

Exploring The Challenges of Communicative Language Teaching in Indonesian Context from a Constructivist Perspective

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ABSTRACT

A communicative approach has been included in Indonesia's English curriculum since the introduction of the 1984 Curriculum. However, despite its popularity, CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) posited some cultural constraints. These constraints are caused by different views of the learning and teaching process in different cultures. This study explores the challenges of implementing such a teaching approach from a constructivist point of view. The primary aim of this article is to provide insightful information about those challenges which may, then, contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue. The descriptive qualitative approach was used in this study. The study concludes that cultural constraints to the implementation of CLT in the Indonesian context do not necessarily come from cultural aspects. Using a constructivist paradigm, this essay provides an alternative explanation on why students are reluctant to engage in a communicative approach in the Indonesian context: (1) the failure of representation to occur in the teaching instructions and teaching materials during the learning process, and (2) identity-caused reluctance to communicative competence.

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1. Introduction

In the globalization era, communicative competence in English is highly demanded. Like technology, English is also considered a tool of global literacy skills (Tsui & Tollefson, 2006). The attempt towards improving learners' communicative competence through the implementation of the CLT (communicative language teaching) approach has been the focus of many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries, especially in Asia. In 1992, the SEDC (State Education Development Commission) in China included a CLT-based syllabus (Liao, 2004 as cited in Butler, 2011). In 1997, South Korea revised the national curriculum and included CLT into the 7th National Curriculum (Y.-H. Choi, 2007). Japan, Taiwan, and other southeast Asian countries surveyed such as Malaysia and Vietnam also adopted CLT into their English curricula despite its discrepancies in terms of the implementation (Nunan, 2003).

A communicative approach has been included in Indonesia's English curriculum since the introduction of the 1984 Curriculum (Harsono, 2005; Jazadi, 2004; Mistar, 2004). It has also been a core of Indonesia's English curriculum guideline until recently. One of the goals of English teaching at senior secondary school, for example, is to develop students' ability in acquiring both spoken and written competence from formal to the informational literacy level (Ministry of Education and Culture/MoEC, 2006). In the most recent Indonesia's curriculum known as the 2013 Curriculum, communicative competence is considered the primary goal of English learning. In the document entitled *Konsep dan Implementasi Kurikulum 2013* issued by the Vice Minister of Education and Culture in 2014, amongst 10 lists of students' future competencies demanded, communicative competence is placed in the first place as the most important skill to be acquired by the students. In other words, English teaching in Indonesia emphasizes language competence as a communication tool to convey ideas and knowledge.

However, despite its popularity, CLT posited some cultural constraints. These constraints are caused by different views of the learning and teaching process in different cultures. To exemplify, Yu (2001) found that CLT faces difficulties in China because of cultural constraints from Confucianism. In China, a teacher is seen as a 'knowledge holder'. This makes students become passive and disengaged in the learning activity. Li (1998) when researching the implementation

of CLT in South Korea found that students interviewed were resistant to class participation. Again, this low participation is rooted in a cultural dimension. It turns out the notion of communicativeness is not universal, it is tied up with cultural values instead (Butler, 2011).

In the Indonesian context, the constraining factors of the implementation of CLT are similar. The implementation of CLT in Indonesia also encounters cultural constraints. Fadilah (2018) claimed that Indonesia possesses cultural norms which prevent students from engaging in a communicative approach; therefore, CLT in Indonesia encounters some difficulties to be adopted effectively. To exemplify, students from *the Javanese* ethnic group, Indonesia's largest ethnic group (Ananta, Utami & Purbowati, 2016), are described as passive and uncritical. They also see interrupting or questioning teachers' instruction in an impolite manner; therefore, teachers dominate the conversation and a communicative approach is difficult to be conducted in the classroom (Marcellino, 2008).

Overall, from all constraints mentioned above, culture contributes to producing difficulties in the implementation of CLT in the Asian and specifically Indonesian context. Culture makes students passive (Fadilah, 2018; Li, 1998); therefore, a communicative approach cannot be effectively implemented. However, such a conclusion disregards another point of view of a culture. Wong and Wong (2016) argued that 'cultural concepts' (thoughts, concepts, or ideas about cultural values) do not necessarily correlate to 'cultural practices' (a product or implementation of the cultural ideas). They distinguish between 'cultural concepts' and 'cultural practices' since they do not necessarily possess a causal relation. In other words, a concept of politeness in Confucianism in China and *Javanese* culture in the Indonesian context towards a teacher in the classroom, for example, is not necessarily responsible for students' passiveness. Besides, *the Javanese* are not the only cultural group that exists in Indonesia. *Sundanese, Madurese, Bugis* are only some of around 200 other ethnic groups (Hadisantosa, 2010). Therefore, to simply conclude that CLT faces cultural constraints in Indonesia seems to be oversimplified as well as neglect diversity within cultures.

