

English Imperialism: A Structural Form of Colonialism in the Intercultural Communication

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the intercultural communication life of six Indonesian PhD Muslim female students in Australia as transnationals during their first year living caused by English imperialism. English plays an essential role as the first place of language hierarchy in the global connection. Adopting the linguistic imperialism of Phillipson and the identity negotiation theory of Stella Ting-Toomey, this ethnography study tries to uncover questions on challenges in intercultural communication caused by English imperialism: (1) How far is English as linguistic imperialism to their mutual intercultural communication? Moreover, (2) To what extent does linguistic imperialism influence intercultural communication competence? This study is a qualitative approach using autoethnography and interview techniques to obtain data of the self-experience of Indonesian Muslim female doctoral students in Australia. Later, these female students own their 'mindful' knowledge, motivation, and skill to obtain their adaptive, effective, and appropriate strategy in supporting their identity construction's successfulness under the superiority of English.

Keywords: *English imperialism, structural colonialism, intercultural communication*

INTRODUCTION

It is no doubt that globalization has shaped the array of communication. The recent era cannot be separated from the existence of advanced technology in connecting people from different places. The innovation of gadgets nowadays influences the communication technology as tools of virtual conversation. Features provide these tools to assist people to meet digitally. Thus, the technology is the mutual product of globalization.

Talking about technology in communication, face-to-face conversation is distinctive, English plays the most essential role in the global communication. However, advanced technology cannot change the position of the language as the most spoken tool. Meanwhile, English is the most and only language to be taken into consideration. English as the global language has its remarkable position amongst thousands of other languages worldwide. Its pole chair has shifted local languages as something primitives. Features in communication tools use English as the main language, especially the American English. It was a long journey when English becomes the most spoken language. The British colonial brings it during the imperialism. Thus, English is the language of imperialism/colonialism. English has continuously spread and retained its power in various domains in periphery countries, whether ex-colonies or non-colonies. English, besides Spanish and Dutch language, is the impose of colonizer's power, here the British. English as a tangible part of tangible power of colonialism.

English has gained its more powers in all fields of life. one of those fields is education. Once it transforms from a foreign into a compulsory language of education, it has been able to make people from non-English speaking countries in demanding for the mastery of the language not only in a phase of grammatical but also a pragmatical stage. Speakers from different cultures push themselves to be

competent in the language if they want to be noticed as the global citizens. English has attracted its fellows to be loyal to use the language to gain their ideas.

Moreover, English has been able to safe its position as no other languages can compete its spread use in technology. This is then come to a portray that other langauges are closed to backward and far from rationality, civilization, and modernization. A naive conclusion but it is no debate that English is a form of hegemony and superiority in discriminating other cultures.

The English expansion in education also invites Indonesian Muslim female students who must compete to be international students. They represent minority communities who live temporarily in a culturally different country where English forces them to engage in intercultural communication. They face challenges that many other international students don't. Communication problems may influence the success of Indonesian Muslim women in both academic and social life. Problem appeared when English became the triggering point to enhance mutual communication, which is later called a form of soft colonialism. Problems arise when the capacity of language competence in the intercultural communication is lack. Not all awardees are good at English and also lack awareness and skill dealing with the communication gap.

The scholarship can invite Indonesian Muslim women doctoral students pursuing the degree in some universities in Australia. These students are those awardees from the Ministry of Religious Affair (MORA) of Indonesia under the Mora Scholarship Program. They competed for the scholarship for their future academic life. Mostly, they were lecturers in some religious based universities in Indonesia. Mora had enlarge opportunities for many lectures as the program provided fully funded education and the ministry's objective was to have genuine human resources. The program is aimed at accelerating doctors in religious-based universities. For sure, the challenge is filled by many lecturers both male and female. Both parties are equal to reach the positions.

After completing the position and deciding to be international students which is limited by time duration of stay, these Indonesian female muslim doctoral students experienced a cultural shock while they were in Australia. Though many Indonesian coral workers and students were in the country, individually they had problems concerning their adaptation process in the beginning year. As students, they tended to have unfortunate situations in experiencing different education systems (Arifin, 2021). She added that the most challenging situation is when they should have an extra intensive surveillance compared to the host students during the thesis/dissertation competition (Arifin, 2021). This is in line with Felix dan Lawson (1994) statement that international students frequently experience pressures during the tutorial, including lecturings and seminars, and during the laboratorium research and essay completion.

