

THE Place of Javanese English Among Globally Known Varieties of World Englishes

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Javanese English might not be as familiar as other varieties of World Englishes in Asia such as Singaporean English or Indian English. However, since speeches delivered by some Indonesian presidents who happen to be Javanese have been heard in several international forums for the past 20 years, this locally known variety of English has gradually been reckoned in Asian communities and perhaps in the global world. Although still far from being globally known by the whole world, Javanese English is likely to appear as one of the mostly known English varieties from Indonesia due to its many speakers who are Javanese. Even so, the existence of Javanese English itself is still doubted by the Indonesians because of several factors. Favored or not, Javanese English is likely to assist Indonesian government in competing with fellow Asian countries in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or in achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) along with most countries in the world. How Javanese English can have a pivotal role to help the government in its strive for advancement might still be debatable. Nevertheless, the writers believe that there is a potential place for Javanese English in the scope of international interactions among other World Englishes particularly known in Asia which can be beneficial to the development of Indonesia. This paper tries to scrutinize the prospects of Javanese English as well as the doubts toward Javanese English by presenting an ongoing study on the intelligibility of Javanese English sampled from several proficient nonnative English speakers in a qualitative perspective.

1. PENDAHULUAN

Nowadays, many new languages are being learned by people around the world for various reasons. English, one of the most favored languages, has been spoken by many people from different countries since it has become known as an international language. English, along with Mandarin, is greatly used to communicate by global people when trading or when making international agreements in economic, politic, or social necessities. The sheer demand of English

by international communities makes language scholars pay attention to its development and change. According to Kachru (1985)[1], the use of English is marked from the categories of which countries using the language. Kachru classifies the categories from historical background from which English speaking countries ever invading other countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are classified in the Inner Circle Countries, whereas the countries which became their colonies like Malaysia, India and Singapore are in the Outer

Circle Countries. Meanwhile, Expanding Circle Countries are those which neither the invaders nor the countries being colonized.

We all know that Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia have made significant progress not only in economic and social development but also in other areas such as education and tourism. English has a very big role in their advancement. Being colonized by the British government in the past had somewhat given them a benefit since English in those countries has served as a second language, making them easier to interact with other countries in fulfilling their needs. Seen from the characteristics, English spoken in Singapore, Malaysia or India are somehow unique since it shows some local features such as accent or even dialect. In Singapore, for example, people often add particular words that are commonly used when they speak in their first language.

Such varieties of English emerging from countries such as Asia have helped enrich the World Englishes with assorted accents or characteristics. World Englishes are a term used to signify the many kinds of English spoken by people from different countries which can also identify each of those countries from one to another. Many well known varieties in Asia, which have long been acknowledged in either international communication or academic studies, are Singaporean English, Malaysian English, Indian English, and so on. Each of these varieties has made its country's national identity become bolder and distinct when compared to others in relation to the current status of English.

The massive use of English in many nonnative English speaking countries has helped the occurrence of the aforementioned varieties. As English is being used by people with different local languages, the contact between them inevitably creates new varieties in accent as well as in other features. Singaporean English, for instance, has several varieties that identifies different types of local Chinese communities in Singapore. As in Indonesia, Javanese English can serve as one of the local English varieties. It has

not been widely known compared to the varieties of local Singaporean English. Realized or not, when using English with their own accent or dialect, those Singaporean and Malaysian people let the other speakers know about their cultural identities. This is actually a good point since people communicating with us can get to know us and our culture at the same time, and by not trying to speak like natives means they are confident enough with their own English. This is what Indonesians should learn from them, their confidence in using English to interact with people from all over the world. Hereby some assumptions and opportunities are elaborated below to proof that even Javanese English can exist in the international communications and thus the people speaking it can gain benefits from the language they use.

1.1 Learning English is “To Survive, Not to Show Off My Accent.”

The emergence of numerous English speakers from many countries for the past two decades has created inevitable changes toward the status of English as an international language. Years ago, learning English was often associated to learning the cultures of English speaking countries like America, England, and Australia. Consequently, the norms adopted by most speakers are also very natively like. For instance, American and British accents are massively learned and common cultures like garage sales and Halloween are gradually practiced by English speakers in Asia. In Indonesia, for example, English textbooks used in schools were filled with American or British cultures which were less known by the students. Recorded materials for listening class were heavily pronounced with American or British accents.

The tendencies above have been going on for so long, until after some language scholars who were very concerned with the aforementioned issue began to investigate its impacts on the global society through meticulous research. Their studies started to reveal some findings which suggested that the status of English has shifted from exclusively owned by

the English speaking countries to owned by none. English can no longer be claimed by any country anymore since every country in the world uses and can use English with their own ways. The key is not on which English accent we use but how we can deliver our message to others when expressed with English. As a result, it is actually alright to speak English but with Javanese accent (or with other local accents) as long as our listener can understand what message we want to convey. This is very important to know since many Indonesians still feel reluctant to use English just because they are afraid to make mistakes or their English does not really sound like American or British English. On the other hand, we should start considering that English is basically used in order to survive, not just to show off our accent without any meaningful message to exchange with other speakers.

1.2 False Assumption on “Mastering English Equals Mastering American or British English

Javanese English itself might not be as familiar as other varieties of World Englishes in Asia such as Singaporean English or Indian English. However, since speeches delivered by some Indonesian presidents who happen to be Javanese have been heard in several international forums for the past 20 years, this locally known variety of English has gradually been reckoned in Asian communities and perhaps in the global world.