Based on this consideration, the fact that Indonesian students are passive and disengaged in the implementation of the communicative approach in the classroom needs to be re-explained. This is based on the argument that there is no causal relation between their disengagement (cultural practices) and their cultural background (cultural ideas). Therefore, this study seeks to re-explain the constraining factors in the implementation of CLT in the Indonesian context. The issue will be approached from a constructivist perspective by considering the concepts of language, culture, and identity.

2. Methodology

This study takes a library-based strategy. The researcher gathered relevant literature and data on the topic, which was the problems that Indonesian secondary students encountered while dealing with communicative learning approach in the classroom. Furthermore, the descriptive qualitative approach was used in this study. Moreover, To explore the challenges of CLT in the Indonesian context, previous studies related to the reading comprehension process, cultural factors that influence its implementation, and studies that are closely related to the discussed matter from constructivist perspective are collected.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 CLT in the Indonesian context

Indonesian government put important attention to the teaching of English. English has even been taught since colonial periods before Indonesia's independence in 1945. Mistar (2005) classified ELT (English Language Teaching) into three historical periods: *pre-Independence, early independence, and development phases*. The pre-Independence period dates back to the early 1900s when Dutch was occupying the archipelago (areas that are known as Indonesia). English was taught in MULO (*meer uitgebreid lager onderwijs*), a Netherland-built school equivalent to a junior secondary school, as a compulsory subject.

During early independence, the Ministry of Education established an Inspectorate of English Language Instruction (IELI). However, during this period ELT in Indonesia experienced up-and-down progress. Due to the increase of Indonesian schools, the availability of English teachers and English materials became a major issue. Finally, during the development phase, from the 1950s above, the issue related to the limited number of English teachers was solved through several programs. In 1954, STC (Standard Training Centres) was founded in Java and Sumatera. In 1960, English Language Teacher Training Program was also established in Malang. To cope with the lack of teaching materials, English syllabi and manuals for schools were developed and published in collaboration between Indonesia's government and the Ford Foundation.

CLT was first introduced in British in the 1960s and was also known as situational language teaching (Jameel, 2011). It emphasizes on communicative competence of language teaching. It was a response towards the inefficiency of GTM (Grammatical Translation Method) and the Audio-Lingual method in improving learners' speaking skills (Celce-Murcia, 1991). CLT puts more emphasis on students' language communication competence rather than language mastery. The role of the learners in CLT is to be actively involved during the learning process. Teachers act as participants who facilitate the process of communication. Therefore, in CLT it is advocated to use authentic teaching materials that resonate with the surrounding contexts of the students. This means that classroom teaching must have a linkage with real-life situations. Most importantly, both teacher and students use a target language to do classroom instructions (see Jameel, 2011; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Richard & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon & Wang, 2003).

It is worth noticing that there was a scholarly debate over the term competence. On the one hand, linguist scholars like Chomsky (1965) postulated that the term competence exclusively refers to the acquisition of grammatical knowledge in a language (as cited in Canale & Swain, 1980). On the other hand, Canale and Swain (1980) inclusively defined communicative competence as a combination of knowledge of the grammatical rules and sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence was explained as the ability to use language communicatively in an appropriate context (Harsono, 2005). In this essay, the term communicative competence refers to the latter, a combination between knowledge of grammatical aspects and sociolinguistic competence together.

3.2 Inquiry to Students' Disengagement in Indonesia's CLT

As mentioned in the introduction, it is assumed that culture is responsible for the difficulties of implementing CLT in classroom activities. Students' cultural background turns them into passive and disengaged in the communicative approach (Fadilah, 2018; Li, 1998). However, as the connection between 'cultural concept' and 'cultural practice' is not a causal relation (Wong & Wong, 2016), a need for another perspective to explain the reasons behind students' disengagement will be further investigated. This essay claims that disengagement is a result of two aspects: (1) the failure of representation, and (2) the identity-caused reluctance to communicative competence. These factors will be elaborated on further below.

