

Literacy Breakthrough Towards Indonesian Disaster Mitigation

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Abstract—Indonesia is in one of the world’s most natural disaster-prone areas and is at risk to multiple hazard. The National Disaster Management Agency or Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB) records that the number of natural disasters during 2019 is 3,271 events excluding human-caused and other incidents of mass trauma. Foreigners from various countries have been offering partnership in volunteering for disaster recovery, risk reduction, preparedness, and financial activities. In 2004, deathly Tsunami struck Indonesia and more than 4000 foreign volunteers participated for the disaster recovery. Despite growing interest in international volunteerism, Indonesian volunteers face a challenge in language and culture differences. A study conducted by Talarski (2014) investigated cross cultural immersion in Tanzania and Zambia found that foreign volunteers have greater understanding of the local culture because the local volunteers welcomed them as the part of their community. It shows that well preparedness of the local brought impacts to culture immersion. Indonesian volunteers should be ready in terms of partnership to foreign nations especially in communication and culture immersion. To overcome the problems, English and cross culture literacy are essential to put into practical to fill the gap due to language and culture differences. Thus, this paper is intended to offer literacy as a breakthrough toward disaster mitigation during the actions. Therefore, English and cross culture literacy are needed to understand and to practice before the voluntary mission.

Keywords—*english literacy, disaster mitigation, cross culture communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

Disasters can occur naturally (e.g., tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wildfire, mudslides, or drought), be human-caused (e.g., shooting mass, chemical spills, or terrorist attacks), and other incidents of mass trauma (e.g., infectious disease, incidents of community unrest, and other types of traumatic events) ^[1]. Indonesia is in one of world’s most natural disaster-prone areas and is at risk to multiple hazards ^[2]. Frequent disaster which always happened in Indonesia is hydrometeorology disaster, such as flood and landslide. Many attempts to minimize and prevent flood and landslide already did by the regional government, collaborate with some college. However, the losses caused by the disaster still happen especially in the monsoon or rainy season ^[3]. More recent disasters in Indonesia have included devastating earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The National Disaster Management Agency or Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB) records that the number of natural disasters during 2019 is 3.271 events exclude human-caused and other incidents of mass trauma ^[4].

Those disasters caused thousands were left homeless and in need of basic humanitarian assistance. These frequent and recent disasters illustrate the need to address not only the immediate disaster response, but also disaster prevention and risk reduction initiatives. Initiatives response are given by various national and international organization in terms of volunteerism. Volunteers in both national and international organization were provided with the unique opportunity to engage with their surroundings. Volunteers are exposed to a new culture, social reality and language which increase their consciousness of different social problems that exist ^[5]. In other words, volunteers deal to language and culture as the major problems among all.

The problem of language faced by volunteers in line with the previous research conducted by Lough, McBride, and Sherraden (2009) investigated alumni report of International volunteering from United States and some English-speaking countries including the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia^[6]. They found that language barriers were the most significant challenge for many volunteers. In some situations, the failure of a volunteer to speak in the local language may have contributed to less successful provision of service. In other cases, “the language barrier caused extra work” because the organization was obligated to supply additional time and resources to explain a volunteer’s responsibilities, particularly when the volunteers were in the community only for a short period of time. According to one participant, the inability to communicate in the local language could have “caused more misunderstanding than help” for some organizations and their clients.

The cultural problem and social reality emerged in form of a culture shock. A previous study conducted by Lough, McBride, and Sherraden (2009) found that a number of cultural miscommunications resulting from working with local staff or members of the community are vital issue to be solved. These differences commonly arise from differences of opinion over cultural beliefs and sensitive topics such as homosexuality, roles of race and gender, or politics. Some reported being proactive in challenging activities they thought were inappropriate or immoral. Seven alumni outlined incidents when faced with corporal punishment or abuse, resulting in significant tension with the school or community. A small number of volunteers mentioned additional minor differences, including discrepancies over work habits, spending priorities, manners, or educational values and technologies. A successful case of cross culture in volunteerism revealed by Talarski (2014) ^[7] found that cross cultural immersion of foreign volunteers in Tanzania and

Zambia have greater understandings of the local culture because the local volunteers welcomed them as the part of their community. It shows that well preparedness of the local brought impacts to culture immersion.

