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## The Cultural Identities of Foreign Language Teachers

**Heri Santoso**

heri.santoso88@gmail.com

*SMP Negeri 18 Jakarta*

### ABSTRACT

Many foreign language teachers, especially English teachers, come from various regions. With their abilities, they managed to compete to be teaching staff in the capital city. Based on their ability to teach foreign languages, all of this cannot be separated from the cultural identity they carry in the world of education and, of course, will carry over to the classroom where they teach. This study uses an online platform because it is impossible to meet face to face. In each question contains a cultural identity whose use can affect the way they teach foreign languages. This cultural identity often draws attention to where they come from, their nature, how they think, and how they speak up, accompanied by their language teaching skills. Besides that, we will also find the advantages and disadvantages of the cultural identity they carry. The results showed that foreign language teachers in English learning has a cultural identity to teach in the classroom.

**Keywords:** foreign language teachers, cultural identity, English teachers, language teaching

### INTRODUCTION

The foreign language teachers who teach in the capital city come from different regions and come from various cultural, ethnic groups. The use of culture in teaching a language has become a problem at one time, and it is a challenge for every language teacher. Starting from the understanding and opinions that may differ from one another, this depends on the language's cultural meaning and

culture. This difference can arise based on the experience that teachers have as language teachers during their education. Besides, they must meet directly with the target culture. All language class activities can be carried out by any language teacher who understands the difference between the original culture and the target culture. In a language that has empathy in learning the language of listening, reading, writing, speaking, but all of that cannot be measured by the name of culture. Therefore a foreign language teacher must learn the students' culture; at least it must be familiar. After that, it only remains to think about how the teacher related to cultural identity with the teaching and learning process in the language class. Understanding culture is sometimes more difficult than understanding grammar or vocabulary. It is what often happens because every teacher has to enter to understand it more. Besides that, an experience can be a support process.

### **Identity in teacher education**

The first thing discussed is getting to know more about identity in teacher education from various views. Although this study does not include a specific discussion about considering the culture of teacher identity, this study still provides insight into teacher identity complexity. They found that the participants in their study performed what Janmohamed (1992) described as “border crossing” (p. 99) this section tries to master the language and culture in the capital city without losing their cultural identity. Cross (2006) attempted to broaden the share of science in teacher education to address the gap between teacher education and what teachers should do in their classrooms. Van der Walt (2007) leads to the opinion of (Bhabha (1994) about "third space," which comes from the idea of English teachers to adopt an English world perspective in teaching according to their method. This part discussed the cultural identity of

foreign language teachers and how teachers present their cultural identity in front of the class.

### **Identity of teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

Identity has several parts, such as social, cultural, religious, and political. It speaks not only of individuals but also individual interpretations in social contexts from oneself, either within a particular group or on the broader society. Bhabha (1994) claims that one's cultural identity can be negotiated and translated only in an indeterminate third space between the world and the individual, and between various identification processes in the social world and in the personal sphere whose contours are formulated by one's understanding of self. Many questions about identity tend to be inexhaustible because "understanding the self" is a never-ending process. As an illustration of everyday social, cultural, and political life, identity provides a way of life accepted by individual societies.

Language teaching and materials can be described as sociocultural, where various kinds of identities come together. According to Kramsch (1993), sociocultural identity is not fixed. It is what teachers bring to EFL students into the classroom and then followed and never changes until the lesson's end. Likewise, Norton (1997), from a post-structural perspective, argues that the relationship between language and identity is complex, contradictory, and multifaceted, dynamic across space and time, combined, contextualized in a coercive or collaborative process, and related. The various kinds of teaching activities will present in the classroom.

### **Positioning the target language**

In this section, how FL teachers position themselves in the language they teach. Clark (2008) studied how EFL students get teachers who have

multilingual and multicultural abilities. The result is an idea to create overlapping identities in multilingual discourse and citizenship in constructing social identities. Clark came to the decisive conclusion that "the different dimensions of overlapping constraints, opportunities and ambiguity of social identity" (p. 12) prove complex and difficult to articulate for the participants.

In studying differences in cultural positions, Siskin (2007) sees that English teachers who come from various regions test whether the cultural roles carry the language learning they provide. In response to finding that some teachers aim to change their own identities by assuming a specific subset of the innate behavior toward FL teachers' native culture. Siskin advocated creating what he describes as critical distance FL class privileged space between outsiders and people in which teachers critically examine their assumptions about language and culture "(p. 27), and revisit ideas and implications in pedagogy.

