TEACHING SOCIOLINGUISTICS:
A MEDIUM FOR CULTURAL AWARENESS OF INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to show the evidences that indicate how teaching Sociolinguistics can result in a number of valuable outcomes, including helping students understand and appreciate other cultures different from theirs. Sociolinguistics provides useful examples of language usage in different genres, including how culture influences people in using a language. The opportunities of learning other cultures through language will take the students to the higher level of appreciation of the culture of the target language. To determine how this outcome can be achieved in the language classrooms, this paper provides a review of closely connected literature about how to bridge the gap between cultures in particular. However, to increase its completeness and relevance, this paper also provides some research results that reveal how teaching Sociolinguistics has taken its new applicability and importance, and furthermore adds the effects on how students become more proficient and enthusiastic about their learning.

Keywords: Indonesian culture, Sociolinguistics, pedagogy, cultural awareness, linguistic competency

ABSTRAK

Artikel mencoba untuk menunjukkan bukti yang mengindasikan tentang pengajaran Sosiolinguistik dapat memberikan sejumlah hasil yang bernilai, termasuk membantu siswa untuk memahami dan menghargai budaya lain yang berbeda dari mereka. Sosiolinguistik memberikan contoh yang bermanfaat dari penggunaan bahasa dalam genre yang berbeda, termasuk tentang cara budaya memengaruhi orang dalam menggunakan bahasa. Peluang mempelajari budaya lain melalui bahasa akan membawa siswa ke tingkat yang lebih tinggi dari apresiasi terhadap budaya bahasa sasaran. Untuk menentukan hasil ini dapat dicapai dalam kelas bahasa, artikel memberikan tinjauan literatur yang berhubungan erat dengan cara menjembatani kesenjangan antara budaya secara khusus. Meskipun demikian, untuk meningkatkan kelengkapan dan relevansi, artikel menyajikan hasil penelitian yang mengungkapkan tentang pengajaran Sosiolinguistik telah memberikan penerapan dan arti penting yang baru, dan selanjutnya menambah efek siswa menjadi lebih mahir dan antusias terhadap pelajaran mereka.

Kata kunci: budaya Indonesia, Sosiolinguistik, pedagogi, kesadaran budaya, kemampuan berbahasa

INTRODUCTION

Learning language does not only involve knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, phonology but also the understanding of specific features and characteristics of culture. English is often seen as international language and it means that communicating in English needs communicating interculturally as well that sometimes it leads us to encounter factors of cultural differences. Those differences can be found in every language such as appropriate topic of conversation, intonation, gestures and expressions. Looking at the explanation, so it can be stated that language cannot be separated from culture and culture cannot be separated from language. These two things are interwoven so that if we separate one from the other will result in the losing of the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 1994). Furthermore, Smith (1985) states that the presentation of an argument in a way that sounds fluent and elegant may be considered as clumsy and circular by members of another culture. However, as the general use of language is related to cultural values, language is considered to be a cultural phenomenon too.

Since every culture has its specific norms for conversation and these norms may be different from one to another, some norms can be completely different and may conflict with other cultures' norms. This condition may result in the communication problem among the speakers who do not understand the norms of other culture. To avoid the communication problem caused by cultural misunderstanding, the English Foreign Language (EFL) learners need to learn not only English as language but also the target culture. However it needs an effort to include it in the syllabus, teaching learning materials and teaching learning activities. On the other hand, the teacher should be aware of their students' motivation and encourage them to learn culture as the inseparable part of learning language.

Literature Review

What is Culture?

There are some definitions regarding what culture is. In the anthropological field, culture is defined as the way people live (Chastain, 1988). Furthermore, Trinovitch (1980) defines cultures as an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behavior of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal system of expressive behavior started from birth, and this "all-inclusive system" is acquired as the native culture. This process prepares the individual for the linguistically and non-linguistically accepted patterns of the society in which he lives. According to Brown (1994) culture is deeply ingrained part of the very fiber of our being, but language –the means for communication among members of a culture– is the most visible and available expression of that culture. And so a person's world view, self-identity, and system of thinking, acting, feeling and communicating can be disrupted by a change from one culture to another.

Moreover, Tang (1999) states a view that culture is language and language is culture. He suggests that in order to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language, and thought is extremely powerful. Language is the soul of the country and people who speak it. Language and culture are linked each other, and that becomes the reason of not questioning the inclusion or exclusion of learning culture in foreign language, to issues of deliberate immersion versus non-deliberate exposure to it. Furthermore, Brown (1994) states culture is a way of life. It is the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate others. It is the "glue" that binds a group of people. It can be defined as a blueprint that guides the behavior of people in community and is incubated in family life. It governs our behavior in groups, makes us sensitive to matter of status and helps us know what others expect from us.

The Importance of Culture in Learning Language

According to Krasner (1999) Linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language. Language learners need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. They should also know that behaviors and intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own speech community may be perceived differently by members of the target language speech community.

Furthermore Samovar et al (1981) adds that in order for a communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior. Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also aids in determining how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Then culture is the foundation of communication (Samovar, et al, 1981).

Learning a language in isolation from its culture prevents one from becoming socialized into its contextual use. Knowledge of linguistic structure alone does not carry with it any specific insight into the social, religious, or economic system, or even insight into when you should talk and when you should not. (Seelye, 1993). The importance of culture awareness in language instruction has been studied extensively and well acknowledged. The more intimate an individual with the target language country's socio-cultural phenomena, the more likely it is to become a productive speaker.

