Title of Project:
A Cultural Balancing Act: The Learning, Beliefs, and Practices of Novice Indonesian Teachers of English

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Final Report

Motivation for the Research
The emergence of English as a global language means that English is increasingly the medium of interaction for cross-cultural exchanges. By teaching English, teachers are preparing students for encounters with people from different cultures – with both monolingual speakers of English and multilingual speakers from diverse backgrounds. Culture is a central part of language study because culture and language are inextricably linked (Agar, 1994; Kramsch, 1993). Language classrooms, therefore, are almost always sites of cultural contact, where language teachers act as “cultural workers” (Giroux, 2005, p. 71) because they help students understand the nature of culture and culture’s impact on communication. English teachers must be prepared to attend to the cultural aspects of learning a foreign language.

In Indonesia, this challenge is compounded by education policies that explicitly require English teachers to sustain Indonesian cultural values. An example of this policy is the required focus on character education within the 2013 English curriculum (Badan Standard Nasional Pendidikan, 2013). Thus, novice Indonesian teachers of English encounter two potentially conflicting demands as they begin their career: the need to sustain Indonesian cultural values while also guiding students through the cross-cultural challenges of learning another language. Without explicit preparation or guidance regarding these two expectations, new teachers may struggle to teach effectively about both local and unfamiliar cultures.

Research Questions
This study examines the issues described above by investigating the following research questions:

1. How do Indonesian teachers of English learn to teach about culture?
2. What beliefs do novice Indonesian teachers of English hold regarding teaching about culture?
3. What practices do novice Indonesian teachers of English use to teach about culture?

Research Methodology
I employed ethnographic methods to conduct a qualitative case study of teacher preparation practices within the Department of English Education and Teacher Training at Central Java Islamic University (CJIU, a pseudonym). The overall case study was complemented by embedded case studies (Yin, 2009).
of 14 novice teachers who had graduated from the teacher education program within the last four years. Data were collected between August 2017 and March 2018, and informed consent was obtained from each participant at the time of their enrollment in the study. Participants were 20 university faculty members, 21 current students and 20 recently graduated novice teachers. The first segment of the project focused on the teacher education context to investigate the first research question. Data collection procedures for this segment included the following: (1) review of 19 CJIU course syllabi, (2) 33 CJIU course observations, (3) 28 faculty interviews, (4) three group and 10 individual interviews with novice teachers, (5) 156 novice teacher journal entries, and (6) five group interviews with current students. The second segment of the project focused on the embedded cases of focal novice teachers to answer Research questions two and three. Data collection procedures for this segment were as follows: (1) 64 observations of, (2) 62 interviews with and ongoing document collection from 14 focal novice teachers, (3) six professional learning community (PLC) sessions with novice teacher participants, and (4) 156 journal entries from novice teacher participants. Lesson observations were audio-recorded and field notes were taken; interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated (if necessary); PLC meetings were video- and audio-recorded and transcribed; and copies were obtained of course syllabi, journal entries, and relevant teaching materials. I conducted iterative data analysis using Atlas.ti, a data management program, to apply codes to portions of the data that revealed emerging concepts of interest. I used the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) to compare and compile these coded concepts and, thereby, identify important themes in the data. I drew on those themes to develop case descriptions of each novice teacher participant, then conducted a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009) to identify similarities and differences across cases.

Summary of Findings
Findings showed that Indonesian English teachers had many opportunities to learn about culture, both within and outside of coursework, but they rarely learned methods to teach their students about the concept of culture. Consequently, many did not include unfamiliar cultural content in their lessons, nor did they make efforts to develop their students’ intercultural competence. Concerning novice teachers’ beliefs and practices, this study identifies participants as falling into one of two groups, differentiated by their access to and investment in cultural learning opportunities. Locally-oriented teachers defined culture as an “inheritance” or “traditions,” saw the goal of culture instruction as fostering appropriate behavior, and perceived a possible negative influence from foreign cultures. Their practices were mostly linguistically-focused; and though they, at times, made connections to students’ own lives, they rarely addressed unfamiliar or new cultures. Globally-oriented teachers defined culture as the actions and beliefs of a given community and believed that language teachers should teach about unfamiliar cultures. They considered preparation to interact with foreigners and the development of respect for others as goals of culture instruction. They were more likely to make connections to unfamiliar cultures by discussing texts, telling students about new cultures, and contextualizing language within unfamiliar cultural contexts. One distinguishing factor between locally-oriented and globally-oriented teachers was each teacher’s own participation in intercultural experiences. The novice teachers that were willing to teach about new and unfamiliar cultures, despite contextual factors and limited preparation, were those who had had intercultural experiences themselves.

Implications
This research makes an important contribution to the field because it highlights the need for language teacher education programs to help novice teachers learn to teach about culture, as well as the importance of offering intercultural experiences to novice teachers before and during their early careers. The distinction between locally-oriented teachers and globally-oriented teachers is a new
contribution to the field, and it is a contribution that may allow language teacher educators to more effectively prepare language teachers to address cultural content and develop their students’ intercultural competence. This study shows that language teachers may struggle to address cultural demands without adequate preparation to do so and that personal intercultural experiences can help novice teachers balance the need to teach their students about unfamiliar cultures while also sustaining the local culture. Therefore, teacher education programs should provide more concrete guidance about how to teach about culture and should support novice teachers’ participation in intercultural experiences. In the future, more focused preparation efforts regarding teaching about culture could allow novice teachers to more effectively prepare their students to meaningfully engage across cultural differences.

**Final Report References**


Doctoral Dissertation References


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