
MULTILINGUALISM AND SOCIAL STRATEGIES USED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN SAWAHLUNTO

Ika Lasmiatun

State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Batusangkar
ikakey8516@yahoo.com

Suswati Hendriani

State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Batusangkar
suswatiamor@gmail.com

Abstract

Multilingualism and multiculturalism- exists in many parts of the world today, including in Sawahlunto. In that city, people come from different cultures and use different languages, namely: Javanese, Sundanese, Bataknes, Minangkabaunese, and Acehnese. It cannot be denied that in such a society, people are constantly creating on and using multiple languages. In fact, multilingualism -and multiculturalism- has been a big issue in the world of language education, especially in English language teaching. To teach English to the multilingual students, the English teachers must understand the connection between students' languages, and their cultures. This will develop the teachers' awareness of the social dimensions of language use which will be an important component in their English language teaching. This awareness will help them to use different social teaching strategies to approach the languages as mediating tools for teaching English as communication. In other words, the languages, then, are not exclusively objects of teaching but a means of communication and interaction. This paper is aimed to find out teachers' social strategies to teach English to multilingual students in Sawahlunto. This is a descriptive research with a cross-sectional design. The data are collected through a questionnaire. The data analysis is done by using SPSS 22 version.

Keywords: *multilingualism, teacher, awareness, social strategy*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the global village, multilingualism and multiculturalism have infested various aspects of everyday life. It cannot be denied that we live in societies that are constantly creating on and using multiple languages. In Sawahlunto, in particular, transmigration and economic factor have permeated most societies and multiculturalism. Sawahlunto -is about 90 kilometers from Padang which covers 5,9 km² - was first established as a town in 1882 by the Dutch along with coal mining operations(www.wikipedia.com). In 1888, the Netherland Indies initialized many coal mining facilities which attracted some people from another town, even, other island to work under compulsion. Since that period, Sawahlunto is considered as a town with multilingualism and multiculturalism.

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.” Noted Nelson Mandela. Therefore, a language teacher presents important aspects of the language as a study and as a tool for communication. Consequently, communication strategy should be comprehended by a language teacher, especially social strategies in a place where the students use different languages and have different cultures like Sawahlunto. In general, communication strategies are understood as the focus on the process of participating in a conversation, which involves getting meaning and clarification, whereas social strategies are those that the students engage to face the opportunity to be exposed to the target language and practice his/her already gained knowledge (Brno, 2007: 14).

Multilingualism and multiculturalism in Sawahlunto have affected the educational life there, especially in school settings. The learners there acquire three or more languages, L1;L2; L3. L1 is a learner's first language, the one acquired as a child; it is in most cases one's mother tongue or native language but not necessarily all the time. The L2 is a learner's second language, that is to say a language spoken in addition to one's native language; it is acquired after infancy and it could be the first foreign language one learns. Finally, L3 is a non-native language being used or learnt when a person has knowledge of one L2 besides one or more L1s (Hammarberg, 2009:6; EOD; Brown 2006: 686-689). To do communication among students and between the students and their teacher in the classroom interaction, social strategies in such multilingual language classroom and society should be considered. Therefore, this paper is aimed to answer the questions, namely: *First*, "Is an English teacher in the city aware of the multilingualism among his/her students?" *Second*, "What is the percentage of the social strategies applied by the English teacher in teaching English language in such a society?"

2. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

a. Multilingualism

Multilingualism has become a very broad phenomenon in today's society, and the term multilingualism which is the focus of this article is derived from two Latin words namely "multi" that means many and "lingua" that means language. Thus, multilingualism is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native like proficiency (Bussmann: 1996). Multilingualism can also be regarded as the co-existence of several languages within a society, like that exists in Sawahlunto. What can result in multilingualism?

According to Gorter (2007: 6), multilingualism can be the result of different factors. They are: (1) historical or political movements such as imperialism or colonialism; (2) economic movements in the case of migration; (3) increasing communications among different parts of the world and the need to be competent in languages of wider communication; (4) social and cultural identity and the interest for maintenance and revival of minority languages; (5) education; and (6) religion movements that result in people moving to a new place.

Related to multilingualism in Sawahlunto, furthermore, Marwan (2015) proposes that it is caused by coal mining which was opened by Dutch in 1888. The Dutch forced people from many places to build up the coal mining. As a result, nowadays, in Sawahlunto live many different tribes with different cultures and different language. This situation invited unusual view of education, particularly in a foreign language teaching. A language teacher in this town faces multilingualism –and multiculturalism- in the classroom that need special attention in order to make the classroom interaction keep running well and the goal of learning can be reached.

