

Expressing Locality in Learning English: A Study of English Textbooks for Junior High School Year VII-IX in Indonesia Context

Authors : Agnes Siwi Purwaning Tyas, Dewi Cahya Ambarwati

Abstract : This paper concerns the language learning that develops as a habit formation and a constructive process while exercising an oppressive power to construct the learners. As a locus of discussion, the investigation problematizes the transfer of English language to Indonesian students of junior high school through the use of English textbooks 'Real Time: An Interactive English Course for Junior High School Students Year VII-IX'. English language has long performed as a global language and it is a demand upon the non-English native speakers to master the language if they desire to become internationally recognized individuals. Generally, English teachers teach the language in accordance with the nature of language learning in which they are trained and expected to teach the language within the culture of the target language. This provides a potential soft cultural penetration of a foreign ideology through language transmission. In the context of Indonesia, learning English as international language is considered dilemmatic. Most English textbooks in Indonesia incorporate cultural elements of the target language which in some extent may challenge the sensitivity towards local cultural values. On the other hand, local teachers demand more English textbooks for junior high school students which can facilitate cultural dissemination of both local and global values and promote learners' cultural traits of both cultures to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. It also aims to support language learning as bidirectional process instead of instrument of oppression. However, sensitizing and localizing this foreign language is not sufficient to restrain its soft infiltration. In due course, domination persists making the English language as an authoritative language and positioning the locality as 'the other'. Such critical premise has led to a discursive analysis referring to how the cultural elements of the target language are presented in the textbooks and whether the local characteristics of Indonesia are able to gradually reduce the degree of the foreign oppressive ideology. The three textbooks researched were written by non-Indonesian author edited by two Indonesia editors published by a local commercial publishing company, PT Erlangga. The analytical elaboration examines the cultural characteristics in the forms of names, terminologies, places, objects and imageries -not the linguistic aspect- of both cultural domains; English and Indonesia. Comparisons as well as categorizations were made to identify the cultural traits of each language and scrutinize the contextual analysis. In the analysis, 128 foreign elements and 27 local elements were found in textbook for grade VII, 132 foreign elements and 23 local elements were found in textbook for grade VIII, while 144 foreign elements and 35 local elements were found in grade IX textbook, demonstrating the unequal distribution of both cultures. Even though the ideal pedagogical approach of English learning moves to a different direction by the means of inserting local elements, the learners are continuously imposed to the culture of the target language and forced to internalize the concept of values under the influence of the target language which tend to marginalize their native culture.

Keywords : bidirectional process, English, local culture, oppression

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