

ELT IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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This paper is aimed to render an analysis on how the impression of linguistic imperialism of English in the era of globalization would affect Language Teaching of English in Indonesian context. English is known to globally spread very rapidly. Starting from the two major diasporas in 16th and 18th century, now, English is accepted in even more countries through the initiatives which is claimed as a practice of Linguistics Imperialism. Indonesia, unlike other neighboring countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Phillipines, has a very little exposure on English due to never become regulated under the British colonial. Hence, English has never been widely spoken in the Indonesian society. But in contrast, English is taught in Indonesian schools as a compulsory subject in grade 7 of secondary school to University levels and considered very important compared to other subjects in Indonesian education system. This is proven by the fact that English is tested the Indonesian national examination (Minister of National Education, 2007). This paper discusses about both the historic view and present-day view of ELT as a form of Linguistics Imperialism to be noted and anticipated in the practice of ELT in Indonesia in order to plan for a more benefitting reason. Hopefully, by being aware of these issues and accusations, ELT in Indonesia will advance better in the future.

Keywords: ELT, Linguistic Imperialism, Post-method Pedagogy.

BACKGROUND

“Why Indonesia takes teaching of English so seriously; Is Indonesia also being ‘imbibed’ into the English linguistics empire as a form of neo-imperialism? Are local English teachers in Indonesia aware of the issue of linguistic imperialism of English in the area of ELT?”

Everybody should inevitably agree that, as today, English is the most successful language on the world (Burns, 2004). Non-English speaking nations have widely opened their door to allow English to be used in almost every aspect of their life. The number of English user increased very significantly that in 2005 the estimation of the user was between 840 millions to 1.34 billion. The number was the sum of both the number of users who speak English as first language and those who speak English as second language. Interestingly, users of English as second language outnumbered the users of English as first language, which English as L1 is 25-40% and English as L2 is 60-75%.

The development of English as global language links with the history of how English made across the globe. If we traced back, it was believed that English global spread was through two major 'diasporas' (B. Kachru & Nelson, 2001). The first diaspora was during the large scale migrations to the North America beginning in 16th century. The second diaspora was beginning in the late 18th century by the expansion of British colonial power to Africa, India and South Pacific (Crystal, 1995). Hence, both access of the global spread of English in the two diasporas suggested us that English become powerful today—multiplying the number of users because it was supported by globalization which is dominated by the western hegemony through trading and the influence trend and culture. Therefore English Teaching was later realized as a commodity that supports strengthening this business. Pennycook (1995) sees English language teaching industry dominated by major English speaking countries such as Britain, the USA, Australian and others – is as an essentially political activity which may be likened to a form of 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson, 1992, as cited in Burns, 2004).

Many studies focusing on Linguistic imperialism has been conducted to see how English teaching in almost every part of the globe being in tandem with certain hidden agenda of hegemonic politics. Phillipson (1992) being the most influential researcher in this matter explores what he called a phenomenon of how English become world language as well as become so dominant. His claim was that

profession in language pedagogy indeed has close entailment with linguistic imperialism.

On the contrary, following the striking notion of imperialism incorporated in language teaching, many other sociolinguists resist the idea. Rajagopalan (1999) argues that such notion will deteriorate the appropriateness of teaching English. Rajagopalan voices that there is a considerable effect entailed that teaching English under the belief of linguistic imperialism will make the English practitioners across the globe to feel guilt (Modiano, 2001). Standing on the same stance as Rajagopalan, Canagarajah (1999a) proposed a contrasting notion called Linguistic Hybridity that he points out “celebrates the fluidity in languages, identities, and cultures, thus pluralizing these constructs” (p. 207). Canagarajah opposes that English is determined by certain dominant ideology that imposes upon a less dominant ideology. He claims that the local community is actually negotiating and filtering the dominant discourses in a many ways such as “modifying, mixing, appropriating and even resisting discourses” (1999a, p. 207).

