



Teachers' Challenges toward Chinese-Indonesian Students in ELT: A Multicultural Narrative Analysis

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Abstract: Javanese and Chinese-Indonesian ethnics are the majority and minority ethnic in Indonesia. Lots of difference are always found in their social environment including education. Teachers will face difficulties if they don't understand well how to engage with multicultural students. Therefore, both ethnics require intercultural competence which is the composite of knowledge, attitude, skill and understanding adjusted through intercultural activities. This research aims at exploring the challenges of EFL teachers' experiences with Javanese ethnicity on Chinese-Indonesian students in English Language Teaching. This study uses qualitative method with narrative approach. The data in this study are statements from interview session which is done by two EFL teachers from Javanese as subjects of data source. Then, the data are analysed by thematic. This study delivers three challenges as the result. First challenge comes from rich Chinese-Indonesian family. Secondly, split of mother language becomes a challenge. The last challenge is high work ethic from Chinese-Indonesian people.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Intercultural Competence, ELT

Introduction

Multicultural problem often becomes conversation matter. It not only happens toward community groups generally but also education environment in classroom. Teachers and students find out obstacles during interaction and communication in multicultural classroom. The study conducted in different countries such as United stated of America, Australia, Netherland, and Asia (Brunei, Singapore, Taiwan) explained that ethnicity from each teacher and student background can impress teachers' behaviour toward students, students' perception toward teachers' behaviour so that it effects on students' learning outcomes (Chouari, 2016). Teachers in Indonesia encounter the similar things as well. Indonesia has lots of ethnicities with various cultures. 633 ethnic groups are recorded and the largest indigenous ethnicity is Javanese with 40.05% population (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2015). Moreover, Indonesia not only has indigenous ethnic groups such as Javanese but also non-indigenous. Chinese is largest non-indigenous ethnic group in Indonesia.

Javanese and Chinese Indonesian people often communicate and interact each other in various aspects such as business, education, health, etc. Each of them has different culture even though they are in the same country. In education context, their relation and interaction often happen in formal or non-formal learning activities especially during teaching English process. In this context, teachers from Javanese teach Chinese Indonesian students in non-formal English learning. Teachers also find out the challenges in their teaching process. The causes of their challenges can be from internal or external group so that their teaching process cannot run as usual. Thus, this study aims at further investigating the challenges of Javanese teachers' experience toward Chinese Indonesian students in English language teaching.

A. *Cultural Role in Foreign Language Teaching*

Language and culture are unity which cannot be separated. During almost a century, introducing culture in teaching foreign language has become an important consideration (Soureshjani, 2013). Understanding culture is crucial in English language teaching apart language structure because most language learners encounter difficulty in communication process (Giyatmi, 2019). Furthermore, the way of seeing culture has developed day by day. There are two standpoints on culture in foreign language learning namely modernist and postmodernist. Modernist perspective views culture as a humanistic paradigm namely capital C and small c. Capital C is about general knowledge such as art and literature whereas small c is seen from theory of communicative competence which means culture is native speakers' way in dealing with their beliefs, values, and customs. In Postmodernist, Culture is viewed from two perspectives namely discourse and identity. Culture as discourse is constructed continuously and dynamically during interactions. Besides, culture as identity represents the way of someone in actualizing and positioning themselves (Anggraini et al., 2021).

B. *Javanese and Chinese Culture in society*

Javanese culture is not only known in their art such as puppet but also their values. They become differentiator with other culture. Javanese people really maintain and

implement their cultural values: 1) Every persistent, petty, and wrath can only be defeated by wise, soft, and patient behavior. Javanese people are identical with suavity and patience even though not all of them have this character; 2) Safety becomes their priority to gain opulence and to avoid greediness because it can break social engagement; 3) Javanese culture also teaches to not regret, amazed, shocked, and spoiled easily; 4) Cheating and being smarter are bad behavior so that they have to implement humility in every situation; 5) Javanese people uphold honesty and sincerity; and 6) Tenacity and circumspection are the key of making decision (Rachmawati, 2018).