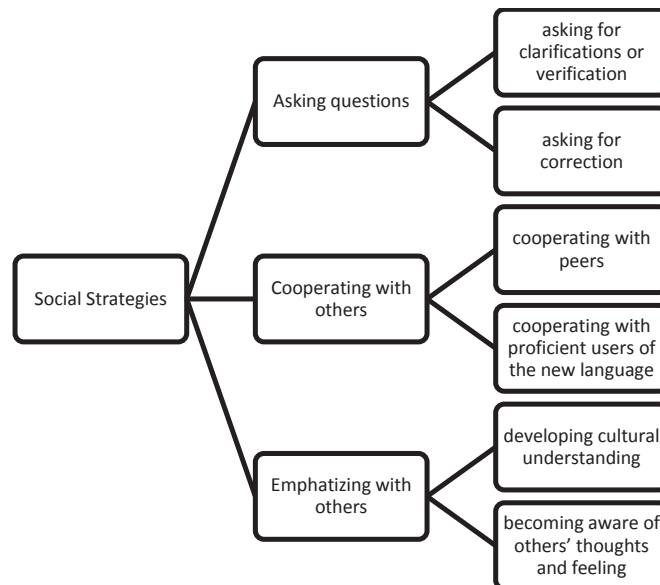
b. Social Strategies

The idea of social strategies is very old. It already existed in the ancient Greece and Rome, even though this term was not used at that time. Social strategies have been involved in education since the early beginning of the society. They appeared in different forms, either as discussion, expressions of student's ideas or as group work or project work. All these methods lead to education of perspective members of society, who are able to express freely their attitudes and to cooperate with others (Brno:2007).

The matter of social strategies has recently become a very frequently discussed topic. Not only does it touch the field of foreign language teaching, but also and mainly our normal daily life. Rubin (1987) describes social strategies as e those activities learners engage in which afford them opportunities to be exposed to and practice their knowledge.

Although these strategies provide exposure to the target language, they contribute indirectly to learning since they do not lead directly to the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language. Moreover, Oxford (1990) explains that social strategies help learners learn through asking question, cooperating with others, and realizing other peoples' feeling. She explains the importance of social strategies in a foreign language teaching as shown by the definition of language mentioned by her as *"a form of social behaviour; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people. Learning a language thus involves other people, and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process."* (Oxford, 1990:144).

Oxford (1990), then, continues that that there are three sets of strategies that are included in social strategies. They are: asking questions, cooperating with others and emphasizing with others. Each set comprises two specific strategies as can be seen from the following diagram:



Based the above diagram, it can be seen that social strategies are important in doing communication in classroom interaction for three cases, namely, asking questions; cooperating with others; emphatizing with others.

c. Multilingualism and Social Strategies in Language Teaching: *How do They Work?*

Language is a social phenomenon and can be one form of communication. It can be used to convey information, express feelings, to persuade someone to do something, to make contact with someone else, to write poetry or to talk about language itself (Leech,1982:150). Students may be strongly motivated to learn foreign languages because they know it will put them in touch with more people, but at the same time they know that it will take a great deal of effort to master it and may begrudge that effort (Crystal,2003:3).

One of the most recent trends in foreign language teaching is the learner centeredness. In other words, a student becomes the initiator of the teaching process and the teaching approach is, therefore, should be directed toward the student's need and take a great advantage of the student's appropriate learning strategies. It has been described by many researchers how to facilitate the student's learning and the use of absorbed information by using the language learning strategies. In fact, these strategies are used by

students consciously or unconsciously, when they are processing new information or accomplishing tasks in the language lesson.

Concerning the social strategies in a foreign language teaching, while working in a classroom, are interpersonal (pair work) and small groups types of communication, which certainly develop the communicative skills the most. Someone could object that the student might not feel comfortable while working in a pair with a partner she or he does not like. In fact, in a real life situation one cannot choose whom to work with or to communicate with. Thus, school should prepare the students for their future and in fact, later at work they will not be asked who they would like to cooperate with.

Why should the students should be provided with social strategies? The advantage of the first kind of social strategies namely asking questions is that while working in pairs or small groups with peers, the students do not feel so anxious to ask or to admit that they do not understand something, as it often happens in frontal teaching. In fact, learning under stress is often ineffective and can even be of negative value, so, pair work and groups work are recommended to reduce the stress (Norman, 1986:12). Briefly, the student's feelings may lower the barriers to language acquisition.

