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## TEACHER'S ROLE AS A PROMOTER OF MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: A CASE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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**Absharini Kardena**

Doctoral Student of Post Graduate Program in  
The State University of Padang  
Indonesia

[absharinikardena@yahoo.co.id](mailto:absharinikardena@yahoo.co.id)

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### *Abstract*

*In EFL context, diversity of students' culture and background commonly contributes as one of problems in teaching and learning processes. Teaching EFL ideally is not only about teaching language but also teaching culture. It is based on a common premise in which these two parts are interrelated; the language is a part of the culture and the culture is a part of the language. Thus, teachers as language practitioners are supposed to be promoters of multicultural perspectives. The teachers are demanded to encourage the learners to be aware of culture while using English. Since many problems appeared in the real life because of misunderstanding of such cultural aspects, teaching culture for the learners is determined important. Therefore, the teachers have a role to teach and guide the students to tolerant of cultural conflict, to respect diverse culture, to avoid stereotyping others, and to develop materials of cross cultural. This paper, which is derived and further developed based on research conducted in 2013, discusses and analyzes English teachers' points of view related to their role as promoter of multicultural perspectives and its impact on students' progress in learning English.*

**Keywords:** *role, promoter, multicultural, perspective, case*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL class increases rapidly. This phenomenon occurs due to CLT is argued as one of the common methods used in teaching English that concerns on developing language users to be able to communicate. The language practitioners direct the learners to focus on ability to communicate and not merely focus on grammar aspect only. Implementation of CLT for several decades proved that most of EFL students categorized success in improving their ability to communicate. It strengthens the use of CLT in EFL class.

However, teaching EFL commonly offers some problems and issues related to the development of any techniques that can improve students' ability to communicate in real life. One of the biggest challenges that have emerged for last few decades is interrelation among some factors contributing for students' success in EFL; one of them is awareness of culture. Many EFL experts have argued that teaching English cannot be separated from culture since language is a part of culture. The way someone utter their opinion may be different to one another due to they have different culture. Besides, the utterances produced reflect their points of view by their own language. In a more complex situation, culture may also influence not only the utterances produced but also the topic or gestures during conversation. It is also in line with the written language in which the writer may have their own styles in sharing ideas. Some writers may have a direct way to state their opinion while the others may have lots of introduction to state the main point of discussion. In some cases, different culture may result different interpretation of one utterance since the speakers or language users use their own culture in interpret it. Shortly, culture gives such influence to the language use.

In EFL class, the issue of culture in using English during oral or even written communication has been appeared as one of interesting topics nowadays. Many cases that involved culture as a cause of such misinterpretation or miscommunication among language users put this issue as one of urgent issues. This

phenomenon cannot be separated from teacher's role in the classroom. Teaching learning processes should provide such chances for the students not only to learn the language but also the culture for using it. In this case, the teacher takes central role to introduce and help the students to the culture of English.

In relation to the issue of culture above, many experts of communicative language teaching propose that one of the teacher's roles is as a promoter of multicultural perspective. In other words, the teacher should be able to provide not only information about the different culture while using English, but also such chances for the students to know and apply those knowledge for helping them in producing such appropriate language. The teacher is responsible to guide the students for using appropriate language in particular situations, which involves such components of culture.

This article is derived from a part of the research results of the author's thesis in master degree conducted in 2013 entitled *Problematic Sides in Implementing Learner-Centered Instruction Paradigm in English Classroom: A Phenomenological Study at MAN Kota Solok*. The thesis discusses the problems during the implementation of Learner-Centered Instruction Paradigm by analyzing the way the teachers and the students play their roles in the classroom. One of the research results deals with teacher's role in implementing learner-centered instruction. This article particularly discusses a part of the thesis result, which dealt to teacher's role as a promoter of multicultural perspective.

Based on the ideas above, learning culture should be integrated in EFL class. Therefore, the teacher is required to provide some necessary information that can help the students for using English. Besides, the teacher should also provide chances for the students to realize and understand many perspectives of culture among language users in the world. Thus, this paper explores how the teachers run their role as a promoter of multicultural perspective. It specifically discusses teachers' performance and any opinions and problems they faced related to their role as a promoter of multicultural perspective.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

### Culture in the Context of Teaching EFL

For last few decades, integration of culture learning into language learning is not a new discussion anymore. Since one of EFL cores in communicative language framework is to communicate with echo the across the linguistic and cultural boundaries, teaching language and culture cannot be separated anymore. In this case, there have been lots of experts who argued that teaching language means involving culture learning since both of these components are inseparable. As stated by Hesar, Konca, and Zarfsaz (2012), language learners cannot be labeled success in mastering English whenever they only acquire and understand the language rules and the four important skills without full mastery of the language culture.

