TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT: A NATIVE SPEAKER OR ELF MODEL?

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ABSTRACT

Today, the numbers of English speakers are geographically and culturally diverse. The discussion on which pronunciation model of English should be introduced to learners of English has become under discussion among English language practitioners. Should English teachers teach pronunciation aiming at near native accents or at intelligibility in which learners can understand different models of English? As a country where English is a foreign language and Non Native-English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) are vastly available, Indonesia has posed its uniqueness due to its diverse learners' and teachers' backgrounds. Under this circumstance, then, there has been a frequent question to whether NNESTs can help learners to develop their English pronunciation. This paper discusses English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) model as suggested by Jenkins (2000) in teaching English pronunciation that can be implemented in the Indonesian context. It suggests that what matters more to learners is improving their intelligibility in English pronunciation rather than aiming for near native accents. English teachers are encouraged to develop a pronunciation instruction that suits the learners' needs and interests without discriminating any model of English. Finally, a conclusion is provided with my argument that ELF model will be a better model to be implemented in the teaching of pronunciation in the English classroom in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: *ELF Model, Intelligibility, Lingua Franca Core, Teaching Pronunciation*.

INTRODUCTION

The number of non-native users of English has now surpassed the number of native users. Crystal (2003) mentioned that over 430 billion people spoke English as a second language (L2) in 2003. English today has become a global means of communication. As a consequence, English now belongs to all people in the world including those who speak English as a second language. This means that the users of English have brought their varieties in terms of identity and culture. English, then, does not belong to people who are regarded as native speakers anymore. In English Language Teaching (ELT), however, the perception that native speaker norms, such as in pronunciation, is the

best to be applied in the classroom is still widely practiced. This is not only misguiding but also insensitive to the non-native English speaking language teachers whose accent might be considered 'unique'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

EIL AND TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

Since English has been widely and rapidly dispersed around the world, it is currently used as a means of communication and mostly used by non-native speakers of other languages in various first language (L1) settings (Canagarajah, 1999). For example, foreigners who have varied first languages visited Bali and should speak in English to be able to conduct transactions with the local people. This example can be the best way to describe the term 'English as an International Language (EIL)' that is people with different L1 use English frequently as a contact language among themselves rather than with native English speakers (Jenkins, 2000). Jenkins also mentions that the trend will change statuses of some countries from their EFL (English as a Foreign Language) statuses to ESL (English as a Second Language) statuses such as Argentine, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, Jordan, and Switzerland. This fact has also influenced the conceptions about the 'ownership' of English (Widdowson, 1994). It means that everybody brings his or her own identity and culture when speaking in English and, therefore, English belongs to everyone who speaks it. Levis, Sonsaat, Link, and Barriuso (2016) state that native speakers have become a minority in the world of language teaching and Non Native-English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) can become a beneficial source too for learners in regard with teaching English pronunciation.

Due to the growing numbers of non-native speakers and the changing ownership of the English language, ELT has to challenge which model of teaching pronunciation of English should be performed in the classroom. Since the needs of non-native learners now are to face mostly non-native speakers, a traditional assumption that a native speaker (NS) model should be performed in the language classroom should be redefined. Jenkins (2000) argues that English users do not need to have a near-native accent to be able to facilitate intelligible communication. Besides, English is diversely linguistic and cultural identities should be embraced since the communication primarily occurs among non-native speakers from various L1 backgrounds. Therefore, it is encouraged for outer and expanding circle (Kachru, 1992) speakers to use English in their own way, even it may or may not conform to inner-circle English. English in India and Singapore, for instance, has successfully created new meanings with its linguistic convergence of form and functions. Therefore, English in India and Singapore can be the best models on how a global identity and local practices are presented at the same time.

Hence, in the light of EIL, as the number of language learners of English has been increasing, there is a need to shift the paradigm from a native speaker model to a model that accommodate all interests. Responding to the changing paradigm, McKay (2002) identifies the importance of teaching and learning English in a different way in the area of teaching culture, curriculum development, teacher education, and teaching pronunciation. In this paper, the focus is to examine teaching English pronunciation within a foreign environment such as Indonesia. It is necessary to investigate what model of pronunciation should be taught in and why it is more desirable to be applied in the ELT.

