

CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ELT: IMPLICATIONS FROM A CASE STUDY IN A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: In this article I examine some challenges of assessing character education in the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia (TEFLIN). Major sources of character education in Indonesia (e.g., *Kurikulum 2013*) seem to be religious values. However, there are two salient problems. First, in religiously inspired character education, there are concerns about religious values imposition. Second, it is oftentimes vague what types of, and how, character education can be evaluated in English language teaching and learning settings. In the context of an EFL teacher education program in a Christian university that I studied, one Christian student showed her religious dogmatism in classroom interactions or elsewhere in which peers having different religious views were present. Students' communicative competence in expressing religious values can be assessed by examining their growing self-reflexivity (which problematizes dogmatism), among others, in their discourse. Character education assessment rubrics are developed from the cases reported here, in light of: (1) the Indonesian government's guidelines for assessing character education; (2) critical ELT; and (3) Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence.

Keywords: character education (CE), assessment, critical pedagogy/ELT, communicative competence.

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Despite the postponement of *Kurikulum 2013* implementation by Anies Baswedan, the current Indonesian Minister of Culture and Primary & Secondary Education,¹ the discourse of character education explicitly stipulated in the curriculum is still ongoing, especially in 6,221 schools in 295 cities/ regencies throughout Indonesia that have used the curriculum since the academic year of 2013/2014 and are still mandated by the minister to implement it.² Therefore, it is still essential for EFL teacher education programs at undergraduate and (post)graduate levels in Indonesia to prepare their students to be competent teachers in addressing character education through TEFL. Therefore, I have the following objectives in this article. First, I will make the Indonesian government's policies on character education (henceforth CE) be more visible to TEFLIN stakeholders. Second, the relationship between the national policies on CE and the literature on religious values in ELT will be elucidated. Third, drawing on insights from the national CE-related policies, the literature on faith and critical ELT, a current perspective on communicative competence, and data collected in my larger study (Mambu, 2014), I will build a theoretical framework that allows English language (teacher) educators to develop and use assessment rubrics for evaluating CE in ELT classrooms.

In Indonesia, character education is inspired by, among others, religious values. The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 [2002] (a.k.a. UUD 1945) clearly states: "The government advances science and technology along with holding religious values... to [promote] civilization as well as the well-being of humanity" (chapter 3, article 31, subsection 5). In *Desain Induk Pendidikan Karakter* (the blueprint of CE developed by the Ministry of National Education; henceforth DIPK, 2010), it is explained that character configuration entails "Olah Hati (*Spiritual and emotional development*), Olah Pikir (*intellectual development*), Olah Raga dan Kinestetik (*Physical and kinesthetic [sic] development*), [and] Olah Rasa dan Karsa (*Affective and Creativity development*)" (p. 9, italics in original). Furthermore, "pendidikan karakter mempercayai adanya keberadaan *moral absolute*" [CE believes in the existence of *moral absolute*]. DIPK (2010) justifies its stance on moral absolute

¹ See Mendikbud Anies Baswedan *Hentikan Kurikulum 2013* on <http://www.kemdikbud.go.id/kemdikbud/siaranpers/3590>, last accessed May 4, 2015.

² Ibid.

by stating that “sesungguhnya terdapat nilai moral universal yang bersifat absolute... yang bersumber dari agama-agama di dunia... contohnya... hormat, jujur, bersahaja, menolong orang, adil dan bertanggung jawab” [truly there are values of universal morality that are absolute... which originate from religions in the world, e.g., respectful, honest, modest, helpful, just, and responsible] (p. 10).

In another document derivative of the Indonesian Constitution (i.e., *Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter* [Guidelines for Implementing Character Education], 2011), the Ministry of National Education enumerates 18 “nilai-nilai pembentuk karakter” [values that form character] (p. 7) which originate from religions, Pancasila (i.e., the state’s five principles), cultures, and the goal of national education: (1) religiosity, (2) honesty, (3) tolerance, (4) discipline, (5) hard work, (6) creativity, (7) independence, (8) democracy, (9) curiosity, (10), patriotism, (11) nationalism, (12) appreciation towards others’ achievements, (13) friendliness/communicativeness, (14) peace, (15) love to read, (16) environment awareness, (17) social awareness, and (18) responsibility (p. 8).

Unlike in Indonesia where CE cannot be separated from religious views, the place of spirituality, especially those inspired by religions, has been disputed in the literature of TESOL in the West. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002), for instance, contend: “our use of the word *moral* has nothing in common with its use by the Moral Majority [in the United States] and other right-wing Christian organizations” (p. 4). Reluctance to include religiosity in second language pedagogy is not without a reason. In fact, both non-Christian (Edge, 2003; Kubota, 2009; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005) and even Christian ELT scholars (Chamberlain, 2009; Ferris, 2009) have reservations about evangelization or proselytization, especially by many Western Christian English language educators in non-Western host countries. Shaaban (2005), a Lebanese ELT scholar, also expresses his secular view when saying that “[a] glance at the divisive role played by ‘politicised’ religion in places like Indonesia... and Lebanon clearly demonstrate the dangers of basing moral education on religion” (p. 214). However, non-Indonesian (including Western) scholars’ (excessive) fear of proselytization through ELT or of centering moral education on religion has not been substantiated by more in-depth analyses of challenges, not simply impossibilities, in implementing character education in highly religious societies like Indonesia and its educational institutions.

