
Advocating Pluricentric Model for Teaching English in Indonesia

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Abstract: The population of people who speak English as an additional language outnumbers those who use English as first language. As it becomes an international language, English is offered as a subject in many countries at various educational institution levels. For many years, British English and American English became the monocentric model and assumed to be the ‘best’ reference for the purpose of teaching English around the world. However, nowadays, World Englishes (WEs), English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), scholars have questioned the privilege owned by the speakers of American and British English. Along with this, the contact between local languages and English has shaped the local varieties of English around the globe. This situation raises a question of whether the two privileged models are still relevant. Furthermore, WEs, EIL and ELF scholars believe that each country has its own right to determine which model to be adopted for pedagogical purpose. This belief implies that pluricentric model in which local varieties of English are adopted is eligible for teaching model in the countries where English is used. Indonesia is a country with complex language diversity. It has more than 700 regional languages as the first language and Bahasa Indonesia as the national language for its speakers. As a result of contact between these regional languages as well as Bahasa Indonesia with English, Indonesia has developed multiple layers of local varieties of English. Hence, the pluricentric model in which local varieties are accommodated seems feasible to be adopted for pedagogical purpose in Indonesia. This paper argues that from the perspectives of WEs, EIL and ELF the pluricentric model is suitable to be adopted in Indonesia. In addition, it proposes ways in which pluricentric model can be implemented in teaching English in Indonesia.

Keywords: pluricentric, monocentric, local varieties, EIL, ELF, Wes

1 THE PLURICENTRIC MODEL IN THE THREE PARADIGMS

Historically, English was viewed as the property of L1 speakers only. From the perspectives of traditional grammarians English was considered as a ‘homogenous’ language (Kachru, 1992) constituting a single variety (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Through a prescriptivism approach the traditional linguists prescribed formal rules based on what was considered correct, best and standard in an L1 speaker community (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.415). Such a view led to the assumption “that there is one “correct” way of language use which is “fixed” and invariant, and that any deviation is at best “incorrect” or “illiterate” and at worst, a threat to social stability” (Clark, 2013, p.58). This belief also means that English is viewed as a monocentric language with only one standard variety determined by the L1 speakers’ community.

The dominant role of L1 speakers was also notable in traditional ELT practices. L1 speakers become the ‘only’ point of reference for both the

ELT model (Kirkpatrick, 2006; Walker, 2005) and intelligibility (Rajadurai, 2007). Thus, imitating and being intelligible to the L1 speakers became the goal of learning English.

Today, English is the most widely spoken language in the world (McKay, 2012). Since the population of L2 speakers outnumbers L1 speakers, “the majority of interactions in English today take place between bilingual speakers of English” (McKay, 2012, p.72). In addition, the spread of English around the world has turned it into a pluricentric language (Kachru, 1996), that is, a language “with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms” (Kloss as cited in Clyne, 1992, p.1).

Since the expansion of English has resulted in the birth of new varieties of English, with “new norms shaped by the new sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts” (Acar, 2009, p. 14), the validity of L1 speaker norms as the standard variety and monocentric models has been challenged in three paradigms: WEs, EIL, and ELF. The following discussion focus on

how these three paradigms interpret the current use of English worldwide and provides a rationale for the adoption of pluricentric models in ELT.

World Englishes (Wes)

The WEs paradigm was pioneered by Braj Kachru, Larry Smith and other scholars (Bolton, 2012). The term ‘World Englishes’ (WEs) itself has multiple meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the study of varieties of English in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Mesthrie & Swann, 2010, p.99); earlier description of Kachru’s institutionalised varieties of English (McKay, 2011, p.124); or identification of nativised varieties of English in the former British colonies (Cogo, 2012, p.97). On the other hand, Kachru (1997) used the term to cover the varieties of English used in the three Concentric Circle countries: Inner Circle (the countries in which English is used as the dominant language, examples: America, Britain, Australia); Outer Circle (the countries of former British colonies, examples: India, Singapore); and Expanding Circle (the countries in which English is used in restricted domains, examples: Indonesia and China).

According to Kachru (1992), the Inner Circle countries have developed institutionalized varieties. Therefore, Kachru (1976) asserted that the codification and authentication of English should not be judged with reference to L1 speakers but to the socio-cultural context of the particular L2 speakers who are using their own varieties.