NATIVE SPEAKER (NS) MODEL AND THE COMPELLING REASONS

Today, the belief that the native speaker (NS) model has the most correct pronunciation in the classroom is still prevalent in the ELT. The NS model has remained appealing for both the process and the product in ELT (Kirkpatrick, 2006). In the process, the proficiency of second language (L2) learners is prepared and investigated to be near native behavior. Meanwhile, along the process of learning, the NS model is set as the measurement of success in the learning of English. As a result, teaching of English in L2 classroom still heavily relies on the NS models particularly in the teaching of pronunciation.

Several reasons are contributed to the hegemony of the NS model in the teaching of pronunciation. First, Kirkpatrick (2006) argues that the NS model has been codified so it makes teachers and students easily refer to the grammar and vocabulary of the Standard English (SE) model. This codification also facilitates the teachers to create forms of evaluation. Second, politicians and bureaucrats view the well-set norms of the NS model as a Standard English that people should learn to make them intelligible in the international community. This can be seen from the way the government of Singapore always reminds Singaporeans to speak standard English British because Singaporean English (*Singlish*) is considered 'broken' or 'defective' (Rubdy, 2009). Finally, the NS model has a historical authority that has been long developed which makes it an easy option. People who have to make decision about which model to choose do not have to think hard as the NS model is available everywhere. Therefore, the model of NS has become preferable and native English speakers are considered as the ideal teachers in the ELT, especially in teaching pronunciation.

The teaching of pronunciation based on the NS model, however, should not be considered as a wrongdoing. Kirkpatrick (2006) argues that the teaching of pronunciation referring to the NS model also has some advantages. For instance, the

model can be useful for learners who have high motivation and are eager to learn the mindset of native speakers, the literacy and the cultural traditions of English language. In addition, it can also be advantageous for the teachers and learners who teach and learn English in the environment where the NS model is constantly used. However, these learners represent only a small number of learners in the Expanding Circles of English who are learning English in their home countries and whose only motivation is to be able to communicate with non-native speakers. In this context, Alptekin (2002) remarks that the NS model is utopian, unrealistic and constraining in relation to ELT. In this case, the so-called native speaker norms such as accent will be impossible to attain for language learners who have never been learning English in a native-speaking country, and even for those who have been exposed to English in the country where English the first language.

ELF MODEL AND TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

As previously mentioned, although EIL has been introduced as a new English variety, unfortunately it does not translate much into the practice of ELT. Rubdy (2009) assumes this fact as an evidence of a culture that considers their own as an inferior culture. For example, in the use of syllabus, teaching materials, and textbook in the classrooms, many practitioners still adopt those that raise the culture of a native speaker model which do not conform with the background of the learners in Outer Circlers or Expanding Circles. This might be dangerous for the learners who may perceive their culture as an unimportant or second-class culture. Therefore, the practice of ELT in terms of the goal of teaching pronunciation should be redefined.

It should be noted that in the teaching of pronunciation the goal is neither to help the learners to attain native-like accents nor to promote comfortable intelligibility to native speakers, but to ensure mutual intelligibility among non-native speakers of English (Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002). Intelligibility is defined as the ability of the listener to recognize words or utterances of the interlocutor (Smith & Nelson, 1985). Since intelligibility is important in communication among non-native speakers of English, Jenkins (2000) establishes a set of phonological features known as the core of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca). Jenkins argues that the core of pronunciation should be: (1) all consonant sounds are important except for "th" sounds as in "thin" and "this," (2) consonant clusters are important at the beginning and in the middle of words, (3) the contrast between long and short vowels is important, and (4) nuclear stress is fundamental.