Although still far from being globally known by the whole world, Javanese English is likely to appear as one of the mostly known English varieties from Indonesia due to its many speakers who are Javanese. Even so, the existence of Javanese English itself is still doubted by the Indonesians themselves because of several factors. The most obvious doubt lays on when the current Indonesian president, Joko Widodo or famously addressed as Jokowi, delivered his speech in several international forums attended by many international leaders. His speaking English was heard in several international forums such as the Asia and Pacific

Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in 2015 and his formal meeting with the President of the United States of America in 2017. Since then, this locally known variety of English having influenced by Javanese pronunciation features has gradually been reckoned in the Asian Economic Community (AEC).

Nevertheless, the existence of Javanese English is still likely to be doubted by the Indonesians themselves. The Javanese accent shown by Jokowi in his English speech was mocked and even deemed as an embarrassing English (Usman, 2014) [4]. This mockery happens because in schools, English teachers in Indonesia are still lack of knowledge regarding the shift of the ownership of English and the current status of English as previously mentioned. Consequently, teachers still think of American and British Englishes as the only good models of English and give such materials for their students, which in turn makes the students think the same way, too. English learners in Indonesia tend to be less confident when asked to speak in English and they often directly apologize for their “bad English.” Another factor is that English in Indonesia is only a foreign language, which makes it rarely noticed or studied by language scholars in the country or even abroad. These facts actually hinder the development of English in Indonesia compared to other Asian countries from which English in their countries serve as a second language.

Indonesians should open their mind that global people who already acknowledge the current status of English does not see Jokowi’s Javanese English as a threat for Indonesia, instead as a potential that can be beneficial for Indonesians when joining any international relation. So, what is wrong with Jokowi’s English? Why should we take Jokowi’s speech as an example, not someone else’s? Despite controversial, Jokowi’s speech has informed the global people of the existence of Javanese English and favored or not, Javanese English is likely to assist Indonesian government in competing with fellow Asian countries in the

ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or in achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) along with most countries in the world (UNDP, 2017) [3]. How Javanese English can have a pivotal role to help the government in its strive for advancement might still be debatable.

Mentioning about Javanese English as one of new candidates in the scope of the World Englishes is not aimed to encourage English learners not to learn the essential features of Standard English such as the pronunciation and grammar. However, in terms of international communication which can help the country boost its development among other Asian countries in particular, Indonesia needs to embrace its cultural identity when using English, not try to disguise it by merely copying the native accent or even native cultural habits which are sometimes not suitable with Indonesian cultures and norms.

1.3 We Should “Speak Up” Not “Speak Less Because My English is Bad”

As stated before, Indonesians should be careful with their latent assumptions about English and the use of English. Another example that actually puts Indonesia into a great loss is when some Indonesian leaders expressed their copinions when commenting on whether or not Indonesia is ready to get involved in the Asian Economic Society (AEC) in the recent years and in the future. Many of them confirmed that Indonesians are not ready to face AEC. Muttaqin (2015) [2] explains some reasons why Indonesia is considered not ready yet. One of the reasons is that their English is still mediocre if compared to fellow Asian countries. This pessimistic statement shows how Indonesians are very bad when using English, thus it will not be able to neither compete with other Asian countries in its strive for development in the scope of AEC nor to reach its SDGs.

This is of course a very sad and false assumption that we need to get rid off right away. If Indonesians still feel unconfident with their own English, they will surely be left behind than any other countries which start embracing their own English and uses it as a medium to develop

their countries. Start from now, Indonesians need to change their mind and stop thinking that their English is bad. Moreover, they need to start thinking that English is only the medium to reach their goals, thus, they need to start speaking up their mind when using English.

2. METODE

As aforementioned, this paper tries to find the prospects of Javanese English among other formerly known World Englishes especially in Asia by investigating the intelligibility of Javanese English which is still in the progress. The study adopts qualitative approach in which the data are collected from several recordings that are obtained from some nonnative English speakers. The participants who are some proficient nonnative English speakers are asked to pronounce particular English words. The participants are purposively chosen from some categories, namely English teachers who are Javanese and who took one of their studies abroad. The recorded texts are then transcribed according to the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) to be coded. Then, the recordings will be shown to some native speakers of English to check whether the participants’ Javanese English are intelligible or not. Up to now, the data are still being transcribed. The transcriptions will be analyzed through comparison-and-contrast technique between the transcriptions obtained and the IPA symbols. The more discrepancies are found between them, the more various their accents are. Then, the more understandable the native speakers when listening to the recorded voices of the participants, the more intelligible their Javanese English are.

3. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Since the study being conducted is still ongoing, the result which can be obtained is still far from being concluded. The excerpts of the data which have been analyzed have shown that their English are quite intelligible seen from the less discrepancies found when compared to the

IPA symbols. Only several sounds that are a bit different from the IPA are found from the participants' recorded voices. The differences are located from the way the participants pronounce some diphthongs, consonant sounds related to [t], [f] and [v], and vowel sounds related to [e], [ae], and so on. However, this temporary finding still needs to be confirmed by asking some native speakers of English to listen to the recordings and by checking whether they can still understand every word said by the participants or not, to confirm their intelligibility.

4. KESIMPULAN

All in all, the temporary finding of the ongoing study about the intelligibility of Javanese English has shown that there are still some false assumptions had by the Indonesians themselves, namely:

- a. Blind assumption on the Standard English Norms (American or British accents) leads to a great loss for Indonesians
- b. English learners in Indonesia lose their confidence when using English since they still merely hold that assumption
- c. The pessimism of the government in facing the AEC and in fulfilling the SDGs is partly

due to the false assumption regarding English which should be erased and should be changed into an optimism that their English is okay and indeed can promote Indonesian national and cultural identities instead.

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