THE USE OF LOCAL CULTURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

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Abstract
The importance of English language as an international tool of communication in this globalised world suggests that English teachers ensure students’ attainment of English language competency through the use of effective English language teaching materials. For this purpose, English language materials containing English culture have been widely proposed for use in English language classrooms based on an assumption that successful language learning is associated with learning the culture of the language speakers. Strong theoretical and empirical support, however, calls for the need to use local culture in English language classrooms. This article discusses that the use of local culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) can be supported by exploring two interrelated issues: the relationship between language and culture and the emergence of World Englishes. Common practices of localised ELT practices in some local contexts also support the use of local culture in English language classrooms which is also discussed in this article. It is also suggested that teachers make use of students’ local culture as learning material as it would develop students’ English proficiency as well as their sense of cultural identity important for a global life.

Keywords: Local culture, World Englishes, Localised English language pedagogy

Introduction
Globalisation has lead many countries particularly in South East Asian nations to introduce the language earlier in the curriculum. The introduction of English in many cases is also accompanied with the introduction of English culture due to an assumption that successful language learning is associated with the learning of culture of the speaker (Schuman, 1987). English textbooks with English Western cultural contents therefore have been widely suggested for use in English language classrooms (Dat, 2010). Tomlinson (2008), however, has reported that the use of such English textbooks has been discouraged by teachers in South East Asia due to the irrelevant contents to the students’ real life and thus suggesting the use of students’ local culture in English language teaching. In fact, some studies have reported that students in EFL classroom showed greater enthusiasm in learning English when local culture is used (e.g. Fredericks, 2007; Luke 2012). More importantly, the integration of local culture in ELT classrooms can be supported by exploring two interrelated issues: the relationship between language and culture and the emergence of World Englishes. Common practices of localised English language pedagogy in some local contexts also support the use of local culture in English language classrooms.

The Relationship between Language and Culture
Collins (2006), Fishman (1994), and Kramsch (1998) have described the relationship between language and culture in three ways. In the first place, language is the means through which culture is created and transmitted. The folktales, wise words, history, wisdom and ideals in that culture result from language and are created in language practices. Secondly, a language symbolises culture. It symbolises the history, tradition, and way of life of its speakers. Finally, a language indexes culture in the
sense that (a) it pre-exists its culture and (b) its vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and grammatical properties are the best means of talking about socio-cognitive and emotive levels in that culture. As Sarangi (2009) have mentioned, people sharing the same language tend to share the same cultural habits while people with different languages tend to develop different cultural habits. Since language and culture are inseparable, one can certainly ask a critical question whether learning another language one will run into the risk of losing his or her native culture. Nonetheless, contemporary studies have shown that language and culture are indeed separable and learning one does not always mean losing the other. As Sarangi (2009) has rightly argued, when language is referred to the referential meaning is always verbal language and the non-verbal means of communication (e.g. gesture, bells, the use of kentongan in Javanese culture) are often neglected. But Sarangi (2009) has also shown that learners of a language can always separate their own culture from the one that they are learning. In fact, they can form a new culture of their own and this what Kramsch (2013) has referred to as the third culture, that is, a set of cultural beliefs and knowledge that learners of a language develop from those in their own culture and the target culture and Kramsch (2013, p.233) proposes this competence to be “the third place” in the communicative competence in addition to lexical and grammatical competence.

In this perspective, learners learning another language do not always start a new endeavor, but in such attempts they bring with them background knowledge which they can make use when tackling language learning tasks at hand. If this is the case, one can then ask what knowledge they bring and how teachers can make use of this knowledge in ELT classrooms, suggesting the possibility of using students’ local culture in ELT classrooms as English materials and teaching and learning strategy.

**World Englishes**

English has been the most widely learnt and spoken language in the globalised world and thus which variety of the language that students should learn is not at all easy to define. So varied is the language and so vast has it spread, we can no longer speak of it as a single language spoken by people with a single group. Consequently, the language has been referred to as world Englishes (WE) representing the multi-variety of the language and its cultures.

Kachru (1992, p. 356) has proposed stratifications of WE in terms of three concentric English-speaking circles which “represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural context”. “The Inner Circle” comprises territories which Kachru refers to them as ‘the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English (mainly USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand).The characteristic of these varieties of English spoken in these locations is mostly endonormative, meaning that they provide themselves with the standard norms as the reference point used in English language teaching and learning in other areas (Bruthiaux, 2002). Accordingly Kachru describes them as ‘norm provider’, which seems to give a prestige position to the Inner Circle varieties.

