

## The making of a multicultural English teacher

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*ABSTRACT: This teacher narrative tells the story of the making of a multicultural English teacher, beginning with the author's roots in a remote village in central Java and tracing his journey through a range of educational institutions. In a series of critical reflections, the author discusses a range of social and cultural influences as these impacts on his emerging identity as both English teacher and speaker of a range of languages. These critical reflections constitute a kind of self-study, where the author discusses in a self-reflexive way the sorts of discourses at work that work to construct his identity in a range of different settings.*

*KEYWORDS: Self-study, self-reflexivity, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, English teaching.*

A single overmastering identity at the core of the academic enterprise, whether that identity be Western, African, or Asian, is a confinement, a deprivation. The world is made of numerous identities interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically (Said, 1991, p. 17).

The following is my “self-study” (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001) in which I reflect how I became an English teacher. Each segment has two parts: my autobiography (italicised throughout the document) and my critical reflection. By arranging it this way, I become a “self-reflexive character” (Doecke, 2004) in which I interrogate “the interconnections between my individual self and larger social contexts and networks” (p. 205). It depicts my experience of learning and teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Additionally, I include also my experiences with Javanese as my mother tongue and Bahasa Indonesia as my national language that have had a great role in constructing my identity. I explore my lives ranging from the rural setting of my childhood to the urban settings in the next phases of my life, including my life while living in Australia.

### **HOMOGENEOUS IDENTITY: JAVANESE MOSLEM PEASANT BOY**

*I grew up in a remote village in Solo<sup>1</sup> region where the life was very simple without any electricity and cars. The beautiful memories of peasant life where together with my friends I helped to cast out the sparrows in the rice field, played “kasti” (a cricket-like game), went fishing in a brook, or went to “langgar” (small mosque) when the dusk came, have remained in my heart. The thing that made me feel really contented was that I got some privileges as “putrane Pak Guru” (the son of Mister Teacher) – in fact, my mother was also a teacher – since teacher was an honourable profession besides “lurah” (the village chief) and “modin” (Islamic preacher). So*

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<sup>1</sup> Solo is a town in central Java, the most populated island in Indonesia

*from early in my life, my identity cannot be separated from my parents' profession as teachers.*

*The most exciting activity in my childhood was watching "wayang kulit" (a shadow-puppet show) which was performed during wedding ceremonies. The grand story of wayang kulit is taken from Indian epics, **Mahabharata** and **Ramayana**, but they have been adapted in Javanese Moslem culture. I liked watching the "satria" (the knights) of the Pandavas who fought and beat the "buta" (monsters) and their other enemies to defend their country or to protect the weak. Among my heroes were Ghatotkaca, who could fly, and his uncle, Arjuna, who became the central figure in the war against the evil. Interestingly, this show was actually an effective means to learn my Javanese culture and language. My parents expected me to imitate Arjuna who always spoke very softly and used "Krama Inggil", the highest register in Javanese language, to anybody, especially the elders. However, since each register has basically different vocabularies, it was very hard for me as a child to master them. When I made mistakes by using "Ngoko" (the lowest register) to an elder, my parents scorned me by saying that I was like Bhimasena, Arjuna's brother, who spoke in "Ngoko" to everybody, even to gods.*

In the early phase of my life, I saw my world as homogeneous: all people were Javanese, Moslem and farmers. The only thing that made me feel different from my playmates was that my parents' occupation was considered more powerful, higher or even better than the common peasant villagers. The profession of a teacher had moral and political power in such a simple social structure. In translating the word "teacher", Indonesian uses the word "guru" which actually refers to a Hindu preacher. This word is actually taken from the Hindu tradition that had authority in Indonesia before the coming of Islam. In the hierarchical structure of Hindu society or the caste system, the highest rank is the Brahman that consists of the Hindu religious leaders that among them are the "guru". By using the word "guru" in referring to teachers, the Indonesian society sees the teaching profession as a high status job. Even in Javanese rhyme (*Kirata Basa*), guru stands for "Sing diguGU lan ditiRU" (The ones to be listened to and to be imitated.) Guru is then an ideal model of a member of the society. Consequently, all gurus should give good examples in manners and behaviour, and members of society should also imitate those examples in their daily practice. This idea places the occupation of a "guru" as a powerful form in the life of a commoner. As the son of a guru, I also felt the impact of my parents' power so that in daily practice I had some privileges.