Cultural immersion is a key of “intensity factor” which more likely refers to the depth of volunteers’ involvement and participation in a new culture. Both foreign and local volunteers equally receive different cultures in all aspects especially during volunteerism^[8]. In the foreign volunteers’ perspectives, it is typically increase as individuals establish personal relationships with host community members in which they live, work, and study in new cultural environments^[9]. When volunteers are immersed in a culture, living with host families and serving side-by-side with community members, they are brought into direct contact with the host culture. As volunteers serve on the ground, they may be perceived as having more equal status than volunteers who live in a separate residence, who receive high wages, or non-native speakers^[10]. Under the right conditions, increased contact with others provides more accurate information about others, which can decrease tension, prejudice and stereotypes^[11]. Increased exposure to a host culture often increases the likelihood that the host culture will be closely identified by volunteers. This cultural re-identification, in accordance with the theory of social identity, contributes to a greater understanding and acceptance of the society of the out-group^[12]. Moreover, foreign volunteers who have direct and intimate communication with those in the host culture, including close friendships, romantic encounters, and relationships with host families may have more intense intercultural interactions and increased prospects for cultural shock and adaptation^[13]. Stage theories of cultural adaptation emphasize the importance of culture shock, and stress that immersion in a host culture creates a degree of psychological isolation and anxiety that encourages cultural learning^[14]. Local volunteers provide every aspects that foreign volunteers need especially in language and cross culture. Thus, intimate communication with those in the host culture goes well.

Language and cultural differences are a common challenge for the global humanitarian response sector. This statement is truer in some places in Indonesia. The adoption of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language in 1945 was a decisive and important tool in uniting the new country. As less than 5 per cent of the nation’s population were native speakers of Malay, the language on which Bahasa Indonesian is based, an extensive program was undertaken to formalize, document and then train the entire nation in the new national language. As such, speaking Indonesian is intrinsically linked to national identity; conducting government meetings in another language is almost unheard of and few government employees are experienced or comfortable in English or any of the other common languages of the international humanitarian community.

Language and cultural difference have been a major challenge in all major disaster responses in Indonesia over the last ten years. In many of those disasters national and international coordination meetings have been conducted separately, leading to confusion and overlapping efforts.

Rarely does either party recognize the importance of, or dedicate resources to translating documents or hiring real time translators, instead relying on local project staff as translators or otherwise fumbling their way through meetings. In order to be more effective, planning for emergency response preparedness in Indonesia needs to take language into consideration, both during planning and as a critical component of response and coordination. Real time translation, automatic translation of important guidelines (such as ERP guidelines), which is ‘business as usual’ throughout Europe needs to be built in to engagement in Indonesia. Increased support to quality communication would ease many existing misunderstandings.

Language in this study tends to be more focus on the readiness of the local volunteer in preparing not only the accommodation but also the support system during volunteerism partnership. In other words, foreign volunteers can complete their missions accordingly. Learning language is not trying to accomplish any individual’s first language, but trying to learn something that exists on a community level, especially in volunteerism.

Cultural Literacy is the ability to recognize all the subtle nuances that come with living or working in a particular society. It consists of understanding the language, methods, hypotheses, and unstated ideas that constitute a way of behaving and communicating. It is unique to each culture, even the particular cultures that form in a workplace or university, and most people are only educated in their own culture. The advantage of having a good understanding of cultural literacy is learning how to avoid misunderstandings and interact well with people from other cultures.

