

NAVIGATING DIVERSITY IN PLURAL INDONESIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE FOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to show the supposedly unquestionable national slogan 'Unity in Diversity'. It still got severe challenges today, as proven by the rise of religious, political, and psychological underpinnings of intolerance surrounding the 2019 presidential election, politically dividing Indonesian into pros or cons of NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia or The United Nations of Indonesia). This was a reader response research of English Department students using short stories to gather their perspectives on the role of Multicultural Literature (ML). The short stories were taken from internationally recognized authors from Indonesia, the USA, Japan, France, China, and Egypt. Questionnaires and interviews were used to intensively collect the participants' experiences and ideas. The results of the research show that diversity problems are identified, and solutions are proposed through the literary learning curriculum design and process. It also shows the need to promote multicultural literature practice for English department students. The mastery of Multicultural Literary Competence is finally proposed as one of the golden goals of Indonesian national education, where diversity is the true color of Indonesia to easily equip graduates to become global citizens. Today's interconnected, globalized world has required millennials to possess CQ (Cultural Quotient) regardless of their diverse background. This CQ can effectively be cultivated through multicultural literature in a multicultural education system. Only through mastering CQ cultivated through ML are Indonesian graduates ready to enter the global and digital competition as global citizens.

Keywords: diversity, global citizen, multicultural literature, multicultural competence, navigating

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is the essence of Indonesian existence as its organic whole, consciously recognized and ideologically cognizant of the country's founders from the beginning, as reflected in Soekarno's Founding Father poem *Aku Melihat Indonesia* (I See Indonesia). He has, for instance, metaphorically specified, "*Jikalau aku mendengarkan/ lagu-lagu yang merdu dari Batak/bukan lagi lagu batak yang kudengarkan/ Aku mendengarkan Indonesia// Jikalau aku mendengarkan Pangkur Palaran/ bukan lagi Pangkur Palaran yang kudengarkan/ Aku mendengarkan Indonesia*" If I listen to beautiful songs from Batak/ I no longer listen

to Batakese songs/ I listen to Indonesia/ If I listen to Pangkur Palaran/ I no longer listen to Pangkur Palaran/ I listen to Indonesia" (Stanza 4 and 5). With his hybrid background (Javanese father and Balinese mother), vast experience, and broad horizon, it is no wonder that diversity is at the heart of Soekarno and then an organic part of Indonesian ideology as a nation. Even from the very brief lines of the poem, for example, it may be observed that genuine empathy, the heart of diversity, is exercised when Soekarno names Batak art and culture before naming his own Javanese art and culture. It is even special as it is written from his perspective and standing point as a part of the mainstream.

As a big country, Indonesia is actually blessed with diversity in stunning ways: “A country with a high level of multiculturalism” (Naim & Qomar, 2021) with 13.000 islands that are inhabited by more than 270 million people made up of 300 ethnic groups speaking over 700 languages, but not without internal conflicts. Intolerance, ignorance, and radicalism are silently growing and threatening the unity of the people and the country’s multicultural ideology, the official state motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), as symbolically inscribed under and clasped by the state emblem Garuda Pancasila (the Garuda bird bearing a shield symbolizing the country five principles). The recent research of 2.237 teachers, 1.172 state school teachers, and 1.065 private/madrasah school teachers randomly taken from 34 provinces by Penelitian Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta shockingly reported that 57% teachers have intolerant opinions on people from different religions and 37,77% have the intention to do intolerant actions or intentional actions (Arigi & Hantoro, 2018). This is quite critical as it reflects the country’s education because teachers are identical to education. What happens to the students if more than 50% of both public and private school teachers are intolerant? This is an example of a serious threat to Indonesian multicultural diversity, and efforts need to be made to address the issue wisely.