The lecturing atmosphere between Indonesia and Australia is also extremely different. Indonesia applies formal system in all aspects such as in the classroom, in communication ethics between students-lecturers, students-supervisors, students-staffs, and students-students, and in clothing choice while it does not happen in the US where the outcome is very substantial rather than formal. The example of informal form in education system is like calling names of the lecturers or supervisors. However, the quality of thesis writing needs more time to complete.

To understand the learning experience of Indonesian Muslim women students in Australia, it is important to note that they also live outside the campus atmosphere. The problems are not always related to education but also personal problems as consequences in deciding to study overseas. This is the impact of intercultural communication, where these students got along with other people from different backgrounds. Though the problems cannot be generalized, most of international students -where Indonesian muslim women are part of this- must get a long with typical problems such as adjustment, financial hardship,

communication, and so on. These problems are then called as common matters (Arifin, 2021). These students should be ready to seek help as supports to deal with their personal and common problems (Else, 1990; Lewis, 1990; dan Quintrell, 1992).

When they come to study overseas, their hopes might be difficult to meet (Mukminin, 2012). It is merely because there are challenges on culture, social life, education bound, habit, and value system in university interaction and communication. The individual and high context of social life in Australia done by its citizens that have made them to be more independent is very far from the usual lives of Indonesians. Hofstede (1986 in Mukminin, 2012) states that in an individual culture as in Australia, the relations between individuals are not too tight. Everyone is responsible to take care of himself. On the other hand, in a collective culture as in Indonesia, the relations between people are communally social and regarded as thankful relationships by being collective and welcome to give aids to other people. This culture concerns on group-oriented.

Robinson (1992 in Mukminin, 2012) states that in an academic culture in Australia, as in other American and European countries, common values as individualism and competition, similarity and informality, pragmatism, reasoning style and philosophy of knowledge are institutional characteristics in Australia education. Those characteristics are very different for Indonesian's education that put harmony values and mutual assistance. This have made Indonesians to be more dependent among students. Thus, the international students from Indonesia who should make adaptation and acculturation experience unavoids stressful situation that later causes both physical and mental disorder.

Though the white supremacy is not an intriguing matters in Australia to name ethnicities in dividing superiors and inferiors, the practice of segmenting people of whom speaks English well and not is too obvious. The power hegemony is no longer about difference in physical appearance but now it is about the

powerful versus the powerless. Here, the differentiation is to those who are Englishman and not.

Furthermore, this study aims at exploring the problems that result from English hardship as a challenge faced by of Indonesia Muslim women students in Australia. I examine the influence of English competence in intercultural communication through knowledge, awareness, and skill to the successfulness of the students in both academic and social life. Further I investigate the strategies revealed by those students in dealing with problems.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper applied ethnography to grab the informants. As a qualitative approach, this study tries to describe the informants in a detail and comprehensive spectacles. Six informants from three big universities in Australia i.e. Australian National Univeristy, Western Sidney University, and Univeristy of Canberra, were involved in the study. The informants were selected by applying a purposive sampling technique to those who were academically and socially active. The technique aimed at exploring the exposure of the dynamics in the first year.

They were interviewed from their point of view about the English hardship during their intercultural communication life in negotiating their identities. Though, there were many Indonesians, both students or ordinary ones, these Indonesian Muslim PhD students experienced different exposure relating to their position as transnationals who lived in the country as international students. First, the were asked to write down their experiences as international students in host country. Their notes were then analyzed to get a clear map of their feeling staying outside their home country. The notes mostly told about their hardship to engage in a social relationship with local friends, supervisors, lecturers and staffs. They perceived that though English was spoken, they thought that a structural linguistic imperialism existed as the locals tended to measure these students based on their

language features as dialects and accents of bold Indonesian in using English. The notes became insight to construct future interviews to have detailed information about the phenomenon experienced by these students. The interviews transcripts were then analyzed and concluded to answer the research questions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This paper applies two major theories named 'Linguistic Imperialism' by Phillipson and 'Identity Negotiation Theory' by Stella Ting-Toomey. To note that linguistic imperialism by Phillipson is a theoretical construct to explain the hierarchy of language where a certain language, here English, is more dominant than others. The feature describes both a structural and cultural inequality concerning about the position of English amongst other languages. Structural inequality among the existence of languages touches material wealth where cultural is more non-material (ideology).