In the context of TEFLIN, CE has been discussed by some scholars (e.g., in a position paper by Sugirin, 2011), but specific attentions to inter-religious negotiations of CE and how it can be assessed democratically in inter-religious contacts among ELT stakeholders have yet to be sufficiently examined. Qoyyimah (2014), in her ethnographic study in Indonesian state junior-high schools, found out that four EFL teachers in the schools have nuanced views of the role of religious values in their ELT practices. She delves into the tensions these teachers had to encounter when they integrated moral (or character) education from secular and religious perspectives. Apart from what teachers can do or have done in class, Hapsari (2013) investigated to what extent reading sections of the English e-book for senior high school students contained 18 character values (see *Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter* [Guidelines for Implementing Character Education], 2011). In my larger study (Mambu, 2014), findings related to CE are the by-products of my overarching question of how spirituality was negotiated by EFL teacher educators and students in a Christian university. Two major themes reported in the findings section of this paper are hence religious dogmatism and religious tolerance, with the latter being a more desirable value in character education to be cultivated through ELT. These themes emerged in my larger study with a case study research design³ (Mambu, 2014). These themes will be selected here as bases for expanding on the specific question of how CE can be assessed in ELT classrooms.

Prior to addressing this question, I will synthesize insights into assessment from (a) the blueprint of CE developed by the Ministry of National Education under Muhammad Nuh (i.e., *Desain Induk Pendidikan Karakter* [DIPK], 2010); (b) critical ELT perspectives; and (c) a communicative competence model (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

The Ministry of National Education in 2010 through its DIPK (2010) has provided some indicators for assessing students' processes of character building. Teachers can base their assessment on observations and anecdotal notes of students' behaviors, as well as students' assignments or reports. Teachers' considerations can be expressed qualitatively based on these

³ These "key recurring principles" prevail in a case study: "... in-depth study, multiple perspectives or triangulation, particularity, contextualization, and interpretation" (Duff, 2008, p. 23)

incremental progress indicators: (a) *Belum Terlihat* (Yet to be Seen); (b) *Mulai Terlihat* (Emerging); (c) *Mulai Berkembang* (Developing), and (d) *Membudaya* (Part of Students' Culture/Habit) (pp. 35-36). In the first stage, students do not seem to understand the meaning of a value. The second phase is indicated by early signs of expected behaviors because students begin to understand, but these behaviors are not yet consistently done. In the third stage, students' expected behaviors are more consistently performed, especially because there is better understanding and awareness, as well as reinforcement from people close or distant from the students. The final phase is signaled by students' continuous performances of expected behaviors due to fuller understanding and awareness, with stronger reinforcement from people surrounding the students. The students show moral maturity in this fourth stage. Overall, assessment framework based on DIKP is applicable to a myriad of behaviors expected to be performed by learners/students. However, there are no concrete examples of how this is utilized in the context of ELT.

In light of critical pedagogy (Keesing-Styles, 2003) and critical ELT (Crookes, 2013), or what I term as critical pedagogy/ELT here, I believe that dialogues between teachers and students or among students themselves in English language classrooms are crucial. An important element in classroom dialogues is how students' voices on their own or their peers' experiences are critically assessed by themselves and by their teachers. As Keesing-Styles (2003) puts it:

To achieve a critical approach to assessment, it must be centered on dialogic interactions so that the roles of teacher and learner are shared and all voices are validated... [A critical approach to assessment] must value and validate the experience students bring to the classroom and importantly, situate this experience at the centre of the classroom content and process in ways that problematize it and make overt links with oppression and dominant discourses. (p. 10)

Students' voices can be based on their own realities or experiences (e.g., of dealing with dishonest person, of facing a racist person, of encountering a discriminatory treatment, of marginalizing other people, etc.). When a student's experience, upon his/her self-reflection, turns out to make others suffer (e.g., bullying his/her friend), then the student is expected to problematize it. Regarding negotiated assessment, it is pivotal that teachers provide opportunities for students to either develop their own assessment criteria (or

rubric) or do self-assessment. “Student-generated [assessment] criteria” (Keesing-Styles, 2003, p. 13) will not be discussed here; it deserves at least another paper in its own right. In this paper, I will focus on teacher-generated assessment rubrics in two versions: one is for teachers to observe students’ language-related behaviors in which themes of character education are embedded; another version is for students to self-assess their language use in relation to character education.

DIPK (2010) has provided stages of CE-related learning behaviors to be assessed, but the assessment framework appears very teacher-centered. The critical ELT perspective enriches the understanding of assessing classroom dialogues critically. Still unclear is how language-related behaviors in spoken or written discourse are assessed by students themselves and teachers. To address this, I will use the construct of “communicative competence,” especially the one which has been modeled by Celce-Murcia (2007). Her currently developed model provides quite a comprehensive elucidation of language learning aspects that can be tangibly observed and assessed.

Refining previous models of communicative competence, Celce-Murcia (2007) suggested six components in the current model: (1) sociocultural competence; (2) discourse competence; (3) linguistic competence; (4) formulaic competence; (5) interactional competence; and (6) strategic competence. I will summarize the first three only, because they are the most relevant components in this current study.

First, sociocultural competence constitutes “the speaker’s pragmatic knowledge” or competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 46). Pragmatic knowledge enables a person to convey thoughts or feelings in ways that are suitable according to (target language) norms of sociocultural contexts of where communication takes place. Second, discourse competence indicates a person’s ability in choosing, sequencing, and arranging words, sentences, and utterances that can be understood by others. Third, linguistic competence can be identified by a person’s capacity in using phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactical knowledge.

How perspectives of DIPK (2010), critical ELT, and communicative competence are synthesized to help educators assess character education in ELT will be illustrated in view of findings in my study.

METHOD

The current study is an extension of my larger eight-month case study (Mambu, 2014) in Jawara Christian University (henceforth JCU). JCU has more than 10,000 students, with over 750 of them in the undergraduate English language teacher education program. At the time of my fieldwork (January to August 2014), there were 25 teaching staff members in the program. Most of them were Christian, and three of them were missionaries from English-speaking countries.

