"No Need-Lah, Uncle": Teachers' Perspective on English(es) Communication and Pedagogy

Christine Manara

Abstract—**This presentation reports English teachers attitudes and opinion based on their encounters and interactions with varieties of English and how these experiences informed their new understanding of English communication and its implication to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Adopting the qualitative research framework, thirteen English language educators of Indonesian nationalities participated in in-depth interviews with the researcher. The findings from the teachers accounts illuminates a move away from the traditional English Language Teaching paradigm (a purist perspective on language, culture, and identity) to embracing the diversity of Englishes in the world and its various local significance as well as shifting our focus to the teaching of English for intercultural communication (a dynamic perspective of the teaching of language). The implication of the findings is suggesting the teaching of intercultural (communicative) competence in ELT classroom.**

Index Terms—**English language teaching (ELT), Englishes, globalization, intercultural communication.**

I. INTRODUCTION

About three decades ago, Kachru categorized three types of English speakers (Fig. 1). Speakers of the inner circle countries are those who have English as the First Language (L1) and often the only language (USA, UK, NZ, Canada, and Australia) [1]. The outer circle countries refer to speakers of countries that have English as a second language (L2) or additional language (e.g. Singapore, India, Malaysia, etc.). The expanding circle refers to countries in which English is learned as a Foreign Language (e.g. Indonesia, Brazil, Korea, china, etc.). This representation considers the inner-circle countries to be the norm-providing varieties, the outer-circle to be the norm-developing countries, and the expanding circle as the norm-dependent varieties. Therefore, this model of categorization, as David Graddol [2] explains, is implying that the inner-circle countries are considered as the source of models of correctness. This model also privileges the so called, Native-Speakers of English (NSE) of the inner circle countries as the best teachers. This ideology of native-speakerism has been influencing many English language teaching practices and policy around the world for a very long time with the idea of making their learners to be able to communicate with the NSE.

However, the teaching of English is now becoming more complex with the rapid movement of globalization and the development of digital technology. The development in

digital technology allows the flows of (local) information, ideas, knowledge, and cultures across border quite conveniently [3]. Languages and cultures contact or interaction has become a common phenomenon today. English has been used as a Lingua Franca for intercultural communication in this globalization process. Therefore, English has not only flowed across the border of the so called "home countries" but also found itself a new form of "being" in other local contexts [4]. It has been used, adapted, and localized to serve various needs and functions in local contexts ([3], [5], [6]). This active interaction between the global and local has lead to the growth of and acknowledgment of English varieties (Englishes). Therefore, Kachru's earlier version of concentric circles does not seem to be able to accommodate the interactive flow and development of English across the world.
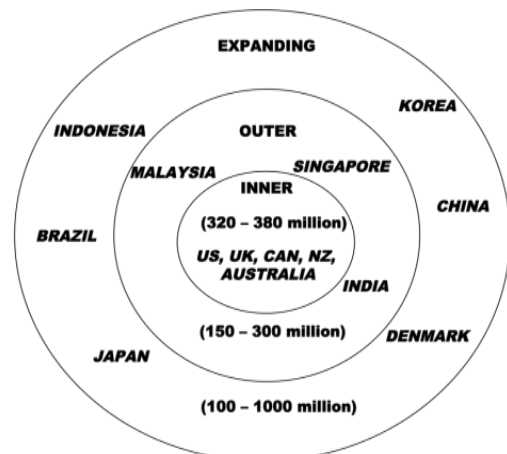

Fig. 1. Kachru's (1985) concentric circles representation of English speaking countries of the world.

As a Lingua Franca, English is no longer used exclusively in its *home countries*. The number of English users around the world is growing and English is not used to communicate to NSE solely. English is used by Bilingual English users to communicate with other Bilingual English users; between Bilingual English Users and monolingual English users; and among Monolingual English users of different English varieties. English is used as the language of a wider communication. Therefore, scholars suggest a shift of paradigm in ELT that takes into accounts the complex inter-relations and communicative interaction between the global and the local. This study aims to do a contextual investigation on the role of English in an Indonesian local context, Englishes communication in today's globalized era, and the teaching of English in an Indonesian context.