Generally, a teacher is a crucial component for conducting teaching and learning processes. During the processes, teacher has great responsibility to provide positive learning atmosphere for the students while providing them with such valuable knowledge. In EFL class, as stated by Kojima and Kojima (2005:69), a teacher does not only function as provider of knowledge, but also as a guide who helps the students to be more creative in using English. In relation to this point, the teacher has some other roles and one of them is as a promoter of a multicultural perspective(Kojima and Kojima, 2005: 69). This role is classified important due to language is influenced greatly by the culture of language users. It is supported by Gardner (1985) who states that the acquisition of target culture has a significance influence on students' learning achievement. Thus, teacher's role to promote the multicultural perspective is categorized highly important.

This role concerns on developing students' awareness of other cultures that are involved during language use. The teacher, in this case, points out any cultural aspects that may influence the language use. In a simple way, it can be stated that this role concerns on teacher's effort to balance the target culture and the students' culture. In a more detail explanation, Kojima and Kojima (2005:69) explain that this role can be generated into four main tasks. It includes helping the students to tolerant for different cultures, to respect to the diverse culture, to avoid stereotyping others, and to develop various materials for cross-cultural communication.

In a more detail explanation, Gay in Hesar, Konca, and Zarfsaz (2012) explain that there are 3 dimensions of cultural responsive teaching framework: (a.) Academic achievement: Teachers aim to make learning meticulous, exciting, and challenging, (b.) Cultural competence: Teachers know and facilitate in the learning process the various range of students' cultural and linguistic groups, (c.) Sociopolitical consciousness: Teachers need to recognize and assist students in the understanding that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum.

In other words, the teacher should be able to involve cultural values in teaching English. As explained by Hesar, et al (2012: 46), the learners should be encouraged to understand a new culture while maintaining their own culture.

Related to this, Purba (2011: 46) also describes that there are two main reasons why cultural value should be taught for the students. The first reason is culture and language is inseparable. He explains that there have been many experts who argue that culture and language could not be separated each other. Acquiring the language also includes a process of understanding a society in which the language used. Because of that, Purba (2001: 46) concludes that an EFL teacher have to teach the culture in order to avoid misunderstanding between two different cultures. The second reason to teach culture in EFL class is the major goal of foreign language program is the mastery of communicative competence. It leads the students to be able to speak as natural as the native speakers do. Because of that, they have to have such background knowledge of the target culture to communicate successfully with the native speaker of the language. As a conclusion, involving culture in teaching EFL is important. It is the main reason why a teacher should be able to be a promoter of multicultural perspective.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted in the frame of qualitative research, specifically on phenomenology design. The research involved 5 English teachers of MAN Kota Solok as the participants of the research. The research was conducted by means of class observation and interview to the teachers. The interview was a kind of depth-interview in order to get valid data. Besides, the research was also done by observing teachers' performance in the classroom. The data were analyzed scientifically by adapting the technique of data analysis proposed by Patton (1990). Practically, steps in analyzing the data were:

1. The researcher transcript the data collected from the interview.
2. The researcher differentiated between participants' opinion and fact on the data gotten from the interview. In other words, the researcher had to be able to clarify any personal bias from the data collected.
3. The researcher gathered the purely data which related to the research. Any other data that were not about the research should be put out. Moreover, the researcher got the real facts of the data.
4. The researcher tabulated the data from the observation.
5. The researcher grouped the data based on the indicators used in the research.
6. The researcher interpreted the meaning of the phrases or statements from the interview and participants' activity during the observation.
7. The researcher discussed the deeper meaning of participants' statements from interview and activity from the observation and related it to the result of students' language culture test.

The results of the observation and interview were studied and analyzed to discuss teacher's role as promoter of multicultural perspective at MAN Kota Solok.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The research was done at MAN Kota Solok to all of the English teachers. The research concerned on analyzing teachers' performance as a multicultural perspective in the classroom. Research data taken from interview and observation were analyzed based on 4 indicators; they were helping the students to tolerant for different cultures, to respect to the diverse culture, to avoid stereotyping others, and to develop various materials for cross-cultural communication.