Although the debates in this issue are still continuing, there are some other studies that tend to see how English being the dominant global language is being appropriated into and for certain contextual practices. Pennycook and Coutand-Marin (2003) pointed out that English has been carried along missionary practices as missionary language. Contrasted to that, Mahboob’s (2009) study on English used in Pakistan appears to reflect Islamic values and represent South Asian Islamic sensitivities. Tout ensemble, the studies and theoretical claims that I provided in this paper are allowing future studies to see more clearly how certain English language teaching can be driven into a more benefiting course rather than addressing negative claims that will evolve into skeptical notion of language pedagogy.

Looking at ELT practice in Indonesia, I believe one should question how this country take sides upon the two poles of perception of globalized English today in which is still left unanswered. Hence, this paper will try to document how English is taught in the Indonesian society through its education program and its language

policy in order to see whether English pedagogy in Indonesia falls under the linguistic imperialism or not.

In presenting this paper, I elaborated history and the scheme of World Englishes of English to date, as well as the ongoing debate over this issue followed by documenting brief history of English in Indonesia and how English become the nation's foreign language of choice. I will also discuss about language planning enacted by the Indonesian government and its indication of policy direction. Finally, to see how ELT in Indonesia today—whether it is affected by claim of linguistic neo-imperialism or not—I would like to elaborate my observation on how the globalization affect ELT; and how unawareness of the phenomena of linguistic imperialism can cause harm to the society.

DISCUSSION

History of the global spread of English

Today's expanding use of English in different parts of the world is inevitably vast. To seek into how English managed to travel around the globe meeting with its unprecedented users, perhaps it can be benefiting for ELT practitioners to trace English back into its origin. Apart from the debate whether English in its original root is romanic or germanic (some claimed west-germanic root) (Leith, 1997; Crystal, 2003) it can be traced as far as the fifth century once it arrived in England from northern Europe (Crystal, 2003). Soon English is spread across the British Isles. Crystal mentions that not until 1066 after the Norman invasion, many important people of England fled north and eventually settled in Scotland.

The next important expansion of English language is in 1607 during the first settlement of English expedition in the land across the Atlantic sea to North America (Crystal, 2003). The earliest English permanent settlement is called Jamestown in Virginia, and later English settlement spread across the east coast of today's United States of America. After 1840, continuously many immigrants entered the United States due to famine in most European countries. Of those with remarkable numbers

were the Irish immigrants. The growth of the population in United States entailed the growth of English speakers, in which “within one or two generations of arrival, most of these immigrant families had come to speak English, through a natural process of assimilation” (p. 35). Therefore, the massive number of English as mother tongue speakers inevitably follows.

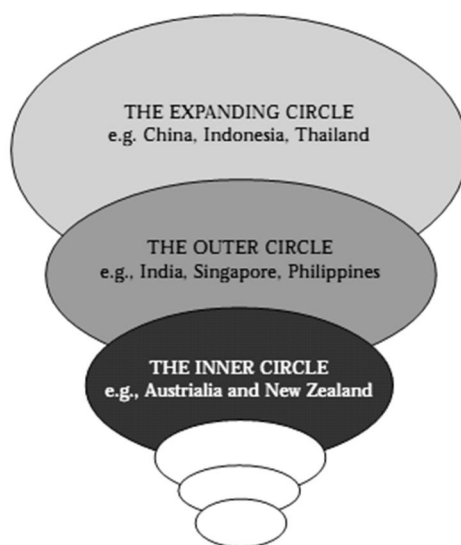
As English travels across America, the spread continues north to Canada in 1495 (Crystal, 2003) and to the south through slaves importation in the Caribbean regions in the 16th century. Interestingly, the traded people grouped in ships were under the policy of putting men of different language background to avoid rebellious act committed by these traded slaves. Hence, due to some of the slaves are speaking English, the slaves develop pidgin forms of communication with the sailors and expanded into language to communicate among themselves and the landowners. In Australia and New Zealand, English was spread through the British world exploration starting by James Cook visited to the land in 1770. Later in 1788, convicts from England were transported to Australia, growing in numbers until approximately 130.000 prisoners in 50 years. English settlements are sprouting in the new lands followed by more immigrants coming from Europe. “The British Isles provided the main source of settlers, and thus the main influence on the language” (p. 41).