The issues surrounding attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism are not always overt and complex in nature. How critical is multicultural literature needed in the Indonesian context today? Akun and Adreani (2017) have conducted research on students’ attitudes toward pluralism in this country through their creative poems and questionnaires. The participants are from 10 selected universities all over Indonesia. The result shows that, even though almost all of the participants perfectly understand the national slogan unity in diversity, most of them still label themselves as ‘so-so pluralist’. It means that the young millennial generation is not prepared to confidently embrace diversity as a positive reality to be engaged in. To be a ‘so-so multiculturalist’ is not good enough for a globalized citizen today. Previously, Akun and Adreani (2016) have also done a textual analysis of the students’ creative poems by focusing on the negative tone of the poems. The research result shows that there are new faces of modern and subtle racism and chauvinism with their growing underground power to reject diversity, and it is apparently noticeable that beyond Indonesian pluralism reality lie these micro-aggressive attitudes and practices of fictitiously considering others as worse, different and the other.

Regarding multicultural education practice in Indonesia, Raihani (2017) has conducted a series of ethnographic fieldwork in Yogyakarta and Central Kalimantan involving six different schools (four religious: three Islamic and one Catholic, one state secular and one state vocational). The results show that there are inconsistencies between policies and

practices of multicultural education due to a lack of explicit policies and incapable education decision-makers and teachers. This research reflects the weaknesses of multicultural education in Indonesia, i.e., incapable teachers, leaders/decision-makers, and lack of supporting policies.

It is obvious that challenges towards multiculturalism in Indonesia are getting worse, as can be observed clearly through the Indonesian General Election in 2014 and 2019, where citizens are severely split into two opposing groups (funnily and metaphorically labeled as baby bat *kampret* for Prabowo Subianto’s supporters and baby frog *cebong* for Joko Widodo’s supporters) due to the politicization of religion, ethnicity, and race (Akun & Adreani, 2019). This politicization has seemed to awaken the polarization of traditional conservatism—anti-multiculturalism versus liberalism—pro-multiculturalism, where hidden, micro-aggressive attitudes towards differences are still in the air. Superficial tolerance and color-blind racism, or new racism, are still indirectly practiced. As discussed by Sijpenhof (2019) regarding racist discourse transformation of new racism or color-blind and biological racism in the Dutch context, explaining that this new ideological structure to maintain the ‘new racism’ is ‘color-blind racism’. Color-blind racism argues that race does not shape people’s lives by providing seemingly non-racial ‘frames, styles, and racial stories’. This racism argues that current racial inequalities, if present, are caused by ‘racialized’ individuals and groups themselves or by other non-racial factors (e.g., SES/Socioeconomic Status). Color blindness is used as a technique to duck responsibility (e.g., “I don’t see color, so I am not the problem”), which then justifies inaction. This kind of racism and intolerance issue is still relevant in the Indonesian context today, as can be obviously observed through Jakarta’s ex-governor ‘Ahok’ or Basuki Tjahaja Purnama’s case of blasphemy accusation with massive reactions of pros and cons. The most recent case of radicalism is seen in the case of Minister of Defense Wiranto’s stabbing by a couple of terrorists on 10 October 2019 (BBC News, 2019). So, although it is cool on the surface, it is hot below, as research in 2016 about the negative tone of those who seem to have no problems with racialism and intolerance.

Meanwhile, globalization and advanced technology have undeniably required millennials to possess CQ (Multicultural Intelligence or Cultural Competence) to survive the competition as global citizens regardless of their personal and diverse backgrounds. How to acquire CQ? Who should possess CQ? How to solve problems in navigating diversity? This research argues that multicultural literature is the right tool to obtain CQ both for students and teachers. In turn, it can contribute significantly to navigating diversity in plural Indonesia with its problems and prospects in English Department in Indonesia.

