

Classroom Interactions as Representations of Multiculturalism: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In countries with multicultural societies, representatives of different cultures are found interacting in a community such as the workplace, neighborhood or school. Of various origins, races, religions, tribes, even nations, they practice interpersonal and transactional communication every day. Therefore, it is important for all members of each community to have a multicultural understanding of differences. Educational institutions are agents responsible for instilling the values of multiculturalism through education. Multiculturalism as an ideology has become a worldwide discussion at the end of the century due to the large number of migrants around the world making the avoidance of local residents and newcomers from cultural conflict a major issue. Therefore, it is important to simultaneously carry out functional intercultural relations for an effective educational process to create multicultural understanding. To do this, teachers need to have social and cultural competence by integrating ethnic and cultural literacy in teaching practices to end racism, sexism, prejudice and other types of discrimination that have the potential to occur in classes consisting of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: *Multicultural Societies, Multiculturalism, Educational, Intercultural.*

ABSTRAK

Di negara dengan masyarakat multikultural, ditemukan sejumlah perwakilan budaya yang berbeda berinteraksi dalam suatu komunitas seperti tempat kerja, lingkungan sekitar, atau sekolah. Beragam asal usul, ras, agama, suku, bahkan bangsa, mereka mempraktikkan komunikasi interpersonal dan transaksional setiap hari. Oleh karena itu penting bagi seluruh anggota setiap komunitas untuk memiliki pemahaman multikultural terhadap perbedaan. Institusi pendidikan merupakan agen yang bertanggung jawab untuk menanamkan nilai-nilai multikulturalisme melalui pendidikan. Multikulturalisme sebagai sebuah ideologi telah menjadi diskusi di seluruh dunia pada akhir abad karena banyaknya jumlah migran di seluruh dunia yang menjadikan penghindaran penduduk lokal dan pendatang baru dari konflik budaya menjadi isu utama. Oleh karena itu penting untuk secara simultan menjalankan hubungan antar budaya yang fungsional untuk proses pendidikan yang efektif guna menciptakan pemahaman multikultural. Untuk melakukan hal ini, guru perlu memiliki kompetensi sosial dan budaya dengan mengintegrasikan literasi etnis dan budaya dalam praktik pengajaran untuk mengakhiri rasisme, seksisme, prasangka, dan jenis diskriminasi lainnya yang berpotensi terjadi pada kelas yang terdiri dari latar belakang budaya yang beragam.

Kata Kunci: Masyarakat Multikultural, Multikulturalisme, Pendidikan, Antarbudaya.

INTRODUCTION

As a country with multicultural society, it is common to find a number of different cultural representatives interact in a community such as workplaces, neighbourhoods, or schools in Indonesia. Coming from diverse origins, races, religions, ethnics, even nations, they practice interpersonal and transactional communications every day. It is therefore important for all members of each community to have multicultural understanding of differences (Cecilia, 2012). Educational institutions are considered as agents that are responsible to impart values of multiculturalism through education (Banks, 2008) which is also mandated by Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education Institution of Indonesia (Setyono & Widodo, 2019).

Multiculturalism as an ideology has been a world-wide discussion in the late centuries due to myriad growth of migrants across the world that avoiding locals and new comers from cultural conflicts becomes central issue. Multiculturalism in education is characterized with positioning everyone with equal opportunities in education (Ozturgut, 2011) regardless of social status, gender, ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds (Nguyen & Phan, 2019) to instil democratic beliefs and

values. Good portrayal of multiculturalism in classroom setting can be seen from recognition of equality in differences (Aydin, 2013) which is characterized by self-esteem increase of non-mainstream students and deepened mutual understanding among classroom members (Levinson (2009). In Indonesian contexts, multiculturalism is integrated within five pillars of national ideology, namely (1) religiosity, (2) humanism, (3) pluralism, (4) democracy and (5) social justice. Hence, practicing multicultural ideology in classroom setting is a realization of implementing national ideology.