English also travels to different part of the world through colonization of British and America. Some countries inherited English as their second language by the British colonial are Malaysia, India and Singapore; and English inherited by America is the republic of Philippines. As of today, English is still spreading to other part of the globe through modernism and globalization. In order to see the distribution of English user, Jenkins (2009) mentioned the three distinct groups of user of English: English as native language user (ENL), English as second language user (ESL), and English as foreign language user (EFL). Kachru illustrates these groups in three concentric circle model of World English consisted of the inner circle

(English as first language), outer circle (English as second language), and expanding circle (English as foreign language) (1992, p. 356).

English in the South-East Asia countries

English language later develops greatly in Asian countries. As of today, Kachru (2008) claims the numbers of English users in Asia “exceed the combined population of inner circle of English. The dominated numbers of users came from the expanding circle, while the numbers from the outer circle seconded the expanding circle. The dominant numbers of the expanding circle are from China and India, in which “add up to approximately 533 million” (p. 14). However, in the context of Asia, Kachru includes Australia and New Zealand as the Inner Circle countries, which illustrated in the following figure.



Three Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes (Kachru, 2005, p. 14).

Indonesia is a part of the South-East Asia countries. The country participates as a member of a regional organization called the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) that established in 1967. Besides Indonesia, the members of this organization are Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. These countries communicate with each other

using English, and therefore, as Krasnick (1995, as cited by Kirkpatrick, 2007) describes English used in this context as *de facto lingua franca*.

The term English as Lingua Franca has been used as a way of “referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages” (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339). The ASEAN country member delegates accepted using English as a medium of communication in acclamation (Okudaira, 1999, as cited by Kirkpatrick, 2007). However, it is true that this language choice privileges some member countries that use English as their second language; who are the countries that inherited English from formerly being colonies of the British and the American.

Looking at the context of how English being used in communication of ASEAN countries, it is interesting to look on how that English being an acclaimed choice. However, there were attempts of including additional official language besides English such as first was Bahasa Indonesia; suggested by Indonesia and second was French, suggested by the Vietnam (their colonial language) but “neither suggestion was taken up” (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 155). This can be inferred that other countries that represent the expanding circle have no other choice except accepting English, although giving privileges to the countries of the outer circle. Therefore, it can be seen that the ‘no other option’ scene in deciding language among countries of the expanding circle is an illustration of how English can easily dominate other languages. Consequently, this will also lead to question to ponder whether the aforementioned scene is an indicator of domination of English or simply a conscious voluntariness to follow the trend of globalization of using English which will be discussed in the following page.

Linguistic Imperialism – foreign policy to maintain the imperial power of the British and the American

Phillipson (1992) argues that despite any nation, whether voluntarily or not, willing to adopt English, in earlier time, there is a *hidden agenda* (Canagarajah, 1999b) believed to be placed in the initiatives of spreading the language. Phillipson

was very contentious in bringing this notion. For instance, Phillipson claimed that British and American promotion of English across the world impose a set of agenda to maintain power and dominance. Giving the sense of maintaining and developing economic stability in the third world was claimed to be among the greatest concern to the British Empire (Drogheda Report, 1954, as cited by Phillipson, 1992). He argued that “in the very long term we have no doubt that the work of British Council, especially in regard to the teaching of English in Asia, will be highly beneficial to our overseas trade” (p. 146). In addition, the learning of English was also proposed to promote beyond instrumental needs: “A knowledge of English gives rise in its turn to desire to read books, talk to British people, and learn about British life or some aspect of it” (p. 146).

America, independently, according to Chomsky (1982), initiates to proclaim strategy for their political stability by aiming to undertake the responsibility of world leadership and building a strategy for world hegemony. Cited from the Security Council report of April 1950, the aim was to “foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish” (p. 22). Hence, among the initiatives is Language Promotion as a part of the American global strategy (Phillipson, 1992). This strategy consists of, amongst all, book promotion, and the increasing number of foreign students in the United States. Similar strategy was also used during the time of American occupation in the Philippines. American introduces English as medium of instruction and American textbooks to enable the people of the Philippines to learn a new language as well as a new way of life (Phillipson, 1992). Consequently, the Philippines become dependent on the new language along with “the dominant ideology and political-economic interest of the U.S.” (p.153).

