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Title

Embracing EIL Pedagogy in Teaching Speaking to University Students
through Culturally-Relevant Materials

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Abstract

The implementation of English as an International Language (EIL) pedagogy is on the rise as a response towards the dynamic use of English language across the globe. In this light, this research aims at describing how such EIL-informed speaking materials are designed. The materials are designed to teach Speaking to the second semester students of the English Language Education, Sanata Dharma University. Despite the acknowledgement of the culture of the Inner Circle countries, the materials are also designed be culturally relevant in such a way that they can accommodate learners to bring up their local cultural backgrounds. It is expected that the designed materials will help raise students' awareness of EIL as well as amplify their sense of ownership of English language.

Keywords: *EIL, Speaking, culturally-relevant materials*

Introduction

In English language education, the current status of English as an International Language (EIL) has shed light on the pedagogy as well as the materials to teach. Generally, English language learning

focuses on materials made and designed in compliance with the native-speakers' norms (McKay, 2003). However, the materials do not really depict how English is used since English is no longer used only to communicate to native speakers of English (NES) but also to non-native-speakers of English (NNES). McKay (2003) asserts further that the nature of English has changed "in terms of how many of its speakers make use of English and how English relates to culture" (p.2). Similarly, Renandya (2012) maintains that one of the principles in EIL is "the promotion of instructional materials that include both local and international cultures" (p.73).

Among four language skills, speaking seems to be one of the most challenging skills for language learners. As future English teachers, the students of English Language Education Study Program, Sanata Dharma University are expected to be proficient in speaking. However, culturally-irrelevant materials (such as those focusing too much on native-speaker models) seemingly affect their motivation and may hinder them in making the most of their Speaking class.

Literature Review

Kachru's Three Circles Model

The discussion of EIL is inseparable from the Three Circles models proposed by Kachru (1985 as cited in Park and Wee, 2009): Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle countries include the USA, the UK, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. According to Kachru (1985, as cited in Park and Wee, 2009, p. 389), Inner Circle countries are where "the traditional monolingual native speakers of English are located". The next circle, the Outer Circle, consists of countries that were once colonized by English-speaking countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and India. English is now an official language in those countries. The last circle, Expanding Circle, is where English does not hold any official status and is used a medium of international communication. Some examples of Expanding Circle countries are Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, and China. However, the clear-cut boundaries in Kachru's model somehow seem problematic particularly due to the vast development of English language use. It does not sufficiently elucidate "the heterogeneity and dynamics of English-using communities" (Park & Wee, 2009, p. 390).

The Need for EIL Pedagogy in Teaching Speaking

The previous discussion takes us further to how English is spoken internationally. Crystal (2003, p. 69) states that "the ratio of native to non-native is around 1:3" Therefore, McKay (2003) argues that "the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second and foreign language" (p. 1). Similarly, Ha (2008) also highlights the need to reconsider

redesigning Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) course so as to “make students from non-English-speaking backgrounds aware of how their images have been constructed through English and ELT, and in what way their voices can be heard” (p. 100)

One of the most common beliefs in ELT is that “the cultural content of ELT should be derived from the culture of native English speakers” (McKay, 2003, p. 75). However, assumptions of EIL stated by Talebinezhad & Aliakbari (2001) heavily emphasize on the existing nature of English use in a way that English is used across nations and facilitates communication not only between NNES to NES but also among NNES. Therefore, the notion of culture in EIL needs rethinking, as Talebinezhad & Aliakbari (2001) further argue that “EIL will not de-emphasize or undermine the interest in culture but it is to say that English culture is not the sole referent” (p. 3).

Traditional ESL/EFL approach might see NES culture as the target culture a student needs to be familiar with. Needless to say, those cultures have become the references in designing teaching materials. As a result, the diversity of different cultural backgrounds is overlooked. In this vein, Renandya (2012, p. 75) argues that “despite the growing awareness of the role of English as an international language, teaching materials often reflect the cultures of native English-speaking countries.” It then becomes problematic as it may create the image of Self and the Other (Ha, 2008).

Methodology

This library research is basically non-empirical research as it deals with a number of references and resources and does not aim at obtaining primary data. The references and resources then became a guideline in designing the materials. Thus, this research is mainly descriptive and interpretative. The result of this study can be a basis for other empirical studies.

