

Exploring Learning Experience in Shaping Teachers' Beliefs in the Light of EIL in ELT Context

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Abstract—English as an international language (EIL) calls for a paradigm shift from teaching Standard English to teaching EIL that recognizes English varieties and promoting source culture as a suitable basis for EFL learners rather than rely on Standard English norms. Many studies have portrayed teachers' beliefs and practice concerning English as an international language in an educational setting; little has been made to study the variable that influences teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice. Qualitatively analyzed, this study examined learning experience domestically and overseas in shaping teachers' beliefs regarding EIL by senior high school English teachers in Indonesia. The observation and interview were employed to assess two dimensions of EIL (i.e. beliefs and pedagogy). Results indicated that teachers' learning experience seemed to have less effect on shaping teachers' beliefs and its practice in the light of EIL. Standard English and cultural content from the West were highly prevalent to be taught in the classroom. Nonetheless, the participants agreed that EIL is fundamental due to its flexibility in modifying linguistic norms to establish mutual linguistic understanding. The author proposes EIL-sensitive teacher training to the teachers in order to make them aware of English varieties and local culture as well as to make them play an active role in designing and implementing teaching, learning theories and materials based on EIL.

Keywords: *English as an international language, learning experience, teachers' beliefs*

I. INTRODUCTION

The inevitable acceleration of globalization allows multicultural societies to interact with each other and creates multilingual communities. This phenomenon emerges the urgency of English as an International Language (EIL) and at the same time influences the English language teaching industry. It compels new insight into the language since it deals with the transformations of language, culture, and identity. In other words, English is no longer a homogenous language with a single norm. Consequently, the English teaching practice must emphasize the varieties of Englishes and learners must be given opportunities to go beyond their own cultural boundaries Mai (2017).

Previous research related to EIL, specifically regarding teachers' beliefs towards EIL has elicited a concept where Standard English is a sole paradigm to be taught in outer and expanding countries (Ali, 2014; Gunantar, 2016; Liu & Cheng, 2017; Mai, 2017; Mai, 2016; Rose & Montakantiwong, 2018). In the context of Indonesian ELT, it is discovered that the

teaching principles and practices are less exposed to the notion of EIL and less recognizing the development of multilingual, multicultural and intercultural competence (Andriyanti & Rieschild, 2017). Further, it is revealed that the current English teaching practice is emphasized on Standard English and grammar correctness which do not offer the learners to use the language effectively varieties (Ubaidillah, 2018). Regarding the Englishes taught and learned in Indonesia are British or American English, both "inner circle" varieties (Ubaidillah, 2018). Hence, it is to say that EIL teaching pedagogy is not widespread yet in Indonesia.

EIL teaching pedagogy is a necessity in the light of today's language and society. Several researchers found out the advantages of EIL from teachers who have shifted their teaching belief from native oriented to nonnative oriented (Ali, 2014; Anchimbe, 2009; Gunantar, 2016; Liu & Cheng, 2017; Mai, 2016; McKay, 2018). Firstly, Ali (2014) pointed out that EIL is prudent to be implemented as it prepares learners to be international speakers in global communication contexts. It fulfilled learners' need and offered better understanding of English varieties and dialects (Mai, 2016). In line with this, Lee and Chen Hsieh (2018) suggest that English varieties suited EFL learners to communicate effectively and confidently with foreigners. Consequently, those findings are related with Anchimbe (2009) and McKay (2018). The British or American English as the Standard English has to be transformed in EIL settings (Anchimbe, 2009). This gives significant change for teaching and assessment. Varieties of English play an important role for the students to achieve their purposes in their community in creating a sense of community and building relationship with other local speakers (McKay, 2018).

Liu and Cheng (2017) stated that focusing on fluency is essential to attain successful communication. They added that embracing EIL as a teaching paradigm offers them opportunities to get more information about different cultures and English varieties (Liu & Cheng, 2017). This is supported by Gunantar (2016) that teachers' beliefs towards EIL were reflected on the teaching materials such as offering local and global cultural content. Those would preserve and reinforce local culture as well as raising awareness of other cultures. Therefore, as the outcomes, the students will be able to use English contextually and they will gain a global vision of the world.

Despite the accumulated research above, it is still rare to find research that investigates the variable that influences

teachers' beliefs and their implementation in the light of EIL in ELT context. It is fundamental to investigate this issue since the variable is a great tool to determine teachers' beliefs and their beliefs are one of the most crucial steps for educational development and innovation (Webster, McNeish, Scott, Maynard, & Haywood, 2012). In line with this, the issue of how learning experience in domestic and overseas shapes teachers' beliefs regarding EIL and its implementation in the ELT context was explored. This research is aimed at discovering and exploring their beliefs, justification and their teaching practice in the notion of EIL in ELT context. It is expected that this study will contribute to filling literature gaps with the previous studies, provide feedback for the stakeholders to insert EIL material in the teacher training to raise teachers' awareness of English varieties and source culture. Foremost, it is expected that teachers can integrate the EIL principle as their substantial element in their teaching practice.