II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDONESIA

Indonesia is a very diverse country. There are about 300 distinct native ethnicities and 1000 languages and dialects. To communicate across cultures, people use the national language, *Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia* is used in social, political, educational and other communicative settings in Indonesia. In educational communicative setting, it is used as the medium of instruction (MOI). Therefore, most Indonesians speak more than 1 language and often use more than 1 language in their daily communication.

English has no official status in Indonesia. Not many Indonesians are exposed to and use English in their daily communication. Although English is learned as a Foreign Language according to the national curriculum, the existence of English varies in different parts of the country, from high exposure (where English is usually learned as an additional language, usually in metropolitan cities and/or tourism areas with high access to technology) to very low exposure to English (where English is learned as a Foreign Language, usually in remote areas with low access to technology). In the past, English is a required subject starting from grade 7. Since the mid 1990s, English is allowed to be taught as an elective subject at the elementary school level. According to Dardjowidjojo, English, in the late 1990s, is allowed to be used as a medium of instruction in classroom [7]. Since then, national plus and international schools at the private sectors are blooming in Indonesia, especially in big cities like Jakarta and Surabaya. In the higher education level, international program or class with English as the medium of instructions are mushrooming (mostly in private universities). In the public education sector, there was an RSBI boom in which top public schools were encouraged to upgrade themselves to International Standard schools. But, this program only lasted for a few years due to public protest that the use of English is degrading the sense of nationalism among the learners. Due to this fear of losing the sense of nationalism, the curriculum 2013 is issued and it reduces the number of hours for English lesson to 3 hours a week. This study also looks at how the teachers respond to this policy in relation to the globalization process in Indonesia.

III. METHODOLOGY

Framed within qualitative research paradigm, the study employed in-depth semi-structured and individual interviews. Each interview lasted for about 45 – 60 minutes. In order to gain participant's trust and lessen the distance of formality, the participants were interviewed in the language they felt comfortable of using (English; a mixture of English, Indonesian, and occasionally local *Jakartanese* dialect). There are 13 English language educators participated in the interview. Most of the educators teach in the primary, secondary, and tertiary school levels and are studying at an MA in English Applied Linguistic Program of a private university in Jakarta. Their teaching experiences are ranging from 3 – 25 years. The teachers' teaching context is in Jakarta (the capital city of Indonesia). The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed. Emerging themes from the interviews were grouped drawing from recurring themes and topics found in the participants' accounts. The data, then, were analyzed based on these emerging themes, and some supporting theories were included to carry out the analysis. In this article, some excerpts of the transcribed are used to support each point in the process of analyzing and discussing the data. The participants' narratives are presented and discussed. For an ethical issue, pseudonyms are used throughout this presentation. This paper particularly focuses on three main ideas emerging from the interviews: 1) teacher's attitudes towards English varieties; 2) Teacher's experiences of intercultural communication in English; 3) and how these experiences influence the way they view the teaching of English in today's globalized era.

IV. RESULT

All participants agree that globalization has been felt in their immediate surroundings, especially through the increasing demand on learning and acquiring English. The participants believe that English has been used in almost all sectors in Indonesia (economics, politics, social and cultural, and education). Despite the issuance of curriculum 2013 that decrease the allocated time for English lesson, interest in acquiring English and effort for providing English exposure (especially at the private sector of education) is rising. Most participants specifically address the growing numbers of international schools and international programs in higher education in Jakarta which also hire teachers from other countries. Therefore, not only that English is used as the medium of instruction (MOI) but also as a Lingua Franca at schools. However, there are ambivalent feelings shared by the participants on the use of Englishes for communication and the teaching of English(es). In this section, I firstly discuss the teacher's attitudes towards Englishes and their opinion on Englishes communication. Then, the discussion continues to teacher's struggle about Englishes and the teaching of English(es) and lessons learned from the teacher's accounts.

