Contradiction between Policy and Teacher Belief about Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching in Indonesian Universities

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Abstract

Teacher belief about Intercultural Approach to English Foreign Language Teaching (EFLT) is central for its practical teaching and learning activities. Otherwise, intercultural communicative competence (IC) will not culminate in improved knowledge, skills, and attitudinal development. A linear consistency between what a policy constitutes and how teachers perceive, and act is fundamental for the pedagogy. However, such a harmony has not been exhaustively investigated on multiple-layered practices and actors. It is found that there exists contradiction on institutional and individual levels in understanding the the pedagogy. It is suggested that these teachers must be equipped with professional developmental activities involving reflexivity on both their own wisdom of practice and critical awareness to be integrated into intercultural teaching and learning activities.

I. Introduction

The challenge of foreign language teachers has been recognised increasingly critical towards Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching (or what so-called interchangeably with Intercultural EFL pedagogy) due to the interconnectedness of the world. The nature of EFLT has been changing; this includes the nature of learner's identity, the context of EFLT itself, the variety of Englishes, and so forth (Byram & Feng, 2004; Kramsch, 1998; Liddicoat, 2008; Moloney, 2013). An English Foreign Language (EFL) teacher is stated not only to integrate cultural knowledge into language learning but also to reflect on an intercultural encounter with other's perspectives, which enable students to relate the phenomenon to specific cultures and to interpret it as open-minded as possible based on the references of those cultures (Baker, 2011; Byram, 1997).

Education is a very important human need because education has a duty to prepare Human Resources (HR) for the development of the nation and state (Pradana et al, 2020). According to Astuti et al (2019) Education is an obligation of every human being that must be pursued to hold responsibilities and try to produce progress in knowledge and experience for the lives of every individual. Education is one of the efforts to improve the ability of human intelligence, thus he is able to improve the quality of his life (Saleh and Mujahiddin, 2020).

It is undeniable that teacher belief has become a language-culture nexus in response to this newly emerging paradigm of teaching. An EFL teacher must be an intercultural mediator who manages the educational process and shapes learners to be interculturally-competent speaker. Teacher's cognition, perception, personal theories, cognition, and behaviour are a set of self-conceptual belief highlighted in this study – teacher belief

(Sercu, 2005). This self-concept is deemed crucial given that what a teacher perceives, knows, and believes are significantly contributing to his/her classroom practices.

A synthesizing study between teacher belief and interculturality has attracted a special concern that involves multiple disciplines such as intercultural communication and experience, social psychology, cultural anthropology, human learning and development among others (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001; Fleming, 2009; Holliday, 2013; Jimenez Raya & Sercu, 2007; Meyer, 1991; Moloney, 2013; Rathje, 2007; Sercu & Bandura, 2005). Unfortunately, the studies have not involved in a macro aspect - language policy and planning, whereby the interpretation of policy can be varied across layers in both institutional and individual teachers (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Therefore, the present critical study is urgent for a more-clearly model of intercultural EFL pedagogy that is built from a full understanding and consistency between its policy and teachers as key actors.

With all above-mentioned, this study strived to investigate the interaction between an intercultural approach policy in the English language education and teacher belief in an intercultural teaching unit (cross cultural communication, intercultural communication, and many other names) in Indonesian universities. It is extracted from the previous studies that teachers enacted their roles in struggles and their beliefs were known to be contradictive to teaching policies, which raise tensions embedded within their positioning and professional lives (Castro, Sercu, & Mendez Garcia, 2004; Mahon, 2006; Manara, 2014; Moloney & Xu, 2015). The present study values both teacher perception towards the policy and the nature of intercultural teaching and learning activities. The paper is aimed to answer: how do teacher belief and the policy interact that impacts on the teachers' interpretation towards an intercultural unit of language teaching?