This phase of life also depicts my experience with my mother tongue, Javanese. My experience with this language is mainly through oral tradition. In addition to the main source of daily communication, I acknowledge the influence of other media such as *wayang kulit*. The performance was so engaging since it had the quality of entertainment. In such a simple life where I rarely saw such "magic" things as cars or aeroplanes, imagining that I had the power to fly like *Ghatotkaca* was very fascinating. In addition to that, the performance also had its function of education. It taught me about virtues of life. In a *wayang kulit* performance, the distinction between good and bad is very obvious. On the stage, all puppets are placed in groups of two opposite sides; the good people on the right side and the bad people on the left side of the "dalang", the puppet storyteller. Interestingly, although both *Arjuna* and *Bhimasena* are the main characters from the good side, *Bhimasena* is not a good

example in terms of language usage. When my parents scorned me as *Bhimasena*, they taught me that being a good person is not merely a matter of doing good deeds but also using proper language. They wanted me to take Arjuna as a role model. Arjuna's way of speaking is in line with Javanese teaching which says "*Ajining diri ana ing kedhaling lathi*" (The dignity of a person is in the way he/she speaks).

What Stuart Hall (1997) argues about language as a system of representation is very obvious in Javanese language. The multi register in Javanese language represents the hierarchal system of society (Anderson, 1990, p. 131). The language imposes on its users an awareness of their social status. The people from the lower classes of society – this can be in terms of age, social status, or gender – *have to* use the highest register when they speak to people from higher class who on the other hand *should* use the low register (See also Soekirno, 2004). The violation of this rule has moral and political consequences. In one episode of *wayang kulit*, *Petruk*, one of the maid characters, violates the social structure by becoming the king. The episode shows how foolish and inappropriate it is in terms of policy, manners and obviously language usage when a person from society's lower class becomes a member of its elite. By grappling from an early stage of my life with the complexity of Javanese language, I learned early on that language is about power.

## CONFRONTED AS BEING THE OTHER

*My life changed a lot when we moved to the city, Solo. Not only did I lose my privileges but also my pride for being the son of a teacher since economically we suffered. Instead of aspiring to be a teacher like my parents, I wanted to be an engineer like my rich uncle who worked for a French company and who even stayed in France for some years. I also started to experience a difference from my friends in term of religion. My parents told me that actually we were Christians. We had not gone to church before, because there was no church nearby. I, then, started to go to church and study in a Catholic primary school. However, in a relatively moderate Moslem atmosphere where I lived, I felt that I was not marginalized. I did not go to the mosque anymore but I was still involved in Moslem festivals and rituals like "bakdhan" (celebrating Eid ul-Fitr, the biggest Moslem festival after a full month of fasting), "kondangan" (thanksgiving) or "layatan" (funeral), since they are integrated in our culture. My beautiful memories of my Moslem brothers and sisters in my village really gave me a strong base to appreciate Islam.*

*Practising Christianity was basically my first encounter with the culture of Western people or in our term "landa", which actually means the Netherlands, our colonizers, but in fact refers to all white people. The rituals used bread and wine as the symbols of thanksgiving rather than rice and tea. The priest and the altar servers (of whom I was a member) wore Roman-style robes rather than "batik" and "sarong". The music was European-style hymns accompanied by an organ rather than "gamelan". I also had to put on shoes rather than sandals or bare feet. I was also amazed by the architecture of my church with its gothic roof and exquisite frescos. Even the sculptures of Mother Mary and Baby Jesus, by which I prayed after the Mass, used European images with their white complexion and blue eyes. In addition, this encountering with Western culture simultaneously made me step into modernity. The bread, wine, organ, and even shoes were all symbols of modernity.*

*In term of language, moving to the city exposed me better to Indonesian language or **Bahasa**. In my early education in the village before, my teachers most of the time still used Javanese language due to the linguistic competence of the young children instead of following government policy and imposing Bahasa in formal education. In the city, there were no compromises, so that I had to struggle to catch up with my literacy in Bahasa. However, since my exposure to Bahasa became more intense, it did not take long to pick up my weaknesses in literacy. My mother contributed a lot in developing my literacy by bringing home a lot of storybooks from her school library. So there was a significant development of my literacy, from spoken to written and from Javanese as my mother tongue, to Bahasa Indonesia, my second language.*