A. Teachers' Attitudes towards Englishes

Through their interaction with their transnational colleagues, the participants are very aware of the existence of Englishes in the world. They view that English is used to communicate across cultures and that intelligible English (with a focus on communication skills and strategies) should be given emphasis in Englishes communication. To the participants, the role of English today has expanded to be used as the language of international communication and, therefore, as medium of the English user's cultural and linguistic backgrounds (c.f. [3], [8]). Most participants show positive attitudes towards varieties of English that they encounter in their intercultural communicative interactions. They considered the use of English varieties to be the communication reality today and that English is now used by and among multilingual English users to accommodate their local and contextual needs and purposes. The idea of English as the language exclusively spoken in and owned by NSE of inner circle countries is often being questioned by most of the participants. Some participants even questioned the conceptualization of NSE. This issue is best presented by

Puput's account:

These days, native or non-native is no longer relevant because nowadays there are more and more people coming from a mixed-cultural background, like Thai-American. In Indonesia for example, there are Ambonese who lived in the Netherland. They speak Dutch, but their physical appearance may not be acknowledged as Dutch. So what is a native speaker really? It's hard to come up with a fixed framework [in defining it]. ... I mean English today is like a bridge or medium of communication of a wider community.

Puput resists the act of differentiating English users by putting them into two distinct categories: NSE and Non-NSE, and privileging the NSE as the best model of Standard English (SE) user. The assumption that NSE variety should be the norm in English communication is felt to be restrictive and unrealistic to the vastly diverse global communication. Therefore, most participants argue that the idea of communicating and even sounding like the NSE is not necessary in intercultural communication. The focus in English communication needs to be on the process of (re)constructing meaning among the interlocutors.

The following excerpt from Narti's account points out the importance of communicative skills and strategies in Englishes communication.

...I'm not referring to perfect pronunciation. As learners, sometimes we make mistakes but that's tolerable. I'm more emphasizing on being able *to send the message, knowing how to send the message effectively and knowing how to gain information or message from the person we are talking to.*

Narti's description welcomes variations in an Englishes communication. Intercultural communicators need to be equipped with knowledge of strategies and skills and ability in communicating, gaining, and co-constructing meaning to achieve inter-intelligibility. Very often, the teaching of language focuses more on the acquisition of linguistic features and detaches itself from real-life communication reality. Developing learner's capacities to be an intercultural communicator has not been given enough room in language teaching.

B. Teachers' Opinion on Englishes Communication

In their daily life, most of the participants use English as MOI in the classroom and as a Lingua Franca when communicating with their transnational colleagues. From their experience, they learned that when English is used as a Lingua Franca, English carries traces of the interlocutor's linguistic and cultural background. This communication reality brings new knowledge of variety to their understanding of English use. In their past education, learning English equals to learning the so called NSE cultures and linguistic practices as if all NSEs speak the same way.

In their intercultural communicative interactions, the participants are confronted with the reality that communication is not as predictable and neat as they learned in textbooks and at school. The participants shared incidents of misunderstanding when communicating with English speakers from various backgrounds. Mostly, their misunderstanding happened due to unfamiliarity with the interlocutor's speech variety, spoken script, and pragmatic norms of the interlocutor's linguistic and cultural background. The following excerpt from Rose's interview shows her unfamiliarity with particular sounds variation.

For example, when they say the word ma'am, we would pronounce it /mæm/, but she would pronounce it /mʌm/. I thought she meant /mʌ'm/, eating. At that time I was... "Where did you got the word /mʌ'm/? That's baby language [for I want to eat]" "No, I'm calling you as seniorita", she said. So, something simple like that but because of the difference in pronunciation, we interpret it as something else. ...so when we are talking English with the Philippines teachers, because of their pronunciation and our pronunciation [are different] so we have to repeat [what we are saying] many times, but we didn't take it seriously. We even laugh about it afterwards.

Although there is a different sound variation appeared in this intercultural communicative event, it did not terminate the two interlocutors speech interaction. From the monolithic and Anglocentric ELT ideology, different sound variation from the SE is often being depicted as the source of misunderstanding and communication breakdown. From the excerpt above, it can be seen that the communication does not cease at Rose's encounter with a new English variety. Both interlocutors are able to reconstruct and resume their interaction. There is evidence of effort in making each other understandable / intelligible to one another in their speech. Tolerance of ambiguity is expected and accepted when communicating with transnational teachers. Rose's account depicts the *human effort* aspect in communication that has often been neglected in the teaching of language. The teaching of language is often treated as linguistic analysis of forms and rules rather than language as a phenomenon of co-constructing meaning (c.f. [9]). As Bambogse eloquently puts it, "the point is often missed that it is people, not language codes, that understand one another" (in [8] p. 53).