Following important element of the social strategies is cooperation. It comes from the mutual interaction between people and their collective living, when one participant influences the other and the other person's reaction influences the former one again. This social interaction, or information exchange between people, enables people to coordinate their work and to cooperate. In addition, it is important for forming interpersonal relationships (Čáp, 2001:190) and building relationship with and among students is very important (Larsen-Freeman, 1986:96).

In a foreign language teaching, the use of social strategies can help the weaker students to catch up some language from their more advanced classmates and to build their relationships in class. It also works vice versa on the level of help and patience. Peer cooperation is especially between school-age children is essential. Moreover, it implies the absence of competition and the presence of group spirit (Oxford, 1996:145). It is obvious that communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students, as it gives students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning (Larsen-Freeman, 1986:130).

Social strategies can also allow the students to learn to understand another student's feelings, to tolerate different opinions, thoughts and cultures. According to Oxford, empathy is essential to successful communication in any language (1996:146). People differ in their behaviours, manners and ways of expressing their feelings and attitudes. Consequently, teaching to communicate gained through social strategies can show the students how to solve their problems of communication by the use of a friendly way and by the use of argumentative arguments and not through the use of physical force. In consideration with the increasing social differences among the students, this point should not be forgotten by the teachers, as the social strategies may be used as bullying prevention (Říčan, 1995:82). The principle is very simple: pair work and group work support the involvement of the class outsiders and some their qualities can be recognized by the class, as well as the possible aggressors could reach some respect of the class.

By using social strategies, teachers, further, are able to make language learning far more effective and enjoyable. According to Oxford (1990: 140), teachers can exert a tremendous influence over the emotional atmosphere of the classroom in three different ways: by changing the social structure of the classroom to give students more responsibility, by providing increased amounts of naturalistic communication, and by teaching learners to use affective strategies. In fact, all strategies should be taught, and the social ones should also be included. Byrne (1987:6) admits that to teach the whole class

together is easier, in a sense to control everything than pair work or group work, but, considering the tendency and merits of student-centred teaching, the teacher's position in teaching process becomes less dominant than before, even though, not less important. The traditional teacher's dominant role in the teaching process is also significant for its effect on human relationships within the classroom and may be also reduced by introducing more informal seating arrangements. Larsen-Freeman (1986:96) admits that the superior knowledge and power of the teacher can be threatening. If the teacher does not remain in the front of the classroom, the threat is reduced and the students' learning is facilitated. When the teacher faces the whole class, interaction between the students and the teacher, rather than among students is fostered, so the teacher's position reinforces his/her authority as 'knower', but a more informal layout of the classroom can help to support the students' balance as communicators (Littlewood, 1981:47).

The old model of teaching is still found in some parts of the world one of which is Czech classrooms, as described by Littlewood, (1981: 92) below:

Despite the fact that classroom setting, and seating included, can positively influence the student's attitude and habits towards learning, most of the Czech classrooms are still organised as it used to be in the era of the empress Maria There a two hundred years ago: the writing desks are set up in rows, which supports mainly the frontal teaching and pair work always with the same partner, the large blackboard is in front of the classroom and not far from it there is a big photo of the president. All the students' concentration heads towards the front of the classroom, where the teacher usually stands and so the students in the back rows might not seem, sometimes intentionally, involved in the learning process. Even if the students would. To sum up, teacher, in a broad sense, 'facilitator' of learning, may need to perform in a variety of specific roles, separately or simultaneously, however, together with the untraditional arranging of the furniture in class and student- centred focus on teaching process, can make the communication and cooperation during the language lessons more comfortable and season the lessons with friendly and creative atmosphere.

Based on the previous ideas a conclusion may be drawn that to facilitate the students' communication in a foreign language learning, an English teacher should try to use social strategies in their classroom teaching. Teaching learning process should be student-centered in which group work is facilitated. This will improve interaction among students and make the students communicate actively.