In the larger study, I recruited 17 focal participants (i.e., six students and 11 lecturers) who came from various religious backgrounds, especially Islam and Christianity. One of the major criteria for recruiting them is their overt religiosity, which was apparent during my preliminary observations in their classes or was based on teachers' and/or students' reports or stories. In this paper, I select data from four participants. Pseudonyms are used to indicate the participants, as follows:

- (1) Calantha (a Christian female student from outside Java; early 20s);
- (2) Tono (a Muslim male student from Java; mid-20s);
- (3) Ellie (a Christian female student from out of Java and a social activist; early 20s);
- (4) Celeste (a Christian, non-Javanese female instructor; early 40s).

The main reason for selecting the three Christian participants in this paper is that they were involved in a heated debate over the issue of homosexuality. Calantha and Ellie belonged to the same class (i.e., Communication Across Cultures), with Celeste being their instructor. Based on my observation of another Communication Across Cultures class taught by another instructor a week before Celeste's class, homosexuality was not explicitly challenged by students, although the same material (i.e., Theresa Tan's [1998] *Kaleidoscope Eyes*) was used by both instructors. I video-recorded Celeste's class twice while observing her class sessions, but I will analyze only one video-recorded class session here (i.e., the one on April 2, 2014 when the issue of homosexuality was discussed in class). Tono, a Muslim participant, is selected in this article, mainly because he interacted with Calantha in a focus group discussion on March 4, 2014.

Follow-up individual interviews were conducted to both Calantha and Celeste a day after a Communication Across Cultures class in which the issue of homosexuality was hotly debated. These interviews on April 3, 2014 hence

functioned like a stimulated recall procedure. That is, I could display some video-recorded scenes on my laptop monitor to them, and I asked them to elaborate on their comments and decisions in class when the discussion about homosexuality occurred in class. In these individual interviews, for example, Calantha and Celeste could explain what they thought of their interactions with a fellow student (i.e., Ellie) and students (i.e., Calantha and Ellie) respectively. I also interviewed Calantha individually on March 18, 2014 to follow up on some of her earlier comments in the focus group discussion two weeks earlier.

For the current paper, I selected video- and/or audio-recorded data that contain divided views surrounding an issue of expressing religious faiths in ELT settings. Two emerging themes were triangulated over a period of one day, up to approximately one month, across participants. The theme of religious dogmatism emerged in Calantha's discourse in a focus group discussion (March 4, 2014), in class (April 2, 2014), and in individual interviews (March 18, 2014; April 3, 2014). The theme of religious tolerance arose in Celeste's and Ellie's discourse in class (April 2, 2014), and in Celeste's responses in an individual interview on April 3, 2014. Furthermore, transcribed spoken utterances quoted at length will be grouped in paragraphs. Paragraphing utterances facilitated my thematic analyses.

To answer the specific question of how to assess character education in ELT, I will use the two emerging themes as conceptual samples to develop assessment rubrics for English language teachers and students in light of the theoretical framework I synthesized in the introduction from the perspectives of DIPK (2010), critical ELT (Crookes, 2013; Keesing-Styles, 2003), and Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Religious Dogmatism

Assessing EFL students' religious views is oftentimes a matter of taste. Is a teacher more in favor of instilling religious dogmas or doing academic inquiry? As a teacher-researcher, I need to be committed to the latter. This accounts for why I thought of Calantha as having a dogmatic view of spirituality. In a focus group discussion, after I asked her "What does spirituality mean to you?" this is her response: "It's something that holy. Holy and there is right and wrong. You

have to do this, and you don't have to [i.e., must not] do this" (Focus group discussion, March 4, 2014). Binary oppositions in words or utterances like "right" versus "wrong," and "you have to do this" versus "you must not do this" are verbal indicators of religious dogmatism. Apart from these indicators, religious dogmatism emerged when a student like Calantha positioned herself in relation to a person having a religion other than hers or to a group of people (e.g., homosexuals) whom she evaluated negatively.

Insensitivity toward a Fellow Student Not Embracing the Same Faith

In a thread of conversation on a different topic, I asked the students in the focus group discussion to comment on a curriculum document that in my opinion contains a Christian bias (e.g., "Being able to reflect Christian values in teaching"). Tono expressed his feeling as part of the minority in JCU. Tono was already a member of the students' body, but as a Muslim, he could not be promoted to general or commission chairpersonship. Then he asked: "What if a Muslim or Hindu, or other that's not Christian is more capable to be a leader, right?" Calantha raised her right hand, ready to take the floor, but Tono still managed to continue on his comment: "Like [what] Calantha said that we have to realize that we live in Christian university. You can't change the rule that they created. So we have to adapt not they adapt to us" (Focus group discussion, March 4, 2014). Tono could question the university's rule, but later he conceded that non-Christian students were the people who needed to adjust to the university's regulation (i.e., only Christian stakeholders are eligible to be leaders at structural positions, like a head of students' body, in the university), not the other way around (i.e., expecting Christian stakeholders to put non-Christian people in key leadership positions).

Calantha's dogmatism was accentuated in full sway afterwards. She not only stressed the word "rules," but she also repeated it across utterances: "Because we have to look the *rules*. ... The university was born or was made in Christian *rules*" (Focus group discussion, March 4, 2014, italics added). Furthermore, the constructed dialogue "What is tritunggal?" [i.e., What is Holy Trinity?] only widened power differentials between Calantha and Tono. The same stance on not allowing non-Christian to be leaders at structural positions in JCU was even maintained in a follow-up interview. As she said in an interview two weeks following the focus group discussion (i.e., on March 18, 2014): "And I want to ask him, like 'Do you know the *rules* of JCU? Like

tritunggal [i.e., trinity]. Can you explain it?' Maybe I just want to prove [that] he cannot answer my question. Something like that." Then I challenged her: "And then if he cannot answer the question? What's next?" Calantha replied: "Ya it is prove that he has to be Christian, to be a leader in this university."

