

TEACHING ENGLISH AT PRIMARY SCHOOL: WILL IT THREATEN THE GROWTH OF STUDENTS' NATIONALISM FEELING?

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Abstract: *There is a fear that teaching foreign language to primary school students may distract the growth of nationalism feeling of the students. It is due to the fact that children within 6 to 12 years old are vulnerable. They are easy to be influenced or shaped by other cultures. Within this age, they are still in the process of developing themselves, in the aspect of personality and social life. However, research conducted on this matter does not prove that teaching foreign language to primary school students can obstruct the growth of students' nationality feeling. The aim of this article is to present literature review related to the questions whether teaching English as a foreign language may distract students' growth of nationality feeling. Then it goes further on the explanation on the requirements that policy maker must prepare when deciding to include English lesson as one of the subjects taught at primary school level.*

Key words: *English language teaching; nationalism feeling; primary school students*

1. INTRODUCTION

“In the 2015 Corruption Perception Index, Indonesia improved its ranking to 88, up from 107 the previous year”(Prabowo, How to nurture an anti-corruption attitude, 2017). Corruption has been a serious problem faced by Indonesia since the reformation era. Many politicians as well as government officers have been brought to justice because of corruption cases. In fact, nowadays Indonesia juggles many serious problems, like corruption, natural destruction, and *SARA* issue. We still remember the 212 event in which Muslim protestor flooded National Monument in Jakarta to demand the Jakarta governor to be brought into trial because of blasphemy. These problems are potential to undermine the country from inside. The country's unity is in danger.

Unity is the key power of Indonesia. Therefore, to make the country have more power, Indonesian people have to maintain the unity. One way to maintain the unity is by raising the people's nationalism. Nationalism is defined as “a feeling of pride in one's own country” (Cambridge School Dictionary). Nowadays, the feeling of pride among Indonesian people has declined. Besides the destruction and internal conflicts mentioned above, there are other

evidences that indicate the decline of the pride of the country, like Indonesian people's preference to buy imported product and to spend much money having vacation abroad. Such worry has actually been expressed long time ago by Prabowo (1995, as cited in Kusumawardani & Faturochman, 2004) that some of Indonesian young people underwent the erosion of nationalism (Kusumawardani & Faturochman, 2004)

Considering the above facts, it is very important to raise nationalism of Indonesian people. Feeling of nationalism cannot just grow without any process. It should be internalized through processes. One way to cultivate the feeling of nationalism is through education. School can be appropriate institution to grow the feeling of nationalism on students, as it is stated in the document of the explanation of curriculum 2013 by minister of Education and Culture that one of the benefits of the curriculum revision is to strengthen NKRI (Implementasi Kurikulum 2013). It gives implication that education through its curriculum must be able to shape students, as Indonesian people, to be qualified individual that can help maintain the power of the nation.

Curriculum covers all subjects at school, including English. It raises a question on how to cultivate the feeling of nationalism in English classes since in this class students are taught English, which is not the students' national language, not the students' national identity. It is perhaps why English is not compulsory subjects at primary school. Students in primary level are young learners within the age of 6 to 12. Young people are considered vulnerable. They are easy to be influenced or shaped by other cultures. Within this age they are still in the process of developing themselves, in the aspect of personality and social. They are still attempting to recognize who they are and in what kind of environment they grow. They are still in the process of acquiring personal and social identity. This paper will discuss whether teaching English at primary level may hamper their national identity. Then it goes further on the explanation on the requirements that policy maker must prepare when deciding to include English lesson as one of the subjects taught at primary school.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a narrow scope, nationalism is described as a feeling of loving to one's own nation, which becomes a symbol of heroic patriotism to do anything for the nation, regardless it is good or bad (Sarman, 1995, as cited in Kusumawardani & Faturochman, 2004). This narrow definition is no longer suitable for the condition of Indonesia nowadays since the problems faced are more complex than only defending the nation from external threat. Hara (2000, as cited in Kusumawardani & Faturochman, 2004) suggested that nationalism covers

wider contexts; they are equality in membership and citizenship from all ethnic groups and culture in a nation. Related to the ethnic groups existing in one nation, Ernest Renan (as cited in Yuhasnil, 2015) proposed definition of nationalism as “the dominant element of the social and political life of a group of people that have encouraged the formation of a nation in order to unite the need of being one (le desired' entre ensamble)”. Nationalism is the important element in building a nation. It is the basic feeling that people of a nation must possess in order to build the unity.