To date, according to Phillipson (1992), America is still employing the strategy in which many private sponsors conduct the activity to promote understanding the language and culture of the USA, which one of them is the school exchange programs. The British also conduct similar strategy; “to increase the use of English as the main second language in most part of the non-speaking world” (British Ministry of Education, 1956, as cited by Phillipson, 1992, p. 147). Another

initiative was to give opportunity for more potentially influential teachers overseas to be brought to Britain for educational training in addition to expanding the coverage of the BBC English radio program.

Today's context of English used in the third world, although with strong evidences brought by the notion of English as part of the imperialism strategy of the dominating superpower, Phillipson (2008) later claims English as a neo-imperial language. The needs of English in the periphery countries are ubiquitous. Global English as a key dimension of U.S. empire expansion is a fundamental principle of U.S. foreign policy. However, surfacing this issue brings a great impact on ELT.

Rajagopalan (1999) was applauded by those who are concern that this notion can bring insecurity amongst many English practitioners, especially those who are from outer and expanding circle countries. The vague notion on Linguistic Imperialism can bring burdening guilt among those English teachers. The trend that linguistic imperialism brought was very provocative. Rajagopalan viewed the trend marked "by certain misguided spirit of penitential self-flagellation" (p. 201) and therefore needs to be argued. Canagarajah (1999a) opposes the notion of linguistic imperialism due to its being too simple and unilateral. Canagarajah pointed out that the periphery users of English are indeed aware of the embedded agenda, and therefore cautiously attempt to filter and modify the dominant discourses, resist on the impositions of English for political and material reasons, and appropriating English to suit with local context (1999b).

English in Indonesian Education (during the Dutch colonial and today)

English has been taught in Indonesia since the era of Dutch colonial period. However, the access to education for the locals was very rare. The Dutch policy in establishing education in Indonesia is exclusively for themselves and some of the important local officials. English was first taught to Indonesians in 1914 when junior high schools were established (Lauder, 2008, p. 9).

After gaining independence from the Dutch in August 1945, the government of Indonesia started to surface their concern regarding language policy. It was clearly, from the initial stages of establishing independent of the country, Bahasa Indonesia has been chosen as the national language when the youth representation from different region of Indonesia committed to the Sumpah Pemuda (Youth Pledge) in October 1928. Therefore, the Indonesian constitution of 1945 Verse 36 codified Bahasa Indonesia as the official language; abandoned the language of the former colonialist, the Dutch.

There were thoughts to take English as the second language at that time due to comparing with the neighboring countries that inherit English from their colonialist such as Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Dardjowidjojo (2003) pointed out that the idea was not feasible because Indonesia has not been the colony of either British or America, and thus, Indonesia never had any establishment upon using English in official or public settings. Therefore, by that time onward, English was recognized as the first foreign language of the country and used as a mean for international communication; to access scientific knowledge and new technologies; as a lexical resources for the development and modernization of Indonesian; and as a way to get to know and learn about the native speakers, their language, culture, literature or expanding one's intellectual horizons (Lauder, 2008).

English as the first foreign Language of Indonesia

Although English was not deliberately introduced to the Indonesian society as a second language, most of Indonesians today would argue that English is perceived as the most important 'other' language. Considering that most of Indonesian population is Muslims, therefore the need of learning Arabic is inevitably compulsory due to requirement of the prayer and reciting of the Quran and other Islamic texts. However, this has been seconded by most of Muslims in Indonesia, and placed the need to learn English above Arabic—maybe other foreign languages as well. Nevertheless, the variant of English in Indonesia as an EFL (English as foreign Language) is not endonormative and has no official status, therefore remain

dependent on the norm set by ENL (English as Native Language) speakers from the inner circle (Jenkins, 2003).