Demonizing Homosexuality with a Religious View in an English Language Classroom

In a Communication Across Cultures class (April 2, 2014), Calantha remained dogmatic. The class was discussing a drama script (from *Kaleidoscope Eyes*) written by a Singaporean female author, Theresa Tan (1998). *Kaleidoscope Eyes*, briefly speaking, contains a fiction of a Catholic wife of Chinese descent (Clare) who was restless about her husband's being a homosexual, which she knew only after they got married. In response to the drama script, Calantha expressed her vehement opposition to homosexuality throughout the class session. She even challenged her instructor, Celeste: "Ma'am. I just [have a] question. How about if we give them time, or give them space to live,... it will increase their homosexual?"

Addressing the rest of the class, Celeste clarified Calantha's question: "She thinks that accepting the fact of homosexuality will facilitate the growth of homosexuality. What do you think of this?" Ellie joined the conversation again: "I think only God can judge." Calantha chimed in again: "It will related to the Bible that God only creates man and woman... . Can you say that after they pass away they can go to the heaven?" The remaining heated debate between Calantha and Ellie was eventually interrupted by Celeste.

On the following day (April 3, 2014), I asked Calantha in an individual interview: "What do you think of your interactions with your friends in the Communication Across Cultures class, especially in terms of dealing with their religious views"? She replied:

Sometimes I find that different people have different perspective..., so I try to see that they have their own perspective about something, and maybe it is different with me. So I have to appreciate whatever they say... (April 3, 2014)

Her response was too abstract, so I asked: "For example, what ideas are different between your ideas and their ideas?" She said:

[1] For example, about homosexual... I'm a Christian, and as a Christian, we disagree with homosexual. And as a personal, I also agree [that homosexuality is wrong]. It is different with Ellie... She agree that as a Christian she disagree about homosexual, but as a personal, we have to give a space for them to live in this world. Because, take from the Bible, she said that 'love each other.' There is a statement which is say that 'love each other.' I want to disagree with her statement. ...

[2] And when the class end, and when we meet each other outside the classroom, ... she state that 'Hey! Think logically. Think logically. We live in the era of globalization. You have to have broad knowledge about homosexual.'

[3] Then I say that 'Hey. We have to appreciate other's opinion. I didn't judge them...' Even though I say that I disagree, doesn't mean that I judge them. I want to say to her like that. She doesn't accept my opinion, maybe because she said that I judge them. Not only I disagree but I judge them. And she said that 'only God can judge them.' 'Yes! I know that. Only God can judge them. But, in my opinion, I only just disagree... with their life as a homosexual. (Interview, April 3, 2014)

Overall, Calantha made a clear distinction between herself and her peer, Ellie. Calantha dismissed any possibility of giving space for homosexuality (paragraph 1), despite Ellie's confrontation (paragraph 2). Much later in the interview, I asked Calantha what she thought of Celeste's (her instructor's) stance on "providing some room for [the homosexuals]" in the Communication Across Cultures class the day before:

I still disagree with Bu Celeste. I think God give us the abilities to analyze everything in this life. If God give us the ability to analyze, it means that we have to analyze about the good thing. About the right thing in this life. When we talk about good thing and right thing in this life, it will related to ethic or ethos in Bahasa Yunani [Greek]... Our society and our religion still say that if we talk about ethic or ethos, it means that we have to come up with right thing. (April 3, 2014)

Religious Tolerance

In this section, I will present how the discourse of religious tolerance, which was constructed by Celeste and Ellie, ran counter to Calantha's religious dogmatism. When Ellie seemed to be open to homosexual or lesbian friends, Calantha protested strongly: "But how about if the Bible said that God just create woman and man in this world!?" Ellie resumed her talk:

Ya. Like I said before, from my religious perspective, I agree that homosexuality is forbidden. But as myself, I very open to them. I mean I have a lesbian friend... . My experience is more open-minded. Because, if you make relationship with them, you will know their reason. So sometimes their situation change their identity. So we can't judge them. (Communication Across Cultures class, April 2, 2014)

Noticing the dispute between Calantha and Ellie, Celeste (the instructor) provided her in-situ formative assessment. Unlike Calantha, Celeste planted some seeds of tolerance in her views expressed in an academic tone:

So as a person, you comprise your personal belief from different sources. Right? And one of them is religion. But I think this is interesting this morning to find out that you share different ideas. Yes. Like on the basis of your religious affiliation or belief, you say you disagree with homosexuality. But as a person you maybe not on the level of agree or disagree, but at least you provide room for this issue. Am I right? Maybe in order to say I agree or disagree is too big. Ya? Unless you spend closer time with the person, like Ellie say, you can understand the reason. Then you can say you agree or disagree. (Communication Across Cultures class, April 2, 2014)

Recall that Calantha did not agree with Ellie's and Celeste's stance, and that in the class, Celeste eventually stopped the debate between Ellie and Calantha.

In a follow-up interview on the following day, I asked Celeste to reflect on what happened in the class just the day before. My specific question was "What do you think of your interactions with your students in the [Communication Across Cultures] class?" Celeste thought that students were involved in a hot debate over controversial issues because they "touched the principle part of their life," e.g., their religious beliefs. And Celeste commented on her very recent conversation with Calantha just before Celeste came over to my interview room:

[1] And I was a little bit surprised. Several minutes before coming here, guess what. [Calantha] came just a few minutes ago. And she came, 'Ma'am, can I have a talk with you for a minute?' I said, 'okay, have a seat.' [And Calantha said], 'Ellie and I, we still have a different opinion about the issue of homosexuality. [Joseph chimed in: 'Oh. Interesting.']

