mother tongue. This is supported by Prodromou (2002) said that the bilingual teacher who using culture which the mother tongue embodies, could assist the progress of their students towards the other tongue, the other culture. Zacharias (2004) in her research found that it is useful to use students L1 in order to explain grammatical concepts which were not present in students' native language such as the use of tenses. Others also said that they believe that using L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) to teach grammatical concept would provide some motivation to the more reluctant learner. Another

reason is the students' mother tongue also useful during the explanation of theoretical concepts. In teaching concepts it is need to simplify difficult language into simpler one. Therefore, the effective way to do is by using the students' mother tongue. The students will understand the concept better when the teacher use English and Bahasa Indonesia. I had an experience when I was teaching English to senior high school in Indonesia, the students complained when I was using English as a medium of instruction. They said they found difficulties to grasp and comprehend the lesson. That is why sometimes I switched to Bahasa Indonesia to explain the concept which needs further explanation. Furthermore, for non skilled courses like teaching poems or literature, it will be easier if the teacher use example using the language that students understand better. As we know that poem and literature are related to culture. Every culture has different style and meaning and may be it will be quite complicated and confused for the students if they do not understand the cultural content of the poem or literature. That is why the teacher needs to express the concept in Bahasa Indonesia after they use English.

Based on discussion above, my personal opinion is it will be hard for the students to learn in the target language especially those who have poor ability. They may feel frustrate or stressful because they have a problem in

comprehending the lesson. That is why the teacher can switch to Bahasa Indonesia as needed. The teacher can use L1 during the teaching and learning process but it should be kept in minimum.

Finally, I would like to present some strategies recommended by research for increasing the use of L2 in the classroom. Firstly, create learning context with clear expectation of L2 use. Teachers need to establish rules of conduct for the classroom, and make clear to students that they are expected to use the L2 as much as possible. To clearly established rules and expectation, teachers also need to create a fostering environment, which encourages the use of L2 and provide opportunities for its use (Cloud et. al. 2000). Teachers also need to provide concrete activities related to the students cultural background which stimulate interaction between students and with the teacher. Secondly is establishing clear separation of the using L1 and L2 in the classroom or outside classroom. For instance, it is useful to schedule English day and English Speaking area where the students are not allowed to use their L1. The next strategy is set a learning objective. Fourthly, develop non academic vocabulary, even though it is likely impossible to teach students the vernacular in the L2, it is possible to expand their vocabulary beyond the academic subject matter. Teach vocabulary related to everyday topics, such

as clothing, food, sport, greetings, family, shopping, travel, feeling, etc. encourage students to share information about their likes and dislikes, family and weekend activities (Stein 1999). Finally is organize classroom activities and provide opportunities that maximize students L2 output by using group and pair activities and develop an activity centred classroom.

Should we teach English as an international Language or English as Foreign Language?

Indonesia is a country made up of plurality of ethnic groups, cultures and languages. So it is not unusual for Indonesians to speak three or four languages. Therefore the language used in Indonesia can be classified into three categories. They are the vernacular language known as Bahasa daerah (regional Languages), the national language, Bahasa Indonesia and The foreign Languages (Djardjowidjojo 2000). English as a foreign language has officially taught to students in primary school up to university students. The history of English teaching in Indonesia has traceable since 1900, when first modern school introduced. Efforts to improve its teaching has been made since Indonesian independence in 1945, these effort include standardization of curriculum carried out in 1975, 1984, and 1994. In this second debate I would like to discuss about the teaching English in Indonesia. Should it be taught as

International Language or as Foreign Language?

Generally, the purpose of teaching English in Indonesia is to provide students with the ability to read the books written in English as well as to speak and to achieve the proficiency of four language skills. It seems that the goal of teaching and learning is for near native proficiency. It is similarly with Smith (1978) who notes that English foreign language means English taught as subject school or on adult level for the purpose of giving students a foreign language competence which may use to read literature, to listen to radio, to understand dialogue in the movies and to use language for communication possibly with English or American variety. Stern (1992) also notes that in a foreign language setting the language is learned for educational purpose and not for immediate application. By looking at the fact that many Indonesian university graduates who have studied for six year in junior and senior high school and another in university generally can not achieve near native proficiency. Therefore, it is better to teach English as international language for several reasons.