Another participant, Joe, shares her encounter with another English variety. She explains that people use English differently in different context, and not as monolithic and Anglocentric as the textbook often presented. The excerpt below shows Joe's language contact with one variety of English:

Once I went to the market [when I was in Singapore], and I was asked whether I wanted to use the plastic bag, but I didn't want to. So I said formally, "No, I don't need it". Then he [the seller] looked at me with a strange look. ...Then, I started to observe how people talked in that market. ...About several days later, I went back to him to buy something, and when I was offered a plastic bag, I said, "No need-lah, uncle". Then the man responded in a natural way [not as before], "oh, okay-okay" [laugh]. So, when I speak using formal [Standard English] language, the person that I talked to responded not so welcoming

This is Joe's first intercultural communication using English. She found that her use of, what she understood as, SE was not received quite well by the interlocutors in that particular communicative setting. She felt excluded by the interlocutor's response to her use of SE. She therefore felt the

need to observe how the people in that community communicate naturally in order to feel accepted in that communicative setting. When she used the English variety of that community, it was well received. It can be seen from this excerpt that Joe adopt a speech accommodation or speech adjustments for that particular speech situation, in this case, at a traditional market in Singapore. In this experience, she realized that different speech situations, interlocutors, and topics have specific speech conventions in a particular community. She, then, recognized that there is no such thing as a one-fit-all English.

Another issue that the participants put forwarded is the importance of knowing pragmatics convention of their interlocutors and acquiring pragmatics skill for intercultural communication. The next excerpt looks at Ajeng's view on the pragmatics of using English in an intercultural communication:

...when replying to a complement given by someone from Western countries, for example, I would reply to the same way as the Westerners. So, I would say "Thank you. You look bright today" or "Thank you, I just bought it yesterday" or "my husband gave it to me today" or " this is like my favorite color." So, I also used these when I received a complement from a Japanese English user. I was wrong! So, I should have replied like, "O, No, No, you look much lovelier". So for the first six months, I always said the wrong things [laugh].

Another example is like, in Japanese,... there isn't any direct "no" word in Japanese. But, in my language, we have that word "no" [in spoken interaction], but I didn't know how to use the word "no" [when communicating with the Japanese]. So, at that time, I was offered a raw horse meat dish and I don't eat uncooked dish. So the Japanese has a dish in which they eat the horse meat with egg and that is like a very prestigious meal usually serves to people who they think are important and special. And, not all horse meat is edible. But then I said, "No thank you. I don't eat raw meat, but thank you". Even though I had already said thank you at the end of my words, it was considered insulting. So, I don't have the pragmatic knowledge [of interacting in Japanese communicative setting].

Ajeng's account re-emphasizes how English is used as a medium of the English user's linguistic and cultural background. In her past education, Ajeng learned English along with its assumed embedded NSE culture and its pragmatics convention. Ajeng responded to her Japanese interlocutor remark using her knowledge of NSE pragmatics that failed to fulfill the politeness convention and value in a Japanese communicative setting. This experience risked her relationship with the interlocutors and took time to recover the communicative relations with her Japanese interlocutors. At this point, she realized that NSE pragmatics did not fit all contexts and the use of Anglocentric linguistic conventions in this context actually caused serious communication breakdown.

From Joe's and Ajeng's accounts, it can be learned that the teaching of NSE Anglocentric linguistic convention and culture through the teaching of English is problematic and unfit to Englishes communication today in which English is used for communication with a wider audience (not exclusively to speakers from the NSE inner circle countries). This example shows the importance of learning the interlocutor's pragmatics conventions. It is also suggesting the need for teaching intercultural communicative competence in ELT [10]. Byram points out that foreign language teaching concerns more than merely exchanging information and sending messages. Communication is about establishing and maintaining relationships and having the ability to use language to demonstrate one's willingness to relate with their interlocutors of various cultural and social identities and discursive practices [10]. Therefore, ELT should aim to develop these language capacities for intercultural communication.