Bahasa Indonesia remains as the function of Lingua Franca for the diverse regional languages spoken by users across the nation. Lauder (2008) stated that the success of Bahasa Indonesia being a national language developed from modest beginning to be able to meet the communication needs of more modern society achieved by the price of people not having working ability in English. I agree that having Bahasa Indonesia as Lingua Franca for the people across Indonesia enables them to unite and establish a unified power in order to stand under one nation. There is no need to force English to fit this purpose for this society. However, English remain in the medium of external communication of the people, as aforementioned requirement in the context of communicating with ASEAN neighbors, and other parts of the world.

The impact of the globalization toward Indonesian foreign language policy

In regard of competitions in globalization, Indonesia, from my point of view, struggles very hard to participate. Here I quote the definition from Fox (2001) that global is shifting from local control to become global. Fox also mentions that business in this age must be able to compete globally, in which the claimed existence of global market imposes everyone to simply compete with everyone else. Fox adds that Economic globalization can be seen as the latest version of capitalism. In order to compete with the other nations, English is inevitably a primary tool in the economic war for communication and negotiation. It puts the position of Indonesia equal to any other nations as both trader and consumer. However, due to the relentless political issues and unstable economy, perhaps, we should be more concerned that Indonesia will be likely left as mere consumers of the 'global market'.

Apart of my being skeptical in this issue, I would like to propose an argument from my observation that the Indonesian society tends to be inconsistent in terms of appreciating value. Indonesia is more of global trend-oriented, and thus possesses a

relatively high culture of consumerism. Therefore, Indonesia can be as easy targeted consumers of global products. Developed countries, on the contrary, focus on production and trade. Therefore, they may have abundant of product in the global market.

At the same time, Indonesia is struggling very hard to balance the distribution of wealth within its society. The distribution of quality education was also problematic across the nation. Both of these two issues will cause mental instability of the society that leads to vulnerability of losing identity. Therefore, with this condition, this unstable society can be easily lured to be the consumers. In the bigger competition scheme, Indonesia will be dominated by other nations due to economic loss. Globalization for Indonesia should be more aimed as the mean to expand the influence of its culture, science and technology, identity and ideology, politic as well as economy to the global world, instead of participating merely as the spectator and the consumer of the globalization.

The scene of English in Indonesia is somewhat tied closely with the paradigm of English as global language rather than as the paradigm of World Englishes. Pennycook (2007, p. 20) argued that the "World Englishes framework has consistently avoided the broader political implications of the global spread of English' and 'places nationalism at its core." The context of the Indonesian language policy in Education choosing English as their first foreign language is a clear indicator of the purpose of globalization. Komaria (1998) noted that the Indonesian government instructed in 1989 Law (Chapter IX, Section 39, Verse 3) as first foreign language and thus instructed to be taught starting at the secondary level as a compulsory subject in the basic curriculum, but allows to be taught as the fourth grade of primary level (stated in Government Regulation, Number 28, 1990). The policy that the Indonesian government make is in a right direction as English will continue to be used as the language medium of globalization. The survey conducted by the British council can be seen in the following table:

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- 1.1 Before the middle of the twenty-first century another language will strongly challenge English for its role as the world's main language.
- 1.4 English will remain the world's language for international communication for the next twenty- five years
- 1.6 English will retain its role as the dominant language in world media and communications
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	1.1	1.4	1.6
Not answered	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Strongly agree	2.1%	59.7%	40.8%
Agree	12.9%	36.6%	53.6%
No view	5.7%	1.4%	2.5%
Disagree	58.4%	1.4%	2.4%
Strongly disagree	20.8%	1.0%	0.7%

Source: The British Council (1995)

Table: Status and use of English (Bamgbose, 2001, p. 358).

CONCLUSION

As I have rendered earlier in this paper that Indonesian policy on foreign language especially on English language teaching requires special attention. We may surrender to the historic evidence of how hegemonic the intention of the expansion of English at the time was. Nevertheless, the global spread of English today is a different scene, which therefore requires a complete different attitude. We need to realize being in the extended circle meaning that we have options whether acknowledging English for our development purposes or for the external purpose.