METHODS

The library research of multicultural literature is based on scientific research on the issue and specific study of English Department students of the Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University, in 2018 and 2019. The research is also supported by a reader response technique through distributing questionnaires to English Department students. Questions regarding multicultural issues based on short stories and poems are used to gather their perspectives on the role of multicultural literature. Short stories and poems are taken from internationally recognized authors from Indonesia, the USA, Japan, France, China, and Egypt. Questionnaires and interviews are used to intensively collect the participants' experiences and ideas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Ang (2020) has emphasized that this world is very complex now, and the ability to navigate this complexity has become an essential part of the universal cultural experience. This complexity cannot be avoided, and those who can creatively manage it well will be more successful. Cultural studies are aware of the complex nature of cultural subject matters, so the purpose is to provide tools and resources to better navigate cultural complexity (Ang, 2020). This is to show that the world that people are dealing with today is intolerably complex and unconsciously requires complex approaches simultaneously. Thus, creativity is an important element in cultural intelligence (CQ). Further, Frawley, Nguyen, and Sarian (2020) have stressed the recognition that the pedagogy of cultural competence cannot be reduced to simple frameworks of knowledge or skill transfer. So, CQ cannot be reduced to an individual capability and psychological competence that can be acquired through certain courses or guidebooks without practically engaging with the real cultural complexity through transformative learning as a process.

Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each (Greenberg, Calkins, & Spinosa, 2022). The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has defined cultural competence as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professionals and enable the system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Berger & Miller, 2021). The National Association of Social Workers has stated that operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into

specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes (NASW, 2015).

It is a process experienced by someone dealing with the reality of diversity in the professional and social life that prompts them to act according to the agreed standards. Simply defined, CQ refers to the capability of effectively adapting to new cultural contexts (Sharma & Hussain, 2017), where everyone is aware of diversity and willing to respectfully adapt to the (newly) faced cultural contexts of differences.

Multicultural education gives graduates the cultural intelligence that makes it easier to engage in global citizenship. Wang and Goh (2020) have defined Cultural Intelligence (analogous to cultural competence or cultural effectiveness) when quoting Ang, van Dyne, and Earley as an individual's capacity to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings. Warwosz and Jurasek (2021) have highlighted that it is the capability to function effectively across various cultural contexts and one's ability to successfully navigate culturally complex situations. There are four factors of CQ: drive, knowledge, strategy, and action.

First is CQ Drive. One has the drive to adapt to new cultural surroundings, to reflect one's interest and motivation to adapt cross-culturally with one's level of confidence in managing culturally complex situations or what is termed in psychology as self-efficacy, the belief that one is able to perform in certain ways, and at a certain level, in a given situation. The second is CQ knowledge that one's level of cultural knowledge or knowledge of the cultural environment. The third is the CQ strategy, one's level of awareness and ability to plan in light of cultural understanding. It also involves sensitive and active mindfulness during culturally complex situations; as a situation unfolds, it is optimal when three dynamic processes, awareness, planning, and checking, are engaged in the cultural interactions. The fourth is CQ Action, the level of adaptation when relating, teaching and leading in culturally diverse situations. It is the extent to which the actions are deemed culturally appropriate in any given situation (Warwosz & Jurasek, 2021).

The importance of CQ then requires the teaching-learning processes that facilitate the existence of culturally intelligent teaching by culturally intelligent teachers to produce culturally intelligent students. Facing the complex and interconnected world, these globalized citizens certainly need open-mindedness to be qualified. The quality can be best cultivated through multicultural literature, which is considered a window to the world.

Lawson (2013) has specifically defined Multicultural Literature (ML) as a body of literature that spans all literary genres but generally focuses on primary characters who are members of underrepresented groups whose racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or culture historically has been marginalized or misrepresented by the dominant culture. Literature is considered an effective means

of achieving the goal of multicultural education, specifically multicultural literature, because it helps learners make meaning of their life through diverse reading, listening, writing, speaking, and engaging activities from diverse walks of life since literature is basically a special representation of life. Literature enables students to nurture empathy because individuals who recurrently deal with fiction may become more empathic. After all, fiction provides more imaginative adventures and richer social experiences as opportunities for them to practice and improve social and interpersonal skills.