Kachru’s Concentric Circle has been very significant in the WEs paradigm since it promotes a pluricentric view in which the variations of English in Outer Circle countries are recognised as innovations and the variety of a English spoken is not the traditional ‘standard’ beset with errors and mistakes, but a variety of English that can be adopted as a new standard (Acar, 2009). Despite its popularity, Kachru’s Concentric Circle has been criticized since the model cannot adequately account for Englishes in Expanding Circle countries as it assumes that, in these countries, English has restricted functions and varieties are not legitimate (Cogo, 2008; Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2009). These assumptions are challenged because, in the globalisation era, Expanding Circle countries have increasingly used English intranationally in various domains (Bruthiaux, 2003; Canagarajah, 2013; Rajadurai, 2005) and have developed their

own norms (Bruthiaux, 2003; Canagarajah, 2013; Lowenberg, 2012; Rajadurai, 2005)

Regardless its critics, Kachru’s model has been influential in WEs paradigm since it advocates “the pluricentricity of English, seeking variety recognition, accepting that language changes and adapts itself to new environments, and highlighting the discourse strategies of English knowing bilinguals” (Pakir, 2009, p. 228).

English as an International Language (EIL)

From the perspective of EIL, it is believed that English in the globalization era mainly used among L2 speakers as an additional language. Thus, many scholars purport that EIL constitutes many varieties. For instance, Yano (2009) believes that EIL refers to “varieties of English with multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual local identities and yet high international intelligibility” (p.216). Similarly, Matsuda and Friedrich (2012) insist that EIL represents “more than one variety of English” (p.7) since each speaker brings his or her own variety.

EIL scholars believe that WEs can no longer be viewed as Englishes in Outer Circle countries only. In this respect, Sharifian (2009) claimed that “The focus of the EIL paradigm is on communication rather on the speakers’ nationality” (p.5); hence, English which is used for international communication by speakers “regardless of which ‘circles’ they belong to” can rightly be called EIL (Sharifian, 2009, p. 2). With these considerations in mind, the monocentric model, arguably, no longer hold and the teaching of English may be best based on a pluricentric model, in which each variety of English is “valid within its own context” (McKay, 2009, p.50).

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The ELF paradigm emerged in the late 1990s (Bolton, 2012). Originally, the term ‘lingua franca’ derives from Arabic ‘lisan-al-farang’ which refers to the language used between Arabic and European travellers (House, 2003). Nowadays, some scholars use the term ELF to describe the English used by people with different ‘linguacultural backgrounds’ (Jenkins, 2009, p.200) or different ‘first language backgrounds’ (Seidlhofer, 2005, p.339) or ‘mother tongues’ (Meierkord, 2004, p.111). The ELF paradigm has focussed on the use of

English by and between L2 speakers (Sifakis, 2007), particularly those within the Expanding Circle (Ferguson, 2009; Schmitz, 2012). As pointed out by Kirkpatrick (2006) who claimed that “the major role of English today is as a lingua franca” (p.78).

Similar to the WEs paradigm, ELF views all varieties of English as unique (Jenkins, 2006). Kirkpatrick (2006) asserted that “Lingua franca English becomes the property of all, and it will be flexible enough to reflect the cultural norms of those who use it” (p. 79).

It is clear that the ELF paradigm depicts how English is used by Expanding Circle communities, recognises the validity of varieties used by L2 speakers, and promotes pluricentricity of English (Cogo, 2012; Pakir, 2009) because it includes both ‘common ground and local variation’ (Jenkins, 2009). In ELF interaction the speakers communicate using their local variety of English and, simultaneously, adopt a common core to maintain mutual intelligibility.

To sum up, the three paradigms mentioned earlier, WEs, EIL, ELF, have several similarities, these being: the rejection of prescriptivism and monocentric model in which L1 English speakers varieties become the only point of reference, the support for endonormative models (the model from the local context), and recognition of L2 varieties as legitimate varieties (Cogo, 2008; McKay, 2011). In addition, the three paradigms: promote a pluricentric model, accepting language changes to adapt to new environments and recognise diverse discourse strategies employed by L2 speakers (Pakir, 2009).

In relation to how English used in the globalisation era, this paper maintains that WEs encompasses all varieties of English regardless of the Circle from which they come. In a normative sense, this paper endorses EIL and ELF paradigms in which all local varieties from any Circle are considered legitimate. From this position, all local varieties in Indonesia are legitimate varieties.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF PLURICENTRICAL MODEL

The position in which WEs, EIL, and ELF adopt certainly has implication for the teaching of English particularly in the country where the

majority of population use English as their additional language. The belief underlying those paradigms has changed the orientation of how English should be taught currently. It is time to shift the goal of learning English from mimicking and being intelligible to L1 speakers to being intelligible to other L2 speakers. This is because L2 speakers now shape the character of English in the globalisation era since their populations outnumber L1 speakers (Canagarajah, 2013; Tam, 2004).

