TEACHING ENGLISH TO FACE GLOBALIZATION CHALLENGES IN ACEH CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Globalization will continue to be a powerful vector of worldwide change. The changes caused are unavoidable, what teachers can do is to maximize the benefits of. English teachers also have to prepare students to face globalization challenges. The education for globalization should nurture the higher order cognitive and interpersonal skills, required for problem findings, problem solving, articulating arguments and applying verifiable facts or artifacts to substantiate claims. English teachers have to be able to provide and to use the technology in teaching. Technology improvements can help teachers in teaching and provide the better quality of education when it is use well. Choosing and preparing materials for English teaching is also one of the important elements to have successful teaching. The chosen materials have to be appropriate with the local context. The influence of globalization also will make teachers have to be careful, not only teaching based on local culture but also English teaching in context worldwide. This becomes the challenge for teachers to balance the local culture but have to make students aware about worldwide context at the same time.

Keywords: globalization, technology, context, worldwide.

INTRODUCTION

Aceh today is very different from Aceh 10, 20 or 30 years ago. Long time ago, Aceh did not have electricity, no good transportation even they did not have any buildings for the schools. However, since many people come and go to Aceh they bring some changes into Aceh. Especially, after Tsunami in 2004, there are many people of Aceh suffered of lost and also brought negative impacts on the education system. It
appealed the attention the people all over the world, INGOs and United Nation help the rehabilitations and reconstructions in Aceh. As the result, Tsunami could integrate a lot of people from different nations and also brought a lot of changes in Aceh, now there are a lot of people in Aceh come from different countries and different cultures, there are many a lot of good buildings, a lot of foreigner companies and also a lot of good school building with good technology. Besides, Tsunami also brought a good effect on the political field, for example the MOU of peace agreement between the government of Indonesia and GAM (Acehnese Army) was signed in August 2005 after they kept fighting for more than 30 years.

Furthermore, there are many job opportunities were available for the Acehnese to work for the INGOs and also local NGO, here English becomes and main requirement for the jobs. Therefore, if Acehnese have good English proficiency they will have a better chances and careers to work and this can enhance the growth of economy in Aceh. Indeed in the past, only few of Acehnese people were interested in learning English and English only played as a compulsory subject in the schools and Acehnese people did not really need English but now most of them are aware about the importance of English. Unfortunately, Aceh has lack of human resources who have a good English proficiency and also good qualification in their fields. Consequently, there are only a small numbers of Aceh people who can take part as professional project of rehabilitations and reconstructions.

This experience has emerged the awareness of Acehnese how important English and education are for a better career in the future in the globalization era. Because when Aceh work with the international people with the international capacity it means the increase of the trade and international mobility and Aceh is becoming more interdependent, economically, socially, and politically and interaction with people from different countries, different languages, and cultures is becoming more common in many fields. Therefore, Acehnese people will need the ability to work cross-culturally and cross linguistically but also need to maintain their identities. Having realized these facts, the government of Aceh tries hard to provide the good education system in Aceh, which not only focus on English subjects but also on the other field of education because in the globalization era education becomes more important than before. Therefore, the curriculum and syllabus of the schools are revised, finding out the
suitable approaches for teaching learning process, the materials that match the contexts and also providing enough technology in teaching learning process in order to fulfill the demands of the globalization era and also to improve the quality of Aceh education.

METHODS

The type of this article elaborated is a descriptive analysis the data gained from the previous researchers and articles related to the development of schools in Aceh and the implementation of the curriculum in most schools in Aceh. Based on the explanation from other articles this article is elaborating the findings by using the descriptive process in order to make a clear picture of the situation in Aceh School.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ACEH SCHOOLS

Long time ago, the people of Aceh only learned under the trees, they did not have the building for the schools and they did not have exact time to go to school. Several years later, there were an improvement; they have the school building and the furniture for studying. And now, the schools have made a significant improvement, now almost all of the schools in Aceh have a good building and good furniture to support teaching learning process and also have technologies such as computer and internet for some schools, just pushing a button on the computer it can brings us to the other world and also communicate and learning English or other languages with the people from overseas just by using internet; something never even imagined before.

Aceh is attached with the Islamic and norms, therefore mostly the culture in Aceh is based on the Islamic teaching. In the school days, both teachers and students have to wear the uniform in schools but for some schools. The uniform is designed based on the Islamic teaching, the female teachers and students have to wear jilbab (scarf) with the long skirt and long levees shirts and the male teachers and students wear the long trousers with long or short levees shirts. Additionally, even though the class consists of female and male students the female students sit in different rows from the male students. Right now, Aceh is trying hard to adopt the global system in education to improve the quality of the education, however, it is hoped that Aceh still can maintain the local culture that show the identity and
characteristic of Acehnese people. In globalization era, it is important to maintain the local culture. Lewis (as cited in Suarez-Orozco, MM and Qin Hillard, DB 2004) has emphasized the importance of maintaining the ability of local and national communities to bolster and validate local knowledge, local language, and local culture. Hence, even though Aceh now has been globalized, Aceh has to maintain its own culture as its identity which is very important in the globalization era.