First, Linguistic imperialism came with the colonizers by exposing military power. Recently, it is more subtle through economic, social, and cultural penetration (Knowles, 1998). The development of English to be well-noticed as the language of imperialism is clearly defined by Phillipson (1992). He divided stages of the development into three: (1) language is imposed as the colonizer's power, (2) the language is a privilege for local people to called as elites, and (3) language is an ideological persuasion through media and technology. Phillipson highlighted that linguistic imperialism is still perceived as establishing English dominance and the continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequality between English and other languages. The aspects to be noted in the linguistic imperialism are the stages of structural and cultural.

One of example of the English dominance is the use of this language in education. As the language of global education is a way to show its power. Big universities in wealth and advanced countries such as the US, Australia, the

British, Germany, Canada, and many more put more concerns to invite citizens outside these big nations to come to study. English is the first and most prerequisite. It is merely because English will be used to demonstrate education. Thus, many inhabitants of the globe race for this superior language mastery. They join trainings that provide English acceleration. It is a clear picture that speakers of this dominant language tend to have more advantages in education that later help the speakers to obtain better employment, social status, and life span while speakers of other languages tend to be disadvantaged.

The above explanation might come to clear insight where the English imperialism by which has been started years ago shows that there is a structural form of colonialism. Time flies but English is very hard to be ruined. The influence of English as the form of linguistic imperialism itself shows a tangible feature to put English at the top level of language clusters. Surprisingly, no language can replace English as the tool used in politics, economy, science and technology, media, and other forms of social activities. It becomes a determinant of social and economic progress in many countries and gatekeeper to a higher status for individuals in other non-English speaking countries.

Relating English as the language of global communication, English has become one of the major language for international communication. Here, international communication is another name of intercultural communication where people from different backgrounds communicate by using similar language, English, in sending and receiving messages. Within that locus of communication, English has unquestionably become the first-choice language, not only because people worldwide choose it voluntarily (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

In intercultural communication, it is obliged that English is essentially used. Unfortunately, people who are not English speakers will be unaware that English has implanted its structural power of the colonizers. It transforms from the language of the colonizers into a privilege language of the colonized people in

order to named as civilized and modern. The main core of intercultural communication is the ability of people from other cultures in negotiating identities in the host countries. English is the main and the only tool to accelerate the idea of difference to be accepted in a distinguished and advanced country. The English mastery is a tangible form of the success of English as media of colonialism.

English as Structural and Cultural Construction in Intercultural Communication

English, whether it is used orally as spoken media or as written expression in media, play a pivot role in communication. As non-English speakers, English becomes lingua franca when a foreigner stays both temporarily or permanently in a country with English as the first language. No matter the accents and dialects i.e. British English, American English, Australian English, Singaporean English, etc., English transformation is situational. In fact, English is still play an essential role.

The previous explanation shows how English has shaped the indigeneous to be loyal to the language. The British firstly brought English colonialism as the form of aristocracy. However, English and the cultures have successfully shaped the local people into a high culture but in a low context one. It merely reflects the British performance who are famous with those two characteristics. English came together with the commonwealth issue where the British domination could not be eradicated. Though, the locals were also able to cultivate distinctive characters that might be different from the British used to be. English is then structurally constructed as the highest rank of language where it is related to civilized and advanced culture. Those who can speak the language fluently will be admitted to a modern and civilized people.

English users, mostly the non speakers, will intentionally imitate the ways of the speakers in applying the words both verbally and non-verbally. This fact is like a must if they want to be noted as the global inhabitants. They prefer to use

English to update social status, e.g., instagram, twitter, whatsapp, etc. They then commented words in English. This phenomenon is a picture of how English can construct people's views on the language. Compared to English as a spoken media, English use in social media or in other written forms in email, journals, books, articles, and other printed media is a matter of transformation from intangible into tangible. Words in those medias are then understood and explained orally to intensify the message. People cannot escape from the new form of English as linguistic imperialism in a soft manner.

