
English Teachers' Perspectives on the Impacts of English as a Global Language Influencing the Indonesian Educational System

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Abstract: This article is as discussion of a study into English teachers' perceptions towards English as a global language in Indonesia. The purposes of this study are to examine whether the non-native English teachers in Indonesia realize the emerging role of English in the global world especially into the Indonesian schools and to find out how those teachers perceive the impacts of English into Indonesian educational system. Twelve English teachers from four school levels started from primary school to university participated in this study. Qualitative interviews were used for data collection. As a result, the participants' responses were all consistent saying that with the tough competition in this modern era, English was undeniably very important and learning English for Indonesian students since the early education had been a good practice in order to support the students to get a bright future. Referring to the impacts of the global language, there were only two teachers paid concerns to the negative impacts the global language brought to Indonesian education while the other ten convincingly stated that it only brought positive effects. Recommendations for maintaining the students' local cultures and identity were given by the participants that were worth considered and informed to all English teachers in Indonesia.

Keywords: English, Globalization, Global Language, Education, Perspective, Impact, Identity

1 INTRODUCTION

English has immensely spread across the globe in many ways. This has led to the recognition of English as a global language worldwide. The spread brings influences to English teaching in educational institutions that require educational practitioners to be alert for necessary adaptation, negotiation or resistance. These reactions appear from wise thoughts for not losing native language and its values by the entrance of English as a global language.

Indonesia was a colonized country under four colonial rulers: Portuguese, Dutch, Japan, and British. This started from the sixteenth century until Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945. Since the independence proclamation, Indonesia has been maintaining relation to the West firstly by joining the United Nations. That was the beginning of the arrival of English into Indonesia. However, it was not until President Habibie's rule that Indonesia widely opened itself to the global world which accelerated the spread of English into Indonesia by re-establishing the International Monetary Fund and donor community support for an economic

stabilization program after President's Soeharto's ending rule by force in 1998.

English soon came into Indonesia in many ways, starting from the continuing missionary, political and economic interests, then developing to science and technology, education, sport, tourism and entertainment purposes. The National Education Ministry kept revising the regulation in applying English in schools' curriculum while still maintaining English as a compulsory subject for all levels of education, a compulsory subject in the national final examination, and one of the subjects tested for entrance to state universities. Currently, the schools in Indonesia is applying the 2013 curriculum which requires the teachers to be creative in making adaptation and adjustment to the content of the their teaching in which at the same time it interestingly causes pros and cons for those who see it as a great chance to develop their teaching sources while the other consider it as a burden (Rahim Hamdan, Z., 2015)

English has not only largely influenced the Indonesian curriculum where it is positioned as fundamental, but also has affected the national language. There have been increasing numbers of

absorbed words from English that are now recognized as part of *bahasa Indonesia* such as *ozon* from ozone, and *nasional* from national. Most often, the absorbed words are in the area of politics, economics, science and technology. In addition, Indonesia has also published a daily English language newspaper since 1983 named *The Jakarta Post*.

Today, Indonesian people feel that they need to study English. They study English for various purposes from marketing, job seeking, advance education and publication, access to Information and Technology and scholarship application for study. More and more scholars learn English in order to pass a TOEFL or IELTS test to apply for scholarships either from the National Education Ministry, local companies or from overseas universities and governments. Even to apply for scholarships to study in national universities, the National Education Ministry requires a TOEFL or IELTS test score of 500 or 5 respectively.

2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The overwhelming spread of English throughout the world starts from the ancient time from expeditions in search of new areas to colonization. Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) divided the spread of English into four periods; the Old English (450-1100), the Middle English (1100-1500), the Early Modern English (1500-1700), and the Modern Period (from 1500 onwards). However it was not until the nineteenth century that English really got absolute power for its spread with industrialization and immigration. Based on geographical distribution, Bhatt (2001, cited in Caine, 2008) claimed the spread of English happened in all three 'Concentric Circles of English; Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle' (p. 2). He stated that the spread of English was triggered by four great forces: 'historical, sociolinguistic, acquisitioned, and literary elements' (p. 2). However, it was the economic dominant power of the United Kingdom and the United States that accelerated the spread greatly. Both of them were supreme agents of the spread. Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) strongly shared similar ideas by stating that the US economy, technology and culture in the years following the Second World War led to the expansion of English. The spread of English across the globe had made it the most widely studied foreign language in the world that also

contributed to making it a booming business. This was what Brutt-Griffler (2002) termed 'macroacquisition' (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, cited in McKay, 2003, p. 32)