There are about fifty schools in Aceh consist of elementary, junior and senior high schools. Generally, the schools were well-built, and normally one class consists of 30 to 40 students. The class provides the movable tables and chairs and arranged in a flexible way in relation with the needs and the purpose of the teaching learning process. The students go to schools every weekdays start from 7.30 am to 1.30 pm. The teaching learning process itself still takes the conventional way even though the schools have already provide the facilities such as television, computer, language and science laboratory. One important point is that the schools in rural areas always seem to be left behind in teaching learning process compare to the schools in urban area. Therefore, in the national examination mostly the students in rural area fail the examination and also they seem to have a small chance to have the opportunity to continue the study to the next level because the teaching learning process and the education system is not well-managed.

Therefore, the government tries to improve the quality of education in the rural area by establishing the Teacher Training Center in each district in order to produce more qualified and creative teachers to develop the approach and material based on the context of Aceh. Besides, the government also gives a lot of scholarships for some students and teachers to study overseas in different countries so that when they return home they can develop the education in Aceh. Government believed that studying overseas is good for Acehnese people, because they can learn from things from different countries and also to prepare for the cross cultural awareness and accept the differences amongst people, so they can work with the people from different cultural background. Besides, the government also provides some exchanges program for teachers and also for students so they can learn more about the countries outside their own countries, here the ability to communicate at international level becomes crucial. Therefore, curriculum designer faces the ongoing challenge of adapting course content
to societies needs to produce good quality students taking part in the development of the nation facing globalization era.

THE CHANGE OF EDUCATION IN ACEH

Throughout the world, rapid change is occurring in the roles and relationships, economic conditions, mores and values, religious and political beliefs, relation between nations, ways of everyday life and so on. These changes in society at large implicitly and explicitly challenge Indonesian government to rethink and reexamine the curriculum. In facing globalization era, education is more important to make the tasks of globalization become easier, because education both raises people’ productivity and provide foundation for rapid technology change (Bloom 2004). Therefore, education is pretty much important in the globalization era than ever before. As mentioned previously, in globalization era the ability to work cross-culturally and cross linguistically is very important because people will not only interact with people from the same country but also with many different countries all over the world. Therefore, education has to fulfill these needs to the students to make them ready to take part in this globalization era. Globalization comes to all people’s lives, whether it is advantageous or disadvantageous for people depends on how people adopt globalization themselves. In line with this Giddens (1995) concludes that globalization not only push upwards but also pushes backward. Education is one of man issues that considerably affected by globalization. In line with this, Indonesian government tries to re-examine the curriculum all over Indonesia including Aceh. As the result, the government changes the curriculum several times to provide the good quality of education in Indonesia which will be useful for students’ prospects in the future in dealing with globalization challenges and also to improve the socio-economic of the countries.

1. The use of technology in teaching

One of the effects of the globalization is that the dependence on the use of technology cannot be avoided in many aspects of live including education. Here, the globalization provides opportunities and challenges for the teachers. Bloom (2004) also points out that globalization also brings the opportunities for education; particularly in the way technologies can be
used to work to improve the quality and quantity of education worldwide. Therefore, the government of Aceh also tries to build the positive attitudes and believes toward the using of the technology in classrooms because some of the teachers still believe that technologies will bring negative effect to the teaching learning process therefore they avoid to use them. In line with this, Waschaur (as cited in Admundson 2007,) points out that teacher’s belief and attitudes about teaching and learning play an important role in implementing new technologies in the classroom for successful teaching learning process.

Therefore, it is hoped that teachers can have a good competencies and awareness about using technologies to inspire the students especially for the teachers who teach in the rural area. The use of technology as media for teaching will be helpful for teachers to transfer knowledge for their students such as computer and internet to search a good resource to be presented in the classroom, or providing collective problems solving using online tools, teaching by using audio and video, consequently the teachers and students will have enthusiasm and interest in teaching learning. The schools with good internet service connection, good language laboratory and computers can build teachers’ and students’ interests and motivation in teaching learning process. Technology improvements therefore can help teachers in teaching and provide the better quality of education when it is well-used.

2. Selecting material for teaching.

As Aceh has become globalized, there are now many programs for sharing knowledge about the methodologies in teaching with other different places. The globalization of education also affects on the additional material for teaching. Teachers can browse internet to find materials that meets their students needs and appropriate with the culture of the schools. All schools in Aceh are restricted to Islamic values; hence, teachers have to select the materials do not against Islamic values. For example the picture use in the teaching learning process should not be the picture of the people who wear the bikini if the topic is about sports and also the teachers should also not choose the topic about how to make pork barbeque when teaching speaking about the procedures. Here, even though the globalization has widely spread all over the world, teachers should also be aware about the important of maintaining the local values not to against them, including in choosing
the materials for teaching. It is also expected that teachers be creative to prepare learning materials based on the need of the students. For example, reading text material, teachers may find the story related to the life of Aceh or about history and culture. This can be beneficial to give information to students about their place besides giving them the content of the subjects.