*Even though I could speak Bahasa, as other people in Solo, I still used Javanese in daily conversation. Solo was regarded as the centre of Javanese culture so that people were very keen on using Javanese language. Those who did not use the language with all its complex registers were regarded as “ora njawani” (not truly Javanese persons). However, in other settings, I felt that Bahasa was more “powerful” than Javanese. I felt really inferior when my parents took me for a visit to my auntie in Jakarta, the capital city, where people spoke Bahasa in daily life, while those who spoke Javanese were regarded as people from “kampung” (village), which connoted the poor and outback place. Even though I spoke in Bahasa to my cousins, they still mocked my Javanese accent. I felt more inferior when my uncle and his family, who had just came back from France visited us. I found myself very jealous when my cousins who were younger than me spoke in a “landa” language to each other and talked to us in Bahasa.*

This stage of my life shows a dramatic shift from the homogeneous atmosphere of the village where I found that most people were Javanese, Moslem and peasants, to a more complex atmosphere of urban life. I soon became aware of diverse professions of urban life including the varying economic prospects of certain professions. Since teaching is not a high-paying profession, the appreciation of a teacher in an urban area is lower than in rural areas. I made up my mind that I would aspire to a more powerful profession than my parents' profession, one that would offer more money.

My experience with Christianity, however, was my most dramatic engagement. Embracing Christianity is not only a matter of religion but also politics. Christianity is the religion of the coloniser, the Dutch, or *landa*. Even though the colonial government ended more than a half-century before, its legacy of Christianity in Indonesia is still strong. Despite being a minority in number, Christians in Indonesia have got huge economic power that has impact on other sectors such political and social spheres. Consequently, the religion embodies the hegemonic power of civilisation that can be symbolised by the outfits, building or even food compared to the religion of the colonised, Islam. Since Christianity in Indonesia was spread by European missionaries, it cannot be separated from European civilisation of modernity. By practicing Christianity, I was dragged to the higher status as a member of ‘modern’ community. I learned to believe that the ideal identity would be a combination of *landa*, being a Christian and living in an urban setting, and I would have to achieve it to get better life. This construction places the settings where I lived before: Javanese, Islam and rural as the “other” (Smoke, 1998, p. 89).

My first experience with other languages other than Javanese shows that Javanese is less powerful. As the government imposes *Bahasa Indonesia* as the official language, I had to struggle to master it in order to gain academic success. Although eventually I mastered *Bahasa Indonesia*, it did not abruptly get rid of my “otherness” as a Javanese speaker. The vignette about when I met my cousins shows how Javanese speakers are regarded as in the lowest hierarchy of power. An Indonesian speaker who speaks the Jakarta dialect, like my cousin, is regarded as in a higher level than me; my other cousin who can speak a “*landa*” language like French is regarded as the highest rank. Nonetheless, as I lived in the centre of Javanese culture, I needed to be keen also in using Javanese in daily conversation. This strengthened my identity as a Javanese.

## **ENCOUNTERING ENGLISH IN THE STATE SCHOOL SYSTEM**

*After finishing my elementary education in a Catholic school, I went to a state junior high school because the school fee was much cheaper. On the one hand, I studied in a “national” system which was supposed to treat all students from diverse religions and ethnicity fairly. On the other hand, it put me in a situation where being minority became more obvious, especially when I had a religion lesson in which I had to move outside from the classroom. In the sense of language, it was my first formal encounter with English. At first, it was really fun to “speak” another language. I was really enthusiastic to read aloud this “inconsistent” language in which a letter did not always represent a sound. After a semester, the method of “listen and repeat” was not interesting any more. Besides that, we were not tested on sound production. The form of test was multiple-choice, which focused on grammar and vocabulary, so that doing that type of activity was just a waste of time. Learning English was then boring and dry since it did not have any connection with the language in use. The only thing that made me determined to learn English was that English was one of the subjects of national examinations. Gaining a high score in the exam was a guarantee that I would get a seat in a public high school and that meant that I could still continue my education.*