Regarding to the feeling of nationalism possessed by Indonesian people, Bung Karno expressed his own definition (as cited by Yushanil, 2015)

"Our nationalism , ... is not a nationalism arising from merely arrogance of a nation, it is a wide nationalism ;a nationalism arising from the knowledge of the history; it is not a "jingo nationalism", or chauvinism, and not a copy or imitation of the West nationalism. Our nationalism is a nationalism, who received a taste of life as the message ... our nationalism is the nationalism that makes us become "the instruments of the Lord" and make us alive in spirit ... "

There are some characteristics of the nationalism behavior in Modern people. They are (1) loving the country and nation by placing the nation's interest in the first place, (2) actively participating in the development of the nation, (3) enforcing the law and upholding social justice, (4) utilizing science and technology, avoiding being apathetic, being open minded to changes, and future oriented, (5) being achievement oriented, independent, and responsible by appreciating own-self and others, (6) being ready in competition with other nations and involving in international cooperation(Kusumawardani & Faturachman, 2004).

Bringing nationalism to educational practice means that teaching and learning process should be able to grow the characteristics of nationalism behavior in the students. Teachers should help students be aware of their national identity and grow pride on their nation and people.

2.1 Children Development

Hurlock divides children development into five periods, i.e. pre-born period, neonates period, infant period, childhood period, puberty period. Primary school Students belongs to childhood period. During the childhood period children begins to adapt themselves socially and recognize themselves as part of the member of society. In this period children also begin to understand their identity - sex, role in he family and society-, and the relationship with other people (Hurlock, 1993).

Jean Piaget, focusing on children cognitive development, divides children development into a series of four critical stages, each of which is marked by shifts in how children

understand the world. The stages are sensorimotor stage, from birth to age 2, preoperational stage, from age 2 to about 7, the concrete operational stage, from age 7 to 11, and the operational stage, beginning in adolescence and spanning into adulthood (Oakley, 2004). Considering Piaget's cognitive stages, primary school students are in the stage of the concrete operational stage. In this stage children's ability to think more logically begins. However, their thinking can be very persistent. They struggle between abstract and hypothetical concept. In addition, children at this stage start to understand that they are different from others, in terms of thought, feeling, and opinion.

Related to the children's development of national identity, there are factors influencing the development. Those factors are child's age, nation, geographical location within the nation, ethnicity, and language use. There are two principle theories that underlie the development of national identity during childhood and adolescence. The first theory is Piaget's cognitive developmental theory. Even though he gives little attention on the explanation of children's development of national identity, Piaget's description on this domain suggest that there are discontinuities in children understanding at the age 7 to 8 and 10 to 11. The discontinuities are (Ding & Littleton, 2005)

The first discontinuity involves the children achieving (concrete-operational) understanding of the spatial inclusion relationship between cities and nations; while the latter involves the child achieving (formal-operational) understanding of the more abstract concept of national group memberships, and of the (decentred) nation that foreigners can be emotionally attached to their own nation in the same way that the child is attached to his or her nation"

Thus, Piaget's description implies that children's understanding of the nation depends on the children's age.

The second theory that underlies the development of national identity in children is the theory of social identity. According to Nesdalein Ding & Littleton (2005), there are four phases in the development of national and ethnic identities. The first phase is undifferentiated phase occurring prior to 2 – 3 years old children. In this phase racial and national cues are not important yet. The second phase, which starts at 3 years old children, the awareness of ethnic and nation begin emerging. At this phase children gradually acquire the ability to identify and distinguish member of different groups. This process can continue up to 10 to 11 years old of age. The next phase beginning at the age of 4 years is marked by a direct of sel-identification, "a focus on and bias toward ingroup emerge. Outgroups are not disliked, and negative attributions to outgroups are not yet made". The last phase starting around 7 years of age, children's attention shifts from ingroup to outgroup. During this period "prejudice and

negativity toward outgroup can emerge”. However, Nesdale points out that not all children come to final phase depending on three factors. Those factors are the level of identification with the ingroup, the extent to which the other members of ingroup can show negative attitude toward outgroup, and the extent to which the ingroup believes that its status or well-being is threatened in some way.