Findings and discussion

Based on the course outline, Speaking II offered to the second semester students generally deals with descriptions of self, objects, places, processes, procedures, scenes and situations. In approaching the topics, ‘traditional’ ELT will most probably focus on how such descriptions are used in the Inner Circle cultures. In addition, most of the sources and materials used in the class will provide or employ vocabulary that may not be present in other countries or cultures. For example, when describing someone’s appearance, the materials use vocabulary such as freckles, red hair, or pale complexion. Those features do not commonly appear among

Indonesians. As Ha (2008) argues, this kind of difference may bring about the gap between Self as an Indonesian and the Other.

Since there are some inappropriateness and mismatches between the materials and the context where students are situated, EIL pedagogy can serve as an alternative to make the teaching and learning more meaningful for the students. In integrating EIL pedagogy, teachers certainly need to consider what culture to represent (McKay, 2003). Before making the decision, there is certainly a need to consider the objectives of learning English that the students have. Students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program of Santa Dharma University are expected to be teachers. The society and the stakeholders may then expect them to introduce the English culture to their future students. Therefore, acknowledging the Inner Circle cultures is still undeniable.

Yet, the materials should also be designed based on the students' culture too to make the teaching more meaningful and contextual. Providing materials based on their culture will hopefully result in a sense of ownership of English language and may consequently affect the students' confidence in producing English language. In addition, language teaching should focus not only on communicative competence but also on intercultural competence (Richards, 2008). Hence, addressing the differences between the Inner Circle culture and the Indonesian culture is also of the same importance.

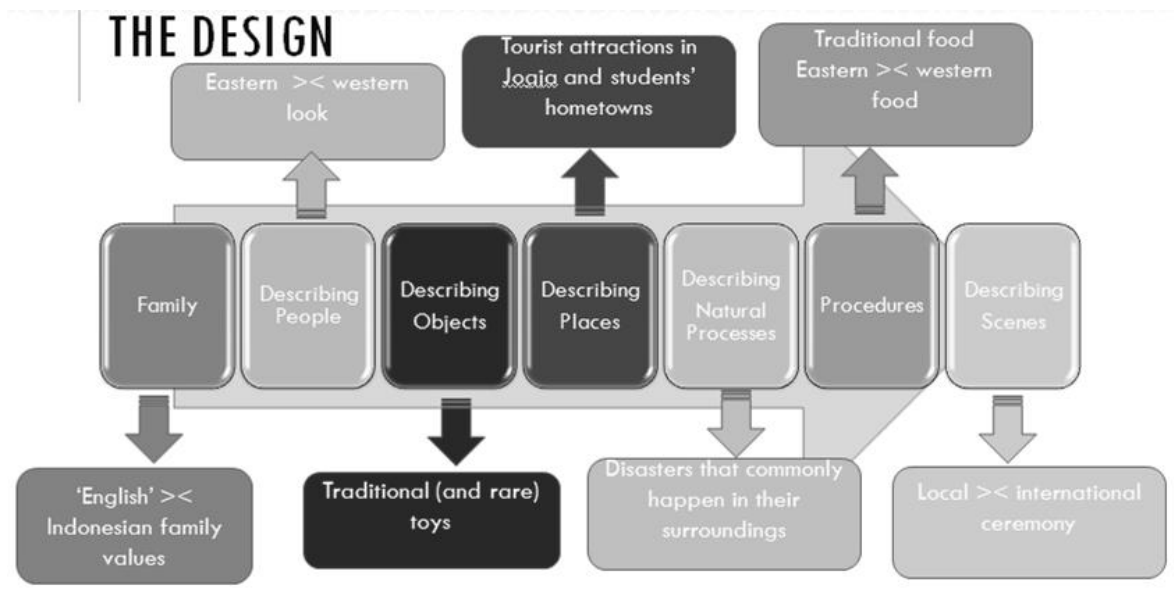


Figure 1. The design of the materials

Conclusion

EIL pedagogy provides an alternative approach to current English language teaching. Based the principles of EIL pedagogy, culturally-relevant materials can be designed. Such materials help the students to be able to relate what they learn with their lives as well as endow them with intercultural competence. Moreover, the sense of ownership of English language may be growing and boost their confidence in producing the language.

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