*My endeavour in study reaped a great success; I was accepted in a distinguished public high school. Different from my classmates in junior high school who mostly came from the lower class of society, in the high school I studied with mostly middle class students. As my family suffered economically, this situation made me more determined to prepare myself for a better future. I wanted to follow the footsteps of my uncle who became an oil engineer so that I chose the strand A1, which concentrated on sciences. I thought that strand A4, which focused on language and culture, would not guarantee a better future. Besides that, A4 was typically for female students while most students taking A1 were boys. It turned out that I did not feel happy to study sciences so that the study life did not impress me at all. The thing that fascinated me was my social activities, especially in my church community. I was involved deeply and became the president of the altar servers and later of our church youth group with hundreds of members. My deep involvement led me to the idea of being a priest.*

The construction that defines the highest identity as a combination of “*landa*”, Christian and urban shadows the journey of my life. Evidence for this was the experience of my uncle who became much richer than other engineers because he mastered a “*landa*” language that enabled him to work and live in a “*landa*” country. As English is a “*landa*” language, I determined that the mastery of the language was the key factor of the success of my life. That is why the early encounter with the language was fascinating, not only because it was something new but also because of its power to change people’s lives. However, after this first impression, my experience of learning English in formal secondary education was not interesting. It happened because English had been isolated from its main feature as a communication device to be only a subject of study. The rigid system of examinations also alienated the language from its main function, so that English only functioned as what Tollefson calls a “gate keeper” (cited in Pennycook, 1995, p. 40) for any people who aspire to be elite members of society.

Since I got my secondary education (and later on also tertiary education) in a state school system, I had to grapple with the idea of national education in contrast to my primary education in a Catholic school. Benedict Anderson (1983) defines a nation as “an imagined political community...and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 7). As it is only imagined, the citizens of a nation do not know most members, have not even seen most of them; however, they conceive “a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). Under the Soekarno and Soeharto regimes, Indonesia had a strong hold of nationalism. People needed to believe that this imagined community did exist so that it hid the inequalities among people. As a result, people did not realise the discrimination experienced by minority groups, especially the Chinese minority. As a Christian, I was connected to the Chinese minority since many of them were Christians. Coppel (1983) showed how Soekarno and Soeharto regimes forced Chinese Indonesians to assimilate into the mainstream in order to be true nationalists. To achieve this aim, the government prohibited the usage of Chinese characters and festivals in public, even banning the use of original Chinese names and demanding them to change their names to Indonesian ‘native’ names. Even though they were third or fourth generation living in Indonesia, all Chinese Indonesians were required to obtain a certificate of Indonesian citizenship from the magistrates. The requirement to obtain this certificate was applied only to them, not to other ethnic groups. When they needed to deal with the public service, in order to enter a public school, for example, they had to show their certificate so that the government could give limited service. In the public school, I had only a few Chinese classmates, and we, the “native” Indonesians, sometimes mocked their “weird” names. Even in textbooks, I hardly found any information about them since they were regarded as “aliens” and their voices had been silenced. Revisiting this moment again, I realise how unfair the treatment of the government to the Chinese minority was for the sake of nationalism.

## **RETREAT FROM THE WORLD**

*After finishing my high school, I went to a seminary, a special school for Catholic priest preparation. Studying in the seminary made me aware of finding my real interest of humanities (philosophy, language and culture, and of course, in the context of a seminary: theology). In term of studying languages, I learned English, Bahasa*

*and Javanese, and also Latin as the “official” language of the Catholic Church. Except Latin, which is a dead language, it was really fascinating to learn those languages in such a constructive atmosphere since it was really connected with mastering the languages for use. That was the first time I learned English from a “Landa” – he was an old Dutch priest – I regarded him as a native speaker even though English was not his first language. He always used English all the time during classes. He also assigned us to read abridged editions of novels which were mostly from masterpieces of English literature and made summaries of them. However, my favourite reading was romance novels. Even though as a priest candidate, I was prepared to be celibate in the future, I was still a sexually normal teenager, so that I was attracted to reading those “dirty” fictions which were amazingly available in the seminary library. As I aspired to work as a missionary in other countries, I realised the role of English as a key factor in doing my future job. Based on the sharing of my colleagues who served in overseas countries, English was the bridge that connected the missionaries from different language backgrounds. However, after two years in seminary, I decided that being a priest was not my “calling” so I withdrew and went back to the “real” world.*