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

A qualitative case-study design was employed since it matches the aim of the study to gain deep information about how learning experience shapes teachers' beliefs concerning EIL in ELT context. In addition, a case study is aimed to explore and to understand the current yet complex phenomenon that happens in individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2017). Therefore, the revelation of beliefs, values, reasons, and understanding will be presented in this research.

B. Participants

The participants of this study were four experienced senior high school English teachers in West Java, Indonesia. Two of the participants were those who had teaching training overseas while the other two participants were those who had teaching training in domestic institutions. The consideration for choosing the participants is due to their professional experience and knowledge so it was expected the participants could enrich the information desired by the researcher. Moreover, since the participants had background learning in domestic institutions and overseas, the revelation of how it influenced their beliefs, as well as their teaching practice, was considered to be the main investigation in this research. Pseudonyms 1,2,3,4 are used. Pseudonym 1 and 2 are the first group who had teacher training overseas, while pseudonym 3 and 4 are the second group who had teacher training in local.

C. Data Collection Procedure

There were two main instruments used to gain the data which are classroom observation and interview. The class observation was conducted prior to the interview for two meetings. In this sense, the researcher collected the data based on the physical setting, human setting, interactional setting, and the program setting (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). The classroom observation was made based on the criteria of teaching EIL that is adapted from McKay, (2003, 2012) and Tajeddin, Alemi, and Pashmforoosh (2017). It is designed as a

tool to validate teachers' perspectives towards EIL. It is employed as the tool to give rich and detailed descriptions when the observation is held. In addition, the semi-structured interview was conducted after the observation. The interview was audio recorded. The questions are adapted from Mai (2017), McKay (2003), and Tajeddin et al. (2017).

D. Data Analysis

The EIL concept presented by Mai (2017), McKay (2003, 2012) and Tajeddin et al. (2017) became the frameworks for analysing the data. In this case, the approach was adapted from Cresswell (2014) which consists of compiling raw data, reading all the data, codifying the data into themes, interpreting themes, interpreting the meaning of the themes, connecting the finding with the underlie theories and related previous studies and presenting something new to the previous study.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to reveal the learning experience in shaping teachers' beliefs regarding EIL that influence their teaching practice. The revelation of their beliefs, justification and teaching practice will be elaborated below.

A. Teachers' Learning Experience and Their Beliefs Toward EIL

There are two groups selected in this study. The first group consists of two participants who had teacher training in Australia for six months and one month. The second group consists of two participants who had teacher training in Indonesia for one month. It is discovered that although the teachers have had teacher training overseas or domestically, it would not have a significant impact on their beliefs if EIL materials were not inserted in the teacher training.

In line with the findings above, both groups stated that they were unaware of English varieties such as Malaysian English, Singaporean English, Chinese English, and Indian English. As Pseudonym 3 declared that "I don't know about Singaporean or Malaysian or Chinese English. However, if there are varieties like that, maybe Sundanese English should exist too". The unfamiliarity of Englishes encountered by the participants may have been caused by the content of the teacher training that had not yet introduced them to this new paradigm.

Pseudonym 1 and 2 expressed that their training included Indonesian cultural studies; nonetheless, it was not specifically influencing the norms that should be taught in teaching English. It is revealed that the training was concerned only with contemporary culture in Indonesia. As a result, they did not gain sufficient exposure about the concept of English varieties and how it was supposed to be applied in teaching learners who are not native English. They assumed that it was mainly affecting the teaching methodology selection in the classroom.

The same is true for pseudonym 3. The study revealed that the local teacher-training informed him only about the teaching methodologies such as total physical response (TPR) that can be implemented in the classroom. Pseudonym 4 found the local teacher-training had not offered information regarding EIL; hence, it did not give an impact on viewing the status of

English in Indonesia and how the view guided the teachers in their teaching. This case is reflected in their teaching where the participants employed British English or American English in the classroom. Thus, this research is inconsistent with the research conducted by Mai (2017) that found teachers who had to learn overseas make a significant influence on teachers' beliefs concerning EIL due to their experience when encountering communication with people with different linguistic and cultural background. In this research, the content of the learning experience determined teachers' beliefs. It denotes learning experience overseas is not sufficient and it is not a prominent factor in resulting teachers' beliefs towards EIL.

B. The Presence of EIL in ELT Practice

One of the ways to figure out teachers' beliefs is seen through their practice. It is revealed that native English norms dominated the teaching practice on pronunciation, linguistic correctness, culture, and vocabularies.