Intercultural communication theory of Ting-Toomey proposes some strategies highlighted by the communicators dealing with intercultural communication. The strategies were resulted from the contemplation of the students to get the knowledge about the situation they had in. Problems they faced were then exposed as the motivation reflected from the knowledge, which then turned into skills. The skills were manifested into varied strategies composed by the representative students of this research (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

As mostly understood, language is a crucial element of communication. Problem came out when the communication should be done by using an unfamiliar language for the communicators. Different languages also projected different cultural background. People will fall through the gaps if they don't start to communicate their difference

Meeting the Components of Intercultural Communication for Mutual Purpose

As has been noted for many years, language is the core point of communication. This has been universally declared by people who engage in communication. The communication may often fail when the understanding and the message of the communication is lack of language competence. Communication is not always easy even when the participants come from a similar culture. Thus, communication will be more complicated if the participants

come from a different background. This is why knowing intercultural communication barriers is the first and the best way to overcome the rising problems. Problems which exist in intercultural communication are: language difference; body language; level of context; negative stereotypes and prejudices; and feeling and emotions.

Language difference is the common prevailing feature of the communication gap (Arifin, 2021). Communication participants will not achieve similar messages when they stand with different language. To be noted, language is a part of distinguished cultural identity of a person who stays in a certain place and it is impossible to expose the use of similar language to others whose cultural identities are quite different. In order to have a similar picture during the communication, the use of similar language is very highly recommended. However, the cultural different background usually also depicting values could be a triggering factor when a foreigner was involved in intercultural communication. Though, some experts state that the different language competence during the communication can be minimized by using body language, only few body languages have similarities in meaning among many different languages in the world. Common body languages only help a little amount of the meanings in the communication. The body languages might contain values to differentiate the language hierarchy, here English and Indonesia. Values of high level in context is applied by most of Asian countries while low context level is applied by most of English speaking-advanced countries.

Studying overseas does not mean that these international students are ready for the exposure to new environment situations. Most of these students are still bound to their nations and not ready to embrace their status as transnationals (Arifin, 2021; Arifin, 2022; Arifin, 2023). This is consistent with what has been found by Weis and Ford (2011). First-year experience pursuing studies overseas is always described as the toughest time. Thurber and Walton (2012) point out that

first year college or university students face significant transition issues from living in home countries to host countries.

Problems arise when students lack capacity for language competence in the field of intercultural communication.. Like other international students, they face problems concerning their personal, cultural, and social identity that force them to engage in intercultural communication to be accepted in the host country. Arifin (2021, 2022, 2023) states that first year living in a different country is crucial to influence the following years for transnationals, such as international students.

Even though the international students have passed the English proficiency test, the language gap also becomes a primary factor in why some sojourners fail in the communication phase within the campus and social life (Arifin, 2022). Lack of English competence, especially in the daily communication, may indicate the failure of the students' progress. The cultural, the socio-cultural, the psycho-cultural and the environment influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication. The effectiveness/success of intercultural communication depends on the students' motivation, knowledge, and skill in the strategies they have found during the interaction.

Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2015) state that communication competence or effectiveness has been investigated in multiple intercultural communication contexts. Futhermore, Ting-Toomey (2007) suggests that a competent intercultural communicator should have four abilities, i.e. ability to manage change and transition; ability to be reflexive about self and also organizational ethnocentric tendencies; ability to develop dynamic, hybrid, and communication stiles; and ability to code verbal switching verbal and nonverbal styles within particular cultural and workplace (here university lives) situations and interaction goals' analysis

Later, she proposes how to be a mindful intercultural communicator who should be able to develop appropriate and effective intercultural verbal and

nonverbal interaction skills; flows with adjustment changes, transition, and ambiguities in the unfamiliar cultural community; understands the unfamiliar cultures' beliefs, value systems deeply, and communication styles; deepens cultural/ethnic self-awareness and other awareness and systems-level communication issue; and is fully-Present and In-the-moment (Ting-Toomey, 1999). She highlighted that mutual intercultural communication should meet knowledge, motivation, and skill to be achieved by making interaction, negotiation, and meaning creation between communicators from different backgrounds.