English is very powerful. Tochon (2009) decisively insisted English as the only means for prosperity. He underlined the greatest power English possessed as the global language was 'its ability to borrow and adapt words from other languages and cultures almost at will' (p. 662). This performance convinced most nations in the world to use English as a part of their linguistic ecology. Though he admitted that the United States' domination in economy and politics enhanced the spread of English, he stressed acknowledgement on the Internet as one of the mightiest tools for the spread of English.

Looking at the facts above, globalization and the spread of English have raised concerns about the economic, political, cultural, and linguistic hegemony of the West over the rest of the world (Edge, 2006, cited in Tochon, 2009, p. 659). However, it is not by force that English is accepted worldwide nowadays but more to the particular interests of each nation that trigger English coming into power. McKay (2003) correspondingly approved this by claiming that the spread of English was largely caused by the tremendous growth in the number of non-native English speakers who eagerly learned English for their own importance to get access to 'scientific and technological information, international organizations, global economic trade and higher education' (p. 34). It is very obvious that people do believe English as the bearer of all knowledge and that ability in English is the key to everything in the world that promises a prosperous life.

The spread of English generates world Englishes and bilingualism. Some countries creatively and purposefully create their own English variety for their own interests. Caine (2008) observed more and more nations of non-native English speaking countries used English, therefore he critically claimed that the ownership of English had shifted and resulted in the emergence of new world Englishes. The varieties emerge were such as Singaporen English, Malaysian English and Indian English. Since this emergence, Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) argued that 'English no longer has one single base of authority, prestige and normativity' (p. 3). The Outer Circle countries now apply their own norms to their Englishes which are slightly

different or even totally different compared to the Standard English of Inner circle.

English's access to the world's classes also initiates bilingualism, where learners use two languages everyday as tools for interaction and learning. McKay (2003) argued that bilingual speakers did not want to be like English native speakers because they used English only as an addition to their other languages to fulfil their specific purposes. They used English to get the massive information accessible in English and opened up wider communication. That becomes a positive reaction to maintain native language heritage while accepting English as a priority focus as a global language. Being bilingual speakers, learners can both develop their understanding and mastery of native language and the world language. This helps them perform excellent academic achievement. This achievement derives from their advanced and enhanced skills in syntax, cognitive, metalinguistic, attitudes towards others, and mathematics as the result of being bilingual (Tochon, 2009). The most captivating research finding about bilingualism is that 'bilingual people tend to do better at IQ tests when compared with monolingual people of the same socioeconomic class' (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1999, cited in Tochon, 2009, p. 655). Currently, Nations, both in Outer and Expanding Circles are in progress of applying bilingualism in their educational system.

Caine (2008) affirmed that the spread of English as a global language changed our understanding about English and how we taught it. The changes were firstly proposed by Erling in suggesting to teach English as 'a means of intercultural communication, critical analysis and indeed, where necessary, resistance' (Erling, 2005, cited in Caine 2008, p. 5). Further, Kachru suggested professionals to teach the language by slaughtering the five sacred cows of English. Firstly, the 'acquisitioned cow,' by questioning the relevance of language acquisition concepts, secondly, the 'theoretical cow,' by reconsidering the difference between native and non-native speakers, thirdly the 'pedagogical cow,' by revising and changing methods, materials, and models that correspond to local context, fourthly, the 'sociolinguistic cow,' by respecting the existing world languages, and finally the 'ideological cow,' by resisting English domination over local language that threatens to the latter's

abolishment (Kachru, 1996, cited in Caine, 2008, p. 5).

Kachru's metaphor accentuates adaptation than adoption to English in order to prevent 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson, 1992, Cited in Caine, 2008, p.4). His suggestion is not easy since it requires boldness, strength, and willingness to move from inner circles' orientation to local's context orientation in teaching practice.

