

SOCIOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK Emotional Geography of a Female EFL Teacher in Rural Area in Indonesia

Sri Rejeki^{1*}, Diah Kristina², Nur Arifah Drajati³

Universitas Sebelas Maret
Indonesia

¹rhe10jeki@gmail.com, ²diahkristina@staff.uns.ac.id, ³nurarifah_drajati@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

This research aims at exploring emotional geography of an EFL teacher taught in one of rural area in Indonesia. Emotional geography is explained through teacher emotions while dealing with teaching and learning activities in the area. It was a qualitative research that emphasizes on teacher emotions. The participant was a female English teacher who had taught in one of rural area in Indonesia. She had participated in a government program focusing on education in rural areas. The data of this research were collected through journal and interview. The participant wrote a journal related to her emotions while working in that area. Interview then was conducted to get the comprehensive data. The findings indicated one framework of emotional geography; sociocultural one. They showed some emotions emerged due to difference culture and social background between the participant and her working place. This description is beneficial for some parties particularly to give comprehensive input about what really happen in rural areas based on a female teacher perspective.

Keywords: emotional geography, EFL, rural area, sociocultural, teacher emotions

Introduction

English has spread widely around the world both as foreign and second language. Its massive spread even makes it considered as international language in which there are a lot of countries use it as official language, medium of instruction, or means of communication among people from different country who do not share the same language. As argued by Crystal (1997), this language has spread so extensively. As the consequence, there have been a lot of attentions given on English Language Teaching (ELT) in which most people try to seek the best way to learn English. Several issues which are important dealing with it are related to teachers, students, books and other supporting material, curriculum and government policies related to the language.

Teachers as a key role in the success of ELT are in charge for designing classroom activities. Indeed these activities determine the result of teaching and learning process. It may lead to a good result if they are prepared and designed well. Conversely,

they may worsen the process if the teachers do not have the ability needed. It means that teacher's ability has a significant contribution in determining the success or failure of ELT.

A "good" language teacher should possess some abilities related to the subject matter, the skill of how to teach this subject effectively or pedagogical knowledge, and so on. Moreover, it is also necessary to have an emotional ability. This is in line with Hargreaves' opinion (2001a) mentioning that teaching is not only about knowledge, skill, and cognition but also emotional relationships with the students, colleagues, and parents. It means that the teacher also should have an ability to deal with his/her emotions. They do exist and become an integral part of the teaching process. Whether it ends in a good or bad teaching process, it depends on how the teacher deals with the emotions.

Indonesia is one of those that consider English as a foreign language. Here English is taught at school in order to

prepare students with competitive skill in the future. It is a compulsory subject taught starting from junior high school although there are some elementary schools still teach English as their subject. Teaching English as a foreign language needs different approach and method compared to that as a second language. Particularly in Indonesia with its characteristics and features, some considerations are needed in order to teach English here.

As the largest and the most populous country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is remarkably diverse in term of the people, language, culture, religion, ethnic, geographic feature and so on. There are approximately 260 million people living in this country and spread out to some big islands like Sumatera, Kalimantan, Java, and Sulawesi. These people speak different language although they have Indonesian as the national language. Unluckily not all people can speak Indonesian here regarding the fact that some people in rural areas cannot speak in this language. Only those who are educated in formal school can do that. These people also hold their own culture and religion which makes them different from each other.

Beside, the geographical feature of those islands is also different which sometimes creates a challenge for distributing facilities and infrastructure. Java as the central of government enjoys some privileges such as good transportation, technology, facilities, and etc. In other hand there are many islands which do not have such privileges; some regions in rural Kalimantan, Papua, Sumatera, and others. These areas are called 3T (the frontier, border, and less-developed areas). The developments of these regions are hindered by their geographical features such as mountains and seas. It takes more time and effort to develop these areas. Regarding to those varied points, teaching English in Indonesia needs different way that should correspond to its characteristics and condition. This is not only about

multicultural aspect embraced by the people but also geographical features that is not beneficial. Thus teaching English outside Java is considered as burden.

Regarding to the problems occur in Indonesia, this study attempts to explore teacher emotions while struggling with several limitations and differences as well. Teacher's emotion is one of significant aspect that could not be left behind in teaching learning activity. Based on Hargreaves's emotional geographic framework this study will explore comprehensively the distance felt by the English teachers in these 3T areas.