The standard to achieve a mutual intercultural communication competence is to do an aware action by having knowledge, motivation, and skill in the diverse background conversation. Again, English as the dominant language becomes the only measurement for those who are competent in the conversation. This situation will fail for those who experience a language gap.

FINDING

This paper only focused on the results from the notes and the interviews undertaken to the informants. The research was conducted for four months from September to December 2019. The study revealed the importance of attachment and interaction with other local students and values to solve their discomfort situation. The academic and social environment clearly showed how English must be used as the means of communication. It is to address another form of English imperialism both structurally and culturally during the intercultural communication where the aspects should be met.

This was in line with notes and interviews with Nuril, Nurul, and Salma who were sitting for their second year living in Australia. Local students were very influential parties in supporting these students effort to master English. They assisted the these students in understanding words in written forms (journals,

articles, papers, etc.) and in oral conversation. They helped them in accelerating the meanings by conveying it using understandable points.

Alma tried to open communication with local friends to help her to solve her education problems particularly with the text materials. She exposed the problems with lecturers, supervisor, and staffs whe she found out that she needed clear explanation which were in English. She also forced herself to actively point out her ideas in front of others though her English needed more progress.

Aliza also did similar thing by meeting her supervisor, lecturers and academic staffs to manage her academic results and to have chances to remake her records. As most of the assignments must be on time and all the references were in English, she frequently met up with friends and lecturers to gain insight into the content she must compile. She spent much time in the library to sharpen her assignments before submitting them to the lecturers.

Hilma exposed her English in intercultural communication by following many seminar and workshops that delivered her to meet other local and international students. Once, she underestimated herself to engage in communication. She felt that she needed to formulate her situation. Then, she always went to her lecturers and supervisors when she had problem concerning about her study. Again, feeling her language gap would not help her to succeed in intercultural communication.

Indonesian Muslim female students tend to construct their understanding on different cultures by undertaking acculturation, socialization, interaction, and other forms of social exposure with the host countries. They also, structurally formed ways on how to blend with the host country during the communication without leaving their cultural backgrounds. These can be achieved when these students can accomplish communicative competence through language exposure. Moreover, they deliberately described their backgrounds to other parties. Again, all problems can be communicated. Dorjee and Ting Toomey (2015) suggest

intercultural communication competence is achieved by switching internal frame and external code to gain a productive and satisfied message between communicators. The competence of the sojourners will also be noted by strategies they make after getting along with the local people that force them to internalize knowledge and skill of communication during the interaction. Creative strategies resulted from problems by the students are the implementation of knowledge, awareness, and skill they achieved after experiencing intercultural communication exposures.

Concerning about the problems caused by the linguistic imperialism, here English, Indonesian Muslimah PhD students must accomplish mental maturity and independence as the keys to coping problems in intercultural communication (Arifin, 2023). Mental maturity and independence occur when the communicator has already acknowledge the situation by which then named as knowledge. The main objective of intercultural communication is to obtain a mindful situation by investing knowledge, motivation, and skill.

The Indonesian Muslim female students were able to develop strategies (as the implementation of three prevailing points) to address intercultural communication problems after they experienced their situation while studying abroad. The experiences drove them to acknowledge knowledge of fitting host culture, feel the problems as motivations, and use strategies as skills. They had to deal with problems such as finding some friends to talk with including both Indonesian and local friends, communicating about academic matters with lecturers, supervisors, and academic staffs, opening communication with local people to ask sort of information in the society such as the halal food court, the prayer site, the recreational place, the good educational institution, and so on .

Relating to the situation of Indonesian Muslimah PhD students in Australia, they have to pay more attention to using English as the spoken and written media. These students must be competent with the language to converse with friends,

lecturers, supervisors, staffs, and other inhabitants of the country. To get a clear picture of the culture of the locals, these students must maintain the language in their daily lives during their stay. Their first year experience was essential for their rest years during the study. The success of these students in manipulating the power of English as linguistic imperialism for both their academic and social life was the key point to accelerating their English competence. Most of these students made use of seminars, workshops, and discussion held by the campus to feel the use of the English in academic settings. They often posted ideas during the meetings though they could not express the language well. They exposed the language intentionally as the English exposures could lead them into a more convenient proper English. It was brave and clever to meet friends, lecturers, supervisors, and staff to ask academic matters. In fact, a non-formal environment in the academic setting also assisted these students to be relax in exposing the language.