Caine (2008) also emphasized the importance of the 'communicative competence' teaching methodology with recognition to cultural differences (p. 6). He obviously demanded ELT professionals to teach English with consideration to learners' social and cultural background and particular needs. This is not necessarily a huge resistance but more an attempt to avoid dependence to native speaker norms and models. Likewise, Cook (1999) also 'advocates creating a successful L2 learner profile as a standard rather than continuing to use native speaker standards' (Cook, 1999, cited in Caine, 2008, p. 6). Both Caine and Cook greatly recommended adapting English to local learners need based on the local learning circumstances and purposes. More specifically, Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) mostly concerned about the fact that the learning of English took place largely in the classroom. They were concerned that the exposure in the classroom would openly offer a new identity on learners because by learning the language they were brought into a world of change and modernity with rising chances. Tochon (2009), on the other hand, positively valued that language learning in the classroom supported learners' academic achievement and opened their mind to accept cultural differences and grant appreciation.

Further, Tochon (2009) firmly declared that the world language, which was English, was the key to global understanding. One of the consequences he mentioned might happen if neglecting the world language was that 'countries isolate themselves and lose international contracts and power by their incapacity to communicate in other language and with other cultures, not to speak of other issues of political importance' (p. 663). In adapting to English, schools must encourage understanding and respect towards different cultures while also most importantly, maintaining their native language. The best way for adaptation, he advised, was through 'immersion' (p. 667). He convincingly said that the immersion education

developed the expertise of both native language and English. However, this type of education needed particular training for teachers because ‘the environment must target higher-order thinking’ (Walker & Tedick, 2000, cited in Tochon, 2009, p. 668), where learners were expected to be actively engaged in the learning practice.

Japan’s classrooms can be taken as an actual sample for school adaptation to English as a global language. In 1990, the Japanese Ministry of Education designed a curriculum that guided English teachers to teach English in junior and senior high schools. This guideline coerced the teachers to adopt CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) methods into the classrooms. Teachers were intensely burdened in adopting CLT into the classrooms because this method was not appropriate to the classroom’s situation. There were problems with the lack of resources and expertise and with students who did not cooperate and kept using their mother tongue. Matsuda (2003a) criticized the Japanese’s language learning which was still profoundly dependent to Inner Circle English. She confirmed that learners should by now be introduced to the world Englishes and considered their real needs. As a real action to undertake, she recommended three adjustments; changing textbooks and materials that accommodate world Englishness, provide students opportunities to various Englishness, and assess students’ ability based on communicative competence (Matsuda, 2003a, cited in Caine, 2008, p. 7).

In consideration to the vast spread of English that influences English classroom teaching, McKay (2003) advocated changes for ELT (English Language Teaching) pedagogy and the EIL (English as an International Language) curriculum. She demanded that ELT pedagogy must not rely on a native speaker model; the cultural content of ELT must expose non-native speakers’ values, and CLT was not the most productive method of learning English. She also claimed that EIL curriculum must be based on the students’ objectives in learning English and should show sensitiveness to their cultural backgrounds.

Phillipson was pessimistic with the future of English as a global language as he said ‘English may be fashionable now, but it may be out of fashion tomorrow’ (Phillipson, 2003, cited in Tochon, 2009, p. 660). Tochon (2009) claimed

that ‘85% of the world’s population do not currently speak English’ and he’s certain that ‘they will not speak English in 10 years’ (p. 657). His argument was strongly based on TESOL reports critiquing the poor teaching quality in many non-native English speaking countries. He also acknowledged other nine emerging languages whose positions highly ranked in international sphere. They were ‘Chinese, Spanish, Hindi/Urdu, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Turkic, Bengali, French and German’ (p. 657). Their opinion contrasted to the fact occurring in Indonesia in which English dominated across its educational system. In Indonesia, English is a mandatory subject in all levels of its schools while from nine emerging languages mentioned by Tochon, only three of them are currently made as elective foreign languages subjects for senior high school students. They are Arabic, French and German.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What motivated English teachers in Indonesia learned English in the first place?
2. How do English teachers in Indonesia perceive English as a global language bringing impacts to Indonesian educational system?
3. What can English teachers in Indonesia do to minimize the hegemony of English over the Indonesian educational system?

The purposes of this study were to examine whether the non-native English teachers in Indonesia realize the emerging role of English in the global world especially into the Indonesian schools and to find out how those teachers perceive the impacts English brings into Indonesian educational system.