It is therefore important to simultaneously run a functional intercultural relationship for effective educational process to create multicultural understanding (Soares & Sudarsana, 2018). To do this, teachers need to have social and cultural competences by integrating ethnicity and cultural literacy in instructional practices (Tangkitjaroenkun, Nawarat, & Jatuporn, 2022) to terminate racism, sexism, prejudices, and other types of discrimination (Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer, (2006) that potentially occur in a class consisting of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Multicultural practices are best described through social interaction (Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2012). One of the interactions can be found in classroom settings. It involves multimodal elements of instructional practices which consist of teaching instruments, teaching medias, teachers and students' interaction and individual images of teachers and students. However, previous studies mainly concern with evaluating one distinguished element to reveal multicultural ideology in education institutions, such as from the content of textbooks (Ahmed & Nancy-Combes, 2011; Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Song, 2013), neoliberalism practices (Babaii & Sheikhi, 2017), gender representations (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Ullah & Skelton, 2013), and religious moderation (Solihah & Abid, 2022). Liu & Fang (2017) analyse multiculturalism from students' perspectives to see how such values influence their learning achievement. Scot (2015) seeks students' resistance towards multiculturalism practices in classroom context. A multicultural study by exploring teachers or teacher educators has been conducted by Ezer (2006) towards teacher educators' narratives. Other studies on multiculturalism focus on examining schools' language planning through curriculum or syllabus to examine inclusion (Yaghoubi-Notash & Nouri, 2016; Savaria & Monteiro, 2017), and through language policy documents (Kim, 2015; Zembylas, 2010).

However, little attention has been paid to classroom interactions in forms of dialogues or conversation among students, between a teacher and a student, and between a teacher and students in the class. In university context, the interaction also involves lecturers and students' decision in personal outfits in a classroom meeting as it reflects people's perspective on how to engage in a situation properly. Widodo (2018) states that teachers-students' interactions create the choice of language users that make reflects their intentions, ideologies and thoughts, while visual images portray multicultural values which are often taken for granted (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). This study aims at exploring the practices of multiculturalism in classrooms context by examining teachers and students' interactions in classroom-based instructional process.

University as a place of inclusion for prominent students from different cultural backgrounds as agents of changes (Banks, 2009) has significant role in building multicultural awareness to students. As a legal institution, universities also have authority to interpret the goals of national education through its institutional ideology which characterizes the uniqueness of each university. Such system is top-down that ideology is embedded in curriculum (van Dijk, 2001) which transmits ideas and values to shape learners' identities (Awayed-Bishara, 2015) facilitated in classroom settings. This study will involve an Islamic state university and a private university in Jakarta. As a capital of Indonesia, Jakarta is considered as the most multi-ethnic city with residents coming from

all over provinces to obtain better education and job opportunities. Jakarta is also a home to many migrants who send their children to study in well-established universities.

This study will observe multicultural practices in an Islamic state university and a private university. The Islamic state university is chosen because the university attracts students from all provinces to study for its affordable tuition and living costs. The university also offers scholarship for international students from Malaysia, Thailand, Ethiopia, Turkey, and other nations who are frequently found in almost all faculties. Private universities, on the other hand, have limitation in funding their students due to independent financial management. However, the chosen private university with its lowest tuition fee in the country successfully become a magnet to students from below average economic families from all over Indonesia to study. Normally, every class consists of students with different cultures. Instructional practices in English departments which have diverse culture representatives will be chosen as object of the study by observing lecturers and students' images and interaction in their classroom meetings.

This study will give contribution to discussions on multicultural values particularly in the context of an Islamic university and a private university which respectively have students with different ethnic, race, and religion as well as revealing whether institutional ideology in multicultural values is represented in classroom settings.

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METHOD

Research Context

This study will take place in two different universities: a state Islamic university and a private university. The reasons of choosing the universities are (1) both of them have students with multicultural backgrounds; (2) both universities are located in South Tangerang, a neighbour city to Jakarta; (3) each university has a responsibility to implement national mandate on education but also has different perspectives in implementing the mandate. Islamic state universities are under the authority of Ministry of Religion Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in terms of bureaucracy. In organizing its curriculum, they have to also be adherent to Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology that gives national standardization. On the other hand, the chosen private university is under a solid foundation with its humanity and religion ideologies with high commitment to organize quality education for marginals in economy. Each ideology is strongly integrated within policies of each university represented by stakeholder who have power to influence their faculty members and students. Classroom interactions in the second year of English department of each university will be employed as source of data. Classroom interactions and individual visual images from lecturer and students will be used as the representation of multicultural practices in each university.