In spite of its short time, the phase of my life that I spent in Seminary was very crucial in the formation of my identity and my engagement with English. It was a retreat from the world spiritually and physically. Since I had only limited time to access entertainment, especially television, I had a wonderful time reading. I read all kinds of reading from light stuff to high brow. Most of my reading was also in English. It was at this time that I fell in love with the language since it became functional in my engagement with my reading and also in oral communication. Telling about my “secret story” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995) that I read many “dirty” novels when I was in the seminary is also my acknowledgement of the importance of popular culture. In a “sacred” place like the seminary, it is really amazing to gain something from this “sub-culture” that is regarded as “unworthy”, “degraded” or even “evil”.

Living in a seminary did not narrow my perspective to think only of Catholicism as my religion/denomination; on the contrary, it opened my perspective wider to the world. Catholic means universal, so that I become more aware of my cosmopolitan identity. I belong to the world, rather than being only Javanese, as my ethnic group, or Indonesian, as my nationality. I was really amazed to listen to the sharing of my *Confraters* (the way we called other Brothers in my convent) about their missionary works in Kalimantan, Papua New Guinea, Madagascar or even European countries. What they did was not simply telling about Jesus, but about how to live and share with people of different cultures. In doing their missionary work in some countries, language played an important role. Sometimes the process was very complicated, as with the experience of my Confrater who was sent to Madagascar. Since the official language in Madagascar is French, he had to go to France first for two years to learn French. To take the French course, he was required to master English as it is the “*lingua franca*” in the course. However, when he was in Madagascar, he had to learn local languages as he mostly mingled with local people. His experience taught me at least two things – that English is a minimum requirement to be a cosmopolitan person and that a missionary should also acknowledge local cultures.

## ASPIRING TO BE AN ENGLISH TEACHER

*My only chance to continue my education was again in a state university due to economic reasons. My good exposure to English through the seminary in those last two years led me to choose English as my major. However, I did not want to study English in the Education Faculty because, learning from my parents' experience, teachers were always underpaid, so that I took English in the Arts Faculty. Despite a short preparation, I was accepted. I started my University with great enthusiasm and confidence. However, when time passed by, I did not really find it fascinating. The exposure to English was a bit limited since there were lots of subjects in Humanities, which were taught in Indonesian. The size of the class was also too big. For instance, I had a speaking class with about forty classmates. Besides that, a few English teachers used Indonesian. It was also sometimes frustrating to learn that the literary works I learnt were written many years before, so that the context and situation were very different from my present time. The most "contemporary" writer that we learned was Hemmingway, who had actually passed away even ten years before I was born!*

*My encounter with one of my lecturers in the English department really changed my life. On the one hand, she represented the orthodoxy, an old lady who even used her Javanese aristocrat title, teaching with old methods and a strict approach. On the other hand, she was a competent lecturer both in the subject matter and linguistic competence. I was really impressed by her native-like accent. Amazingly, when she spoke in Javanese with other lecturers in an informal context, she could shift to Javanese accent and expression smoothly. With a small group of students, I went to her house every week to have an informal meeting which we called a "night club", because we always held it at night. We discussed all aspect of English literature and connected it with our society. Sometimes, we also talked about trivial things as long as they were in English. The thing that also impressed me was that our "course" was free of charge and she even provided us with drink and cookies. Her competence and integrity as an English teacher inspired me to be an English teacher. I did not see the profession only in term of money anymore.*

*I started to help some friends in my church youth organization by giving free lessons. I really enjoyed teaching and felt that I could improve my linguistic competence through teaching. I became more contented after I also became an English instructor in some English courses where I could earn some money. Working in those courses made me realise that I had to negotiate my perspectives on teaching with the institution. Once I had to quit a job because I had to prepare my students for high stake tests such as national examinations or university entrance tests. That was really far from my ideal of teaching and learning in general and language teaching in particular. However, the good thing about working in those courses was my encounter with colleagues and students of different backgrounds as a balance to my involvement in church activities.*

*My part-time job and church activities really took my time and energy so that I neglected my research project and it took three years to complete my thesis. The other reason was that I selected a work of an "infamous writer" in my department. I analysed a work of Saul Bellow entitled Mr. Sammler's Planet. There were very limited resources about him in my university library (at that time, access to the Internet was also very limited). He must have been regarded as "too contemporary",*