3.3 The Failure of Representation

Before arriving at the first main argument that the failure of representation is responsible for disengagement in the communicative approach implemented in the classroom, the overview of the concept of meaning, language, and culture needs to be addressed here.

a. Conceptual Frameworks: Language, Meaning, and Culture

Three approaches can be used to understand the concept of meaning and language. *The reflective approach* postulates that language works like a mirror, reflecting meanings that already exist in the world. According to this approach, meaning is believed to lie in the object. In other words, objects alone already contain meanings in themselves. Meanwhile, *the intentional approach* assumes that meaning is determined or decided by the subjects (speakers). The speakers are those who have the authority to impose meanings of objects in the world. Meanings do not exist until the speakers put them in the objects. Finally, the *constructivist or constructionist approach* proposes the idea that objects in the world do not possess meaning until the system of representation occurs (Hall, 2013). In other words, meaning is produced through the system of representation. Hall (2013) defined representation as "*the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language*" (p. 3).

As a system, representation needs two processes to work. First, *mental representations*. Hall (2013) wrote:

"There is the 'system' by which all sorts of objects, people, and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads. Without them, we could not interpret the world meaningfully at all. In the first place, then, the meaning depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts which can stand for or 'represent' the world, enabling us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads." (p. 3)

Second, *language*. As meanings are constructed in the process of mental representation, they must be expressed or translated into a sign which can be whatever (words, sounds, or images) that carries meanings. This sign is a language. Therefore, language can be spoken, written, facial expressions, or gestures. Moreover, the concept of representation cannot be separated from that of culture. For people to be able to communicate, they must have a shared *conceptual map*. It enables one individual with another to interpret the world in a roughly similar way. In other words, through a shared

conceptual map amongst members of a group community, meanings can be understood and communicated. In this sense, the connection between language and culture can be well-understood. For constructivist, (Hall, 2013) explained the connection between them as follows:

to say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and making sense of the world, in broadly similar ways." (p. xviii-xix)

Such a view on language and culture is to respond to the structuralism that merely emphasized linguistic aspects of language. According to a structuralist scholar such as Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), meaning is produced through the system of convention, involving a *signifier* (sounds, words, images, signs) and a *signified* (concept) (Hall, 2013). Meanwhile, constructivism considers the essence of social life in the production of meaning and communication. Hall and Ghazoul (2012) wrote:

"a sociocultural perspective on human action locates the essence of social life in communication. Through our use of linguistic symbols with others, we establish goals, negotiate the means to reach them, and reconceptualize those we have set. At the same time, we articulate and manage our identities, our interpersonal relationships, and memberships in our social groups and communities." (p. 13)

In this sense, the production of meaning within the system of representations cannot be separated from the concept of culture since it is within culture people share a similar conceptual map (Hall, 2013). Meanings produced and exchanged between students and teachers in the classroom can only be understood by those who interpret the world in a roughly similar way. Therefore, teachers must consider from which cultural community their students come. Besides, this will also enable the students to make a conversation amongst themselves. Students who come from a similar cultural background are more likely to communicate in English effectively since they share a similar conceptual map.

b. The Failure of Representation in Teaching Instructions

CLT requires English to be the language of instruction in classroom activities (Jameel, 2011; Littlewood, 2013). To ensure that students make sense of meanings within the language, teachers have to pay attention to the concept of representation. Students who learn a new language such as English needs to have the ability to understand the meaning within that language. Otherwise, representation does not occur, and meaning is not communicated well. Consequently, understanding fails to occur between a speaker (teacher) and interlocutor (student). Therefore, teachers need to speak English to the students within the level that students can understand its meaning.

Rusdi (2004) who studied the English learning preferences of the Indonesian students found that students prefer English teachers to use English (85 percent). In contrast, only 16 percent of them prefer English teachers to teach in the Indonesian language. Interestingly enough, most of them (85 percent) also prefer spoken English when their teachers explain grammatical rules. However, when English is used as a language of instruction in the classroom, students have difficulties in understanding the instructions. Sundari (2017) who researched classroom interaction of Indonesian secondary school students in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, reported that when teachers use full-spoken English in classroom activities, students found it difficult to understand what the teachers say.

"Once I try to use English, yet they do not understand what I am saying. Then, I think I rather choose to use Indonesian than keep consistent in English." (Sundari, 2007, p. 151)

This is also the case in South Korea. It is difficult for students to communicatively engage in classroom activities since they are unable to fully speak English (Li, 1998).