In studying the relationship between reading and empathy, McCreary and Marchant (2017) have found that reading may promote both academic achievement and social development, including reading literary fiction. Roza and Guimarães (2022) have highlighted that improved empathy levels obtained through reading fiction texts lead students to care more about their peers, as well as other people around them. Multicultural literature is also capable of empowering students and teachers to be social agents that can promote social change by developing intercultural competence and literacy skills in appreciating their own and others' cultures, honoring students' voices, being connected to students' cultural backgrounds and rich linguistic, as well as to promote critical consciousness of multiculturalism (Mandarani & Munir, 2021). Goh (2012) has listed possible multicultural understandings across the curriculum and for language and literary understandings (English language, literature, and arts). He lists stories shared across time, space, and culture that give meaning to lives by providing diverse perspectives. The same thing also works for poetry, songs, and other modern literary forms. He has stated that the performing arts can provide many pathways to foster an understanding of oneself in relation to diverse cultures. Besides, teacher educators can utilize multicultural literature as a tool to create awareness and understanding of different cultures, challenge assumptions and biases, engage in learning, and provide transformative experiences (Bennett et al., 2022). Literature has the potential to be the medium of enhancing understanding and promoting empathy towards diversity because, just like English, literature is the window to the world.

Grasso (2016) has claimed that ML fosters positive self-esteem and prevents students from feeling isolated. It has the ability to nurture respect, empathy, and acceptance among all students. Schrijvers et al. (2019) have stated that reading fictional texts is found to enhance adult readers' scores on various empathy measures and the accuracy of their perceptions of social interactions. Reading fictional and literary texts may positively affect readers' out-group perceptions (i.e., people's attitudes toward groups of human beings other than the group with which they identify) and are closely related to feeling empathy for others. McNair and Edwards (2021) have highlighted how the metaphor of literature as a window and mirror can inspire children to be more multicultural and make

meaning of their life as a part of a greater human being and experience.

Literary works possess the capacity to induce reader identification with the characters in a story, thereby providing emotional involvement in the actions, feelings, and motivations of the people in the narrative. Literature normally invites explanation and description of the cultural and social context in which the story occurs, thereby enhancing the reader's awareness of values, customs, and communication patterns that may differ sharply from his or her own. So, although it is purely or partly fictional, literature has the capability to stimulate and inspire people to see the truth of diversity more comprehensively, not with narrowmindedness but with broadmindedness. As Picasso once suggested, art is a lie that helps people see the truth more clearly, as fictional literature represents a reflection of human life and thought. Literature is the only 'window' that can open to the possibilities of diversity and the true understanding of it, as literature is life itself in its diversity.

Ideally, multicultural literature will work best within multicultural education and teachers with CQ are the key factor to reach successful education. Multicultural education in the Indonesian context is accommodated, though still halfheartedly. The Ministry of Education's decree of 23 has operationalized the Education Law of 2003 by standardizing the graduates' competencies of primary to high school graduates, stating among them that graduates must be able to respect the diversity of religion, culture, ethnicity, race, and social and economic groups/classes (Raihani, 2017). These graduate attributes can only be achieved through multicultural education because it can produce democratic citizens with multicultural intelligence.

In its development, multiculturalism as the background for multicultural education has three interdependent orders of priorities, as described by Kim (2014). First-order multiculturalism simply describes a physical state of racial and ethnic diversity. Second-order multiculturalism refers to the belief and practice of maintaining equality across cultures based on legal protection and rights. At last third-order multiculturalism signifies not only an active promotion of inter-ethnic understanding and exchange but also a reflective critique of unequal opportunity structures and a static treatment of culture.