[2] Ya. If we recall what happened in the class yesterday, I think Ellie was one of the vocal students in articulating her position about the issue of homosexuality.

‘What happened?’ [Celeste asked Calantha]. [Calantha said:] ‘Oh, [Ellie] told me: ‘Come on! Think logically! Do not judge the homosexual!’

[3] And [Calantha] asked me, ‘being disagree with something doesn’t mean that I judge a group of person, Ma’am. Am I right?’ And I say, ‘ya to some extent I can say that. ... And when agree and disagree meet one to another, well, a dialogue could be there, or a conflict could be there.’ I said ‘I hope the dialogue would be there. ...’

[4] I said [to Calantha]: ‘Be fluid. You don’t know what you’re going to face tomorrow, or next year, you don’t know what film you’re going to watch, what book you’re going to read, what lecture you’re going to sit in, or any other people that you’re going to meet. Remember this as a significant influence in changing our view. Maybe today you disagree. [But] once watching a specific movie, then you revisit what you think.’

Calantha seemed to seek for some justification from Celeste that it was fine for Calantha to disagree with Ellie (paragraph 3), but Calantha was described by Celeste as a person who still needed to be exposed to life realities represented in movies, books, and lectures (paragraph 4). This implies that Celeste would like her students like Calantha to be more open-minded in handling controversial issues like homosexuality.

In the interview, I also displayed the video recording of the classroom session. I particularly showed Celeste the scene where she decided to interrupt a heated debate between Ellie and Calantha. I asked her why, and she explained: “the main reason is I sense... *resistensi, gitu. Yang satu resisten sana, aku resisten ini. Na kalo dilanjutkan, nanti kan akan menjadi kurang dialogis lagi* [resistance. One was unwavering about her opinion, the other was adamant with her own opinion. If it had been continued, it would have been less dialogic.]” Besides, Celeste would like other students to participate (Interview, April 3, 2014). Endorsing a dialogic approach to learning is consistent with Celeste’s value of religious tolerance. Without tolerance, dialogues and more students’ participation in class are less likely to come about.

Discussion

Assessing character education is challenging, especially because a person’s values (e.g., being dogmatic) can be radically different than other people’s values (e.g., being tolerant). It is therefore incumbent upon EFL teacher educators/researchers to, first of all, think of a set of core values that form a

desirable character. Being religious is a value. However, when a student's (e.g., Calantha's) religiosity is likely to hurt other people who have either a different religion (e.g., Tono) or a secular view, performing religiosity per se might not constitute a desirable character. There are other values that need to be taken into account.

Determining Desirable Values to be Nurtured and Formatively Assessed

Let us assume that (religious) tolerance is a core value (see *Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter* [Guidelines for Implementing Character Education], 2011, p. 8) for assessment focus. The next step I suggest is figuring out a cluster of values relevant to religious tolerance. From the perspective of *Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter* (2011), the cluster of values shape a "character configuration" of "Olah Hati" (spiritual and emotional development), "Olah Pikir" (intellectual development), and "Olah Rasa dan Karsa" (Affective and creativity development). According to the *Panduan*, relevant values in *Olah Pikir* include being critical, open(-minded), and reflective; in *Olah Hati* having empathy, and in *Olah Rasa dan Karsa* being tolerant (p. 9).

Although I did not grade Celeste's students, I can still build up a model of how to assess students' character development through English language use over time. After determining the core value (e.g., [religious] tolerance) with its related values (e.g., being critical, open[-minded], reflective, and having empathy), the next step is to delineate observable language-related behaviors, seen through the perspective of communicative competence, that reflect the core and related values being assessed.

Selecting Components of Communicative Competence that are Relevant in Cultivating Desirable Values in Character Education

The selection for components of communicative competence is certainly at an individual teacher's discretion. However, to illustrate the development of a model for assessing religious tolerance in TEFLIN contexts, I will elaborate on my selections of communicative competence components that I emphasize and my justifications for doing so. In terms of sociocultural competence, Celce-Murcia (2007) argues that "a social or cultural blunder can be far more serious than a linguistic error when one is engaged in oral communication" (p. 46).

Although Celce-Murcia seems to limit the sociocultural aspects within the purview of learning “target language” norms (e.g., the sociocultural norms of English as a foreign language being learned), in the case of Calantha the communicational blunder on their part is more on their insensitivity, regardless of the language being used or learned. Still, if Calantha had been addressing competent English users (including the so-called English “native speakers”) in a highly secular academic context in, say, a state university in the United States, their audience (particularly those who are non-Christian and proponents of homosexuality) could have felt very uncomfortable. No matter how strongly Calantha claimed “even though I say that I disagree [with homosexuality], [it] doesn’t mean that I judge them... I only just disagree... with their life as a homosexual” (Interview, April 3, 2014), the way she constructed her discourse in the class on the day before the interview suggests otherwise: Calantha sounded judgmental. Moreover, in an Indonesian university, Calantha’s dogmatic stance might sound offensive to her Muslim friend, Tono. In terms of “stylistic appropriateness” under the component of sociocultural competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 46), Calantha still had poor politeness strategies, too. Checking Tono’s understanding of “tritunggal” (i.e., the Holy Trinity) may be regarded as rude.