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Teacher Belief and Intercultural EFL Pedagogy

Drawing upon Vygotskyan theory (Vygotsky, 1978), teacher belief, act, and behaviour must be regarded as a manifestation of lifespan development (Marginson & Dang, 2017), and not understood as a spontaneous product of behaviour. A holistic-analytical orientation is then suggested to be a lens to look at the historicity of teacher learning, teaching, and professional development (Cross, 2010). This lens reflects on a teacher's social situation, history and previous life experiences (Pollard, 2002).

Such social and conceptual activities are inextricably linked to interculturality. It is due to fact that culture is functioned as a set of mediational tools of learning and resources for teacher belief construction (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Individuals rely on culture to initiate an action, and to develop such an action depending on the changed circumstance (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Teacher belief is constructed through embodied actions between individuals in particular contexts (Bhabha, 1994).

2.2 Defining the Construct of Teacher Belief

Teacher belief is a complex construct to understand because it has interplayed with many other components. Beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge are claimed to be three components that underlie teacher perception of the curriculum and its practices (Woods, 1996). The construct can be reflected through teacher instructional behaviours (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 1996). Its alteration is claimed to be possible through sustained formal training and education (Guskey, 2002).

Teacher belief has also been recognised as an emerging cognition; it is developed through learning experiences, teacher education, and professional practices (Borg, 2003).

This sheds light on the ultimate role of teacher's wisdom of practices in the promotion of positive changes of teacher belief (Chappell, 2017; Shulman & Wilson, 2004). In this study, the wisdom of practices is an inseparable part of teacher belief in which its presence strongly affects the quality of teaching and learning activities.

2.3 Wisdom of Practices of Intercultural Language Education

It is strongly believed that the wisdom of practices, as philosophical stances towards the natures of language, language learning, and teaching practice, are interrelated with the goal of an EFL classroom. For intercultural pedagogical practice, a teacher's understandings about what constitutes a language, language learning, and how such knowledge, skills, and attitudes being taught are interdependent (Liddicoat, 2008) because they become conceptual knowledge-bases for a teacher to mediate linguistic and cultural assumptions both teachers and learners bring to a classroom teaching. If these linguistic and cultural assumptions are not fully understood and well-managed, the unit may lead astray to tensions and disputes. These tensions can lead to: the disparity between teachers' perceptions towards the objectives of EFL and intercultural pedagogical practices (Castro et al., 2004); the tensions of EFL teachers between their roles and their socio-cultural realities in their teaching contexts (Manara, 2014).

2.4 Intercultural Educational Policy and (Re) Contextualisation

Intercultural EFL pedagogy has been principally embodied within the language policy and expert's discussion in Asia Pacific and other parts of the world (Chang, 2009; Hamid, 2010; Hamid, Nguyen, & Baldauf, 2013; Kubota, 2017). In Indonesia, the recent English language curriculum 2013 (Revised in 2016) has stated that the students are expected to internalise intercultural values such as cooperation, tolerance, and peace. They are also expected to be 'polite, responsive, and pro-active as part of solution of problem solving and to position themselves as a reflection of the nation in the global community' (*Kurikulum 2013 Dokumen Konseptual Pengembangan Silabus Revisi 2016 [Trans. Curriculum 2013 Conceptual Syllabus Development Document Revision 2016]*, 2016). In addition, multilingual languages education has been promoted to all educational levels; it can be indicated that the recognition of Indonesian English learners with local languages varieties has been admitted and the English Language can also be taught by local cultures or other cultures that students are familiar with (Hamied, 2012).

However, the above-mentioned goals can be understood by manifold interpretations by both institutions and individual teachers, taking into account of the policy is multivalent, minimum attention, and lacking supplementary professional support in teacher education. In essence, a goal of policy must correspond to an individual teacher's orientation, which demands much effort and times of lifelong learning and professional development in reconstruction of own teacher belief.