Criticizing the structured inequality existing in society is the challenge and task of multicultural education to reach a more substantive form of equality (Kim, 2014), where inequality has been mostly taken for granted. In Indonesia, the challenges are enormous as this multicultural education is not openly declared as a priority in the national education system, while diversity has colored this country since its establishment (thus the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Out of Many, One; Unity in Diversity). However, it may be learned from other countries' challenges. South Korea, for instance, faces internal orientalism, where the condition and process of not

only marginalizing and devaluing minority cultures within a single nation-state but also enhancing the current hierarchical relationship between the minority and dominant cultures that naturalize the system of inequality (Kim et al., 2018). Australia (along with USA and UK), despite its long history of global education since the 1960s, has faced challenges in maintaining GCE (Global Citizenship Education), such as its marginal position in school education, its ambiguity, conceptual vagueness, and rhetorical construction of global citizenship (Buchanan, Burrige, & Chodkiewicz, 2018) as well as the trends of GCE towards more nationalist thinking and the narrowing of international perspectives in many developed industrial countries. It includes Australia, where policymakers and progressive globally concerned movements are struggling to resist the push towards narrow, self-interested, isolationist views in which global citizenship education is structured into merely economy-wise education that will unavoidably strengthen global inequality.

There are four elements to be well-understood and practiced by both teachers and students. Goh (2012) has emphasized that to teach students to be culturally intelligent; teachers need to teach with cultural intelligence. The four elements involved in culturally intelligent teaching are (1) teachers' awareness of their level of cultural intelligence and developmental pathways to growing cultural intelligence; (2) Teaching methods that utilize the four factors of cultural intelligence to engender culturally intelligent classrooms; (3) Students' awareness of their own level of cultural intelligence and developmental pathways to growing cultural intelligence; (4) Teacher/student partnerships in growing students' cultural intelligence in the context of character and citizenship education. It is obvious that it all begins with the teachers as agents who are willing to transform the teaching methods to create the students' awareness and change their CQ potentials into the expected cultural competence through a good teacher-student partnership.

As the key factor in multicultural education, more specifically in teaching multicultural literature, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is the attribute that should be possessed by all teachers/lecturers. CRT is defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2018). With the belief that diversity should be celebrated in a true educational environment, CRT requires behavioral and attitudinal changes in the teachers by perceiving differences as assets (not threats), and these changes do not just come out of the blue. Transformative efforts must be done, especially in preparing teachers by providing just the same culturally responsive learning and teaching environment. Gay (2018) has further detailed CRT that culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that

recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. It is contingent on seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and educational equity; mediating power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class; and accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups. Teachers and students should become agents of change in the learning process as the best learning value and success is gained when learning has transformed the simulation of life as life itself. CRT provides both. As Nieto (2017) idealized, happiness should be part of multicultural education outcomes, where the educational process is deeply humanistic, democratic, participatory, and artistic. It is about learning for life, not (merely the emphasis) for a job.

Two pieces of research have been done regarding the need for multicultural literature for English Department students of Bina Nusantara University in 2018 (41 students) and 2019 (70 students). The students are diverse in their background as they come from different parts of Indonesia with different ethnic backgrounds, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Chinese, Batak, Batavian, Madurese, Acehnese, Menadonese, Malay, Dayak, Maluku, Ambonese, Minang, and Dutch. When asked in 2018, after explaining clearly whether multicultural literature is important to study, 97,56% of students agreed it is important. 97,55% also agree that CQ will help them understand the current global and competitive world. Contextualized in Indonesian richness of diversity, 100% of the students agree that they need to understand multicultural literature and cultural quotient.

Regarding their self-perception and confidence of future success, whether multicultural competence acquired through multicultural literature will help them succeed in life, 83,80% claim and assume that CQ will contribute to their future success. Interestingly, when asked to honestly self-measure their level of multicultural competence (1 to 10, 1=worst, 10=best), none of them answered 1, 2, 9, and 10. Most of them answered 7 of which level was high enough (36,58%), and secondly, they answered 5 (26,82%) of which level was neutral or in the middle and questionable position. Only 7,31% of students answered 8 (very high level), 4,87% answered 2 (very low), and 9,75% answered 4 (low level). This preliminary study has shown that multicultural competence is needed to face today's globalized world cultures. The high level of cultural competence is understandable since the studied participants are English Department students who consciously choose to study foreign cultures different

from theirs. Another research should be conducted on students who do not study other (foreign) cultures at all to compare the results.