FL teachers develop and continue to establish themselves in the classroom. Based on the results of the questionnaire the researcher conducted, he explored the cultural identities of two English teachers who, on this occasion, were dominated by women: one EFL teacher came from Java and another from Medan who worked for years in traditional schools. Like Clark (2008), Menard-Warwick (2008) found that the two women described their identity as "split, hybrid, mixed" (p. 635). In this case, there is a process of their approach to teaching culture. The author takes two examples, women who have been in the profession for many years and have developed the ability to reflect on and articulate their cultural affiliations. There are no teachers who do not have experience in this study. They have experienced, and we can see that their abilities were excellent in teaching FL.

To discuss the teacher's identity, it turns out that it needs a more profound language that must be done. It can happen if we want to know the complexities. It starts from the teacher's identity and its implications for the

language class, especially when language teachers are considered capable of going beyond their traditional roles as users of linguistic codes that are considered neutral and function as intercultural competence teachers (Byram & Kramsch, 2008). Teachers have quite a lot of roles and responsibilities because these are the demands placed on each teacher to produce students who are competent and have good competitiveness against study groups in general.

Language learning, especially foreign languages, really requires self-awareness so that every student learning a foreign language can build a language and cultural identity among national languages. Cultural identity is also necessary because everything is based on the experiences gained by the teachers, and they can apply to students so that students are carried away in the cultural context and produce students who are like the teachers want. Although this is good, it should not take away from their cultural context. In learning the language itself, of course, students will learn vocabulary and how to pronounce them. For this, teachers and students must be neutral so that the target language can be met and as expected. In other words, cultural identity can be used in a variety of material delivery. That is not to emphasize that tradition or culture must be used, because every educational institution, both formal and non-formal, of course, already has its own rules in carrying out teaching and learning activities.

Language, of course, is more than just learning grammar and vocabulary. Precisely because the language has always been placed and connected by culture, the FL teacher's own culture arises of particular importance for the language classroom. The cultural affiliation that FL teachers bring to the school can affect their confidence and comfort level when teaching about the target language's culture and their cultural collaboration and experiences in shaping their cultural knowledge and the way they value it. It can be exemplified by foreign language teachers sometimes not confident in what they teach because they never or rarely have direct contact with native speakers. There was a lack of

self-confidence, which resulted in teaching activities that were not suitable even though the teaching concept was already available. Thus, the cultural identities that FL teachers have developed can influence the way they teach about culture and the relevance of their cultural affiliations. Therefore, this paper aims to look at the extent to which FL teachers are affiliated with more than one culture and how these cultural identities influence the way they see themselves in the classroom. Therefore two questions can guide us in this paper:

Q1 : How is cultural identity in the learning process carried out by foreign language teachers?

Q2 : What are the advantages and disadvantages of foreign language teachers regarding cultural identity in their class?

There is a meaning in the word of culture. Arjun Appadurai (1996), namely that the form of a noun, is related to the implication that culture is a kind of object, object, or substance while the adjective of cultural form refers to the realm of difference and comparison. In this opportunity, the focus is put more emphasis on cultural characteristics related to identity. As has been stated by Bauman and Kramsch (2003), although we are guilty of different areas, both see identity as something that exists in understanding a developing science. It is related to this that the complex results of several processes are not fixed but follow on a significant reassessment.

## **METHOD**

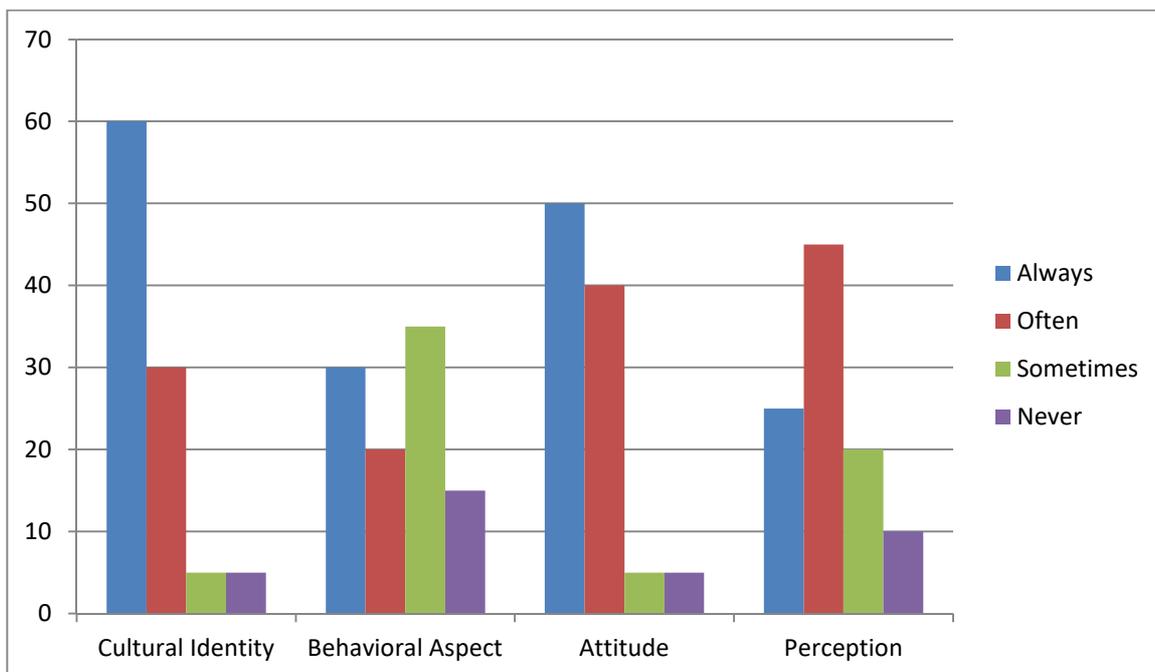
The participants I took part in were English teachers in Jakarta's several schools (the capital). They teach at different levels ranging from Elementary School to High School. The teachers come from other regions, some from Java, Medan, Padang and Nias. The cultures they carry and are still frequently used are Javanese, Sundanese, Bataknese, Padangese and Nias. The teachers as my participants were between the ages of 31 to 55. The participants were 20 people