Ding and Littleton (2005) emphasize that the factors influencing the development of national identity are not only on the cognitive development and social development identity, but also on the media, school and family influences. Those factors shape the national identity of children during their personal and social development.

2.2 Children as Language Learners

Piaget was one of the scholar who concerned on how young children function in the world around them and how this influence their mental development. Children continuously observe their surrounding and interact with the world around them. Children actively construct the knowledge through their experience. Vygotsky gives different point of view o children learning. He proposed that children learn through social interaction. Children learn to do and to think are both assisted by adult. Hence, it can be said that Piaget views children as active learners alone in the world of objects; while from Vygotsky views children as active learner in a world full of other people (Cameron, 2001).

Related to language learning, children are different from adult. There are characteristics that make young learners different from adult learners. The differences are on the ability to grasp meaning, the creative use of limited language resources, the capacity for indirect learning, the instinct for play and fun, the role of imagination, and the instinct for interaction and talk (Halliwell, 1992). These differences give implication on the activities and tasks designed for young learners. To design teaching and learning language in classroom should take into consideration those characteristics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Since the implementation of curriculum 2004, one of the objectives of English teaching and learning at school as stated in the curriculum is that students will have the communicative competence in using English as foreign language(Kurikulum 2004: Standar Kompetensi Bahasa Inggris SMA dan MA, 2003). Communicative competence covers linguistics competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence, actional competence, and strategic competence (Celce-Murcia, 1995). Having the communicative competence means that students can perform or use English language like the native speakers do. This also means

that students can internalize the native speakers' knowledge of socio-culture, of ideology, and of value/belief. In other words, successful English learner is characterized by their embracing idea of themselves as speakers of the foreign language: "the ideal L2 self" (Dornyeiin Byram, 2013).

When English is taught in primary school students, the objective of the teaching and learning will remain similar, that is achieving communicative competence, eventhough the level will be lower than those in secondary schools. It implies that teaching english, tecaher will also teach the socioculture, value/belief, as well as the ideology of English native speakers. Some people fear that acquiring knowledge of other people's socioculture and belief/value may threaten their acquisition of a firm identity(Byram, 2013). It is because children are still in the process of learning about their countries to grow positive feeling towards their nation. When primary students are exposed too much about other countries, their positive feeling may grow more toward those countries than toward their own countries. Hence, foreign language learning – English - is perceived as a threat to children'a 'national identity'. As it is claimed by Ding and Littleton (2005) that language use influences the development of children's national identity.

However, this assumption is lack of evidence (Byram, 2013). Studies on children's preference on natios (between the age 7 to 12) suggest that there is no direct relation between the amount of knowledge that children obtain about countries and their feeling about those countries. Despite the fact that before the age of 7 to 8 children's preference for other countries is likely to be "haphazard and idiosyncratic", at the age 7 – 8 onward their preferenceand pride for their own countries grows more over other countries, and this preference increases still further through middle childhood. Nevertheless, the level of pride is variably across countries and with respect to gender (Barrett & Buchanan-Barrow, 2005). In addition to the argument, Barret(2007, as cited in Byram, 2013) suggested that "there seems to be no necessary relationship between knowledge about other countries and feelings about them; more knowledge does not necessarily lead to more positive feelings nor the opposite, despite the expectations of many language teachers and language education policy makers"

Studies on children's acquisition of 'national identity' and its factors come to conclusion that there are many factors that influence children's acquisition of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about the nation and national groups. Among the many factors, parents and teachers play significant role (Baret 2007, as cited Byram, 2013). This conclusion then suggests that foreign teacher in primary school should be aware not only that there is possibility the emerging knowledge of and feelings about the other countries.

The above suggestion implies that teaching English to primary school students will neither hamper students' acquisition of their national identity nor reduce their pride on the nation. However, since teacher plays important role in forming students' positive feeling on their nation, the inclusion of English as subject taught at primary schools needs comprehensive preparation. The preparation should cover all the elements related to teaching and learning program. Those components are teachers and curriculum (Byram, 2013).