*even though he received his Nobel Prize in 1976. To make it worse, the political situation of my country was in uncertain. My social activities brought me into contact with the student movement, which lead me to join the demonstrations to reform our authoritarian and corrupt government. The situation was getting worse owing to the economic crisis that shattered the welfare of people from the lower class of society. The situation led to social unrest in which the Chinese minority became the victims, since the majority of “native” people were jealous of their wealth. My city, Solo, was like a war zone, where there were lots of houses and buildings burnt down. I had seen the same situation when I was still a kid. But, the effect now was really more dramatic for me, because I joined the demonstration and I did not expect that it would lead to horizontal conflict like that. As most of the Chinese were Christians, my identity was torn between my own ethnicity as a Javanese or a native Indonesian and my religion which connected me with the Chinese minority. Just like Mr. Sammler in the novel that I analysed, I really felt alienated from my society.*

Edward Said (1983) argues that the canon of English literature defines what is worth reading and criticising and excludes other texts. This is the mechanism that I faced when I studied for my Bachelor of English Literature. In order to resist this mechanism, I chose a more contemporary novel which is actually still from the “golden past”. However, the thing that attracted me to this novel was the writer and the content. Saul Bellow, the writer of the novel, is a Jewish writer. In Indonesian discourse, the Jews are regarded as Indonesia's “public enemy”. This happens because of the solidarity with the Palestinians as Indonesians' Moslem brothers. Since I never believe in labelling one ethnic group or nation, I was challenged to know more about the complexities of Jewish writers and their work. The content was also very interesting since it related to the social and political situation in Indonesia. Reflecting the condition of America in the late of Sixties, where there was a cultural and political move to counter the established social system, connected me with my own activities and views to challenge the discourse of the New Order regime<sup>2</sup>. This is in line with what Said (1983) calls the “worldliness” in a text. As an approach to analyse the novel, I employed Lucien Goldman's theory of genetic structuralism (Goldman, 1975, 1978). As its name implies, I had to trace down the genesis of the text by finding the worldview of the writer. I could do it by analysing the society that formed the writer and the society as the context of the text. I learned a lot about Jewish society, the Holocaust and the counter-culture movement in America in the Sixties and I tried to connect them with the novel. I found it really fascinating to discuss the connection and it was all the more fascinating when I, as the critic, also connected it with my *own* “worldliness”.

My thesis writing and my activities then could not be separated. I found it really worthwhile when eventually I finished my thesis. My activities then could not be separated from politics. As a critical student, I could not accept the New Order system under the Soeharto administration, which had created a corrupt government that only gave privileges to his family and cronies. This led me to join the student movement that became very massive to topple the regime. Even though the movement succeeded in toppling the regime, the side effect of the movement that dramatically

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<sup>2</sup> Soeharto's administration (1966-1998) is named after the New Order that focused on political stability, economic growth and defense and security. These principles lead to the suppression of any democratic and human rights activities

victimised the Chinese minority really troubled me. Mr Sammler, the main character of the novel that I analysed, experienced alienation from the dramatic change in America in the late Sixties because of the student movement and counter-culture movement. Like him, I also experienced alienation. All the social unrest after the ruin of the regime made me ask many questions about my society. Do people really need this “freedom” from the militaristic regime? Are they ready for all the complexities of a democratic country? Why are ethnicity and culture dividing the country? All these questions about democracy and cultural diversity continue to float in my mind.

## **BEING AN ENGLISH TEACHER**

*I was determined that being a teacher was my vocation so that after completing my study, I applied to become a teacher. I was accepted in a Catholic university in Surabaya, East Java. Teaching in the university's English Department put me in a very different situation from my previous education in state schools and university. Most of my colleagues and my students were Chinese Christians. I lost my self-confidence the first few months I taught after I found out that many of my students spoke English fluently. Some of them had even been overseas either for vacation or study. My Chinese colleagues also showed better linguistic competence compared to “native” teachers like me. It was not really surprising for me since they had a better chance to improve their English through private courses, while basically I relied only on formal education. I was then motivated to work harder to improve my English.*