This study is on literacy breakthrough; the insights that literacy on language and culture is crucial toward the disaster management in Indonesia. The objective of the study is to offer some solutions for the better management and risk reduction of disaster in terms of building literacy both in language and cross culture understanding. This study is beneficial for the foreign volunteers to be ready with cultural differences in Indonesia, the local volunteers to be more professional both in their language skills and culture adaptation to the foreigners, and most importantly for the local society to be more knowledgeable with their surroundings and to work together with the volunteers.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Four central features have been mentioned by Brutt-Griffler (2002) in developing international language. *First, the development of a world econocultural system includes the development of a world market, business community, a global scientific, cultural, and intellectual life.* More products and trends from an English speaking country are reaching global market. Crystal (1997) illustrated its spread through important arenas of international relations, the mass media, international travel, international safety, education, and communications. It makes English become an international language. *Second, an international language picture itself to bridge the gap in multilingual contexts.* Graddol (1999) portrayed the number of people using English as second language will be around 462 million during next 50 years. It

constitutes English to be justified as a global language. *Third, it is learned by various levels of society.* In many countries, English is a required subject which has to be learned in every level of learners. *Fourth, the language is acquired by many individuals across the world.* It spreads not through speaker migration but rather by macro acquisition. In sum up, international language is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another, and English covers those criteria.

Cross-cultural literacy is important both to individuals and to community. As an individual, it will help people to interact with others from diverse background smoothly. It also helps to develop a critical cultural perspective, especially if someone is part of the dominant culture. Cultural literacy also helps people to develop certain skills, including communication and self-reflection.

This paper employed documents analysis as a preliminary data in qualitative research and discusses document analysis procedure in the context of actual research experiences. Eight-process in this study are proposed by O'Leary (2014) as follows: (1) Gather relevant texts. In this step, the texts chosen are from the manuals of disaster management in Indonesia, both written by the government of Indonesia and also some by US and Australia government as a way to have risk reduction on the disaster, (2) develop an organization and management scheme. In order to select the appropriate sources of data, the organization of the texts are made upon the topic of language and culture literacy. Another organization is also drawn under the categories of the target respondent of the study, those are the foreign volunteers, the local volunteers and also the society suffering the disaster, (3) Make copies of the originals for annotation. This step is taken to guarantee that the original texts is at its best condition and also to avoid bias, either from the researcher and also from the writer of the texts, (4) Asses authenticity of documents. Concerning the authenticity of the documents, the researcher chose the documents which are the legal release from the authorities of Indonesian and foreign governments in their concern to work for disaster management. Thus, the documents are supposed to be authentic to be used as source of data, (5) Explore document's agenda, biases. This step is quite important to implement, especially to avoid bias from the writer of the texts and also from the researcher. These are delivered by checking the tone, style and purpose in the next step of research, (6) explore background information (e.g., tone, style, purpose). The researcher explores the background information through the use of the diction, the tone or voice of the text writers and also the purpose of the texts. While they are written to help the disaster management in Indonesia, the texts also contain some purposes which are drawn specifically by the writer of the text based on their capacity or roles in the process of voluntary mission, (7) ask questions about document (e.g., Who produced it? Why? When? Type of data?). These questions are checked very carefully as if the documents are given some checklist and interviews as the treatment of a research, and (8) explore content. The last part of the data analysis would be in the content, that is on the language and culture literacy as well as on the target respondents of the disaster management in Indonesia.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper analyses the urgency of building literacy as a breakthrough toward disaster mitigation. Literacy is considered to be important as a solution to disaster risk reduction in the way that it helps all supporting elements to work together. The scope for literacy in this paper is built within the framework of education both in formal and informal settings, is culturally bound, and is established by the stakeholders namely the national government, local and foreign volunteers, and also civil society.

Literacy is a part of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The basis is for positive social transformation, justice, and personal and collective freedom. Literacy is no longer ranged between reading, writing and calculating, but it goes beyond to the boundaries of economic, politics, social transformation, globalization, information and technology [16].

Literacy as a continuum formal and non-formal education for children, teen, and adults. Due to the risk reduction disaster in Indonesia, disaster management especially in literacy context are needed to literate three subjects by programs and training which are focused on (1) government, (2) local and foreign volunteers, and (3) the society.