3.1.2 Participants

Twelve English teachers in Indonesia from Primary school to university in the province of North Sumatera were invited to participate in the survey. They were three English teachers from each educational level; primary school, junior high school, senior high school, and university respectively. They are Indonesian citizens, age from 25 to 39, three males and nine females, who have completed their degree in specialization for teaching English to Indonesian students and have been teaching English in Indonesian schools for at least three years.

3.1.3 Instrument

Qualitative interviews were used for data collection. The teachers were asked to give their views on a total of 11 questions of which two asked for their agreement or disagreement to the statements provided by the author regarding their personal beliefs and the other nine were open ended questions used to find out detailed views of the participants.

4 DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

4.1 Discussion and Findings

To the statements given to the participants in order to acquire their personal beliefs, all twelve participants similarly gave positive responses. The two questions were assessing the teachers' beliefs to the importance of learning English, and the need for making English as a mandatory lesson at all levels of education in Indonesia.

4.1.1 Teachers' beliefs to the importance of learning English

Asked to give elaboration on their beliefs for each question, every teacher gave wide insight. Meanwhile all similarly mentioned that the importance of learning English was for the unarguable role of English currently as a global language. Below was the collection of those teachers' thoughtful views (The teachers' original words or sentences had been paraphrased by the author for ease of comprehension):

1. English allowed students to attend international conferences and competitions.
2. English was the widely used language for text books such as science, math, and technology.
3. English enabled someone to travel around the world.
4. English enabled someone to get a well-paid job.
5. English created opportunities for bilingual learning.
6. English enabled students to access the Internet and get important information or resources that supported their study and self-development.
7. English enabled students to apply for or join exchanges programmes to go overseas.
8. English helped a country to be ready to face the AFTA (Asean Free Trade Area) and MEA (Asean Economic Community).

Those thoughtful views indicated that the teachers in Indonesia had understood the booming business English had brought worldwide (Mesthrie and Bhatt, 2008), and instead of being a victim, those teachers proved to seek for the benefits they could get from the condition as McKay (2003) also claimed that English could be used for many

advantageous purposes by any country for improving one's economy, politics, and education.

For the teachers' agreement to make English as a compulsory lesson at all levels of education in Indonesia, the teachers also delivered some rational reasons as follows (The teachers' original words or sentences were paraphrased as well for ease of comprehension):

1. Children's brain could develop better if they learned English.
2. To graduate from schools, students needed to pass an English test.
3. To be skilful in a foreign language, students should be introduced to the language from the very early age.
4. Early encounter to English would help children to memorize a lot of vocabulary that would be useful for fluent communication in English.

4.1.2 Teachers' perceptions to the need for making English a mandatory lesson at all levels of education in Indonesia

The nine open-ended questions asked in the interview could be grouped into three categories: the English teachers' motivation to learn English, their perspectives towards the impacts of English to Indonesian educational system, and their views and suggestions on how to minimize the impacts.

4.1.2.1 The English teachers' motivation to learn English

In the interview, the teachers were asked to recall the reasons why they were interested to learn English in the first place. The teachers mentioned quite similar reasons that could be concluded as follows:

1. Because English is an International language
2. English skills could be used to read English books and American novels, to send letters to the world star idols, to listen to English music and news.
3. Because people who could speak in English is cool.
4. Because having an ambition to become a tour guide in Indonesia.
5. Because knowing English enabled someone to communicate with people from overseas, to go and visit the western countries, and to find a good job.
6. Because having an ambition to be an English teacher.

Those motivations were undeniably triggered by the globalization in which English is the main tool

for all communication to happen around the globe in order to gain prosperity as Awwad, A.S., Stapa, S.H., Maasum, T.N.R.T.M. (2015) claimed ‘the global English is becoming increasingly associated with a cosmopolitan and technologically advanced imagined community’ (p. 281).

4.1.2.2 The English teachers’ perspectives towards the impacts of English to Indonesian educational system

From twelve participants, only 3 teachers acknowledged that English brought negative impacts into Indonesian educational system while the rest were confident enough saying that it had positive impacts only.

However, though some teachers realized the potential threat English could bring into the educational system, all agreed to make English as a mandatory lesson at school in Indonesia from the very lowest level; primary school to the highest one; university.