This phenomenon is tied to 're-contextualisation' as a process 'whereby texts move between spatially and temporally different contexts, and are subject to transformations whose nature depends upon relationships and differences between such contexts' (Wodak & Fairclough, 2010, p. 22). Policy text here constitutes discourse where it is discursively created, developed, and practiced as the socio-cultural and historical product of a particular context and interest (Gee, 1994). For institutions, a policy text is hardly inevitable with multiple interpretations across times, layers, and contexts. For an individual teacher, the enacted interpretation of the intercultural policy must stem from not only teacher belief about language, language learning, and culture but also their own attitudinal stance towards the unit and other socio-cultural realities in a teaching context (Sercu, 2006). These multiple-layers and actors are regarded as an integrated unity in this study.

III. Research Methods

The study is qualitative in nature with multiple case study as its research approach (Creswell, 2013). With a synthesis of constructivist and post-modernist perspectives, each case study spent a two-week living, interaction with the teachers, students, faculty members and inquiry about teaching syllabi/materials. These three universities/sites were purposively-selected because of two rationales: 1) They are renowned to have an established English Education School with an intercultural unit and 2) They represent central, east and west of Indonesian archipelagos.

3.1 Data Collection

Teacher in-depth interview was conducted on each site. There were 2 (two) teachers participating into teacher interviews on each site with total 6 (six) teachers. These teachers were interviewed twice, similar as the observation of the unit. So, these resulted in 12 (twelve) sessions of interview. Each interviewing session took approximately 1 (one) hour in Bahasa Indonesia or in English or the combination of them. The interview was recorded in the form of data of teachers' voices. For analysis purposes, these data were then transcribed and translated literally into English.

3.2 Data Analysis

Next, these data were then analysed by analytic induction (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013) on the support of N-VIVO Software. The data were inputted and coded in general groupings (nodes). As a result, the data were condensed into a set of relevant constructs that were found in each participant profile. The datasets were then compared/contrasted across arising constructs. Then, they were verified and confirmed iteratively in the way how they were generated, corroborated, and connected with other data. Data were then displayed and finally concluded with the emerging themes.

These data also underwent a sort of credibility, and confirmability in their meanings. The data were read and analysed by another qualitative researcher with the same inductive analysis. As a result, the data were found to display typical data images with what the present study have concluded previously.

IV. Results and Discussion

The present study has finally generated some salient themes for presentation. The three findings were resulted from teacher narratives. Due to space limitation, only a few extracts were displayed in the section. The teachers were indicated by pseudonyms and placed before their respective narratives.

4.1 Teachers' Understandings about Language and Language Learning, and Intercultural EFL Pedagogy

It can be surmised that most teachers have conflicting understandings about language and language learning, and Intercultural EFL pedagogy. Such disagreements were dominant in the extracts indicating there is a lack consistency between the natures of language and language learning, underpinning the pedagogy. The teachers' narratives from Dara, Kay, and Kara were evident in echoing such inconsistency.
Dara said:
When moving to another place, we will also follow the host culture. It's true and I agree that culture is our identity. I am also proud of culture which requires me to be a Javanese

woman. <u>But for me culture is fluid, it is so flexible</u>. Not only one can take his or her identity with him or her, but also he or she can adapt to the new culture.
I think learning the language based on my understanding is indeed <u>through culture</u>. It makes me more open-minded or what do we call it <u>comparing with the other culture, which is (the result) more practical than the Indonesian culture</u>.

From the above extracts, it is found that the ecological approach of language learning is salient in which language is viewed as representational and dialogical product of interaction (Van Lier, 2000). This stance prioritises the important role of interaction in target language community that acknowledges contribution of learner's social activity into his/her language information processing. With regard to culture and interculturality, the teacher has a sense of fluidity, but such a great view is not supported by the values of respect leading to misjudge a cultural identity. The teacher seems to have skipped the own cultural value in cultural reflection of meaning-making so that she started building prejudice towards her initial cultural identity.

Kay said:
Ways of people doing many things or looking at things based on <u>their knowledge and belief</u> that's what I believe what culture is and <u>that dictates or determines the way they act and determines their behaviour</u>.
Think when you are an intercultural competent person, I think you are able or <u>you have good command (expertise) when you interact with people from other cultures and you understand them</u>. And then, you can read whether this people understand your culture or not. If they don't understand your culture, probably you are the one <u>who have to compromise, speak and adopt their cultures</u>.