The average secondary school students have a very small English vocabulary. They know a limited number of English structures. So they have great difficulty expressing themselves in English when they are assigned to do communicative activities. Gradually they lose interest in trying to speak English and become too discouraged to speak English anymore. (p. 690)

This situation forces teachers to blend English and Indonesian in classroom activities. However, even though using a target language (L1) is required in adopting the CLT approach, a study showed that the use of mother tongue in English learning does not necessarily disadvantage the students. Halasa and Al-Manaseer (2012) suggested that using a native or mother tongue language in an ELT classroom seems to have some advantages to the students. This enables students to comprehensively understand the instruction and meanings residing in the target language. Besides, enabling students to make sense of what is spoken by the teacher in language teaching and learning can facilitate students in improving their communicative competence because misunderstanding between speakers and interlocutors can be avoided.

Language instructions used by teachers in classroom activities are not limited to spoken language, facial expression, and body language can also be used to convey the teaching instructions that can be easily understood by the students. Consequently, CLT can be successfully implemented in classroom activities. In the context of lower secondary schools in Indonesia, for example, the failure of a communicative approach to effectively occur is caused by a lack of understanding of teachers' English spoken language amongst the students.

c. The Failure of Representation in Teaching Materials

The idea of representation is also important when it comes to teaching materials. The teaching materials need to be easily represented or understood by the students. Topics in the teaching materials that can hardly be conceptualized by students may lead to the failure of representation to occur. In Indonesia, according to Mantiri (2004), teaching materials are still derived from western countries and rarely incorporated Indonesia's cultural aspects. Since 1985, 80 percent of English books have been imported to Indonesia (Smith, 1991). This means that Indonesia's cultural aspects are more likely to be neglected in teaching materials. To exemplify, a recent English learning module used for Indonesia's Higher Secondary School students in Grade X confirms this claim. In chapter 5 of the book, arouse the topic "Let's Visit Niagara Falls" (Widiati, Rohmah, Furaidah, 2017, p. 69-73).

Students who have never heard of it may be confused and cannot be engaged in classroom activities. It is stated that one of the learning purposes in this chapter 5 is to describe tourist places, historic sites in spoken and written English by considering the purpose of communication (Widiati, Rohmah, Furaidah, 2017). However, since the chosen topic is about Niagara Falls which is unlikely familiar to the students, it seems that they are more likely to encounter difficulties in dealing with the topic.

In this sense, Neba (2016) pointed out the importance of involving students' cultural backgrounds in ELT materials in a cross-cultural environment. Providing learning and teaching materials familiar to students is more likely to facilitate the creation of their cultural awareness. Students will see that the language they learn is accommodating their culture. This enables them to positively consider a target language as part of their cultural identity instead of a 'foreign language' or 'colonial language'.

To summarize, the failure of a communicative approach to be conducted in the classroom can be analyzed through the concept of representation. Disengagement in the communicative approach can be assumed that students fail to represent the meaning within (1) teaching instructions and (2) teaching materials.

3.4 Identity-Caused Reluctance to Communicative Competence

Here this essay argues that students' reluctance to engage in a communicative approach seems to be affected by the way students see their identity in the English teaching process. Students assume that being communicatively competent or not in English does not have a significant impact on their identity. English does not belong to them. They are still part of their community whether they are capable of speaking English or not. To arrive at this argument, the concept of identity will be elaborated further.

a. A Conceptual Framework: Identity

Identity is about how individuals narrate themselves. One's identity can be seen from his/her membership and involvement in a group community (Hall & Ghazoul, 2012). As humans were born, for example, they automatically belonged to one of the social groups such as religion, race, and nation. Also, as they get involved in various activities such as being a student, teacher, or CEO, they play roles to which a group community they belong. In the same vein, identity can be categorized as a group-based identity and a role-based identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Awareness of identity is important in teaching and learning activities. Rahman (2004) mentioned that to make a learning process effective, matching students' and teachers' values, ideas, and perceptions about learning and teaching is crucial. For example, teachers who apply a communicative approach, which of course requires students' active participation, need to make sure that students also

realize that their participation is needed in the classroom. Otherwise, there is a conflictual value between teacher and students that may lead to an unexpected learning atmosphere.

This is in line with the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy. The term refers to the attempt to include cultural values that are compatible with students' cultural backgrounds into classroom pedagogy (Billings, 1995). There is a reason that a student's academic failure is caused by a cultural mismatch between students and schools. It is believed that more academically successful students are those who shared relatively similar language instruction patterns with the teachers (Erickson, 1987). Therefore, students need to possess an understanding of the knowledge and language of different cultural communities. This enables them to know when and how it is appropriate to engage in classroom activities.

