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Perspektif
Kritis Studi

Education Reform and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) in Indonesian Context

Udin Kamiluddin

Education reform refers to reorientation of educational goals. It is formulated to achieve such ideal goals as cultural reproduction-the transmission to successive generations of the accumulated resources of the culture so that they will be able to contribute productively and responsibly, in their turn, as members of the workforce and of the larger society. The second goal is the development of individual students to enable them to achieve their potential as human beings and to develop original, and possibly divergent, skills and ideas. More specifically, in the context of TEFL in Indonesia, teaching reformation is practical oriented instruction involving four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It is to de-emphasize theory in favour of communication skills. Stressing on theoretical aspects in language teaching caused students to be less skillful in applying language as means of communication, a tool for thinking, and a tool of civilization. This paper addresses two major issues: the extent to which English serves as a global language and problems that occur during English class and possible solutions for the existing matters.

Key Word: Education Reform, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

Learning is a process that begins as soon as the conceptions begin. Parallel to this is what the holy prophet saying reveals: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." Moreover, another tradition says: Seek knowledge even though it is found in China. The two indicated that learning is long life process of education. However, understanding some definitions of education is essential prior to further discussion. John Dewey as cited in Alwasilah, said: education is a process of forming intellectual and emotional fundamental skills on nature and among human beings. Education is a process of communicating values, experience, and skills i.e. cognitive, affective, and psycho motor faculties. Language is the most important tool for communication. Moreover, education is making language to be useful in transforming experience and or other culture. In addition, Arief Rahman says: as a process, education means transformation of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Hence, the goals of educational achievement should be oriented towards attitudes, values, and skill development, as well as knowledge acquisition (Rahman: 2004:1).

In a broader term, education serves a dual purpose, for the individuals and the other for society. Individual potentials including physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and emotional are drawn out, cultivated, and developed through a proper education. In the words of Socrates, a teacher is a midwife since his or her role is to draw out the innate capacity of a child. What to draw and how soon can a teacher draw out those capacities it relies on his skill and ability. It is for this reason very important to conduct teacher's training for the betterment of education quality. Another important role of education is to transmit and transform cultural values, and legacy of a particular society. Gordon Wells in his work "Dialogic Inquiry: Towards a Socio-cultural Practice and Theory of Education" stated that education serves two prime goals. First is cultural reproduction-the transmission to successive generations of the accumulated resources of the culture so that they will be able to contribute productively and responsibly, in their turn, as members of the workforce and of the larger society. The second goal is the development of individual students to enable them to achieve their potential as human beings and to develop original, and possibly

divergent, skills and ideas. Moreover, these two goals are equally important and dialectically interrelated (Wells, 1999: 227, 242).

The field of education is a part of academic and scientific disciplines. It comprises of five major sub-disciplines, namely: curriculum, counseling, management, teaching, and evaluation. This paper focuses on teaching aspect, particularly on the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Indonesian context.

Problems that Encounter Education

This paper addresses a number of questions: 1. To what extent does English serve people globally? 2. What is going on in English classroom in Indonesian schools? To date, English plays very important role in such global activities as political and economy development of Indonesia and of many countries worldwide. Paul A. Ramsey, a former Senior Vice President of International Division Educational Testing Service Princeton, New Jersey, USA highlighted a number of reasons of English as an international language. First, is that English serves a valued commodity. It is a tool of global commerce and communication to the 21st century. It has become a second language of a country or people. It is spoken as a mother tongue by more than 341 millions people, and spoken as a foreign language by more than 167 millions people around the world. It is the common language of education, research, economics, and politics. Finally, the Economist magazine of August 5, 2004, published: "..... in much of the world, knowledge of English has become a basic skill of modern life compared with the ability to drive a car or use a personal computer." (2004: 1-2).