Predominantly, in the case of pronunciation, the participants highly expected the students to speak like native English. The pronunciation is rhotic or post-vocalic such as the word far. When the teachers employed British English, /r/ is not pronounced and /r/ is pronounced when the teachers used American English. They concerned that if the students were unable to speak like a native, what they said would be not understandable although they have acquired perfect grammar skills. This resulted in their beliefs regarding which paradigm to be implemented in the classroom. It is proven from the data that most of the participants still assumed native norms should be brought into the classroom activities. They believed that Standard English is the origin of English grammar, vocabularies, pronunciation, and culture. They also mentioned that Standard English is easier to understand for the students because of the commonness of its variation. Pseudonym 1 considered EIL as a global language and native-like competency was highly favored. Further, pseudonym 3 conveyed that "Standard English is useful for my students because British English is common everywhere and people will understand what they say". Since the participants are only familiar with Standard English, they do not recognize English varieties. The result of the current study is also in agreement with those of Andriyanti, Erna, Rieschild (2017); Bernaisch and Koch (2016); Siregar (2010); and Ubaidillah (2019) who pointed out that Standard English still dominated the pedagogy in Indonesia that involves its teaching principles and practices since it is considered as legitimate and prestigious language.

In line with this, the participants believed that native-like competence is crucial to be achieved because it is the model of the correct and original model of English. The participants assumed that the pedagogy from the West has a clear-cut pedagogy, assessment, and linguistically comfortable to be used. It can be implied that English language teaching in Indonesia is still perceived exclusively to be possessed by the inner-circle countries.

Moreover, it is found that the teachers emphasized linguistic correctness rather than encouraging students to use language effectively and to be proficient users. As a result,

students' lack of ability in both receptive and productive skills was portrayed. This is occurred by considering that the teachers maintain high expectations of themselves that at the same time influences their expectations towards the students. If the students are not able to compose correct English utterance or writing, the teachers may imply themselves as unprofessional teachers. This finding concurred with previous studies conducted by Liu and Cheng (2017) and Pishghadam and Saboori (2011) that the teachers had a strong belief of expecting the correct use of English compared to English varieties. Besides, Liu and Cheng (2017) advocated that when the aim of the teaching practice is on fluency rather than pronunciation and grammar correctness, students will be able to sustain and achieve successful communication.

Interestingly, this study also showed contradictory beliefs regarding the pedagogy from the West. Although the participants desired the adoption of English pedagogy from the English speaking countries, they encountered obstacles when implementing their beliefs into practice. It is asserted that they required a sociolinguistically and socioculturally suitable teaching paradigm for Indonesian teachers and students. They further claimed that depending on the pedagogy from the West had resulted in students' skills deficiency in English. In addition, they identified a mismatch between the pedagogy from the West and the national curriculum, culture of learning and the students' communicative needs. To conclude, the pedagogy from the West seems to be irrelevant to be implemented for Indonesian learners.

One of the participants believed that focusing on intelligibility can be an effective tool to enhance students' communicative competence. This goes along with Kirkpatrick's (2014) ideas that in this diverse world with different accents and pronunciations, sounding like a native speaker is not prominent. It is mutual intelligibility that serves a function as the ability to understand each other's utterances. It is emphasized that "being a native speaker is no guarantee of mutual intelligibility". In addition, the participant pointed out that teachers must teach intelligible pronunciation to avoid miscommunication because context and cues were no longer helpful if the pronunciation is unintelligible. This is congruent with Pollard (2014) that intelligible does not mean any pronunciation is acceptable. It must be highlighted that the accepted norms for their respective English variety must be considered carefully in order to produce intelligible communication.

The study also reported that the second group still determined local culture essential to be employed in the classroom as the tool for showing national identity. One of the ways to preserve the local culture is by using local lexical items. The teachers who had teacher training in local allowed the students to employ local words in Indonesian dishes such as *cincau*, *cireng*, *bala-bala*, and *bakso*. They argued if those words are translated to English, the words will lose the true meaning. Moreover, prevailing local words can be a great tool to show national identity.

Pseudonym 4 offered an instance for this case. Tempura that is known from Japan is not translated in English, by doing this "people will be able to identify the origin of the dish; this

also works in clothing such as Batik that represents Indonesia". Pseudonym 3 asserted that additional information is provided when the interlocutor does not recognize the local words; thus, the local words do not need to be translated to English. He believed that if we continue using local words, conceivably one day *bakso* is not translated into meatball. From this circumstance, the teachers who had teacher training in local are more open in embracing local words to be included in teaching practice. The phenomenon is in concurrence with the study of Gunantar (2016) that informed vocabularies as the main factor to express students' culture to achieve learning target. It is expected that the representation of the local culture that is conveyed through the lexicons makes the students obtain broader knowledge of diversity and raise awareness of their own culture (Setyono & Widodo, 2019).

IV. CONCLUSION

The outcome of this qualitative study portrays learning experience in shaping senior high school's teachers beliefs towards EIL. Although learning experience overseas is assumed to have a significant influence on teachers' beliefs, the content of learning experience is considered to be the most influential factor that determined teachers' beliefs in viewing EIL and its pedagogy. Since there has no teacher training about EIL provided by the local government in this study; therefore, the participants seem to prefer Standard English to be the yardstick of teaching and learning English due to the consideration that it is more legitimate, it has clear-cut pedagogy, and instructed in the curriculum. Nonetheless, the result of the study also indicates that the pedagogy from the West is no longer relevant for Indonesian learners since it does not cater to students' communicative needs when encountering communication among different people from the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

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