In 2019, the researchers conducted similar research on 70 Binus English Department students, but this time using the poem *Aku Melihat Indonesia* (by Soekarno). 88,57% of students agree that multicultural literature helps them understand other human beings. They also agree (92,85%) that ML covers literature written in or officially translated into English from other non-speaking English countries, such as Egypt, Japan, China, Chile, France, Indonesia, etc. Regarding the poem, when asked whether they see Indonesia as the author, 60% said 'Yes', 18,57% 'No', and 21,43% 'Don't know'. When asked how they feel about Indonesia, 41,42% feel peaceful, 30% feel proud, 12,28% feel included, 12,85% feel safe, and only a small number feel negative.

There are some challenges to beware of in multicultural education, let alone multicultural literature in Indonesia. Firstly, very few multicultural or intercultural education/schools are established, but unfortunately, due to the effect of commercialization of education, they are only accessible for middle-upper class society where, ironically, the schools become exclusive, lack real experience of class diversity, and indirectly do not celebrate (class) differences. Multicultural education should reach all public and private schools to have a more significant impact. Secondly, the education policy so far only advocates a tokenistic approach to culture, but sadly with inappropriate/unrepresentative representations of culture. This dutiful or symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of underrepresented groups is merely practiced to give the appearance of equality. Exposure to real equality should be practiced based on an actual and empowering approach to whichever cultures exist in the learning environment.

Thirdly, the unconscious threat of colorblind ideology posits that the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity (Williams, 2011). Kirby and Kaiser (2021) have differentiated the two ideological perspectives of colorblindness and multiculturalism. Multiculturalism highlights racial and ethnic differences, arguing that these differences enrich society and should be celebrated; colorblindness instead deemphasizes differences, focusing on individual traits or similarities across people, considering this commonality a source of strength. This colorblindness actually negates the bad experience of the underrepresented groups; thus, treating everyone equally does not mean ending discrimination because it is an act of new subtle/modern discrimination as discrimination experiences, many of them causing cultural traumas, are equalized to non-discriminative experiences. Rudnick (2019) has strongly criticized colorblind ideology for its belief that systemic racism does not exist, that failure and success in school and life are matters of individual merit, and that racial identities are not salient markers

of the experiences of individuals, communities, and societies. By ignoring race, however, racism is minimized, contributing to collective ignorance and relieving individuals from fighting against the impact of racism. It ignores the role and value of students' and teachers' racial identities, reduces deeply complex phenomena to 'good guys' versus 'bad guys', and upholds mainstream more of individuality, neutrality, and meritocracy. It is obvious that colorblind ideology fosters the collective ignorance of the complexities of racism and gives illusive and self-justified relief from the dark impacts of racism. Hobson (2014) has stressed that color blindness is dangerous because people ignore the problem that they cannot afford to be color blind and have to be color brave. People have to be willing to have proactive conversations about race with honesty, understanding, and courage, not because it is the right thing to do, but because it is the smart thing to do because the businesses, products, science, and research will be better with greater diversity. Stokke (2021) has even seen the colorblind ideology as White-Eurocentric universalism of domination discourse. He has said that colorblind racism is a Eurocentric discourse that universalizes western cultural perspectives and marginalizes non-Western perceptions of reality.