3.1 English Language Teachers in Primary School

Due to the fact that teacher plays important role in influencing how students at primary schools perceive their nation, primary school teacher who teach English must be those who have the competence on four elements (Doyei, 1999 as cited in Byram, 2013). The first element is related to the knowledge of the language taught, that is English. This knowledge refers to the communicative competence encompassing linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence, actional competence, and strategic competence. This competence is not necessarily in very advanced level since the students taught will not advance to complex level.

The next element is related to the knowledge of education focusing on "the place of primary education in education systems as a whole, and the principles of integration of language and intercultural education". English teachers at primary school have to recognize where the position of the primary education is as part of the whole education system, and how to integrate foreign language and intercultural education. This knowledge will allow teachers to design the English language teaching in the classroom appropriately.

The other element is the knowledge of foreign language pedagogy. It deals with the objectives, methods, and materials. Successful English language teaching is determined by the feasible objective set to be achieved by students, the suitable method based on the students and learning characteristics, and the selected materials relevant to the objective and students' level. English teachers at primary school must have this knowledge before conducting English language teaching in the classroom.

The last element that teacher should have is psychological knowledge. It includes developmental and social psychology, theory of learning and psycholinguistics. Having this knowledge, teacher will be able to determine what treatment is appropriate for his/her students depending on their age. In addition, knowledge of theory of learning and psycholinguistics help teacher to give solution on the problems encountered in the classroom and by the students in relation to their English learning.

Byram (2013) emphasizes that those elements can be obtained from training courses in higher education. Yet, attending the training courses in higher education is not enough. Such knowledge should be complemented by experience. In other word, English teachers at primary school should be those who are well-trained and have adequate experience in order that she/he can handle the teaching and learning process in the classroom and help students gain the objective of the learning. In addition, well-trained and experienced teacher will be able to handle the special characteristics of primary school students as well as to play role in shaping students' personality development and their attitude.

3.2 Curriculum of English Language Teaching in Primary School

One of the important elements in English Language Teaching is curriculum, or syllabus. This term refers to the content of language teaching and learning. It means what to teach by the teacher and what to learn by the students. Nonetheless, in broader scope the terms of curriculum and of syllabus refer to different elements which have hierarchical relationship. Curriculum encompasses all aspects of language policy, language planning, teaching method, and evaluation measurements. Syllabus is related to the content of language teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006)

This paper will discuss only the appropriate teaching method for English Language Teaching at primary school, as part of the curriculum, and the syllabus, or the content of the language teaching and learning.

Post-method Pedagogy for English Language Teaching at Primary School

There have been many methods and approach applied in the English language teaching curriculum in Indonesia, like Grammar Translation Method, Audiolingual, Communicative approach, and Genre Based Approach. However, the result of English Teaching Learning is still far from satisfactory. There are students who have graduated from senior high school still having low English language competence (Lie, 2007). This may be caused by some factors. Lie (2007) identified four problems that become the constraint of the success of ELT in Indonesia. Those factors are (1) the large number of students in one classroom and the high diversity of students – motivation, intellectual capability, cultural backgrounds, and access to education resource; (2) the budget shortage; (3) the nature of EFL learning environment; and (4) politics and policy curriculum. The first three constraints make it difficult to design one ELT curriculum that fits to all students in all regions (Lie, 2007). It is reasonable since Indonesia is a country home to 1.300 tribes who practice six different religions and speaks 740 different languages (Witular, 2016)

Considering the above facts and the special characteristics of students at primary levels, the policy maker should reconsider the adoption of the existing method, and turn to apply post-method pedagogy. Post-method pedagogy emerged along with the post method condition in which teachers tried to develop their own ‘method’ which worked in their classroom, based on their intuitive ability and knowledge for the existing method did meet the challenges in language classrooms (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Post-method pedagogy is considered relevant to the English Language Teaching in primary schools based on its three dimension parameters, i.e. particularity, practicality, and possibility.