Combining Language Use Teaching and Sociolinguistics

How to implement cultural elements for foreign language classes and how to integrate language use and sociolinguistic are challenges in sociolinguistics class. Sociolinguistics talks about cultures as the concept however the use of language is taught in other different subjects such as grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The forms of address, greetings, formulas, and other utterances found in the dialogues our students hear and the allusions to aspects of culture found in the sociolinguistics text represent cultural knowledge. Gestures, body movements, and distances maintained by speakers should foster cultural insights.

Students' intellectual knowledge is gained when they learn that there are other modes of expression to talk about feelings, wants, needs, general conditions and when they read the text of the foreign country. In deepening of cultural understanding it is necessary to see how such patterns function in relation to each other and to appreciate their place within the cultural system. If language learners communicate at a personal level with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences at work in the behavior of others, but also to recognize the profound influence patterns of their own culture exert over their thoughts, their activities, and their forms of linguistic expression.

The teaching of the target culture has to serve the development of cross-cultural communication. The achievement of this goal is possible with the preparation of an organized lesson plan that includes both linguistic and cultural aspects of the target language. This way the language could build bridges from one cognitive system to another (Seelye, 1993).

METHOD

The method of this study is experimental method in which trying to find the effect of combining examples used in language use into the topic presented in sociolinguistics. The participants

of this study are 110 students of 5th semester students of English Department. However, they are then divided into two equal groups. The first group consists of 55 students who learn language use, in this case, grammar, phonology and vocabulary, while the other 55 students learn about sociolinguistics with the combination of examples suitable to grammar, phonology and vocabulary they learn.

The sociolinguistics materials focus on topics such as language change, social networking and code mixing. However, those topics are combined with grammar, vocabulary, phonology. The combination is in term of the use of correct vocabulary or grammar in the appropriate situation, for example the use of specific topic to open a conversation. A same test regarding the use of language in the suitable context is then conducted to the two groups. The results are compared and analyzed in order to see how the sociolinguistics plays important roles in the gaining students' language competencies. Dealing with the students' cultural awareness and whether they are more proficient and enthusiastic about their learning, a set of questioner is distributed in order to gather their opinion, however since this paper is dealing with culture in which it is learned more in Sociolinguistics, so this questionnaire is distributed only for sociolinguistics class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data, taken from the results of the test, indicate that the two groups show almost similar achievement regarding the language competencies. However, regarding the appropriate use of language, the sociolinguistics classes are obtaining higher result. Table 1 shows data of the final test result.

Table 1 Data of the Final Test Result

Language competency	Non sociolinguistics students (average)	Sociolinguistics students (average)
Grammar	86	84
Phonology	73	82
Vocabulary	77	86
Appropriate use of language	**64**	**79**

The table shows that in term of grammar, the non-sociolinguistics students get better result compared to sociolinguistics students. However, in term of phonology and vocabulary, the sociolinguistics students obtain better result. The significant differentiation is shown by the average result of appropriate use of language, in which the sociolinguistics students get better result compared to the other class. The appropriate use of language here is about the use of suitable grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation on the suitable situation and condition presented in the test.

To collect information about the the students' cultural awareness and whether they are more proficient and enthusiastic about their learning, a set of questioner is distributed to Sociolinguistics students in order to gather their opinion. The questionnaire itself includes the questions about: (1) enthusiasm in learning English and (2) cultural awareness in communication using English. The first part is asking about the students' opinion regarding the more interesting and applicable materials, in this case about the inserting language use examples as the examples of the sociolinguistics topics. While the second part is asking about the gaining of English cultural knowledge in relation with the application of suitable English language use in communication. The result of the questionnaire shows that 45 sociolinguistics students or around 85% are more proficient and enthusiastic about their

learning, because it is more interesting and the materials are more applicable, since the application of the topics learned in language use can be seen directly in sociolinguistics class.

The other part of the questionnaire is about the increasing of cultural awareness in communication. Based on the questionnaire, many students say that sometimes they find difficult in communicating with foreign people since they are confused with the topic to talk about, their gestures and moreover whether their statements or questions are suitable to be said or not. This is culturally related, and the cause of this confusion is the difference between Indonesian and foreign culture. The result of the second part is 39 sociolinguistics students or 79% say that they know more about foreign cultural and can apply the language use materials suitable to the condition of the foreign culture. In this is it can be concluded the there is increase of cultural awareness in communication.

CONCLUSION

Learning a language in isolation from its cultural roots prevents one from becoming socialized into its contextual use. Knowledge of linguistic structure alone does not carry with it any special insight into the social system. Or even insight into when you should talk and when you should not. However it is a common condition of differentiating the language teaching and culture teaching. This condition is actually considered pity since the more intimate an individual becomes in the target language country's socio-cultural phenomena; the more likely it is to become a productive user of language. How to implement socio-cultural elements for foreign language classes and how to integrate sociolinguistic and cultural awareness are then challenges in language instruction.

One method in combining language use and culture is by using language use examples in sociolinguistics topics, so the students can directly see the use of language suitable to the context and condition. Besides providing good impact to the students' ability in the use of language, learning Sociolinguistics increase students' cultural awareness and adds the effects on how students become more proficient and enthusiastic about their learning since the materials are more interesting and applicable.

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