The above teacher has lied his understanding about language at a networking of ideational, personal and textual components of communication (Halliday, 1978). Learning a language, therefore, can be best done by improving human capability at analysing text and context (topic, audience, and medium), which determines the meaning and the goal of communication. In connection with that, culture and intercultural are thus perceived as a set of norms that can be adopted and employed as a personal identity. It can be enacted and used for ensuring the fulfilment of communication's goal.

Kara said:
Way of life and way of looking at life itself. So, the way people think about how they should behave, <u>how they should do many things in their lives</u>. So, more on <u>the behavioural things.</u> What we need to learn actually is <u>not learning the culture but learning how to experience the culture.</u> Or, more precisely learning how we should behave in that kind of situation that is an intercultural situation.

The above teacher believed that language is a mental construct where a human is endowed by the innate ability in brain as hardware to absorb language. This interpretation of language stems from Chomsky's theory of universal grammar (Chomsky, 1987) for child language development or Krashen's theory of input processing output (Krashen, 1982) for second language development. The stance stresses the role of exposure of target language with monitoring and comprehensible language production. The conceptualisation of culture is still restrictive with behaviours even though this teacher successfully articulates an ideal format of intercultural approach with 'experiencing the culture'.

4.2 Teachers' Sources of Knowledge for an Intercultural Teaching Unit: Learning and Teaching Experiences

It is evident that the teachers principally have not gained a full support of teacher education/training about the pedagogy. As an implication, they rely on other sources of knowledge in managing the intercultural teaching unit as illustrated in the following extracts. The dominance of learning and teaching experiences were indicated in the voices of Maya, Kay, and Jay.

Maya said:

Prior knowledge is extremely important. So, when I see something that I don't really understand about…. Well, from there, after I enriched myself with the knowledge, I also tried to predict how my students would react; (and) how I should react if my students said something about.

Kay stated:

There were many books that I read as long as I had time in the past. I always chose whatever I liked and I was interested in English or American culture. And then (these knowledge were blended) with meeting with the people and interacting with the people from that culture.

Jay claimed:

The personal experiences are more enriching them. We provided an empirical example such as I have been to this country, and I encountered a difficulty, and how I solved that difficulty.

From the above-mentioned narratives, experiential knowledge in the form of learning and studying experiences (including interpersonal relationship with persons from the cultures) seems to have been solid in shaping the teachers' interpretation towards the intercultural unit. In turn, this interpretation affects both the process and the content of the unit. It is undeniable that these experiences may contain personal presumption and bias, which potentially degrade the format of teaching and learning activities.

4.3 Cultural Reflection in Classroom Teaching Indicating the Teacher Belief about Culture

It is evident that these teachers have varied understandings about culture especially in the way how they reflect on cultures in classroom teaching. It was found that cultural descriptions have been attributed to symbols, artefacts, and rituals, which reduced the real representation and essence of culture. This can be illustrated in the extracts of Dara, Maya, and Kay.

Dara stated:

Each culture has different styles and procedures wedding parties. We have specific customs on each sub-cultural group. Javanese with its custom and ceremony, Padangnese with its uniqueness and special symbols, and others too. In a national event, Different cultures exposed varied identities in the event.

Maya claimed:

There are many types of American TV Channels such as soap operas, comedies, and news. Sometimes, we found this information in a textbook we sue. I really need to relate them to local features while explaining that there were some differences between own culture's and target language culture's programmes. This strategy eased students to understand the text because the students' familiarity was improving. Unfortunately, due to this strategy, the class has never discussed further what underlie the differences across cultures.

Look at to the two columns! I give the word 'culture'. Please give me some words in your minds related to culture! Some students said, 'tradition', 'custom', and 'norms'. I wrote them on the left and right ones. Finally, I stated that culture is always socialised within a community in a geographical region.