Indonesia is a densely populated country of more than 235 millions people. It is a country of multi ethnics and has a great number of regional languages. In 1960s and 1970s, the government invested much in education resulting in the increase of literacy rate. The literacy rate was higher than in those countries with comparable per capita income. A statistic revealed the overall literacy rate in 2003 was 88%, male literacy is 92.9% and female literacy reaches 84.1%. However, the economy crisis hit the South East Asian countries, with no exception of Indonesia, in 1990s. The economy conditions of the country worsened the standard of living, as well as educational services, for example teachers' salary at secondary schools dropped drastically, textbook shortages, and less adequate computer facilities (2004: 9-10). Moreover, it has worsened such education quality as in the field of teaching English. A survey of more 189 university graduates showed 16% of them have good proficiency in international language. Another survey to university graduates applying for job in more than 145 companies revealed 85% of them showed poor English language skill (Ekawahyu, 1999: 61). Indonesia is one of the biggest countries in the world in terms of population. This condition, for some reasons may enable the country to become the powerful axis in the region provided she is equipped with skillful human resources. However, after more than half century of independence, Indonesia remains left behind. According to a report issued by the UNDP in its Human Index Development (HDI), Indonesia stood 112 out of 175 countries. It is even lower than Vietnam, the newly independent country in South East Asia (Kompas: 5 October, 2004: 4).

Some common factors that might hamper those problems are as follows:

1. Education process oriented towards knowledge transformation.
2. Teacher-centered during teaching activities in the EFL classrooms.
3. Not contextual-based subjects.
4. The subject materials are less relevant to the students' need.
5. The students showed low motivation to learn. Classroom is another form of a prison for them. However, this happened because of poor teaching experience and low teaching competence among the teachers.
6. Conventional language teaching methodology.
7. Students are treated as an object rather than as a subject of learning. Teachers are not so aware of their students' learning preferences.

The problem of education will prolong unless government policy makers taking a side with educationists to reform education practices.

Towards Reformation of TEFL Education

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) refers to the teaching of English in communities where it is not widely used for communication (Nunan, 1999: 306). Following a discussion of barriers of education, the paper addresses a concept for changes and innovations for TEFL. According to Henry L. Giroux, cited in Pennycook:

1. Education orientation is not only directed to produce knowledgeable people but also political subject. It is to transform political concept particularly to open up radical democracy among the students.
2. To understand ethics as the core of education suggesting that in the teaching process, teachers are not subject to teach English knowledge only, rather they must transform the values of good and bad to the learners.
3. Education is the process of understanding and building the sense of equalities, tolerance, differences of students and teachers in race, ethnicity, language, and gender. Education is to develop emancipation among humankind. To Habermas, emancipation means 'independence from all that is from outside the individual'. It is a state of autonomy rather than libertinism.
4. Curriculum is a dynamic guidelines. It is not a sacred text. In this sense, curriculum needs to be reviewed regularly to respond the socio-political needs. However, the curriculum is so important that it has been named the queen of educational sciences. Curriculum is a reflection of the educational philosophy of an institution concerned, in fact, the mechanism by which its goals are attained.
5. Education means creating and forming knowledge and culture.
6. Education as an enlightenment process should be designed to reformulate the so-called truth in favour of more partial and particular versions of knowledge, truth and reason.
7. Education is not the point of language critique only, rather it is a vision of better future for which it is worth struggling.
8. Teachers' role needs to be reformed. Teachers are no longer as classroom technicians. They are 'transformative intellectuals' for social changes and development.
9. Education means giving freedom of expressions to both teachers and students as well. Let them be empowered to develop themselves (Giroux, 1994: 297-292).

Referring to Alwasilah, education in the context of Indonesia and the competitive era should be designed to drive three major focus. First, to boost science and technology development, especially manufactured and agriculture industry for both are central to industrialization. Second, to develop skill management to support industrialization including management of foreign languages proficiency. This field is vital to enhance political and trade relationships worldwide. And third, management of the so-called human capabilities natural resources harmony (2004: 33). The fact is that poor countries differ from the advanced ones in many aspects. For example, Egypt is a country that has been existing more than 2000 years, and yet it is poor. On the other hand countries like Japan, Singapore, and Switzerland despite they are relatively small in size and have very limited natural resources, but economically they are three of the world leading countries. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are the other examples of the developed and rich countries although they are newly emerged 150 years ago. To conclude at this point, the difference between them is not in term of the available natural resources. The difference is in the attitude of the people as the product of education and culture building.