Moje and Hinchman (2004) suggested some principles related to culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy should make a relationship between teachers and students closer; therefore, explanation and instruction given in the classroom will be more acceptable and relevant to students' cultural values. Students are seen as individuals who already possess a cultural background since they are also members of a cultural group. Pedagogy should resonate with their prior experience.

From a constructivist perspective, identity can be conceptualized within three fundamental arguments. First, identity is non-essential; therefore, it is subject to change. This means that identity is struggling, contested, and changing over time. Therefore, Hall (1996) notes that identity is "*the process of becoming rather than being*" (p. 4). Block (2007) explained that culture is fluid in the way that when individuals are surrounded by new socio-cultural environments, the sense of their identity is unstable so that they struggle to reach a balance, sinking in a new identity.

Second, identity is relational (Woodward, 1997). This means that one's identity can be marked through its relationship with other identities. In the same vein, Hall (1996) also mentioned that identity is the point of identification and attachment. This means that, on the one side, identity is much more about sameness within a particular group of identity. On the other side, Hall also believed that identity is constructed through, not outside, difference. This means that identity is not only about unification but also exclusion. People who are members of a group of identities look at people who are not them as 'other'. Third, identity is connected to a language. As Morgan (2007) postulates that it is upon identity conceptualization of language is transformed. In other words, the concept of identity has a connection with that of representation. As the conceptualization of the meaning changes, so does the identity. Therefore, it can be said learning a new language means gaining a new identity. People can be identified to belong to a particular group by acknowledging their vocabularies, accents, and discourses (Kramsch, 1998).

b. Reluctance to Communicative Competence

The Indonesian government, following the declaration of independence in 1945, established English as the first foreign language, neglecting Dutch which was considered the language of the enemy and less valuable for international communication compared to English (Smith, 1991). According to Smith (1991), this led to the popularity of English in Indonesia. The influence of English can also be seen in the acculturation of English into the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*). Words such as *televisi* (television), *radio* (radio), *satelit* (satellite), *bikini* (bikini), *heroin* (heroin), *taxi* (taxi), *kompas* (compass) and many others are derived from English. American English became the most favorable dialect learned in Indonesia because of extensive US influence.

The establishment of EFL, it turns out, has a significant impact on how learners see the urgency of learning English. In EFL countries including Indonesia, English is learned and thought in the classroom as a subject matter like science or history even though the focus of the ELT, as written in the syllabus, is to equip students with competence in both spoken and written English in a variety of contexts. There are three general competencies of secondary school students in Indonesia required by the syllabus. They involve communicative competence in three dimensions: (1) interpersonal, (2) transactional, and (3) functional (MoEC, 2014). Moreover, English is taught twice a week for 40 minutes (lower secondary school) and 45 minutes (higher secondary school) per meeting (MoEC, 2013).

As English is only taught in the classroom, contextualization of real-life context outside of the classroom is needed. This is to enable students to use English in a real situation as required by the curriculum. Therefore, the English syllabus is contextualized to suit the local features.

"Kegiatan Pembelajaran pada silabus dapat disesuaikan dan diperkaya dengan konteks daerah atau sekolah, serta konteks global untuk mencapai kualitas optimal hasil belajar pada peserta didik. Tujuan kontekstualisasi pembelajaran ini adalah agar peserta didik tetap berada pada budayanya, mengenal dan mencintai alam dan

sosial di sekitarnya, dengan perspektif global sekaligus menjadi pewaris bangsa sehingga akan menjadi generasi tangguh dan berbudaya Indonesia.”

[Learning activities in the syllabus can be adjusted and enriched in the context of the region or school, as well as the global context to achieve optimal quality of learning outcomes for students. The purpose of this learning contextualization is for students to remain in their culture, to know and love the nature and social environment around them, with a global perspective as well as being the heir of the nation so that it will become a strong and cultured generation of Indonesia]. (MoEC, 2016, p. 9)

As an impulse to learn English is to fulfill the subject-matter requirement, the sense of struggling for identity interest is not the case especially in the case of learning English in an EFL context like Indonesia. EFL refers to a foreign language is one that is spoken in non-medium of ordinary communication (Yeung, 2011). In the learning and teaching context, EFL countries commonly design their English curriculum in a ‘target-language removed context’, which means a language learned in the classroom is different from the real contexts in which the target language is supposed to be used (Graves, 2008). Unlike learners in EFL countries, those in ESL countries see the ability to speak English as an impulse to the approval of their group community. This is because ESL is not only defined as a language spoken by individuals along with their first language but is also related to identity.