It is palpable that the above-stated field narratives these teachers were restrictive of defining cultures with symbols, artefacts, and rituals. The last findings, that were gleaned from classroom observations, confirm that the lacking wisdom of practices directly implicates practices in which the teachers' understandings about culture are central and need to be revised for the improved pedagogy.

It is evident that these teachers face struggles in enacting the role of intercultural expert in their own teaching context. Apart from their teacher beliefs, the contextual challenges appear to have brought more complexity upon them mediating the gap between the policy and the real teaching practices.

The present study, on one side, recognises that intercultural communicative competence is inextricably linked to a deep-seated perception that ends up with a full understanding towards interculturality. On the other side, as a solid body of knowledge, teacher belief is also admitted as a complex phenomenon that has been crystallised through one's life-span development along with accompanying sociocultural realities (Borg, 2003; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Young & Sachdev, 2011). This study is grounded from an optimistic view that teacher belief can be re-shaped by reflective practices (Sercu & St-John, 2007), even though the previous studies have never concluded how to start and which element should have been prioritised.

In general, the present study found that the contradiction between the policy and the teacher beliefs were caused by no systematic incorporation of intercultural approach into teacher education, that the teachers' wisdom of practices (the natures of language, language learning and culture), which are extracted from the teacher beliefs, were conflicting with the actual embodiment of interculturality. This means that the interaction between the teachers' beliefs and the policy creates disagreement that leads to differing interpretations across actors, practices at universities, and eventually inflicts tensions upon individual teachers. It is evident that the policy spotlighted intercultural values to be an ultimate goal of intercultural pedagogy, whereas the teachers' perceptual understandings adopted partial understandings.

Firstly, attitudinal development has to be prioritised as the foundation of intercultural communicative competence. The above-mentioned policy also puts emphasis on positive attitudinal enhancement through the adoption of intercultural values. Attitudinal development must be set priority into teacher profile development accordingly. It focuses on the way how open-mindedness and tolerance can be nurtured so that an understanding towards a sociocultural reality is not determined by a solely single lens of perspective but multiple perspectives – *savoir etre* (Byram, 1997). As one of the intercultural dimensions, attitudinal development stems from perceptions of students towards others and other people's perception of them (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). This perceptual understanding is grounded from their own attitudinal positioning towards all aspects of interculturality, but not limited to, teachers' understanding about others and wisdom of practices.

This area is undeniably a sensitive domain because intercultural pedagogy is always inextricable with dialogues with social structures. A conflicting teacher belief has been understudied hitherto, but its role is essential for a success of educational practices (Haney, Lumpe, Czerniak, & Egan, 2002). Understanding towards the pedagogy is also said to be

painful as it destructs the former beliefs and re-constructs the new ones whereby discomfort and resistance are emerging (Hooks, 1996). In other words, a teacher is not only supposed to change their old teaching practices, but also to shift their paradigms about the world (worldview) in order to realise its quality promotes values and behavioural changes.

With these in teacher mind, intercultural values will stimulate restructuring on teacher belief especially in individual's wisdom of practices so that the intercultural unit can be maximally driven. The intercultural approach to English language teaching can employ existing cultural resources to learning a new language and culture simultaneously (Liddicoat, 2008). It can be used to articulate both own and others' cultural framework and resolve conflicts across cultures (Byram & Zarate, 1997). Finally, it can be employed to find a personal style and identity (Byram, 2008). In a nutshell, these positive intercultural attitudes are becoming an entryway to initiate reflexivity in practices.

Secondly, intercultural experience must be accompanied by professional developments in teacher education. Indeed, intercultural experience is one of the best ways to develop intercultural (communicative) competence. Plenty studies have claimed that overseas studies have enhanced both linguistic and cultural competences (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Lafford & Collentine, 2006; Marx & Moss, 2011). It is claimed that overseas studies may integrate both engagement with target language community (building relationship) and formal organised instruction into individual learning process (Fleming, 2009). At intercultural circumstances, an individual teacher/learner can analyse, use the target language and interact with the community as well as develop their awareness of own identity as an intercultural speaker (Moloney & Harbon, 2010). It is realised that not all learners or teachers are of such a golden opportunity, yet its effectiveness has been gradually recognised in recent studies.