While in EFL situation English is found only as school subject, EIL is used as the medium of instruction or the lingua franca of community which used most frequently be the local educated variety (Smith 1978). The distinction with the Indonesian ELT context is English is not the

medium of instruction except for limited classroom instruction in English major courses. However, the social practice of English in Indonesia not limited to school practice but also as lingua franca in international work situations such as dominant language of foreign trade, international conference, air traffic in international or domestics airport. In these situation English is used by non native speaker English to communicate with other non native speaker as well as native English speaker. If English is used for communication between non native speakers then the cultures and background of those people become more important than native speaker.

In EFL context only the spoken and written text is closely associated with British or American English and other inner circle nation's cultures. Some experts believe that the learner who wants to communicate with native speaker must get a sense of the world view by native speaker have to see themselves and their own country (Stern 1992). That is means the learner should learn native speaker culture. By learning native culture, the foreign students have the opportunity to come to the reality of culture. The most important aims are to help the learner gain an understanding of the native speaker perspective. It would help them to be aware of the cultural dimensions of language as social interaction. It is supported by Brown (2000) that foreign language curriculum

could present culture as a list of fact to be cognitively consumed. That is why native speaker teacher is preferred than local people, no matter educational background they had. In an international situation any educated English speaker is acceptable. It may be a native speaker, a local variety speaker or an educated speaker of regional variety (Smith 1978). It will create a greater opportunity for the local teacher as long as they have appropriate educational background and English proficiency. This also has another advantage, that is the loss of own identity of the learner can be prevented by including local value and norm in the teaching material. Besides of local culture a large number of English varieties can be exposed to facilitate and stimulates learner awareness of different varieties of English (Xu 2002)

Furthermore, the EIL learner is a multi competent users of English since they can use their existing knowledge and their mother tongue together with others mother tongue (Xu 2002). It views the students as multi competent in using different varieties of English rather than knowledgeable to imitate native speaker. Similarly, the learners of English as foreign language also have a choice of language variety but British or American English much more acceptable (Broughton et.al.1978). As an illustration, the variety of English taught in formal and informal school in Indonesia is very much

determined by the textbook being used or by the variety of teacher speak. However, in current situation the teacher much more emphasizes on fluency rather than accuracy that is why non native sounding English is also acceptable.

Moreover, the using of authentic material as a way to bring language learner closer to the real world is used in EIL context (Xu 2002). Indeed, the teacher can use many sources which are containing different varieties of English to make students more aware that there are many different English in real world. However, EFL teaching in Indonesia is very much used British or American literatures. As a result students sometimes face difficulties when they find most of the people around them are not speak standard British or American English.

In conclusion, due to the number of world varieties of English exist use for many purposes, it can be argued that it should better the English language teaching In Indonesia started to move away from EFL to EIL. There are many advantages can be gained for the students and the teachers themselves, those are: the EIL learner is values as multi competent users who do not loss their own identity when they learn English; EIL also inclusive other mother tongue norm and values; and EIL brings real life to Language classroom. However, it is important for the teacher to understand different variety of

English, how English develop in specific context and how it spread around the world (Xu 2002).

Should English taught by grammar translation approach or using communicative approach?

It is undoubtedly true that language is a potential tool for communication in every human activity. English is one of the crucial languages around the world seems to be more interesting to learn. Considering this situation, it is needed to figure out the most comfortable way in learning English that can make everyone who want to learn English is easier to understand it.