Participants

A second-year class of English department of each university is randomly employed as object of the study to maintain the natural process of instructions. The second-year students are chosen because they are considered to have known one to each other for more than a year and still run similar program or classes altogether. Each class consists of 15 full-time students who come from different cultural backgrounds. *Situational Speaking* class is chosen as the class to observe. The class is taught by female senior lecturers. The chosen classes from each university are used for a more in-depth analysis on the following criteria:

1. The Islamic state university is chosen to see how Islamic ideology puts values in multiculturalism. While for the private university, it is one of universities with students reflecting cultural diversity.
2. Each class fulfils a good representation of its own university and ideology which is used to be compared to see its influence in instructional practices
3. Both classes have high similarity in composition: the lecturers are female with relatively the same age, the students' ethnics are diverse with Javanese acts as the majority ethnic followed by Sundanese.
4. Both classes have similar subject called situational speaking which becomes classes where the data will be taken. This similar subject has likely similar learning goals which lead to the same learning objectives and activities.

The multicultural background of the object of the study can be seen in the following tables. Table 1 lecturer's identity and Table 2. Describes the students' identity. Both are from class A and Class B.

Table 1. Identity of the Lecturers

The Participants	General Identity				
	Ethnic	Origin	Religion	Gender	Age
Lecturer A	Javanese	Central Java	Islam	Female	50
Lecturer B	Batakese	North Sumatera	Islam	Female	54

Table 2. Identity of the Students

No.	Class A	General Identity			Class B	General Identity		
		Gender	Ethnic	Religion		Gender	Ethnic	Religion
1	Aisyah	F	Betawi	Islam	Alwinsyah	M	Melayu	Islam
2	Amri	M	Jawa	Islam	Alfian	M	Bugis	Islam
3	Arkansa	M	Sunda	Islam	Andriyani	F	Jawa	Islam
4	Awaluddin	M	Melayu	Islam	Arianto	M	Jawa	Islam
5	Bambang	M	Jawa	Islam	Benedicto	M	Abui	Christian
6	Sulastri	F	Jawa	Islam	Darmawati	F	Jawa	Islam
7	Nasution	M	Batak	Islam	Diandra	F	Sunda	Islam
8	Fadilah	F	Sunda	Islam	Fahrury	M	Padang	Islam
9	Harahap	F	Batak	Islam	Rohman	M	Gorontalo	Islam
10	Hamdan	M	Betawi	Islam	Sinaga	F	Batak	Christian
11	Caniago	M	Minang	Islam	Kamila	F	Jawa	Islam
12	Siregar	F	Batak	Islam	Putut	F	Bali	Hindu
13	Lubis	F	Batak	Islam	Margareth	F	Batak	Christian
14	Nabila	F	Bugis	Islam	Maulidina	F	Sunda	Islam
15	Setiono	M	Jawa	Islam	Narindri	F	Sunda	Islam
16	Syahnas	F	Sunda	Islam	Ardiyan	M	Sunda	Islam
17	Syakeera	F	Betawi	Islam	Natanael	M	Batak	Christian
18	Syaksena	F	Melayu	Islam	Oktavianti	F	Jawa	Islam
19	Waseno	M	Jawa	Islam	Salsabila	F	Jawa	Islam
20	Yuni	F	Sunda	Islam	Senja	F	Jawa	Islam

Class A represents object from the state Islamic university, and Class B represents the private university. Table 1 shows that both lecturers have similar cultural background. They are both Javanese and their ages are relatively quite similar. On the other hand, Table 2 shows students' identity from Class A and Class B. It can be seen that Islam is the most dominant religion in both universities and Javanese is the most dominant ethnic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Collection

Uncovering multicultural ideology in classroom settings will be done by analysing classroom interaction between lecturer and students of each class and school-outlook choices of each individual. To reveal the representation of multicultural values of each university in the classroom settings, document analysis, interview, and questionnaire will be conducted.

1. Classroom interaction

Halliday and Mathiessen (2004) propose general model of conversation: giving/demanding goods and services/information which normally also occur in classroom setting. The structure of conversation by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) known with initiation-response-follow up (IRF) in the conversation will be a basis of data source. The interactions as source of data may come from teacher and student's dialogue, teacher and students' conversation, and student and students' conversation. The example of interaction structure is as follows:

Initiation: *Well. It seems that young generation puts little attention to national heritage and are proud with western values in their daily life.*

Response: *I partially agree. However, we cannot overgeneralize that in many places, we can still find youngsters' enthusiasm to local culture.*

Follow up: *I cannot agree with you more.*

2. Videotaping

Ideologies are represented through selection of semiotic resources to make meaning as a choice which is socially regulated by discourse community (Belzemer, 2015). Therefore, the lecturers and students' individual choices of artifacts (attire, school equipment, and personal belongings) will be videotaped to encapsulate cultural representations of individual choices.