For internal development purposes, Indonesia needs to be able to develop English language curriculum that enables the learners to enhance themselves in education and scientific field, global trading, and academic advancement. As for external purpose, I would really advise my students to anticipate understanding English only as an international language or language of global cultures (pop culture). Everybody who learns English needs to know that the latter was part of the

global market politics. Those who have very limited awareness on this matter will likely become the agent of the western (inner circle country) global marketing strategy. Local English teachers will unconsciously become agent of foreign product marketing. Their job will be only circulating around enabling their students to be able to absorb English spoken advertorials and become potential buyer of the products; to understand English spoken movies thus their students will shift identity of becoming a 'westernized' Indonesian; to enjoy English spoken entertainment that make them accept their local entertainment as conservative and old-fashioned; and to appreciate English written brand of product and thus left local brand with local language on the shelf without comparing their quality; and many other wasted skills.

In addition, we should note that the influence of the depiction of unequal power between developed and developing countries will result inferiority toward the people of the developing country of having insecured identity. Failure to understand the concept between globalization and ELT will lead Linguistic Imperialism to activate in that matter. On the contrary, having a full awareness of the developmental purpose of learning English will automatically disarm practices of Linguistic Imperialism. Moreover, it is considered naïve to accept that the inner circle countries are not taking any advantage of the current setting of English spread and the importance globally people understood. The inner circle countries are very serious in promoting their English norm; for example promoting British or American English through English language program in the internet and other various media. Attempts to take advantage of the stream are absolutely acceptable; afterall, those countries are living with English as their first language—neither second nor foreign.

Indonesian society can be easily targeted as this nation is in the group of extended circle. English Language Teaching (ELT) can be a vital weapon to make this half-conscious society to provide agency service for the imperial competitors' economic power benefit. The original identity can be bought by the dominant societies, and fulfill the hidden agenda of the neoliberal empire (Pieterse, 2004, as cited in Phillipson, 2008) that I have previously discussed. The users of English in Indonesia can easily accept the new culture and replace his/her own culture, as well

as perception and attitude towards issues brought within the more dominant countries agenda. Therefore, there is an urgent need of educating local practitioners of ELT to raise their awareness of any potential hidden agenda encapsulated within the English language pedagogy. In this light, ELT can be metaphorically illustrated as a Trojan horse.

In addition, ELT practitioners in Indonesia are required to be neutral; not to oppose and feel guilt of the profession. Language teachers must be able to filter any contents that might harm the integrity of the identity. Although Canagarajah (1999b) pointed out that “people are not always passive or blind to be converted heart and soul to new discourses,” contrarily, foreign language curriculum should be in line with national foreign language policy that fosters Indonesian society in resisting the hidden agenda in the dominant discourses. All local ELT teachers need to be trained and informed about the challenges of globalization and the the potent of linguistic imperialism, apart from its vagueness. Therefore, ELT in Indonesia will have a commitment to benefit the local society to be able take active part in the continuing globalization positively.

Language policy needs to be purposely strengthening the purism of the national language and raised better nationalism, not putting “aggressive efforts to implement assimilative language policies and educational curricula” (Kachru, 2005, p. 166). Even though for the context of Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia is already hard-framed within the society, which unlikely becomes ‘killed’ (Crystal, 2003b) by English. However, from local language point of view, it is true that Bahasa Indonesia is a threat for other local mother tongues in Indonesia.

According to UNESCO survey, out of 738 local languages, there are 15 that are close to extinction due to the use of English or the national language (Rudiana, 2010). However, I personally question that English being responsible in this case. For this case, it is inevitably caused by unawareness of language transfer between generations; the plausible cause could be the ‘teacher’ who teaches Bahasa Indonesia is not aware of the power of the dominating language. The debate of

English has the potential of being a predator language is noted by Fennell (2001, as cited in Kachru, 2005. p. 165) who believes that 'English is not a "killer" language in most instances, but it could definitely be called as an "accessory to murder" .

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