3. METHOD

As mentioned previously, there are two goals of this study, namely: (1) to explore English teachers' awareness on the multilingualism that exist among his/ her students, and (2) to find out the percentage of the social strategies applied by the English teachers in teaching English language in multilingual society (Sawahlunto). In order to reach the aims of this research, descriptive quantitative approach was applied. The design of the reseach was cross-sectional.

a. Respondent of the Study

The participants of the study were secondary-high school English teacher in Sawahlunto, West Sumatera, indonesia. The total number of the participants was 28.

b. Technique of Data Collection

To collect the data of the reseach, a closed-ended questionnaire consisted of 16 items was used. In the questionnaire several questions were asked (see the results and discussion part).

c. Technique of Data Analysis

To analyze the data of the research, Descriptive statistics of SPSS 22 version was used. The data were analyzed to find out the percentage of the application of social strategies by the English teachers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the aims of the research are (1) to explore English teachers' awareness on the multilingualism that exist among his/ her students, and (2) to find out the percentage of the social strategies applied by the English teachers in teaching English language in multilingual society (Sawahlunto), the questionnaire was constructed to find out the fact about the two things. Therefore, the items of the questionnaire were arranged about the teacher's awareness and the social strategies applied by the English teacher in Sawahlunto. Based on the collected data using the questionnaire, the following results were found. First, the students were indigenous of Minangkabaunese, Javanese, Batakese, Sundanese, and Acehnese. It means the students come from different regions of Indonesia and have different native languages. To find out the English teachers' awareness of the students' different languages, there were four items constructed. Based on the four items, it was found that in teaching in their classrooms, the English was mostly used (75.714%), Bahasa Indonesia was used (61.428%), the teachers' native language was used by them (36.428%) and the students' native language was used (32.857%).

To find out the fact about the use of social strategies by the English teachers, there were twelve items were arranged. The first social strategies namely "asking question" were found out through eight items. Four items were used to find out whether the English teachers ask questions to clarify unclear things while the other four were used to find out whether the English teachers correct the students' mistakes through questions. To find out whether the English teachers apply cooperating strategy in teaching English, there were two questions were constructed. Moreover, to find out whether the English teachers apply empathize with their students, there were two items were asked. All those items are shown in the following table.

No	Statement	Percentage
1	In teaching in the classroom, I use English	75.714%
2	In teaching in the classroom, I use Bahasa Indonesia	61.428%
3	In teaching in the classroom, I use my local Language (my native language)	36.428%
4	In teaching in the classroom, I use students' local language (the students' native language)	32.857%
5	I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using Bahasa Indonesia	53.571%
6	I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using English	75%
No	Statement	Percentage
7	I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using my local Language (my native language)	34.285%
8	I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using students' local	32.143%

	Language (the students' native language)	
9	I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using English	79.286%
10	I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using Bahasa Indonesia	60%
11	I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using my local Language (my native language)	32.857%
12	I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using students' local language (the students' native language)	30%
13	I use group discussion to teach my students	68.571%
14	I ask my students to cooperate with competent users of English	45%
15	I empathize my students by trying to understand their cultures	67.857%
16	I empathize my students by trying to understand their thought and feeling	75%

In the next part, the results of the research will be described in turn, ordered from the highest to the lowest rank. Among the sixteen questions asked, the research results show that the social strategy "asking a question to correct students' understanding by using English" got the highest percentage (79.286%). The next social strategy that was mostly applied by the English teachers was "Teaching in the classroom by using English" (75.714%). On the third rank, the social strategy "Empathizing students by trying to understand their thought and feelings" was applied by 75% of the respondents of the study. The next social strategy that were mostly applied by the English teacher was that of using group discussion to teach the students (68.571%). The social strategy of "Empathizing my students by trying to understand their cultures" was applied by 67.857% of the English teachers.

The social strategy "In teaching in the classroom, I use Bahasa Indonesia" was applied by 61.428% of the respondent. The social strategy "I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using Bahasa Indonesia" was applied by 60% of the respondents. "I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using Bahasa Indonesia" was applied by 53.571% of the respondents. "I ask my students to cooperate with competent users of English" was applied 45% of the respondents. "In teaching in the classroom, I use my local Language (my native language)" was applied by 36.428% of the respondents. "I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using my local Language (my native language)" was applied by 34.285% of the respondents. The social strategies "In teaching in the classroom, I use students' local language (students' native language)" and "I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using my local Language (my native language)" were applied by 32.857% of the respondents. The social strategy "I ask a question whether my students understand or not by using students' local Language (students native language)" was applied by 32.134% of the respondents. The social strategy "I ask a question to correct students' understanding by using students' local language (students' native languages)" was applied by 30% of the respondents.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the English teachers were aware of the existence of multilingualism among their students. It was proved that

they used various languages in their English teaching. Yet the most frequently used language was English. Besides, they applied different kinds of social strategies in their English teaching. When asking questions, they more often use English. The social strategies that are mostly applied was empathizing with the students, especially with their thoughts and feelings.

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