3. Document Analysis

Document in this study refers to curriculum and syllabus of the subject from each university. The analysis aims at revealing multicultural values found in the document. The values found in the document will be enlisted and crosschecked with its practices in classroom settings.

4. Interview

The interview aims at crosschecking findings of the classroom interaction, videotaping, and document analysis to meet triangulation validity. The lecturers and selected students will be requested to participate in the semi-structured interview to justify whether they are in line or contradict the findings about multicultural practices in the classroom settings.

Data Analysis Results

1. Classroom Interactions and Documents

To reveal multicultural ideology in the classroom settings, every datum extracted from the IRF model will be analysed using appraisal system which involves lexicogrammar ties. As a micro language analysis in systemic functional linguistic, lexico-grammatical analysis is particularly used to examine multicultural values through the choices of linguistic and visual elements in a discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Values are also assessed using appraisal system (Widodo, 2018) as an attempt to develop the minutiae of the interpersonal function by focusing on how someone expresses his/her views and react to the views of others. It aims to provide a descriptive systematisation of the linguistic resources in order to construe the value of social experience, and thereby to achieve a richer understanding of the patterns of interpersonal meaning (Oteiza, 2017). The analysis is at the level of word or group (Flowerdew, 2013) to be examined by gradation, attitude, and engagement systems (Figure 1). The same way of analysis will be used in revealing multicultural values in the document.

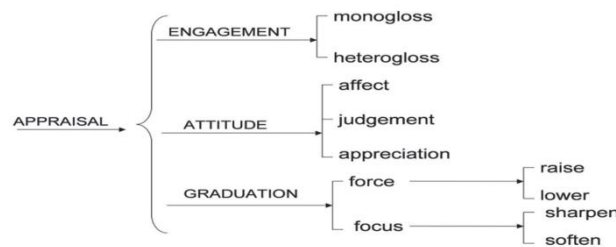


Figure 1. Appraisal System of Analysis

2. Videotaping

Videotaping functions as a semiotic resource to uncover what multicultural values the lecturers and students represent. Social Semiotics is concerned with meaning in context (Bezemer, 2015) whose analysis does not involve speech aiming at meaning making using multimodality approach. The resources may include the choices of dress, trouser, hijab for women, religious symbol, ethnic symbol, and other cultural symbols that students and lecturer may use in every meeting. Figure 2 describes the process of meaning making through social semiotic perspective.

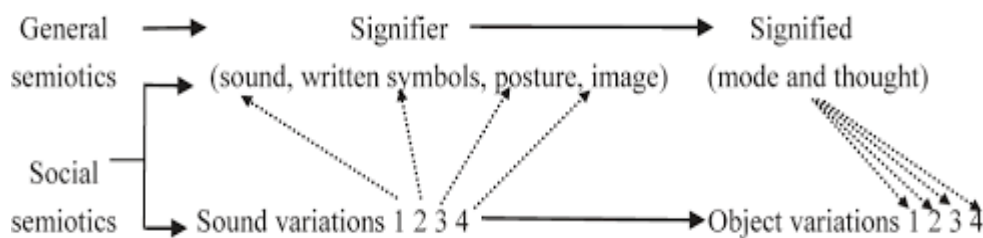


Figure 2. Process of Meaning Making in Social Semiotics

3. Interview

Data from semi-structured interview will be analysed using content-reduction technique to meet certain words or phrases that justify the findings of classroom interactions, documents, and videotaping. The utterances from the interview will be scripted then reduced. After that, arguments of the interviewee will be analysed using appraisal system to reveal whether they agree or disagree with the findings.

CONCLUSSION

The conclusion of the paper "Classroom Interactions as Representations of Multiculturalism: A Critical Discourse Analysis" highlights the significance of educational institutions in promoting multicultural values. The study emphasizes the role of teachers in fostering social and cultural competence to combat discrimination and promote equality. It concludes that classroom interactions, including verbal and non-verbal communication, are crucial in representing and reinforcing multicultural values. The analysis of interactions and institutional ideologies in an Islamic state university and a private university in Jakarta reveals how different educational settings contribute to the cultivation of multicultural understanding among students. The study underscores the need for integrating multicultural education within the curriculum to ensure that students from diverse backgrounds are equally valued and respected.

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