Some salient characteristics of the people of the developed and rich countries are as follows:

1. Ethics, as a basic principle
2. Integrity
3. Responsibility
4. Respect to the laws and rules
5. Respect to the rights of other citizens
6. Work loving
7. Strive for saving and investment
8. Will of super action
9. Punctuality (Rukman, 2004: 7).
10. Openness
11. Democratic

On the contrary, few people of underdeveloped countries apply those principles in their daily life. Regarding backwardness of a nation, both in the fields of science and technology worldwide, Nurcholish Madjid stated that the Muslim World represents the majority (1997, 21). The Islamic civilization began to fall in the Abbasid Dynasty in Baghdad and Banu Ahmar Dynasty in Spain in the 13th century that has affected the quality of education in the Muslim Worlds. Furthermore, Maxime Rodinson said that two-third of underdeveloped and poor countries are the Muslim countries (1982: 25). Countries like Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Nigeria, and the Middle Eastern countries are rich of natural resources. However, they are poor in terms of mentality and attitude that have led them poor in economy. For that reason, Muslim countries should pay serious attention to improve their quality of education as it covers broad spectrum of issues (Hashim, 2000: 27). Supporting her statement, Imaduddin Abdul Rahim said as cited in Rukman, this country needs human resources development rather than technology. The technology can be purchased if people have money. But, they cannot buy human resources (Abdul Rahim, 2004: 1). Quoting Melvia A. Hasman (2000: 2) as saying that English continues to be the world standard language, and there is no major threat to the language or to its global

popularity. Since English will remain as a dominant language of science and technology, of education, of other major aspects of life, it is a high time to reform the TEFL in different levels of education ranging from primary schools to university level. The following is guide lines for TEFL reformation based on critical pedagogy of Giroux:

1. Create student-centered instruction. It is an approach to instruction that uses information about and from learners in selecting learning content and procedures. The phrase is also used to describe a classroom in which learners are required to learn actively, through doing, rather than through focusing on the teacher (Nunan, 1989: 310)
2. Language teaching should be practical oriented involving four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). In the words of Alwasilah, it is high time to de-emphasize theory in favour of communication skills (The Jakarta Post, May 2, 2004). Stressing on theoretical aspects in language teaching caused our students to be less skillful in applying language as means of communication, a tool for thinking, and a tool of civilization. To produce a skillful language learner, Alwasilah stated further that a number of ways in teaching language may be introduced, for example public speaking, debating, role playing, paper presenting, and essay writing. Through these activities, the students are trained to develop critical thinking, be open-minded to accept criticism and differences. In the context of Indonesia, this model of teaching is important for Indonesia is multicultural and multiracial country. And moreover, they are trained to be fluent communicators (May 2, 2004).
3. Understand the students' style of learning. Their orientation towards learning.
4. Guide the students how to learn what.
5. Develop contextual learning through role play, games, and other enjoyable activities.
6. Create independent thinking and work.
7. Develop equalities among the learners culturally, ethnically, and racially.
8. Provide activities for students to involve in real life setting.
9. Make some innovations and follow new method of teaching that matches the learners.
10. Encourage students to express their ideas and concepts.
11. Enhance the existing Teacher Development Program (Flores, 2000: 1-3).

Apart from those suggestions, here are some ideas for successful ESL/EFL classroom activities to be taken to account:

1. Emphasis is placed on second language acquisition rather than on language learning. Second language acquisition is similar to that of first language acquisition where there may not be conscious awareness that learning is taking place. In other words, language acquisition is not a learned process, rather, it is an acquired skill. On the other hand, language learning means system of language instruction in which learning grammar rules, by such techniques as paper and pencil activities, occurs prior to students internalizing the new language.
2. Natural redundancy in the use of language is used to reinforce language.
3. The whole body is recognized as an excellent tool for language acquisition.

4. Concrete examples and objects in the environment are used to encourage second language acquisition.
5. New concepts are presented contextually in a participatory manner with extensive opportunities for practice.
6. Instruction for language acquisition is focused on meaning.
7. Students are encouraged to experience and take risk in order to acquire the new language. In the words of David A. Kolb this theory is called experiential learning.
8. Teachers should establish a background and context for natural language acquisition.
9. Whole language strategies are used as an excellent means for teachers to meet the needs of second language learners.
10. Holistic, integrated, thematic instruction is best used to provide language-enriched learning.

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