Some students also exposed the language use by attending an English class held by the locals to provide foreigners in mastering the English. The meetings were held by levelling the students along with other transnationals and led by the local tutor. The levelling was not meant for cultural differentiation but more to gain those attendees to be confident in voicing out ideas. The meeting was started by having games and reading and then continued to discussion by giving equal opportunity. After completing the level, these attendees would enter the next level. The most important thing was that it was a free of charge and held by the local government in local library. The meeting also provided journeys to many established important buildings of the city. It was a mutual and influential between locals and foreigners. This situation was one way revealed by the students to face a structural situation on how English must be used as a compulsory language in the communication.

Most of the students who had the experience were then received a positive exposure when they should meet locals in groceries, public schools, streets, and other places where English was the key in expressing their performances in front of others. They were also confident enough to teach their husbands and children as most of them were under their guidance during their stay. Thus, as the frontguards of the family, these students must be in a mature condition for the English exposure. It was like their responsibilities to invite the family to better understand the language as the core point of the culture in Australia.

Most of the students related the situation they faced as an unavoidable one. Though they were noticed as quite fluent in English, the language hardship which confronts the intercultural communication faced by these students cannot be separated from the psychological preparation of the students. This situation can be seen in detail through the internal and external circumstances. The readiness of the students to study abroad that meets the psychological exposures is very crucial matter that should be taken into account. The psychological exposures here are like obstacles that the psychological students' situations might face as fears of being discriminated, alienated, left-behind, and so on. Thus, motivation is the motive for the students to handle language hardship by hiring self-willingness in the intercultural communication.

Mostly, the psychological condition, both internally and externally, affects the receiving process of the mutual conversation. The internal problems were merely caused by the feeling of having low confidence that impacted the unreadiness toward the cultural difference situation that obliged them to master and use English intentionally. This unprepared situation led to the expanded language gap that showed how English was a dominant language compared to Indonesia. This was a linguistic imperialism feature by which its power could not be compared as the top tier of the language hierarchy. The prevailing first year of language gap distracted the following years of intercultural communication in

engaging communication among students, lecturers, supervisors, academic staff, and the people in surrounding.

On the other hand, their external problems that continued the intercultural communication problems could be diminished if psychologically the students were ready for the internal empowerment. Aside of common problems might be faced by international students in the beginning phase such as homesickness, loneliness, negative place attachment, culture shock, and financial problems (Arifin, 2022; Arifin, 2023), external problems of which relating to the bounding with the environment were an excessive situation of the internal ones.

The students stated that the most significant problems faced by those students dealing with their identity negotiation come from the internal situation (personal matters) rather than from the external (the environment) influenced by the English competence. Ability in intercultural communication helps students to succeed.

CONCLUSION

In the intercultural communication, English as the global language cannot be denied. Brought by the British colonizers, other languages cannot replace the language's position English is the form of linguistic imperialism that can influence both its original speaker and non speakers has been structurally recognized to note that the users are civilized, educated, and advanced. Thus, it is a weapon to shape the people's minds to be intentionally use the language. The non-speakers will be aware to use the language in conveying the messages to admitted by others. It is then a tool to demonstrate the identity and assimilate host culture to be more competent with the language in the global communication.

Intercultural communication requires a mutual understanding that different cultures reveal different customs, standards, social mores, and thought patterns. A good intercultural communication should be done deliberately and

consciously as it covers knowledge, motivation, and skill. The motivation is done to make a mutual communication with others, while knowledge is aimed at improving relationship by facilitating two-way conversation which is in turn foster mutual understanding between people of diverse background. To add, skill should be accomplished with a willingness to accept the differences and to adapt.

As a temporary citizens in an atmosphere where English is very dominant, these people do not need to assimilate the host culture within their insights. The English is a tool to penetrate structural and cultural for the users. Technology might change, but English's position as a form of linguistic imperialism is too tangible. Agree or not, English has much influence for a mutual intercultural communication by forcing non-English speaking people to use the language. It has influenced speakers, especially non-English speakers, to meet the aspects of intercultural communication i.e. knowledge, motivation, and skill.

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