Research finding proved that 4 of 5 teachers did not run their role as promoter of multicultural perspective optimally. It was analyzed based on the result of class observations as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Teachers' performance as promoter of multicultural perspective

Note: (A) tolerant of cultural conflict (C) avoid stereotyping others (T) Total

In dic ato rs	Participants' Code																													
	A						B						C						D						E					
	Meeting						Meeting						Meeting						Meeting						Meeting					
	1	2	3	4	5	T	1	2	3	4	5	T	1	2	3	4	5	T	1	2	3	4	5	T	1	2	3	4	5	T
A	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
B	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
C	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
D	-	v	V	-	-	2	v	v	-	-	v	3	v	v	v	-	v	4	-	v	-	v	-	2	-	v	v	-	-	2
T	0	1	1	0	0		1	1	0	0	1		1	1	1	0	1		0	1	0	1	0		0	1	1	0	0	

(B) respect diverse culture

(D) develop materials of cross-cultural

Table 1 shows that none of the teachers played their role as promoters of multicultural perspective except one point; develop materials of cross-cultural aspects. However, this point was also not implemented in a better way in which generally the teachers only tried to implement it on 2 of 5 meetings observed. One of the worst situations was none of the teachers who have ever related between the texts and topics discussed to the cultural value included inside of the text. The teachers have never encouraged the students to see the cross-cultural points whenever they discussed any text that involved target language culture.

In a more detail explanation, there were 3 points that were not implemented by English teachers. The first one is tolerant of cultural conflict. This task refers to a responsibility to help the students understand about any kind of cultural conflict appeared among countries that use English as vice versa. The cultural conflicts that commonly appeared are related to different cultural beliefs and ideas that are used in such ceremonial, customs, religion, etc (Saluveer, 2004). Based on the class observations done, the teachers as the participants did not lead the students to know any cultural conflicts that they found related to the materials discussed. Although the materials related to the religion and or habits in ordering food at restaurants, there was no longer discussion related to any cultural conflict that may involved at that point. However, according to Kojima and Kojima (2005:69), one of the important tasks for teachers is build students' awareness about cultural conflict occurred in using language. Thus, the teachers are also responsible to build students' tolerant about it and see it based on neutral point of view.

The second point which was not implemented by the teachers is respect diverse culture. Every country has its own culture that also appears in language use. These cultures that varied among countries are integrated in language use. Due to the diverse culture among countries that use English, it is important for the teacher to discuss the cultures during language studies. It is line with the theory proposed by Brook (1986:123) in which he states. As language teachers, we must be interested in the study of culture (in the social scientist' sense of the world) not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the other country but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time cultures in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning.

It is clear that the teachers have responsibilities to teach language culture. It does not mean to adopt the culture but as a way to build students' awareness that there are many varieties of cultures in the world. Thus, the students are not demanded to apply all foreign cultures they learnt, but they need to know, understand and appreciate the diverse occurred among cultures in the world. In fact, none of the teachers during the class observation helped the students to build their awareness related to the variety of cultural among English language users. Consequently, the students possibly know any diversity of cultures but have no idea about respect those diversities. It indirectly may lead the students to think that their cultures could be the best one that should be accepted by others or even think that other cultures should not be respected as it should be.

The last one is direct the students to avoid stereotyping others. This task has a high correlation with the previous point. Due to the diverse of cultures among countries using English, there is high possibility to stereotype people based on their cultures and nations. As the diverse occurred, the language

users may be led to such misinterpretations and miscommunication. Consequently, the diverse of cultures emerge such stereotype in some countries. Thus, teachers who have a central role to promote multicultural perspective should be able to avoid any stereotyping actions by building students' awareness of such diverse cultures. The students should realize that diverse cultures may appear and it possibly causes such misinterpretation. The important point here is an awareness of diverse culture that affects language production of each language users. As stated by Hesar, et al (2012: 71) The way we create encode our language to transmit to an addressee, and the way we interpret decode the message we receive is governed by our cultural background. Individuals including the teacher in a multinational classroom would have different ways of encoding and decoding the verbal messages; this might cause some misunderstandings between the learners and the teacher and among the learners.

It strengthens the premise which state that different culture may result different interpretation. The worst one is whenever this diversity led the students to take stereotype actions as a result of such misinterpretation. Thus, it is urgent for the teachers to promote students for avoiding stereotyping others based on their culture.