C. Teacher's Perspective on the Teaching of English(es)

Despite the participants' awareness and acceptance of Englishes in their intercultural communication, the domination of native-speakerism ideology and practice in their teaching context can still be felt very strongly. Teachers *struggle* greatly, on the one hand, to embrace the presence of Englishes and, on the other hand, to allow English(es) to be used and learned in their classroom practice. Some participants show ambivalent emotions about Englishes and the teaching of SE. This can be seen from Emi's account:

...we receive [from a language institution in Jakarta] a lot of Native speakers from UK. I realized that they have different dialects. Like, the one from Liverpool has a different dialect than South Hampton, that's the Southern part [of England]. It's so different, the one from Liverpool is so very different. I mean, when we taught a word, we corrected [our students pronunciation], and we consulted the dictionary for that. But, they [the native speaker of English teachers] pronounced the words so differently. So, we had a hard time explaining it to the students.

The school, where Emi taught, still operates under the assumption that English is owned by the speakers of the inner-circle countries and that these speakers speak the same kind of English, the believed *Standard English*. The school hired NSE from the inner circle country based on this assumption. Emi also operates within this discourse that English learners only need to learn and acquire SE. However, in the excerpt above, she encountered a new reality that there are varieties of English within an inner-circle country like the United Kingdom. This reality conflicted with her previous belief (NSE is the best English speaker model because they all speak SE) and her SE teaching practice. She felt the tension between accepting this new reality (that NSE also speaks differently) and *safe-guarding* the teaching of SE to her students. In the following set of ideas, she displayed her disappointment as follow:

Well, I was a little bit disappointed. We did complain about it [to the language institution that sent the NEST to her school]. But, since they are from that area, I thought it is also good for us to know more varieties. But, we [teachers] feel torn.

Sometimes the students laughed at his pronunciation because they are so used to listening to one model. So, when

they hear a different pronunciation, they laugh. But I always emphasize that we need to have a standard to my students, yes we still need a standard. I said, "You have a good dictionary, use it. If the NS speaks differently like that, that's because they are from that particular place there [so they speak that way]".

In the excerpt above, Emi expressed her stand that *a standard* is still needed to be taught to the students so as not to confuse the learners who are still acquiring the linguistic knowledge of English. Emi sees the teaching of language in academic setting as linguistic units, rules, and norms that are codified in a form of reference works (such as dictionary and grammar books). Knowledge of English varieties is considered as a supplementary material in learning English.

Several teachers display their uncomfortable feelings when learners adopt and use other English varieties in academic setting. These teachers have a less positive attitude towards varieties of Englishes (especially varieties in the outer and expanding circles). They considered these varieties to be the non-standard or incorrect form of English, implying that there is only one *correct* variety of English to be used in international communication (either the so called British English or General American). Therefore, English learners need to be taught the *correct* English varieties. This can be seen from Ken's account as follows:

There are many international teachers teaching here [in Jakarta] and they taught our students with their strange English. ...I have a student [that I tutored], he has never been abroad but he is studying in an international school. When he speaks English, he uses Singlish fluently. Then, I found out that his teacher is from Singapore.

Ken, having to learn English through the traditional grammar-translation method in the past, resists the existence of varieties of English in his local context, holding on to his belief of SE as the language to be acquired by English learners and used by English users. Ken argues that in order to achieve intelligibility in communication, one has to use SE. Ken strongly resists the adoption of English varieties for any use of English in communication and in classroom lesson.

V. Discussion

There seems to be a compartmentalized view of English for academic purpose and English for intercultural communication (especially verbal communication) purpose. The participants teaching contexts are still dominated by the monolithic and Anglocentric ideology of ELT. This ideology is well preserved through the institutions' hiring practice (hiring NSE teachers, often without having any necessary qualifications in ELT), positioning NSE teachers as the provider of correct models, use of commercial textbooks published in the inner-circle countries (with the assumption that these textbooks provide SE norms and rules), and language testing and assessment that are often only testing linguistic knowledge of one English variety, *Standard English*. Thus, learning a language is viewed as learning a *standardized* linguistic knowledge, norms, and rules.

Most participants believe that introducing variations of English will cause confusion to learners who are still learning and acquiring ,what most of the participants refer to as, *basic knowledge of English* (phonology, syntax, and lexis). Exposing learners to more than one variation of English is not a wise decision. They tend to think that it is necessary to teach and safe-guard the normative linguistic knowledge in the classroom due to the teaching and learning system and framework adopted at their schools. Although the presence of Englishes (even produced by the so called NSE teachers) is an inevitable occurrence in the classroom, the participants would redirect their learners to the SE variation. It seems that Englishes is given very little room to be allowed in the English lesson classroom.