As regards linguistic competence, it is interesting to notice Calantha’s lexical (or word) choices. She used the word “rules” repeatedly, and defined spirituality in a black-and-white approach: “right” versus “wrong;” using the modals “have to” and the erroneous “don’t have to,” which is supposedly “must not” (Focus group discussion, March 4, 2014). Also interesting is the fact that Calantha returned to her dogmatic word choices (see the following italicized words) at the very last conversation I had with her: “Our society and our religion still say that if we talk about *ethic* or *ethos*, it means that we *have to* come up with *right* thing” (April 3, 2014, italics added). Overall, Calantha’s inaccuracy in using “don’t have to” instead of “must not” shows her rather weak linguistic competence. Moreover, her lexical repertoire for religious dialogues seems very restricted as she kept using rule-oriented words (e.g., “rules,” “have to,” “right,” “wrong,” and “ethic”). As such, she did not seem to have some flexibility in expressing a critical stance, empathy, and self-reflections.

Unlike Calantha, two of my other research participants (i.e., Ellie and Celeste, the instructor) provided exemplary sociocultural competence, discourse competence, and linguistic competence with regard to exhibiting religious

tolerance, as a desirable character, verbally. Their tolerance is demonstrated in the following.

In terms of sociocultural competence, Ellie and Celeste conformed to very crucial (target) academic language norm: being critical, which is encapsulated in Olah Pikir (intellectual development; *Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter*, 2011). Being critical has a twofold meaning: (1) being objective, as opposed to being too subjective (e.g., Calantha's one-sided view of religion); (2) being aware of power differentials between people having different orientations, especially in terms of religious views and sexuality.

With regard to discourse competence, Celeste and Ellie exhibited their critical ELT orientation through reflection (or, to be used interchangeably here, self-reflexivity). The self-reflexivity is expressed in the discourse of intrapersonal dialogues in which a learner's or an educator's experience is subject to problematization, especially when the experience is deemed colluding with dominant discourses (e.g., religious one-sidedness and dogmatism) perceived as oppressive. To illustrate, at a discourse (i.e., across utterances) level, Ellie could distinguish between her religious belief (e.g., "from my religious perspective, I agree that homosexuality is forbidden") and her personal secular stance (e.g., "as myself, I very open to [the homosexuals]"). Furthermore, showing empathy, which is part of Olah Hati (spiritual and emotional development [*Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter*, 2011]), Ellie stated: "... if you make relationship with [the homosexual or lesbian people], you will know their reason. So sometimes their situation change their identity. So we can't judge them" (Communication Across Cultures class, April 2, 2014). Overall, Celeste agreed with Ellie, and suggested the notion of "providing room" for understanding an issue like homosexuality from homosexual people's perspectives before saying "agree" or "disagree" with the issue. Based on the examples of Celeste and Ellie, self-reflexivity hence means people's capacity to express their understanding of sources of their own beliefs, how they deal with conflicting beliefs over time, and what belief(s) regarded as the "best" (e.g., not judging the homosexuals) that they decide to embrace now, in written and spoken discourse.

Some, including the policy makers publishing DIPK (2010, p. 10), may disagree with U.S.-styled "moral reasoning" and "value clarification" like what Celeste and Ellie did competently in their self-reflexive discourse when they clarified their religious belief in relation to other values they need to be aware of when interacting with a marginalized group of people known as

“homosexuals.” These policy makers are more concerned with moral absolutes. However, I have three counter-arguments. First, even policy makers formulating the DIPK (2010, p. 16) promotes tolerance, so if moral reasoning or value clarification is not nurtured, I wonder what kind of tolerance it is. Second, students like Calantha and Ellie are learning English, a target language substantially associated with Western countries, particularly the United States, and their values. If students are not made aware of Western countries’ sociocultural norms (e.g., academic critical thinking, empathy with a marginalized, albeit controversial, group like the homosexuals) through their spoken or written English discourse, an educator like Celeste (and I) may put students at a disservice by implying that English usage can always be framed within “the Indonesian way of thinking,” which in itself is a construct eluding easy definitions. Third, in no way did I see Celeste, Ellie, and myself abandoning our religiosity. In particular, I know that Celeste is a person who is still actively involved in church ministries. As such, academic discussions that allow self-reflexivity and critical thinking to be nurtured do not necessarily convert someone into an agnostic or an atheist.

Celeste’s and Ellie’s ability in demonstrating their (a) critical stance, (b) empathy, and (c) reflections can be traced by their linguistic competence, especially the use of lexical items like “open” or “open-minded” (Ellie, April 2, 2014), despite her inaccurate usage (i.e., “I very open to them”; “My experience is more open-minded”), and a syntactical construction like “But as a person you maybe not on the level of agree or disagree [sic], but at least you provide room for this issue [of homosexuality]” (Celeste, April, 2, 2014). “Provide room” is particularly a powerful verb phrase in this context. It indicates some degree of empathy for marginalized homosexual or lesbian people.

After discussing how DIPK (2010), critical ELT perspectives, and Celce-Murcia’s (2007) communicative competence are related in assessing religious tolerance, I will now proceed to summarizing the discussion in rubrics for teacher’s part (see Table 1) and students’ self-assessment (Table 2). Desirable language-related behaviors depicting students’ character development, as far as their constructed discourse in class or elsewhere is concerned, are gleaned from my discussion about Calantha’s, Ellie’s, and Celeste’s verbalized responses.