Unlike traditional ELT which focus on monocentric model using L1 speakers such as American or British English as the only point of reference, the three paradigms (WEs, EIL, ELF) allow any countries to adopt the local varieties for pedagogic purpose. Bearing this in mind, Indonesia, arguably, can also adopt pluricentric model for several reasons. First, Indonesia has developed multiple layers of local varieties of English as a result of contact between its regional languages and Bahasa Indonesia with English. Hamied (2012) pointed out that “As the Indonesian people represent an extensive number of linguistic backgrounds, we teachers should accept varieties of English” (p.76). Second, some studies involving Indonesian participants revealed positive attitudes towards the adoption of their local varieties for ELT purposes (Adityarini, 2014; Hartono & Aydawati, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Intani, 2012). Third, the adoption of pluricentric model can fulfil the need of local student to express the value in their own culture (Hino, 2012). Fourth, the use of local varieties as the models will be convenient for teachers to teach and effective for the learners to learn (Nihalani, 2010). Fifth, the model will empower local teachers since “They will be freed from the self-conscious feeling that their own variety is being constantly and negatively evaluated against the externally imposed standard” (Kirkpatrick, 2006, p.79). Sixth, in terms of normative sense, Indonesia is developing local varieties which can be observed in English programs aired on radio and TV stations; official document such as birth certificate; English spoken by educated urbanites; public signs and advertisement.

Some scholars have proposed ways in which pluricentric model can be accommodated in teaching English. For instance, Nihalani

(2010) recommended the adoption of English pronunciation which are built on local varieties of English but are “globally intelligible without sacrificing their own local (national) identity” (p. 36), maintaining that this approach would give expression to segmental features that characterise national identity but incorporate supra-segmental features to permit international intelligibility. Referring to Nihalani’s recommendation, in Indonesian context, teachers can allow their students to substitute [θ] with [t] or [ð] with [d] since the two sounds are difficult to pronounce and not essential in English as a Lingua Franca interaction. Instead, teachers can focus their attention to teaching supra-segmental features such as stress and intonation.

In terms of ELT materials, many scholars advocated the inclusion of local and international contexts (Alptekin, 2002; Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011). Similarly, McKay (2012) put forward some principles for the design of EIL materials: relevance to students’ local context; the inclusion of a wide range of English varieties and examples of interactions among L2 speakers; provision for code-switching; and, teaching that is sensitive to the local culture of learning. With respect to Indonesian contexts, teachers can introduce local varieties from the regions other than their local students’ region. For instance, teachers in Central Java can introduce varieties of English spoken in South Sulawesi or vice versa. In addition, the use of code-switching should be regarded ‘natural’ and can be used as ‘teaching methodology’ (Cook, 2001, p.105). For instance, a teacher in Central Java is allowed to switch from Javanese to Bahasa Indonesia or to English or vice versa at certain key points to facilitate the students.

Hino (2012) enunciated the importance of developing norms based on local varieties. In this respect, Hino (2012) gave example of the Model of Japanese English (MJE), a model he developed as pedagogical alternative to American or British English. In his model, Hino (2012) made use of phonological, grammatical, lexical, discourse and sociolinguistics features of Japanese English as ELT model in Japanese context. Furthermore, Hino (2012) argued that MJE “exemplifies the range of possibilities for

Japanese users of English to communicate effectively in international situations while maintaining their Japanese voice” (p.29). In Indonesia, teachers can start developing the model by paying attention to phonological, grammatical, lexical, discourse and sociolinguistics features of the local varieties frequently used in their contexts. For instance in lexical features, teachers allow their students to use the word ‘hand phone’ as an alternative to ‘mobile phone’ or ‘cellular phone’ since the former is much more familiar to Indonesian people. In terms of grammatical features, the teachers are expected to be tolerant with the unique use of preposition, as exemplified by Azis (2003) who pointed out that in Indonesian English the preposition ‘with’ is commonly used in the word ‘same with’ and ‘different with’.

In relation to assessment, Lowenberg (2012) argued that the norms for English testing should be based on how English is used in “the contexts and situations in which students will actually be using English” (p.98). In a similar vein, Tomlinson (2006) maintained that “Learners’ production of spoken and written English should be evaluated in relation to the outcomes (or potential outcomes) in the context in which it is produced” (p.146). With this in mind, the norms for language testing in Indonesia can be based on the local varieties used within the students’ local context. For instance, in speaking test, the teachers can use the local people who are well-educated and ‘proficient bilingual users of English’ as the standard for measuring their students’ speaking ability.

3 CONCLUSION

It is clear that the spread of English has resulted in the development of new varieties of English around the globe. In this respect, the three paradigms—WEs, EIL, ELF—advocate the pluricentric model for ELT by accommodating varieties of English other than that of L1 speakers’ varieties. Based on the three paradigms recommendation it is sensible for ELT in Indonesia to adopt pluricentric model in which local varieties are accommodated. The adoption of the pluricentric model not only will empower local teachers but also motivate the students since the model is ‘user-friendly’ in Indonesian context. This paper has discussed

several ways in which pluricentric model can be implemented in ELT in Indonesia.

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