According to Nayar (1997), ESL has three characteristics. First, ESL is commonly acquired and taught in the native environment ideally by native-speaking teachers. Second, integration into the native English-speaking social group is the goal of ESL learning. Third, the language is learned not only for communicative purposes and integration into the community but also for emancipatory reasons such as respect and mobility. This has a powerful impact on the identity of ESL learners. They see learning English as a medium of full participation and an opportunity to get involved in the community. Also, they have feelings of discomfort if they are incapable of using the language because they are situated to meet the expectation of the target community. Even further, a lack of competence in a target language may be seen as a cognitive deficiency within their social group.

This is in line with Priyono's (2004) assumption that there is a discrepancy between learners in ESL (English as a Second Language) countries and those in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries when it comes to motivation in learning English. This motivation is related to the concept of identity. People in ESL countries are motivated to learn English since English is what makes them identified as members of the community. As they can speak English, they are part of the group. This is because English is part of their social identity. On the other hand, learners in EFL countries do not share the urgency of English competence similarly. Gaining opportunities to get a job and pass the test is most likely to be the prominent goal of learning English for them.

A dissertation by Yeung (2011) on motivation for English language learning confirmed this tendency. Vocational students in Hong Kong surveyed indicated that their motivation towards learning English relates to the opportunities to get a job and higher salary (career-oriented). Moreover, other motivations related to the expectation of getting good examination results and the ability to communicate. This, according to Yeung (2011), has been consistent with a previous survey in Hong Kong conducted since the 1970s. Nothing has changed drastically. Similarly, Graves (2008) found that the impulse to learn English, in the case of senior high school students in a Japanese context, is to improve spoken English for communication, economic aspects, and globalization.

In the Indonesian context, Effendi and Suyudi (2017) postulate that the English national examination affected students' priority in learning English. Instead of improving communicative competence, students focus more on learning English for a national examination which is a multiple-choice format. As a result, communicative competence is neglected. In this sense, House (2003) made a useful distinction between language for communication versus language for identification. When language is only used for communicative matters such as a *lingua franca*, then culture, norms, errors in the usage of language are not taken seriously since the mere focus is to ensure that communication between speakers and interlocutors successfully occurs. They do not think that the target language, English for example, belongs to them; therefore, English is not a component that identifies who they are, which group they belong to.

In response to this, Ariatna (2016) suggested the Indonesian government amend the policy related to the position of English in Indonesia from EFL to ESL to successfully enhance the implementation of CLT in the Indonesian context. The transformation of EFL to ESL will create a more supportive atmosphere to improve their communicative competence. However, this idea was strongly criticized. Fadilah (2018) contended that such policy will marginalize Indonesia (*Bahasa Indonesia*) as well as other Indonesia's local languages. The English usage as a *lingua franca* by the members of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) can be taken as an example. Kirkpatrick (2012) found that as English was

established to be the working language amongst the members of the regional association, many vernacular languages are spoken within ASEAN are likely to devalue and less interesting to learn since they are replaced by ELT in the curriculum.

Moreover, without transformation from EFL to ESL, English has been attracting many Indonesian students. Many students have joined English courses to learn English outside of the classrooms. The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2003) imposed a regulation for the establishment of courses and training to facilitate citizens who need such programs. According to Nugroho (2010), 65 percent of Indonesian students, ranging from primary to secondary school students, join English courses and training.

To conclude, students' reluctance to communicative approach seems to have a connection with the idea of identity. Having communicative competence in English by students in EFL countries is not considered necessary to represent their identity. This is because students think that being isolated or excluded from the group community is not the case in the Indonesian context. Rather, they learn English for the sake of passing the national test and gaining job opportunities.

4. Conclusion

From the explanation above, cultural constraints to the implementation of CLT in the Indonesian context do not necessarily come from cultural aspects believed by some previous researchers (i.e., Fadilah, 2018; Li, 1998; Marcellino, 2008). Wong and Wong (2012) claimed that the relationship between cultural ideas and cultural practice is not a causal relation. This has driven the essay to look at the case from a constructivist perspective by considering the concepts of language, culture, and identity. Using a constructivist paradigm through the concepts of language, culture, and identity, this essay provides an alternative explanation on why students are reluctant to engage in a communicative approach in the Indonesian context. The essay concludes that such reluctance comes from two main factors: (1) the failure of representation to occur in the teaching instructions and teaching materials during the learning process, and (2) identity-caused reluctance to communicative competence.

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