consisting of 18 women and two men. You will find that the female participant is more dominant than male participants. It is not very influential because, in this study, researcher only want to see the cultural identity in foreign language teachers, especially in English learning, which is guided by the process. The teachers themselves come from public schools and private schools.

The data was collected by filling out a questionnaire consisting of 5 items. These items correspond to five main areas of inquiry, including personal background (for example, reasons for learning a language or wanting to teach it), cultural identity (e.g., expressed affiliation, perceived position in the use of the language and target culture), cultural identity in the classroom (for example, representing the culture of the target language, the desired self-image at the school), ambitions (for example, developing a student's cultural awareness), and time to use it. Completion of the questionnaire lasted from 10 to 15 minutes and was carried out by one researcher. Every questionnaire uses Google Form because it is impossible to do it face-to-face because of the Coronavirus disease (Covid19).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The participants have filled in the results of my questionnaires, and all of is used as the basis for the data described in this section. The participants answered all the questions contained in the questionnaire. And for that, we keep all participant data confidential, and it is for research purposes only. Researcher get a lot of information that can be used to reflect between fellow foreign language teachers or, more precisely, as an English teacher. Researcher will present the data in a bar chart based on an instrument that focuses on two questions on research questions.



Based on the chart above, we can see that cultural identity still dominates foreign language teachers. In general, teachers always bring their culture into the foreign language learning process, and in particular, here is English because they are English teachers. The age variation does not change the nature of cultural identity. From this result, also, the first question has been answered. To support the first question, that is also strengthened by the data results that the researcher obtained from the behavioral aspect. We can see that almost all of the processes are close to each other, indicating that most of them are influenced by cultural identity and enter their behavior when teaching in the classroom. From the attitude part, almost all of them follow the cultural identity brought by the foreign language teachers that they teach or accustom to students. There is a mixture of cultures in getting the goal of mastering the target language. Then in terms of the perception that cultural identity is not always influential because there is also an action that shows the advantages and disadvantages of using one's own cultural identity. The advantages and disadvantages can be seen from teaching and learning activities in the language class.

A culture does need to be maintained and preserved. Culture itself can be a reflection of a person's personality. When a new culture enters, all of that will be processed, and if it is observed, the original culture will never disappear even though the person begins to forget it. Cultural identity is at the core of the cultural description in this paper. Everything will be more diverse when culture is combined with language. Language teachers have done it. It is a challenge for foreign language teachers because they have to maintain the original culture as a cultural identity. The new culture they get where they are, and foreign culture because they teach foreign languages. Cultural identity can help teachers teach activities because a cultural approach is sometimes easier to understand learning in the classroom. Based on experience, of course, cultural identity has a very important role in this part. Therefore, based on the results of the data obtained, most foreign language teachers still apply cultural identity in the classroom's teaching process.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, it can conclude that language and cultural identity are interrelated, both of which influence each other and each produces responses to each other. Besides, as indicated by the research findings, cultural identity influences cultural learning, which means that holding a cultural identity can bring readiness to learn a foreign language. Language functions as an identity and is reinforced by culture. Identity can be interpreted as the ability to socialize and provide language learners opportunities to increase this potential. There is a reciprocal relationship between cultural identity and student success in language learning, even in the context of foreign language learning.

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