Among many ethnicities, Chinese-Indonesians become the largest non-indigenous ethnicity in this country. They are Chinese descendant who were born in Indonesia. They are seen as important part of Indonesian economy. Consequently, calculating their existence is important because it can predict their political and economy power (Arifin et al., 2017). Most of Chinese-Indonesian people are entrepreneur. There are some gaps between Chinese-Indonesian people and other ethnicities in Indonesia since ancient time until now. Chinese-Indonesian people tend to socialize with same ethnicity in every activity. For instance, their children prefer to study in Chinese majority school. In work environment, most of them recruit people who have same background. But nowadays, Chinese Indonesians have more interacted with other cultures because of the influence of globalization, nationalism, and local culture. They even resemble the local culture; Some of Chinese Indonesian people grow and live in Javanese. It establishes a sort of local behavior even though their appearances are Chinese. These people identify themselves culturally as Chinese and some of them simply identify as Javanese. Besides, there are people deeply admit as Chinese and even as Indonesian because they do not look like Chinese (Arifin et al., 2017).

C. *Intercultural Competence*

Intercultural competence becomes one of crucial skills in 21st century. In English language teaching context, teachers should not just have competences linguistically but interculturally as well. Intercultural competence for teacher is a vital because of unstoppable technology, rapid globalization, and globalized societies (Li, 2020; Solhaug, 2020). Intercultural competence is the composite of knowledge, attitude, skill and understanding adjusted through intercultural activities (Deardorff, 2023b; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, intercultural competence is the ability of using intercultural knowledge, skill, and attitude to understand and communicate with other people from different cultures and identities (Deardorff, 2023a; Eko, 2019; Gong, 2022; Hammer, 2023; Müller, 2020; Romijn, 2021). Therefore, intercultural speakers can socialize with other people without any obstacles (Idris, 2020).

Moreover, intercultural competence in education generally also has some components which consist of attitude, knowledge and understanding, skill, as well as action: 1) attitude is about assessing pluralism and cultural differences from practice and point of view; 2) knowledge and understanding are defined as knowledge of beliefs, practices, values, and product used for specific cultural orientations. On the other hand, understanding is about

cultural process, social interaction, and having awareness toward the others people stereotype, prejudice, and assumption; 3) skill is the ability in multi-perspectivity, empathy, discovering information, interpreting, adapting, and communicating with others people from different cultural background; and 4) action is the practice of individuals' understanding, knowledge, skills, and attitude. Action becomes the complement of their intercultural competence (Huber & Reynolds, 2014).

Methodology

The research used qualitative design with narrative approach. The data of this research were statements from interview session about the challenges of Javanese teachers' experience toward Chinese Indonesian students in teaching English. Then, data source in this study involved two teachers from RK course. They are from English department; "L" was from English Education. "S" was from English Literature. They had different teaching experiences between 2-3 years. Both teachers were Javanese people. The Chinese Indonesian students also lived in Surabaya.

This research collected the data through semi-structured interview which the first interview was open-ended interview and in-depth interview by face-to-face on the following day. In open-ended interview, participants shared all their teaching experience and it was recorded. Then, the second interview was held by 1) Deciding research questions based on theory of culture and intercultural competence in education and foreign language; 2) Identifying the participants; 3) Using suffice recording during interview; 4) Using interview guide; 5) Determining place to conduct interview; 6) Having consent from participants to participate in study which contains the purpose, time interview, and the use of interview result before conducting the interview; and 7) Utilizing good interview procedure within interview by following the questions, finishing interview on time, being respectful, good listener, and offering additional questions or advises. Then, the technique for analyzing data in this research is thematic analysis which is to identify and analyse the information of interview transcript.

Result and Discussion

This research found three challenges of teachers from Javanese ethnicity on Chinese Indonesian students in ELT after doing interview and analyse the data.

A. *Rich Chinese-Indonesian Family*

They generally work in trading sector by opening business from small to large ranging. Based on history, this can happen because they from Dutch era work in economic sector and the government prohibited them to work in others sectors. However, they are currently involved in other fields such as education, health, and others. Chinese-Indonesian people demand their children to be succeed as what they reach. It indirectly also requests the teachers to give best teaching. High expectation and success refer to history that Chinese-Indonesian people as minority ethnic were initially not confessed their existence in society. Therefore, they could prove if they were successful in prospering their family through their

independence and tenacity (Wijayanti, 2022). Hence, they implant this character on their children to be able to do many things perfectly because they have given best various facilities. Therefore, they tend to usually choose everything in advance, including education. Many schools in Indonesia even own Chinese-Indonesian students as majorities. This challenge pushes teachers to implement best, creative, understandable ways in teaching. Subsequently, teachers must be able to guide students in solving the problems of school lesson.