Besides, teachers have to be selective in choosing the material and they also have to be careful in applying the methodology of teaching. It is hoped that the teachers not to apply the materials and methodologies that they adopt from different schools in the other countries because it is not always applicable and appropriate to certain contexts, because schools, teachers, and students are from different contexts and different contexts have different needs. Although many people from different countries gave shared the methodologies that have succeeded in their countries, Aceh teachers should not take them for granted without any consideration of the appropriateness for Aceh contexts. In line with is Bloom (2004, p. 72) “lessons from other countries can bolster developing-world educational system, but maintaining and nurturing local knowledge, and strengthening local’s culture, is also critical for addressing a country’s needs.”

3. Teaching English in context worldwide

The impact that English makes on the lives of so many people worldwide and, in turn, on the curriculum design most of nation-states is now dramatic. It redefines national and cultural identities, shift political fault-lines, and creates new global patterns of wealth and social exclusion. Almost everywhere, education systems are in a state of rapid change and literacy in English literacy has become a key requirement for industrializing and urbanizing economies.

American English is more popular in Aceh compare to other Englishes, because most of the schools in Aceh provide American English and also there are many exposure of American English such as movies and news papers. Additionally, it is admitted that talking about language not only talking about culture associated with it but also politics. In line with this Carter (as cited in Hall 2008, p. 87) states that “the relationship between politics and knowledge about language is both comprehensive and complex”. Here, most of Aceh people master American English because of America influences Aceh socially, economically, and politically then it influences the use of American English in Aceh.
As mentioned previously, English plays different roles in Aceh in this globalization compared to the past. Now, English plays a role as a lingua franca, which means English is used by people from different countries and different first languages in communication for different purposes (Holmes 2008, p. 82). Therefore, in teaching English, teachers should focus on the communicative purpose not to focus on which English to be learned, which of English countries to follow or which culture of English has to be taught but the teaching has to focus on the goal of teaching English which is to make the students able to communicate in English both spoken and written based on contexts regardless of which English they use. Because it is hoped, students can use their English at the international level in their future and also for their better career. Therefore, the curriculum has to be designed in facing the ongoing challenges of adapting course content to a society needs because increased international communication increases the needs not only for global awareness but for language skills as well for a better communicative ability.

Furthermore, language is a part of the culture that some studies have held to find out the relationship between culture and language. Here, the culture is always associated with the language. Even though the communities are becoming more culturally diverse, the local culture must be preserved as the identity and also as the filter of the western culture that can influence the local culture. According to Kramsch (1998) language expresses, embodies and also symbolizes cultural reality. This fact might draw some advantages in learning English such as the students can have a chance to enrich their knowledge about other culture. However, on the other hand, it also has disadvantages for learning process. Such as the politeness of strategy of western to call older people by names while in Aceh it is considered impolite to call the older people by their names but with “brother and sister”. Another example is, kissing and hugging among men and women who do not have the blood relationship and marriage is not allowed in the Islamic rules. Children will figure out that it will be alright to do so in their daily lives. Then teachers have to be very careful in delivering the culture of the target language. Here, what seems to be more urgently needed in preparing students to interact with each other in English is to raise consciousness of intercultural understanding and be sensitive that people have different cultural background might have different ways of expressing.
politeness for example. Related to this points, Kuo (2006, p. 219) points out in his critical argument that:

“What seems to be more urgently needed in preparing learners from widely different L1 backgrounds to interact with each other in English is to raise consciousness of intercultural understanding, such as being aware of and sensitive to the fact that people from different cultural backgrounds tend to express politeness, gratitude, and condolences in overtly different ways.”

The good points to be considered is that, in Indonesia English textbooks are designed based on the Indonesian culture. The settings, the picture, the culture presented in books are from Indonesia; therefore it brings good effects on the culture of Indonesia, besides it will ease the students to understand English because it is presented with something they are familiar with and not contradict to what their own culture. Here, English can be developed and local identity and culture can be maintained as well. Given that, the danger of English is it can cause the lost of the local language and culture if both are not well- maintained. Hopefully, by knowing this issues teachers can be careful in taking the language and culture and also considered the implications of these for curriculum, pedagogy, and practice.

CONCLUSION

Globalization will continue to be a powerful vector of worldwide change. We need a better understanding of how education will be transformed by globalization and how it, in turn, can shape and manage the courses of globalization. Finally, as the globalization has happened and we can avoid the changes that brought by, as teachers what we can do is to maximize the benefits of it and minimize the challenges presented by globalization. Therefore, an education for globalization should nurture the higher order cognitive and interpersonal skills, required for problem findings, problem solving, articulating arguments and applying verifiable facts or artifacts to substantiate claims. The skills should be required of children and youth who will, as adults, fully engage the larger world and master its greatest challenges, transforming it for the betterment of humanity, regardless of national identity and cultural upbringing. And hopefully, the way of how Acehnese teachers view globalization will increase their awareness to improve their skills in teaching and improve the
quality of education in Aceh to take part in globalization era. Finally, the future, education in Aceh can be equal to other provinces in Indonesia and also globally which can provide students a lot of knowledge for their life but do not let them erase their history and change their truth because it what define them in this world.

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