Hargreaves (2000) mentioned that emotional geographies investigates the spatial and experiential human interactions which can create a closeness and distance as well based on emotions experienced toward themselves, their world, and each other. Research on emotional geographies, however, is still limited on certain subject. Particularly in EFL context, Cowie (2010) investigated emotions of EFL teachers in Japan and Liu (2016) reported a narrative case study of non-native English teacher emotional experiences in the teacher community in England. Both researchers tried to find out emotions experienced by teachers who have to teach in foreign country meaning that they were challenged emotionally by different culture and working condition.

As suggested by Cowie that emotions may be especially prominent for language teachers living in a foreign country since they engage varied emotional challenges because of some changes in their work environment. Yet the challenge also comes from another aspect. It arises when EFL teachers in Indonesia have to teach in 3T areas. This constrain inevitably causes some distance for the teachers. This research tries to investigate the occurrence of teacher emotions in relation with sociocultural perspective.

Particularly in Indonesia in which the study of teacher emotions has not got much

attention, this research will give some beneficial inputs for the English teachers who have to handle complex situation while teaching. It is also significant considering that there are limited numbers of study related to both teaching English in rural areas and emotional geographic research. Finally for the government, the result of this study hopefully will help them in designing the program or curriculum for rural areas in Indonesia.

Methodology

The design of this study was qualitative. It explored emotions encountered by the teacher while teaching in rural area. The participant of this study was a female English teacher who had joined SM3T program. Her name was Rom (pseudonym). She taught in Maurole, Nusa Tenggara Timur, one of rural areas in Indonesia. The researcher collected the data through journal and interview. First, the participant was asked to write a journal about her emotions. Second, interview was conducted to get a deeper understanding about these data.

Findings and Discussion

This research emphasized its study only on sociocultural aspect of teacher emotions. It narrated emotions experienced by the teacher due to social and cultural perspective. The participant of this research was called Rom. Before teaching in Maurole, she lived in Yogyakarta. She was born in this city and got her degree in Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. Since she was child, she was familiar with Javanese culture because most of people in her surrounding were Javanese. She was a moslem and have an opportunity to interact with people with different religion. Some of her neighbors were Hindu people and they could get along well. Thus, she was quite familiar with those who are different from them in relation with culture and religion.

When Rom was teaching in NTT, she had to deal with some differences related to culture and religion. She stayed in a house

belongs to one of people there. Most of people there were Christian including the family that she lived in. They also have different culture from her. However, these differences did not disrupt her especially related to her communication with them. After doing her job at school, she also participated in some activities such as teaching children in reading Arabic in the mosque and came to funeral. However, these activities sometimes made her worries. For example, when there was a prayer for funeral she did not come to the family who mourn to. In this occasion, she rejected this invitation since she was afraid of the food in the funeral. She was afraid whether those food were “halal” or permitted based on her religion or not. She explained this experience below.

“Actually in some occasions they invited me to the prayer held in the family who mourn, but because we have different religion, I did not come. The mother who shared a house with her suggested her to come, just sit and eat. But, because I was worried about the food then I decided to not come to the event.”

Instead of that uncomfortable feeling, she really appreciated their culture. Although they do not share the same religion, they still hold the humanity value. It can be seen when the mother who share the same house with her always put her name in her praying. Actually the mother was Christian and Rom was Moslem. But, it did not hamper the practice of caring with others. It was described as follow.

“Every time I had a plan to go somewhere, the mother always made sure that I will come home before night. If there were any chance it happened, she put my name on her praying list. At the beginning I did not believe it, but when the praying was done in our house then I saw it by myself. There was my name in that list. Actually I was in between; believe it or not.”

The difference of social and cultural aspect between the teacher and the society

where she lived inevitably existed. Whether she liked it or not she had to deal with those differences. For Rom who was already familiar with this situation, she could handle it well although still there was a few uncomfortable feeling.

Conclusion

From the findings above it can be concluded that the teacher who taught in rural area encountered some emotions that influenced her life. She had to refuse any funeral invitation because she was afraid of the food. She also surprised when the mother who had different religion from her put her name on the praying list. Those experiences happened and she had to deal with them.

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