Across time, the considerable changes have occurred in the field of English teaching both English as foreign language in Indonesia or second language like in Malaysia and Singapore and on teaching of foreign language in general. ELT in Indonesia is taught as a compulsory subject from junior high school up to university. Since it was first taught, there have been problems in teaching English as foreign language. The changing of curriculum and approaches along with the changing of minister of education is a common problem. The big class sizes and teacher with poor mastery of English are other factors that contribute to the ELT problem in Indonesia (Dardjowidjoj0 2000). Other reasons for the problems are: limited time allocated for teaching

English, students do not have time to learn to speak English in class because the teacher much more concern to teach grammar and syntax, the absence of good and authentic learning material and the absence of the social uses of English outside the classroom (Musthafa 2001).

At present and all levels, the teaching of English in Indonesia is either limited to structure or grammar translation method. The structure and vocabulary are being taught by using structural syllabus and grammar translation method when the students are in the primary and secondary level. ELT at Indonesian school was teacher centred and text book driven. The teacher typically explained new grammatical structured and required students to memorize the rules. The students also spent time to translate text or vocabulary from English to Indonesia and vice versa. The grammar focused lessons are often not communicatively based. However, teaching grammar was simply making students learn language habits through numerous drill and pattern practice (Brown 1994). Indeed it will help students in production stage to generate sentences and use structure they have not used before (Durkin 1995). This traditional method preferred by the Indonesian teacher due to lack of competence and their heavy teaching loads, large classes and lack of textbook and facilities (Sadtono, et al. 1997). Over the years it is believed that this

method would help the English learners arrange correct sentences through the structure learnt. Reach the higher level, these structures are being revised and a more exposure to it is created with the help of literary text.

Through this approach, we can find out the fact that the learners of English do not learn English in any real sense, since they often stay in lacking in case of normal communication, whether in spoken or written form. Further, this method only teaches the ability to compose correct sentences. Unfortunately this ability is not the only one needed by English learners to develop their English. In fact we do not communicate only by composing different kind of sentences but by using sentences to describe things, ask question, offering something etc. Although this method has made the English learners structurally competent and enable those to produce grammatically correct sentences, the real fact that they are unable to perform a simple communicative task (Freeman and Freeman 1998). It means that they already know the grammar but lack in ability to be appropriate users as well as fluent.

The other approach is communicative approach. English in communicative language teaching emphasizes on the communicative competence of the learners (Larsen and Freeman 1986). Communicative

competence itself can be summarized as skills needed for communication which consists of four important components. Those components are grammatical/linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Brown 2000). Learners are mostly forced to communicate what they really want to do through giving their ideas, thoughts and feeling. They are taught how and when these communicative tasks and acts are performed in order they are able to communicate whatever the subjects are. It is because that learning English by using communicative approach encourage everyone goes beyond the structure take another account of aspects of communication. The English learners will concerns with how to use English not 'English Usage'.

Teachers in communicative classroom will talk less and listening more, becoming facilitator of their students' learning. A classroom during activities is dynamic. The students do most of communicative exercise. The learning task should include pair and group work, and that activities like role plays, language games and problem solving task are encouraged when the students are expected to interact with other students in order to communicate in target language. Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may gain confidence in

using the target language in general (Larsen and Freeman 1986). The using of authentic materials is also important in an English classroom. Teachers can use newspaper, magazine articles, post card, recipe, etc. The important thing is to choose material that is appropriate for the students' level.

Since 1984 communicative approach has been introduced in Indonesia through curriculum 1984. However, the implementation still far from perfect. It is related to ideological issues that the communication approach will lead to the overuse of English as foreign language by the students and this will eventually reduce the sense of nationality and will corrupt their cultural value (Tomlinson 1990). Nevertheless, this can be avoided by including local culture in teaching material. Therefore the teaching materials in English should reflect Indonesian culture

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and other culture which students' interest. The students would not loss their identity, yet they will learn other cultures which make them more aware of their own culture.

In summary, it can be said that applying communicative approach means that teaching and learning are more than a series of grammar lesson and vocabulary list. For language teaching and learning to be truly communicative, it must not only be in context but used to convey idea, preferences, thought, feeling and information. Expanding circle country like Indonesia can implement this kind of approach without losing their identity as we can involve local culture in learning process. Also the teachers will attempt to improve their capability since the implementation of communicative approach require teachers who fluent and has high level of English proficiency.

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