A. Government Supports on Literacy

In order to reduce the risk of the disaster, government of Indonesia managed to set Indonesian National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB) which include the tasks on disaster prevention, emergency response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, and also works to communicate information on disaster management activities to the community. The government has set cooperation with UN to integrate disaster risk reduction into development programming in the country. BNPB also manages and develop guideline toward international assistants.

Government roles on building literacy is supported in education program which is embedded in school curricula, education material, and training. The education program is mainly on disaster awareness and readiness to minimize the risk.

B. Volunteer Assistance on Literacy

Volunteers are also a prominent agent in the process of disaster management. Their capacity building is necessary in order to assist the society for disaster response and recovery. The effort to build the literacy in the form of capacity development training to the supports BNPB staff on a regular basis is highly needed.

In the process of acquiring literacy, there should be some consideration on the need of different cultural processes, personal circumstances and collective structures. When two or more culturally different groups come together, interact, and communicate, it would create new ideas, beliefs and assumptions of seeing the world. Volunteers are exposed mostly to different social problem in their surrounding especially language and culture. Language and cultural differences are common challenge for the global humanitarian response sector. A successful case of cross culture in volunteerism revealed by Talarski (2014) [7] found that cross cultural immersion of foreign volunteers in

Tanzania and Zambia have greater understandings of the local culture because the local volunteers welcomed them as the part of their community. The success reflects on the several aspects including motivation, changes in their beliefs about themselves, changes in their cultural beliefs, volunteers' impact, and hospitality and relationship. It shows that well preparedness of the local brought impacts to culture immersion. Among others, language was found as the most significant challenge for volunteers. The language problems contributed to less successful provision of service and caused more misunderstanding than help because it reflects and reinforces cultural norms. Cultural norms often caused a problem over different opinion of cultural beliefs and sensitive topics.

However, the target of literacy to overcome the problems are foreign volunteers, local volunteers, and society. Foreign volunteers need to engage with local to cope and learn directly the language and culture that local have. While the local have to prepare the support system of working with foreign volunteers especially language and culture as a key of intensity factor. Then, society would receive side by side the impact of culture immersion. To overcome the problems, English and cross culture literacy are essential to put into practical to fill the gap due to language and culture differences.

C. Society Disaster Awareness on Literacy

In terms of the literacy breakthrough toward disaster management, the most crucial point is on building the awareness of the society of the disaster so that the risk could be reduced. The disaster risk could be minimized by providing education, information, and communication to the society. This is in line with the programs of BNPB to ensure the local governments and communities have access to knowledge and mechanism. With the help of the foreign as well as the local volunteers, the society would be able to react faster and survive from the disaster.

Another aspect of good disaster awareness in society comes from media. Media plays a crucial role to literate mass society in disaster mitigation and risk reduction once a disaster strike. The Indonesian media has been proactive in reporting disasters, however, media licenses which are separate from the government or privately owned television stations are controlled by KOMINFO. Media becomes a link between government and the citizen by broadcasting early warning reports through mass media, television, radio, and social media.

Civil engagement is the huge needs for capacity building in disaster management. It also involve the civil society, NGOs, and professional associations. The participation of internal parties may be done through field visit to the sites of disaster, meetings or discussions to identify obstacles, and examination of disaster risk reduction activities.

By addressing full range of context, languages, purposes, means of acquisition, application employed by learners, literacy would be a reachable target. When all stakeholders are literate to disaster management, the risk would be reduced. Thus, language and culture are vital aspects toward the disaster management in Indonesia. To enhance the better

management and risk reduction of disaster, English language and cross culture literacy are needed to understand and to practice before the voluntary mission.

IV. CONCLUSION

English language and cross culture literacy are needed to understand and to practice before the voluntary mission. By mastering those aspects, local volunteers expected to be more ready as host to welcome foreign volunteer. Thus, volunteer experiences access to gain information in communicating and sharing in a common verbal language.

This paper is using document analysis as representative sample to overcome the problem between language and culture. This paper does not include further details data known to be associated with literacy toward Indonesian disaster mitigation. Interview and observation are needed to reach more complex and depth data. Authors and Affiliations

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