*As a young lecturer, I had to face the orthodoxy in my department. There was training for the young lecturers to produce “correct” sounds and intonation delivered by a group of senior lecturers. Interestingly, the model that they gave was American pronunciation because they all had been trained the same way by an American instructor when they were still young. Sometimes, it was very frustrating just to produce a sound that took a long time to do and it was more frustrating when I had to do the same way to my students. To make it worse, I could not ignore it because I was under supervision.*

*Since I specialised in teaching English literature, I also had to face the orthodoxy of the canon of English literature. My senior colleague insisted that only literary works from the canon deserved to be discussed in class. However, despite the disagreement of the material included in the teaching, he did not force me to choose the materials that were “worth reading”. This flexibility gave me freedom to include materials outside the canon. I also developed an approach in which I gave students freedom to interpret the works discussed. I was amazed, for instance, by their hot discussion about Nora's decision to leave her family in Ibsen's A doll's house. Since most of my students were female, that matter intrigued them and they connected it with religious, social and cultural values. Their critical opinions really enriched me in addition to learning English as merely a language.*

My career as a teacher in a Catholic university raises a question about the privileged identity of “*landa*, Christian and urban”. As I am an English teacher, I receive the benefit of the language of the power that enables me to earn more money because I can work extra time out of my office hours. There is a great demand for English

teachers since many people in Indonesia want to master the language to make a better living. Working in a Catholic institution places me in much better facilities and with a higher salary compared to working in state institutions. Most of my students are also from middle and high classes of society since the school fee is so high that only people from those groups can afford it. In addition, I work in Surabaya, the second biggest city in Indonesia, with better facilities compared to my home town. This situation made me interrogate my own commitment toward inequality in Indonesia. One of my intriguing experiences was when I accompanied my friend from Canada to see some shelters for street children. I felt really guilty when someone from another country had such great attention and commitment toward the inequality issues in Indonesia, while I was such an egotist that I did not want to take any action and enjoyed my own position. Reflecting about this endorsed me to act when I returned home from Australia.

As a young lecturer, I have to deal with the orthodoxy of the practice of teaching in my department. This places me in a dilemma, whether I have to fight the orthodoxy or just accept it as given. To fight means facing some consequences that I was often too scared to bear. However, I found that sometimes I could react positively against the orthodoxy without sacrificing my own ideals and commitments. The reader-response approach that I use in my teaching also shows my commitment about knowledge. I challenge the practice of teaching in Indonesia that positions teachers as omnipotent and the students as recipients of knowledge. By using this approach, I want to engage my students as pre-service teachers to become “producers of knowledge” (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, p. 9).

### **EPILOGUE: THE PENDULUM SWINGS BACK**

*Living and studying in Australia was a liberating experience for me. In a multicultural country like Australia, I met people from different backgrounds of nationalities. When those people spoke English with me, I found myself grappling not with English but with englishes (Pennycook, 1994, Ashcroft et al., 1989) due to the variety in accent and even expressions. However, I also found out that the practice of sound production that I hated before was very beneficial especially when I was teaching Indonesian – I was teaching Bahasa Indonesia in a State High School in Melbourne – due to the vague differences between “voiced” and voiceless” sounds in Bahasa Indonesia. The experience of teaching Indonesian that brought me into contact with Australian students and colleagues enabled me to overcome my inferiority as a Bahasa speaker. I was very contented when my students highly appreciated Indonesian culture. My personal encounter with Australians through English made me understand the values that lie in the language. I was especially struck by the frequency of giving compliments – something that I do not use very often when I speak Bahasa or Javanese. I became also more critical about the languages that I use with my own family, my wife and two kids. I realise the importance of English in this global world, however, I do not want my children lose their identity as an Indonesian. That is why we create a multilingual atmosphere at home – I speak English with my kids, my wife speaks Bahasa to them while my wife and I still speak Javanese to each other. In addition, I also have to resist Western culture, especially the media, which is not always in accordance with my values and beliefs. However, it does not mean that I have become a narrow-minded person. My experience where I worked part-time as a domestic cleaner with people from a different sexual*

*orientation – something that would be ridiculed in my country – was very valuable to build up my human values. To sum up, living in an English speaking country, like Australia, strengthened my identity as a Javanese Christian Indonesian without lessening my appreciation of Western culture and English language.*

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