A Suggested English Language Teacher's Rubric for Assessing Students' Religious Tolerance

In the teacher's rubric (Table 1), I do not include the word "dogmatism" explicitly, because at the end of a learning process (e.g., at the end of a semester), the rubric will be shared with students, and it is likely to be too face-threatening on the part of the students (like Calantha) if they are labeled as "dogmatic." It will be more fruitful, therefore, that desirable values forming a composite character like "religious tolerance" are elucidated in the rubric, especially at the indicator sections (under each component of communicative competence). Besides, by saying "with or without stronger reinforcement from the instructor and/or peers" (under "Membudaya" column) I attempt to provide some space for EFL teacher-researchers to analyze the extent to which religious tolerance constructed by a student like Ellie and an instructor like Celeste is internalized in due course by a student like Calantha. When students ask an instructor to explain her or his rationales behind marking certain columns in the rubric, the instructor can make use of their notes, which are ideally as detailed as my transcribed video-recorded data I presented above. One example of elucidating the rationale is for an instructor to bring the notion of linguistic modalities of necessity (e.g., "must," "have to") to the student's attention. In so doing, students can be guided to minimize dogmatism in academic discourse.

Table 1. A Teacher's Rubric for Assessing EFL Students' Character Development on Religious Tolerance

| Character Development Rubric | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| A Specific Character being Assessed: | Stages of a Student's Character Development (DIPK, 2010) | | | |
| RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE ³ | | | | |
| Components of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007) | Not Yet Seen (Belum Terlihat) | Emerging (Mulai Terlihat) | Developing (Mulai Berkembang) | Part of Culture/Habit (Membudaya) |

Character Development Rubric

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Sociocultural competence Indicator: Being <u>critical</u>¹ in an academic setting (i.e., being objective or not one-sided, and being aware of power differentials in people's orientations, especially toward religious views and sexuality.</p> | <p>The student does not seem to understand critical and polite stances in academic settings, especially when an audience is religion or is non-religious.</p> | <p>The student begins to understand critical and polite stances in academic settings. However, her or his discourse suggests that such stances are not yet consistently, if at all, performed.</p> | <p>The student's critical and polite stances in academic settings are more consistently performed, regardless of whether there is some degree of reinforcement from the instructor and/or other students.</p> | <p>With or without stronger reinforcement from the instructor and/or peers, the student continuously performs critical and polite stances in academic settings due to a full(er) understanding and awareness of potential academic audience's expectations.</p> |
| <p>Discourse competence Indicator: Elaborated discourse (i.e., a stretch of utterances) on <u>reflection</u> (or <u>self-reflexivity</u>^{1, 4}) that shows some <u>empathy</u>² toward a marginalized group of people.</p> | <p>The student does not seem to be aware of the need to be self-reflexive and show empathy across utterances (i.e., at a discourse level) in academic settings, especially when an audience is</p> | <p>The student begins to understand the need to be self-reflexive and show empathy in academic settings. However, her or his discourse suggests that such reflection and empathy are not yet consistently,</p> | <p>The student's reflections and empathy in academic settings are more consistently performed, regardless of whether there is some degree of reinforcement from the instructor and/or other students.</p> | <p>With or without stronger reinforcement from the instructor and/or peers, the student continuously performs self-reflexivity⁴ and empathy in academic settings due to a full(er) understanding and awareness of potential academic</p> |

Character Development Rubric

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| | from another religion or is non-religious. | if at all, performed. | | audience's expectations. |
| Linguistic competence Indicators: Mastery in using lexical and syntactical forms indexing <u>critical stance</u> ¹ (including <u>open-mindedness</u> ¹), <u>empathy</u> ² , and <u>reflections</u> ¹ . | The student has yet to use lexical items or syntactical forms that show critical stance, empathy, and reflections in academic settings, especially when an audience is from another religion or is non-religious. | The student begins to use lexical items or syntactical forms that show critical stance, empathy, and reflections in academic settings. However, her or his discourse suggests that such reflection and empathy are not yet consistently, if at all, performed. | The student's use of lexical items or syntactical forms that show critical stance, empathy, and reflections in academic settings are more consistently performed, regardless of whether there is some degree of reinforcement from the instructor and/or other students. | With or without stronger reinforcement from the instructor and/or peers, the student continuously utilizes lexical items or syntactical forms that show critical stance, empathy, and reflections in academic settings due to a full(er) understanding and awareness of potential academic audience's expectations. |

Notes:

¹ Olah Pikir (Intellectual Development): Being critical, open(-minded), and reflective.

² Olah Hati (Spiritual and Emotional Development): showing empathy.

³ Olah Rasa dan Karsa (Affective and Creativity Development): being tolerant.

(Based on *Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter* [Guidelines for Implementing Character Education], 2011)

⁴ The notion of self-reflexivity is in line with the critical pedagogy/ELT perspective (Crookes, 2013; Keesing-Styles, 2003).

The teacher's version of rubric (Table 1) can be used for formative assessment once or subsequently. To illustrate, the rubric allows a teacher/researcher like me—Celeste has never used it—to trace whether or not, or the degree to which, Calantha developed her religious tolerance as a desirable composite character over time. By “composite” here I refer to related values (e.g., being critical, being reflective, and showing empathy) constructing the character of religious tolerance. To assess Calantha's character development, I will first document how many times I met her. Based on the reported findings above, I met her on four major events: (1) a focus group discussion (March 4, 2014), when she challenged Tono, her Muslim friend; (2) an individual interview (March 18, 2014), when she imaginarily defied Tono; (3) a class session (Communication Across Cultures class, April 2, 2014); and (4) a follow-up interview (April 3, 2014). In these events, her sociocultural competence can be viewed as “Not Yet Seen,” “Not Yet Seen,” “Not Yet Seen” and (probably?) “Emerging” respectively. In the first three events, she combatively attacked Tono and an imagined homosexual community respectively. Only in the last event did Calantha incorporate what Celeste said about providing room for homosexuals, which she did not frame in an elegantly academic way because she was insistent on rejecting that idea altogether. Concerning discourse competence and linguistic competence, “Not Yet Seen” prevails in the four events, in my opinion.