According to the teachers, knowing English since the early years enabled students to:

1. be more intelligent for they can use the language to read many books written in English for all subjects especially science and technology,
2. be prepared for any English test for entry to a higher degree,
3. access Internet and search for any information on it,
4. be able to operate a laptop or computer,
5. communicate with people around the world for many purposes,
6. be competent and active English speakers because the longer students learn the better their skills will be

Unlike Ridhwan, M.’s (2014) study that viewed English as a threat to advancement where students might less appreciate their own language and lose their ‘motherland-loving attitude’ (p.43), none of the teachers mentioned the impact as to cause the emergence or growth of bilingualism, though in reality, there had been several international schools in Indonesia that applied bilingualism in their education system, such as those international schools in big cities with some English native speakers involved as the teachers or curriculum designers.

The issue of bilingualism seem to be slowly developing in Indonesian classrooms teaching.

The major reason for this is that English is still treated as a foreign language. Only in some schools which are recognized as international standard schools and national plus schools put a huge effort in applying bilingualism. Tochon (2009) stressed the plus value of being bilingual in increasing students’ academic achievement, however, this opportunity seems to very rarely happen in Indonesia because the international standard and national plus schools are very expensive and therefore they are only for the high class society.

4.1.2.3 The English teachers’ views and suggestions on how to minimize the impacts

Some of the teachers seemed not to realize the hidden threat of English for eliminating the students’ identity. However, there were some teachers; at least one teacher from every level of education, who was thoughtful enough by suggesting the following actions in order to minimize the negative impacts of English use in schools:

1. The English curriculum should be designed well enough to get the local contents into the teaching practice. It meant the teacher should not totally rely on the English text book produced from overseas.
2. Providing qualified Indonesian English teachers instead of importing native speakers to teach in Indonesia.
3. Applying student centred method so that students were engaged in meaningful and interactive instructions.
4. Implementing local culture based learning for socializing the importance of local culture.
5. Explicitly emphasizing the importance of national values such as the importance of maintaining the national language, culture, and identity.

Those five points mentioned by the teachers were in congruence to the recommendation given by Caine (2008) and Cook (1999, cited in Caine) that strongly advised the non-native English teachers not to rely on the native speakers standards but wisely adapted the standards based on the local circumstances in which just like what the government in Indonesia was currently trying to apply to all schools in Indonesia by giving independence to design materials by making adaptation and adjustment to local context (Rahim Hamdan, Z., 2015). The adjustments offered by the teachers had also been similar to what Matsuda

(2003a, cited in Caine, 2008, p. 7) suggested for choosing a text book that accommodated variety of Englishes.

The teacher's views on point 5 opened up a chance for instilling a character education to the students as it was a great concern in Abu, Mochtar, Hassan, and Suhan's (2015) study in order to keep students discipline, honest and mentally and spiritually developed. Character education could also develop in students the values of kindness, friendship, brotherhood, family, sincerity, and togetherness (Artika, 2015).

Though Caine (2008) claimed that more and more nations created their own Englishes, Indonesia still remains in the Expanding Circle that uses English as a foreign language. The English varieties introduced in Indonesian classrooms are still British English and American English with the latter as the most familiar one. The other world Englishes such as Indian, Singaporean, and Malaysian Englishes hardly, if ever, access Indonesian education. So, for Indonesia, the spread of English did not generate any Englishes.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the English teachers in Indonesia as represented by twelve English teachers from four different levels of education in North Sumatera are aware of the importance of teaching English to Indonesian students since the early education for the students' own needs for a prosperous life. Despite the teachers' positive attitudes for supporting English subject given in all levels of education in Indonesia, they still mentioned that some efforts should be done to protect and maintain the national's language, culture, and identity. Therefore some adaptations or negotiations should take place to filter the contents of the text books used in classrooms so that Indonesian students, while being enriched by learning western cultures and language, can still keep their identity as Indonesians. English is here already, in all schools in Indonesia, there is no need for fear but urgent need for wise adaptation and negotiation so that English becomes a powerful tool for gaining tremendous and unlimited knowledge for all kinds of subjects learned at schools and in the end for prosperity.

However, this study was conducted with a very small number of teachers and so can be argued not very valid for representing Indonesian teachers in general, therefore further research can be done to get wider views of a bigger number of English teachers in Indonesia and to do even more direct intensive

longer observations to the schools in Indonesia since the 2013 curriculum is considered beneficial for English teachers to bring into the classrooms the culture of the schools and for making students more active (Ayuningtyas, L.P., 2015).

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