However, simply intercultural experience has been viewed insufficient in growing intercultural values because exposure to other cultures is not guaranteed for an escalating degree of tolerance (Moloney, 2009). Teacher's positioning is still entrapped with the persisting ethnocentric worldview that causes prejudice, discriminative and racist acts. The reflection on experiences; therefore, is more impactful to the attitudinal development. This can be done when an individual construes cultural differences and seeks for multiple interpretations of a sociocultural reality (Bennett, 2009; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). An individual can see many other perspectives besides his/her own lens to analyse a sociocultural act. An intercultural learner must be aware of the potential of reflexivity to supplement experiential knowledge in the creation of teacher belief.

This study asserts that learning and teaching experiences must be always juxtaposed with knowledge and skills that resulted from formal, organised and educational or training activities – expert knowledge/skills. Personal observation and experiences in experiential knowledge seem to be untenable to become a scientific fact as there exist other intervening dispositions, which they are hardly independent of emotion and intuition. (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). In light of this situation, a combination between experiential and expert knowledge is imperative for the reconstruction of teacher belief to develop intercultural communicative competence. This combination should not always be interpreted by schooling or studying, rather teacher capacity building activities such as, to name but a few, teaching practice with reflexivity (Sercu & St-John, 2007), exploring intercultural communication permeates in language use (Hua, 2013), and intercultural narrative reflections (Moloney & Oguro, 2015).

In addition, the present study highlights reflexivity in teacher belief in order to increase both teachers and students' critical cultural awareness. It is beyond 'linguistic and

cultural dimensions that can be taught in any language classes; this is how a learner starts to reflect critically on their own identity' (Byram, 2012). It may start from analysing pictures or texts from target culture, try to understand through learners' prior knowledge to compare the images and scripts with own cultures, and finally interact with a specific linguistic component as a personal meaning (Liddicoat, 2008). Once the teachers are equipped with the criticality, they will start being mindful of the act of comparing across cultures. In other words, they are becoming more critical of using clear and explicit criteria in cultural descriptions. They also consider the effect of larger societal and personal forces underpinning a cultural act in complex ways (Holliday, 2009). They will finally gain a better-informed positioning that cultural resources, universal features of all cultures, global circumstances and cultural politics lie beneath any social acts.

V. Conclusion

This study highly values teachers' intercultural experiences despite its downgrading quality due to lacking support of teacher professional developments as explicated above. Teacher professional development activities are suggested to explore the existing teachers' beliefs and to focus on the revitalisation of the wisdom of practices as part of the beliefs. This strategy asserted that professional development must start from the discussion of existing teacher beliefs with a greater critical awareness as its target through reflective teaching practices. Since interculturality is always related with national culture and identity, it is used as a medium for self-reflection that captures the development of positioning of teacher before, during and after the course. All of these strategies indicate that the synthesis of teachers' beliefs (crafted by learning and teaching experiences) and intercultural experiences must be integrated for an interculturally-oriented teacher education.

With idiosyncratic approach of six university teachers across Indonesia, this study cannot be used for generalisation, yet this study can present clearly a real implementation of the pedagogy. The study found that the teachers' wisdom of practices or perceptions/understandings about the nature of language, language learning and culture, which are embedded within teacher belief, are not aligned with the expectation of the pedagogy. This contradiction may be caused by, not limited to, teachers' sources of knowledge that refer merely to personal learning and teaching experiences and cultural conceptualisation. This study found that the crystallised intercultural experiences were not optimised with attitudinal development through critical awareness and reflexivity on teacher belief. These two vital major aspects are central and highlighted together that can be included into teacher professional developments. It is strongly believed that with the capital of the teachers' intercultural experiences, the teachers' beliefs can be restructured, and a contextually-model of intercultural teaching and learning can be formulated in the Indonesian context.

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