Thus, the core of ELF pronunciation can help teachers prepare their syllabus and materials for teaching pronunciation. Teachers should be able to include the values that

are offered in EIL and implement them in their courses. In line with this, Modiano (1996) points out that teachers should carefully select a textbook used in their courses. For example, a textbook should have exercises that expose the learners to various samples of pronunciation from non-native speakers. This will be useful for the learners in particularly expanding circle settings as they will come across non-native speakers in the daily life. By doing this, the learners will be able not only to explore their own cultures but also to speak about their cultures with other non-native learners in English. Additionally, besides the varied samples of pronunciation, Widdowson (1998) states that teaching pronunciation should also integrate the interactions between native and non-native as well as non-native and non-native. This means that the displaying of only one model interaction (either NN-NNS or NNS-NNS) is irrelevant for the learners who will use the English language in various settings.

DISCUSSIONS

TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

According to Kachru's (1992) division of world Englishes, Indonesia belongs to the Expanding Circles, where English is not spoken on a daily basis but taught at school. Teaching of English in Indonesia has been introduced since junior high school with four hour meeting in a week. Some elementary schools have even started introducing English in grade 4. The Indonesian English language curriculum aims at developing the students' four important components: linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Ministry of National Education, 2004). Therefore, the teachers of English are encouraged to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in order to support the students to use English for communication.

In Indonesia, the English language has become a very important part in national education as reflected in some government policies. A critic comes from Sugiharto (2013) who argues that the government has become obsessed with the notion of Western intellectual tradition. He, furthermore, states that the Indonesian national system has adopted the ideology of inner countries to its educational philosophy. For example, the government established international schools aiming to produce graduates that are able to compete nationally and globally. In the implementation, the policy requires students and teachers to interact in English in every course, except in Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) course. However, the policy has not run very well since there are still many teachers and students who cannot speak English correctly.

Despite uncertain guidelines of pronunciation teaching in the curriculum, the adoption on Western notion influences the ELT practice in Indonesia. In teaching pronunciation, the models that are heavily emphasized are the British or American accents (Mardijono, 2003). The same happens in many Expanding Circles countries, such as Greece, where the teachers' viewpoints predominantly norm bound (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). Having spent my adult life in Indonesia, I realize that I have been taught to focus more on studying English pronunciation based on NS accents. This is still the case until now where many Indonesian English learners are focused on studying English pronunciation with near-native accent. The emphasis on pronunciation on one variety of NS model cause confusion to the learners when they are dealing with people who have different accents. Besides, the near native accents are impossible for many Indonesian learners to attain because not all of them are motivated to learn English. For some learners, being able to communicate in English is more important than to gain perfectness in the Standard English accents.

In addition, in terms of geographical position, Indonesia is surrounded with several countries such as Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, and Thailand that have different L1 and culturally diverse backgrounds. Even though Indonesia and Malaysia share a similar root language, there are many different words such as 'jemput' where in Indonesian language it means 'to pick up', while in Malay language it means 'to invite'. In my experience communicating with the Malaysians, the word differences have to be facilitated with the English language when we deal with communication breakdown. This shows that Indonesian learners will also be exposed to people who speak English in different varieties. Therefore, based on this explanation, the teaching of pronunciation in Indonesia should incorporate the EFL model that is more relevant to intelligibility than traditional pronunciation syllabus. In addition, exposing students to the ELF model can also promote awareness identity and cultural diversity in English. This suggests that plenty of exposure in pronunciation classrooms to other non-native accents of English should be introduced to the students so that they can understand the non-native accents easily even if a speaker has not yet managed to acquire the core features. In the EIL classroom, this is much more important than having classroom exposure to only native speaker accents.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, teaching pronunciation in Indonesia should shift from a native speaker model to the ELF model. The teachers need to introduce to their students different models of English so that they can choose which model they prefer to have. It is also important to know the purposes of the learners in learning English so that we can adjust the pronunciation models that are in accordance with the learners' needs. Finally, what

most important in teaching pronunciation is not the near-native accent but intelligibility. It is recommended that the teachers promote the concept of intelligibility in the English classroom. The teachers should also ensure the learners that many people with accents speak English intelligibly, and still succeed in their communication.

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