Chinese-Indonesian people with high economic level desire to get proportion service with the nominal they spend. On the other hand, their children must be maximally guided. Being success in academic level becomes determinant of their children's intelligence. One of participants said that their parent ever blamed toward the teachers as their children's score was bad. It is not similar with Javanese people who tend to absolutely turn over their children to teachers. Various statements above become one of challenges for Javanese teachers because Javanese people tend to not force their descendant to do anything.

B. *Split of Mother Language*

In Chinese-Indonesian ethnicity, dialect from every individual shows their cultural identity. Split of mother language here presents as language difference which Chinese-Indonesian and Javanese use in daily and it becomes a challenge for teachers in English language teaching. In this case, Teachers does not understand about Mandarin language and they require to explain English lesson by using Indonesian. Hence, it can cause misunderstanding and misinterpreting in both sides' conversation. The students must be good at Mandarin language since they were child and they perceive Mandarin language is easier than English. They keep good relation with same ethnicity by using that language. Some of them are not fluent in Indonesian language even though they are appointed as Indonesian citizens. They used to apply Hokkian as one of dialects in their own language (Christian, 2017). Therefore, they do not arrange words in correct sentence both spoken and written yet. They even do not understand result of English Indonesian translation. This challenge makes teachers to be more careful in explaining world meaning of a language. Hence, they often flip words because of their language limitation. In addition, they do not mention a sentence with a correct structure yet. For instance, subject-verb-object. It makes teachers going the extra miles in teaching Chinese-Indonesian students to deal that challenge. Teachers must explain definition of a word as easy as possible. Then, teachers slowly fix their structure to arrange a sentence correctly.

C. *High Work Ethic*

High work ethic refers to Chinese-Indonesian people's habit, character, and behavior. They are known as hard-work and persevering people. Most of them are great traders, which ability will be definitely given to their descendants (Elfani, 2021). This point becomes a challenge for teachers because their culture is different with their students and they need adjust with students from different cultural background. Javanese teachers get used to doing anything based on their cultural habit such as *alon alon asal kelakon*. It means that Javanese people are always careful in doing and deciding everything. They perceive that

safety is priority to reach the purpose and they do not need to rush. For Chinese-Indonesian people, this habit is not only done in business field but also in education. However, high work ethic for them can be elaborated through being discipline, fast, good at various skills, having course seriously.

Chinese-Indonesian students are habitual not to come late in any activity; *they will join in time before meeting open*. It means that, it is relevant to a *credo* that Chinese is always serious with time. However, Chinese-Indonesian parents teach their children to manage time as good as possible. Afterwards, this statement *materials must be sent earlier* elaborates that Chinese-Indonesian parents are also involved in monitoring students' learning outcome by reviewing the lesson of their children at home. Even though they are very busy, they spend some times to control and prepare next lesson well for their children. In addition, high work ethic also means about skills of Chinese-Indonesian students. They have lots of activities in a day. Having various skills is a must for Chinese-Indonesian students especially English, Arithmetic, and Mandarin. Their parents can give many facilities and contributing the children on many courses or competition in order to make their children able to develop common fields in the future.

Conclusion

This research can be concluded that three challenges found by Javanese teachers on Chinese Indonesian students in English Language Teaching. First challenge is from rich Chinese-Indonesian family. They demand teachers to make their children good at English quickly and perfectly without understanding own ability. It is also supported by their good social economy. They presume that fruitfulness of academically education is very important. Therefore, they demand their children to get perfect score as well. Next, the challenge comes from split of mother language. They lack of communicate by English and Indonesian language so that they do not have enough vocabulary. They used to communicate in Hokkian or Mandarin language in daily which is different with teachers' daily language. Hence, teachers must find the best way to deal and solve the challenge in teaching process. Lastly, Chinese Indonesian people have high work ethic which form habits to their children such as curiosity, fast, discipline, high pressure to master various skills. It is different with teachers' culture from Javanese "slow but sure." Hence, it became their challenge and they need to adjust and give explanation to both students and parents when they find inappropriate things.

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