“The Outer Circle” varieties are spoken in English as a Second Language countries such as Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Malaysia and Singapore (Jenkins, 2003). Kachru (1997) describes the varieties in “The Outer Circle” circle as “the institutionalized non-native varieties” given that the regions have passed through a long period of colonization. Kachru (1992, p. 356) has suggested that these varieties pass through a gradual shift from exonormative to endonormative, and
Kachru (1997) thus labels them as ‘norm-developing’. Therefore, some speakers of English in the outer circle have been widely accepted to alter English by localizing English. When English is localized it reflects the speakers’ local cultural norm (Jenkins, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Meanwhile, the “Expanding Circle represents societies where the performance varieties of the language are used essentially in EFL contexts. The variety used in the Expanding Circle is labelled as “norm dependent” (Kachru, 1992, p.357). In these regions English tends to be exonormative in that speakers, educators, and policy-makers have traditionally make reference to American or British models for linguistic norms (Bruthiaux, 2002). Kachru, 1992 refers to China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia as belonging to this Circle. Bruthiaux (2002), however, argues that the Expanding Circle could be assumed as every nation neither in the Inner or Outer circles, given that English is now presumably taught to someone somewhere in every nation in the world, to mention few of randomly selected names, such as Brazil, Italy, Thailand, Morocco, and many more. It is also possible that some countries in the Expanding Circle go through so remarkable development of English that they increase their status from ‘norm dependent to’ norm developing’. An increasingly use of English as Lingua Franca for business and commerce within China, for example, would increase the status from ‘norm dependent’ to ‘norm developing (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Similar transition would also happen in Japan as there has been an increased need to use English as a means of expressing Japanese values in international communication (Hino, 2012). For countries with ‘norm dependent’ status, Rajagopalan (2011) argues that, they need to take people’s experience in the Outer Circle as a role model in their desire for learning English.

Even though some countries possibly no longer fit into Kachru’s stratification due to the countries’ development, what has been described by Kachru with his three concentric English speaking cycles have shown that English has grown into a myriad of varieties with their own norms. This means that WE theory views localised varieties along with their sociocultural context as legitimate as ‘native speaker’ varieties. This brings implication for a pedagogical shift from conforming to native speaker’s norms to local norms enabling teachers to use learning materials with local cultural and pragmatic norms. Learning English using local norm is relevant particularly because English is an International language (McKay, 2002). Adopting local norm is also important to anticipate the fear that learning English bring with it the learning and adoption of inappropriate values and language, even though learning English is also seen as local demand (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Localised English Language Teaching Practices
The need for localising ELT has been highlighted by Canagarajah (2005, p. 12) who claims that “all knowledge is local”, and therefore other knowledge constructs can only be interpreted based on one’s particularity. His claim suggests that the adoption of dominant pedagogy by teachers in local contexts does not always follow the expectation of the local students. Thus, adaptation needs to be made rather than adoption (Littlewood, 2000) of the already established method of ELT pedagogy. Such adaptation is clearly shown in Kramsch and Sullivan’s (1996) ethnographic study in a Vietnamese classroom. From their classroom observation on how teacher used materials in Western textbook, Headway, localisation of ELT in Vietnamese English language is identified when the teachers appropriated communicative language teaching to fit the Vietnamese cultural traditions. The study reports that instead of assigning the students
to work in small groups to respond to a language task, the teacher preferred the tasks to be responded by the whole class where the students were observed to create various language responses in English and build each other’s responses to the question. As the researchers explain, the teacher did so because of the teachers’ awareness of Vietnamese ‘collectivist’ culture, and thus avoiding ‘individual competitiveness’ characterizing Western culture (Hinkel, 1999). Though the activity in this localised ELT can be seen as insufficient in providing the students with negotiating meaning focus activities, the students might benefit from experimenting with language which can be seen in the creative verbal language response done collaboratively occurring in the whole class discussion.

Similarly, (Tin, 2014) ethnographic study in an English language classroom in Nepal reflects the actual practice of a teacher in translating Communicative Language Teaching approach to suit the local classroom reality in Nepal. The localised of ELT is identified in the study when the teacher used quite high teacher talking time during a lesson discussing the content materials in the prescribed textbook oriented to the use of Communicative approach. As the researcher argues this teacher talk seems to be motivated by the Nepalese classroom culture favoring teacher’s explanations or lectures. Therefore, the teacher appeared to neglect a Communicative Language Teaching principle that teacher talk should be kept at minimum in order to provide maximum opportunities for the students’ oral and written English language production (Harmer, 2007). However, such high teacher talking time was also revealed to be connected with the teacher’s concern with some constraints including a shortage of classroom teaching time and limited learning resources as well as facilities. Under such constraints, teacher talk was found to serve as not only economical and but also effective sources of input on which the students can rely in class, and that can be a basis for them for extended learning activities after class done either individually or in pairs or groups.

CONCLUSION
The use of local culture in English language teaching in this globalised era has been justified by theoretical perspectives that local culture provides students with linguistic and content schemata which facilitate their second or foreign language learning. Teaching students local culture while learning English also makes sense based on scholarship regarding the relationship between language and culture as well as World Englishes. Some studies on localised English language teaching practices on some local contexts also support local culture integration into English language teaching in a globalised world. As the use of local culture as English language learning material would not only develop students’ English proficiency but also develop their sense of cultural identity, it is advisable that teachers make use of local texts and cultural practices from which students can learn cultural values.

References