A Suggested English Language Student's Self-Assessment Rubric of Religious Tolerance

Having discussed the rubric for teachers, I now turn to teachers' necessity of scaffolding students' self-assessment through a simpler rubric. Inspired by the critical pedagogy/ELT perspective (Crookes, 2013; Keesing-Styles, 2003), I find it crucial for students to be guided to problematize their experience, particularly in class, which perpetuates some sort of oppression or marginalization. The suggested rubric for students' self-assessment is in Table 2.

For the students' rubric (which I adapted considerably from Brookhart, 2013, p. 47), I choose words that are less jargonistic than those used in the teacher's version. The scores (4 [A], 3 [B], 2 [C], and 1 [D]) in the student's rubric are simplified from Part of Culture/Habit, Developing, Emerging, and Not Yet Seen stages respectively in the teacher's rubric. Showing an Objective

Stance, Demonstrating Empathy, and Using Appropriate Language for Discussing Values in the student's self-assessment rubric are equal to Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence, and Linguistic Competence respectively in the teacher's rubric. In conjunction with the student's version of the rubric, ideally students can attach their reflective journals that contain some explanations about why they tick or mark certain columns in the rubric. Important elements in the explanations are (a) what they remember saying in class or writing in an assignment; (b) their instructor's and peers' responses to what they said or wrote; and (c) what they think they can do to improve themselves in terms of character development and English use.

Table 2. A Rubric for an EFL Student's Self-Assessment of Her/His Character Development on Religious Tolerance.

| Character Development Rubric | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Focus: Religious Tolerance | | | |
| Your score | Showing an Objective Stance (In your speech or written assignment, are you aware of objectivity expected in academic settings?) | Demonstrating Empathy (In your speech or written assignment, do you show empathy toward people whom you think are different from you?) | Using Appropriate Language for Discussing Values (Do you use appropriate words, phrases, or sentences when expressing your thoughts on values?) |
| 4 (A) | I continuously express objective statements about people's orientations (e.g., in terms of religion and culture) in academic settings. | I continuously show empathy toward people whom I think are different from me. | I continuously use appropriate words, phrases, or sentences when expressing my thoughts or emotions on values, including religious tolerance. Note: "Appropriate" here may mean, though not limited to, "correct" (or "grammatical"). |
| 3 (B) | I am quite consistent in expressing objective statements | I am quite consistent in demonstrating empathy toward people whom I | I am quite consistent in using appropriate words, phrases, or sentences |

| Character Development Rubric | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Focus: Religious Tolerance | | | |
| Your score | Showing an Objective Stance (In your speech or written assignment, are you aware of objectivity expected in academic settings?) | Demonstrating Empathy (In your speech or written assignment, do you show empathy toward people whom you think are different from you?) | Using Appropriate Language for Discussing Values (Do you use appropriate words, phrases, or sentences when expressing your thoughts on values?) |
| | about people's orientations in academic settings. | think are different from me. | when expressing my thoughts or emotions on values. |
| 2 (C) | I am not very consistent in expressing objective statements about people's orientations in academic settings. | I am not very consistent in expressing empathy toward people whom I think are different from me. | I am not very consistent in using appropriate words, phrases, or sentences when expressing my thoughts or emotions on values. |
| 1 (D) | I rarely (or even never) express objective statements about people's orientations in academic settings. | I rarely (or even never) show empathy toward people whom I think are different from me. | I rarely use appropriate words, phrases, or sentences when expressing my thoughts or emotions on values. |

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this article, the challenges of assessing character education in ELT have been addressed through my working models of assessment rubrics for teachers and students. These rubrics incorporate insights from the findings of my larger ethnographically framed case study, in light of DIPK (2010), critical pedagogy/ELT, and Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence. The most challenging part in developing the assessment rubrics is the necessity of coming to terms with the controversy of incorporating religious and critical views into ELT settings, including an English language classroom like Celeste's Communication Across Cultures class. Some Indonesian state policy makers (e.g., authors in DIPK, 2010) favor moral absolute, especially

that which is religiously inspired, over relativizing morality. However, DIPK itself endorses “tolerance” as a value that shapes a desirable character. From a critical pedagogy/ELT perspective, tolerance can be nurtured through providing space for EFL students to have dialogues of controversial issues like homosexuality in class or elsewhere. With regard to assessment, the critical pedagogy/ELT perspective encourages me to develop rubrics for both teachers and students, on the grounds that the voices of both parties need to be “validated” (Keesing-Styles, 2003, p. 10). Central to the rubrics are elaborated indicators of values (e.g., being critical, reflective/self-reflexive, open[-minded], and showing empathy) that are supposed to shape a desirable composite character of religious tolerance. These indicators are translated from my research participants’ elicited data, in view of Celce-Murcia’s (2007) model of communicative competence. The degree to which these values become internalized in the students’ language-related behaviors at sociocultural, discourse, and linguistic levels can be observed in four stages, following DIPK (2010): Not Yet Seen, Emerging, Developing, and Part of Culture/Habit.

The working assessment rubrics I present in this paper are inductively generated from my findings in a larger study (Mambu, 2014), and so they have not been used by the research participants whom I assessed with the rubrics. In future studies, the rubrics can be used and refined not only by me and my research participants, but also by other teacher-researchers working in EFL teacher education programs and schools at primary and secondary levels. One aspect of refinement is integration of communicative competence components that have yet to be explored here (i.e., formulaic competence, interactional competence, and strategic competence). Apart from prospective use and refinement of my suggested rubrics here, Indonesian-based ELT practitioners can explore CE-related themes other than religious tolerance. For instance, based on my 2014 study, two major CE-related themes emerged: academic honesty and love to read. How teachers develop and utilize formative assessment rubrics on a regular basis in order for students to avoid plagiarism and to become avid readers are crucial issues to address.

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