Interestingly, in terms of English for (verbal) intercultural communication, the participants view that the norms and rules of English use are more flexible in nature. English is seen as more related to co-constructing meaning and building and maintaining relations with their interlocutors. From this perspective, as Møller & Jørgensen [9] explains, "language use is therefore intentional" (p. 143).

In explaining Englishes communication, the participant's accounts point out some features that fit Byram's framework of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). These ICC elements (in [11]) are as follows:

A. Linguistic Aspects

1) Linguistic competence (*10 participants mentioned this as one of the basic knowledge needs to be acquired in order to be able to communicate with others*);
2) Sociolinguistic competence: the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor (*c.f. Ajeng's, Joe's, Narti's, and Putut's accounts*);
3) Discourse competence: the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes (*c.f. Ajeng's, Joe's, and Rose's accounts*)

B. Cultural Aspects

1) Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (*Joe's, Rose's, Puput's and 8 others participants share the same openness about Englishes*);
2) Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction (*most participant's brings up this aspect in their description of an intelligent intercultural communicator*);
3) Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own (*Ajeng's and Joe's accounts*)
4) Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and

interaction (*Ajeng's, Joe's and 6 other participants' accounts*)

5) Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (*Ajeng's and 3 other participants' accounts*).

The participant's accounts show a shift of perspective concerning language use in communication among the participants. In the past, little attention is given to language use in communication. Instead of looking at how people use language in real time, language use is taught to follow a standardized and well-organized script. In accordance to the reality of today's communication across cultures, the narrative data depicts the need to integrate ICC into speaking skill syllabus to enable English learners to communicate across cultures intelligently and effectively.

VI. CONCLUSION

English varieties contact is a phenomenon today in which people from around the world use English as a Lingua Franca. English is no longer seen and treated as the sole property of NSE inner circle countries. However, Englishes have not yet been accepted quite well in a formal academic setting. The belief of SE as the language of education is still strongly preserved by the system and administration of the institutions. Also, teachers may not be well-equipped with a structured and grounded knowledge that could help them to make a sound and professional decision to integrate varieties of English in their practice. Thus, integrating Englishes to their teaching is still an uncharted territory of practice for most teachers in the study. So far, Englishes occurrences in the classroom have only been addressed incidentally by redirecting the learning process back to the learning and acquisition of SE. This suggests more opportunities of exploration for future studies to seek for more informative, systematic, and descriptive ways of integrating Englishes in classroom practice.

Englishes are felt to be more acceptable in communicative settings (other than formal educational setting of a classroom). In Englishes communication, variations are welcomed, tolerated, and accommodated because English is used by speakers from around the world. The focus is no longer on achieving NSE competence. Rather, these accounts suggest teaching language awareness (knowledge about language, how it works, how people learn and use it) (c.f. [12]), communication accommodation knowledge and skills, and ICC [10] for English for Intercultural Communication (EIC) purpose. Thus, these findings also suggest teachers to have additional teaching capacity: *teacher as a language*

educator of intercultural communication [13]. To support students learning of ICC, English teachers need to be intercultural speakers themselves. As Sercu points out, teachers need to acquire additional knowledge, attitudes, competencies and skills needed for teaching ICC [13]. Therefore, further exploration on studying this teaching capacity would definitely be beneficial for the field of teacher education.

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Christine Manara has been an English language educator for over 15 years in various teaching contexts, having worked in Indonesia, Australia, and Thailand. She received her PhD in TESOL from Monash University, Australia, and has published her works in national and international journals such as *ASIA TEFL, Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,* and *the International Journal of Innovation in ELT and Research*. Her research interests include teaching methodology, English as an International Language (EIL) pedagogy, the inter-relation of language, culture, and identity; teacher's professional learning and identity, and the use of literature in English Language Teaching. Her recent book publications include *Intercultural Dialogue on English Language Teaching: Multilingual Teacher educator's narrative of professional learning* (2014), *Bringing Linguistics and Literature in EFL classrooms* (2011) (co-edited with Nugrahenny Zacharias), and *Contextualizing the Pedagogy of English as an International Language: Issues and Tensions* (2013) (co-edited with Nugrahenny Zacharias).