Based on the findings above, it can be argued that English teachers did not consider culture s an important point in language class. Therefore, these findings emerged two possible conditions; the teachers did not know that culture should be included in teaching English or the teachers did not have any knowledge even competence to teach the culture as a part of their materials in the classroom. Theoretically, Stern (1992:207) state that there 4 possible reasons for the limited treatment culture: (1) the vastness of the culture concepts, (2) the problem of goal determination and lack of accessible information, (3) syllabus design place to culture in predominantly a language-oriented curriculum, and (4) questions of teaching procedure.

By considering the two possibilities above, the interview was conducted to confirm the data found. Based on interview data, the teachers have two main reasons why they did not teach or include culture as a part of learning materials. The first reason is their opinion that culture is not a part of English language teaching. It is proved by interview done with the teacher.

Transcription 1:

R: *ada ndak pak... itu dari segi cara berkomunikasi, dijelaskan juga dari unsur budaya native speaker itu. Misalnya disiplinnya atau yang lain.* (Do you explain or discuss the target language culture?)

T: *Itu kan bukan ranah kami ya.* (That's not our field.)

R: *Hhmm, tapi kalau misalnya ditemukan dalam materi seperti itu, pak?* (Hhhmmm... if you find it on your materials so...?)

T: *Ya materi saya daily activity konsepnya. Kehidupan sehari-hari saja konsepnya. Jadi tidak dibahas itu.* (My materials are only about daily activity. So it is not discussed) The data above proved that the teachers had an opinion that learning English means mastering language skills only. The assumption that culture is not a part of English learning materials led the teachers not to teach it. It is supported the data that showed how the teachers did not discuss the culture of spoken language when they taught some materials, such as introducing self, like and dislike, etc. In fact, those materials contain some cultural aspects that should be known by the students. The students should know how to start new conversation for introducing self, some forbidden questions for foreigner, degree of formality in expressing like and dislike, etc. By considering it, the students are prepared to face any situations whenever they should introduce themselves.

On the other hand, language learning experts state that culture is interconnected to language. There have been lots of discussions that proposed the importance of teaching culture during language class. In relation to this, Samovar, Porter, and Jain (1981) emphasize: Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted... Culture...is the foundation of communication (p. 24).

It strengthens that language class should involve not only language skills but also language culture. Thus, there is no reason to state that language class is only about how to communicate without considering the culture involved during its communication.

The second reason stated by the English teachers related to the competence they had. The interview data proved that the English teachers did not have any ideas about culture points that possibly included on their materials. The interview is stated as follow:

Transcription 2:

R: *klu ni liaat kemrin bu waktu pembahasan materi tentang ordering food, itu menurut ibu perlu ndak dibahas unsure culture yang terlibat disitu?*(when I observed your class yesterday at the time you discussed about ordering food, I want to know your opinion whether discussing culture involved at that materials is needed or not)

T: *culture...maksudnya budayaa?* (culture... you mean 'culture')

R: *iya bu.*(yes, mam)

T: *ndak ada lah nak.maksud ibu itu kan kitaa mengajar ekspresi yang dipakai pas momen itu ya.jadi ndak ada culture sama sekali.*(there is no culture inside. I mean I taught about the expressions that commonly used for ordering food, so no discussion of culture indeed)

R: *hanya focus ke ekspresi y bu?*(just focus to the expression only?)

T: *iya, ini kan untuk speaking ya* (yes, because it is aimed for speaking skill)

The transcription above can be analyzed in a way that the teacher did not know any cultural aspects involved on ordering food. In fact, it may discuss the politeness during order, the different way of ordering food between Indonesian restaurant and western restaurant, etc. It proved that the teachers did not have such appropriate knowledge related to the cultures. Consequently, it affects students' competence for a real communication.

Based on the discussion above, it can be stated that the English teachers fail in implementing their role as a promoter of multicultural perspectives. Due to the teachers did not provide any information or create a discussion related to any culture points involved on their materials, they did not help the students to develop their cultural competence during their language learning processes.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Language class, especially English as a foreign language, cannot be separated from English culture. As a language is a part of culture, it is important for the teachers to take a role in promoting multicultural perspectives for the students. The teachers are demanded to give chances for the learners learn about diversity of cultures and respect it. as communication is not merely about sharing ideas through language skills, it is important for the learners to know, understand, appreciate and consider any culture involved during the communication, oral or even written communication. It is expected may avoid any misunderstanding or misinterpretation that could occur due to the diversity of cultures among language users.

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