Lastly, even though the final goal of multicultural literature/education is to generate empathy among learners, there is a trap of false empathy when someone thinks of one's self as more empathetic than can actually be confirmed by the intended beneficiary of empathy's application (Warren & Hotchkins, 2015). It is a one-sided paradigm of empathy without caring and cross-checking the actual situation and response of empathized individual towards whom the empathy is addressed. Like colorblind ideology, false empathy can be counterproductive and belong to subtle discrimination. Genuine empathy is absolutely needed, and teachers are role models at schools just as parents at home because they are the agents to cultivate empathy in the education world. Warren (2017) has even started to emphasize earlier that the teacher candidates need empathy to better understand students, families, and communities, especially if they are preparing to teach in racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse school settings, where the teachers-to-be must cultivate the CQ and become emphatic themselves in the first place.

The new technologies, especially those of the internet (of things) fast development, have unavoidably facilitated the growth of unemphatic, intolerant, and racist individuals and groups through cyber-racism (Bliuc et al., 2018). All these go against, and at the same time become the concerns and challenges of, multicultural education.

There are sufficient possible discussion topics for multicultural literature, among others, the danger of a single story, as shared by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Shringarpure, 2017), and the power of stories (Osorio, 2018). Further, there are four key functions of multicultural literature: (1) develop an appreciation for diversity, (2) honor students' voices, (3) connect to

students' rich linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and (4) promote critical consciousness (Scott & Purdum-Cassidy, 2020). There are spaces for multicultural literature teachers to use literary multiculturalism not only as merely learning materials but also as a strategy to gain and practice meaningful experiences in the process. One possible challenge for educators in Indonesia is finding good and resourceful literature and literary texts that fit in with the objective of this multicultural education. Indonesian multicultural literature is very limited. However, there are a few potential literary works. Andrea Hirata's *Laskar Pelangi* (Rainbow Troops) is an example. This novel, to some extent, fits in multicultural literature because the story, though not focused on the main character/narrator, involves underrepresented groups and issues, such as the Chinese (Aling, Akiong), disabled (Harun), poor (Lintang), native (Suku Sawang), loner (Bodenga), and minor school (SD Muhammadiyah). Well-elaborated, this literary text may inspire students to deal with differences and how to set the appropriate attitude towards differences in others without othering the underrepresented.

Regarding the challenges discussed, there are some alternate solutions. Firstly, multicultural education should be adopted as the mainstream education system in Indonesia as a multicultural country. This multicultural education should apply CRP (Culturally Responsive Pedagogy) (Walter, 2017), where both teachers and students develop CQ. CQ should be one of the prime assessments for teacher recruitment and student graduation in addition to their expert knowledge and skills. Secondly, the adopted multicultural education should make teachers and students aware of colorblind ideology and false empathy. Learning techniques, materials, and activities should be cautiously selected and designed to produce authentic empathy and not to be trapped in the subtle and new face of discrimination. Thirdly, colorblind ideology among teachers and students should be identified and transformed into color brave or diversity brave as the new multicultural ideology. Lastly, hybridity (cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnical, social, etc.) and cultural polyvalency should be celebrated, where individuals and groups simultaneously belong to more than one culture (Barry, 2017) because interactions in diversity are unavoidable and should be thought of as empowering.

CONCLUSIONS

Equal treatment for everyone, unconditionally, will be the new positive and anticipated culture in today and the future globalized world. This indicates the importance of education that promotes diversity, tolerance, and peace. To achieve this in the Indonesian context, developing and conducting multicultural literature is a promising way worth serious consideration because multicultural literature can be a tool in the classroom, for it may be used to

help students make sense of their world by reflecting on their lived experience, making connections, telling stories, listening to multiple perspectives, and enacting their multiple identities. Multicultural literature is a promising subject that can contribute to the success of national (multicultural) education through its application of CRP. This interconnected, globalized world has required millennials to possess CQ regardless of their diverse background, and this CQ can effectively be cultivated through multicultural literature in a multicultural education system. Only through mastering CQ cultivated through ML are Indonesian graduates ready to enter the global and digital competition as global citizens.

Finally, the research has not covered the necessity and urgency of applying ML and CQ in primary education. It is therefore suggested for further research that ML and CQ are developed, taught, and researched as early as possible through primary education.

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