Post-method pedagogy’s parameter of particularity refers to the condition that language pedagogy must be specified for particular teachers teaching particular learners to achieve particular goal in a particular sociocultural context (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). This parameter makes post-method pedagogy fit to ELT in Indonesia due to the fact that it allows English teachers to design or determine method or technique based on the students’ characteristics, cultural background, and sociocultural context in which the ELT take place and on their own teaching experiences and beliefs/values. The parameter of practicality in post method pedagogy gives classroom teachers more opportunities to apply the professional theory, proposed by experts, and to theorize their teaching practice in classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Applying post-method pedagogy in ELT at primary school will help teachers do professional development as well as personal development. Teachers will be encouraged to find solution for the problems that they encounter in the classroom and to continuously develop their teaching skill to help students gain the learning objectives. The third parameter, possibility, is about the learners’ experiences which are shaped outside the classroom, learners’ ideology of the language and learners’ identity (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In teaching and learning process, learners’ experiences are not only obtained from their learning experiences in the classroom, but they are also shaped by the economic, socio-cultural, and political condition of the place in which they grow (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Such experiences may affect the teaching and learning process in the classroom, and further the result of the processes. The different characteristics of students at primary level from adult and from one place with specific culture and socio-economy to another also give significant implication to ELT at primary school. The implication may be on the provision of the learning resource, the awareness of the advantages of mastering English, as well as the attitude toward the language learned, i.e. English. The parameter of possibility in post-method pedagogy makes teachers be always aware of the learners’ socio-cultural background as well as their

identity and ideology. Thus, they can create any activities that fit the learners to achieve the learning objective.

After all, post-method pedagogy is suitable to be applied in English language teaching and learning at primary school because it allows teacher to particularize their teaching which may be different from other teachers who teach to different students in different areas which may have different characteristics, background, and ideology. This method can also help teachers grow students' awareness on their national identity, which is different from others who come from different country inasmuch as teachers is provided more opportunities to design particular method for his/her own students.

Syllabus for English Language Teaching at Primary School

Syllabus for English language teaching mostly covers two kinds of goals, i.e. content goal and attitude goal. Good syllabus for English language teaching at primary school gives more emphasis on attitude goal, without losing the concern on content goal. The attitude goal refers to how to encourage students' positive attitudes toward the learning; they are confidence, willingness 'to have a go', and risk taking (Halliwell, 1992).

In relation to growing students' nationalism, syllabus can also give attention to the increasing students' positive feeling on the nation and students' awareness to maintain unity. The attitude goals can be achieved through the tasks and activities that students do in the classroom. The tasks and activities can be designed in gradual level, from teacher's fully assisting to students' fully independent, from group work to individual work. Activities which are based on cooperative learning can be used to promote students confidence and to cultivate students' ability to work together with others and to do negotiation. The ability to work together in harmony and to negotiate become the foundation to grow the ability to maintain unity.

Even though the syllabus should give higher emphasis on attitude goal, English language teaching at primary school should not lose the attention to content goal since it is actually the objective of the teaching and learning English. However, there should be careful analysis in the material design before using it in the classroom. Related to the analysis on the material development, Byram (2013) state:

“wherever a topic can be planned to include a foreign perspective – one that can be explored through the foreign language – there is potential for arousing children's curiosity and allowing them to see a different perspective (*savoir être*). Older children particularly may be encouraged and provided with the resources for discovering parallel phenomena in another country (*savoir apprendre*) and even discover how other people perceive the children's own society and its practices and products. It is however crucial to ensure that children do not over-generalize from their discoveries,

assuming that ‘All French/Japanese ... people do this, believe that ...’. They must always have opportunities to discover a range of perspectives and experiences in other countries and one method of doing this is through direct contacts by visits, exchanges of materials, and electronic media

The analysis of materials for English Language teaching and learning at primary school must take into consideration which is given higher and lower priority between the aspects of *savoir être* and *savoir apprendre*, so that students do not have wrong perception on their culture and other culture. The other criterion of the material analysis is on the consideration of developmental psychology (Byram, 2013). Material selected for English language teaching at primary school should be based on the development of psychology of the students.

4. CONCLUSION

There is fear that teaching English as foreign language at primary school will threaten students’ feeling of nationalism. It is because students at primary levels are still in the process of gaining the awareness of their country. However, this fear is not proven. Studies suggest that the feeling of liking the nation on the students at the age of 7 or 8 onward will grow stronger. Nonetheless, teaching English at primary school should be well-prepared in terms of the teachers and the curriculum, therefore it will not destruct students’ positive feeling on their nation, or their nationalism feeling, and will grow positive attitude toward the learning.

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