

THE DIASPORA FEATURES OF AMERICAN-BORN INDONESIANS IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Abstract: Language phenomena can be triggered by some factors such as diaspora. Diaspora is the dispersion of ethnic groups that move to other countries for particular purposes but still have collective memories about their homeland and attempt to recreate their socio-economic, political, and cultural institutions as a form of minority survival in the host land. This study investigates the daily activities done by American-Born Indonesian in the USA related to diaspora phenomena while they lived in the USA and after they moved to Indonesia. The data were taken from interview by video call and recording audio. Additional data such as text messages were also used as supporting data. The data were analyzed by using diaspora features theory proposed by Cohen (2008) and reasons and impacts classification by Zhao (2015). The result indicates that the participants show some of their features as diaspora and the reasons and impacts of not speaking Indonesian while in the USA. The result also provides their language solution when they moved to Indonesian since they could not speak Indonesian or Javanese fluently.

Keywords: *Indonesian diaspora, cultures, diaspora features, language solutions*

INTRODUCTION

One of the causes that influence the changing or the development of language is the phenomenon of diaspora. The term diaspora means the collective dispersion of ethnic group that have collective memories about their homeland and attempt to recreate their socio-economic, political and cultural institutions of their homeland that they remember in their group society as a form of minority survival in host land (Chaliand & Rageau, 1995; Reeves & Rai,

2006). There are variant purposes of the homeland people migrate to host land. Kerswill (2006) points out that there are three major motivations of people migration: forced migration, economic and cultural factors affecting orientation to migration, and ethnolinguistic vitality and saliency. Force migration consists of migration because of war, developmental project, or environmental changes. Educational matter includes the second point since improving education is an attempt to have a better life in the economic side. While, the third point encompasses the number of speakers in an ethnic society, strength of ethnic identity and economic base, and the domains of use range. Due to the migration, people with different ethnic backgrounds, languages, and lifestyles live in other countries with the differences. Since they are the minority, they need to learn to adapt and survive in the new society, including cultural assimilation, language use, etc.

Several previous studies have been conducted regarding the phenomenon of diaspora. Bhatia & Ram (2004) and Macwan (2014) have observed acculturation experiences of diaspora in their host land. Bhatia & Ram (2004) discussed the acculturation of South Asian-American women that went dynamic, contested, and through dialogical process and negotiation. It emphasized that the acculturation was rooted from the culture, historical, and the politics of both homeland and host land. While, Macwan (2014) explored the acculturation process experienced by the immigrant characters in *The Namesake* novel. It emphasized that the acculturation process that happened to Indian diaspora in America. The result showed dilemma, negotiation, and struggle in maintaining their identity and belongings in host land. This study is conducted differently from the previous studies since it investigates the second generation of Indonesian diaspora who lived in the USA (from 2010 to 2019). This study discusses the acculturation that happened to the participants as a second generation of diaspora while living in the USA.

Fletcher (2011) and Lidskog (2016) have explored the maintaining of diaspora identity through sport and music. Fletcher (2011) discussed about how British Asian (Pakistan diaspora) maintain their identity as Pakistani yet still be part of British citizen tested by which cricket team they will support (between Pakistan and British team). The result revealed that their identities tend to be fluid, changeable and hybrid. Moreover, Lidskog (2016) explained the role of music among diaspora in the USA, UK, Europe, and Asia. The study showed that playing music associated with their homeland can develop and express their identity and recall the homeland memory to strengthen the establishment of their identity in society. However, none of those previous

studies investigate about similar situation towards the Indonesian diaspora. Hence, this study focuses on investigating specific activities associated with ethnic culture of Indonesian diaspora in the USA. Different content and context are possibly to make this study contribute a new perspective of diaspora researches.

Another related study has been conducted by Zhao (nd.) that discussed the Chinese diaspora in the US that has lost their Chinese language for several reasons. The previous study then inspires the researcher to conduct similar research to determine the participants' situation of using English more while they were in the USA. It helps the researcher to do the classification, which then is discussed further in the theoretical framework. Also, this study combines Zhao (nd.) notion with the theory of Cohen (2008) about the features of diaspora and the linguistic solution they did when they return to their homeland with the lack ability of speaking Indonesian.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Reasons and Impacts of "Not Speaking Chinese"

In her journal article, Zhao (2015) has emphasized the discussion points on why American-Born Chinese are not speaking Chinese and its impacts. There were two sub-points in reasons: language barrier in American society, and emphasis on education. The first sub point means that English is used in almost all communication languages in America since it is their first language and the major language. The daily and official languages also use English. It becomes a fear of the diaspora parents if their children cannot adapt to the language used there since English is used as a daily language and official language such as education. Another aspect is to avoid the "not competent enough" perspective. The parents must be worried that their children will get discrimination due to their language deficiency. The parents then decide to use English more than Chinese. This point relates to the second sub point of "Emphasis on education". Education is one of the important things in human life that should not be avoided. Since the education in America uses English, the students also must speak English or not follow the material subjects given by the teacher.

Due to the lack of speaking Chinese leads to the impacts of not speaking Chinese for China diaspora. The first impact is there will be a cross-generational communication such as between American-Born Chinese and their

grandparents. Their grandparents ask them in Chinese, and they only can answer it in basic Chinese. Moreover, it can cut them from the interaction with other Chinese speakers. Meanwhile, language is a historical and cultural connection. It means that they lose the ability to learn the Chinese history and possibly be labeled as "disloyalty" by other Chinese speakers. This point is related to the next point, language as a marker of race and nationality. It is important since one of Chinese characteristics is the ability to speak Chinese. It is difficult for American-Born Chinese to have a high confidence to speak Chinese bravely due to their inability to speak Chinese fluently, which also affects their identity. Things that differ between Asian and American are heterogeneity, hybridity, and diversity. The phenomenon of American-Born Chinese that lack of speaking Chinese may impact their authenticity as Chinese since language is also used as the criterion of authenticity. They can be accused as "fake Chinese" or "failed Chinese". These notions are useful for this study to investigate American-Born Indonesian that have similar situation. This study focuses on the Indonesia diaspora that "does not speak Indonesian". Since the focus is different, this study is expected to give variant perspective regarding diaspora phenomenon.

The Feature of Diaspora and Language Solutions

Cohen (2008) points out the nine features of diaspora: (1) Dispersal (they dispersed from original homeland), (2) Motivation (things that motivated them to migrate such as working, studying, etc.), (3) Memory (there is a collective memory about their homeland such as location, history, etc.), (4) Maintenance (there is a desire and willing to maintain their locality and culture), (5) Orientation (there is a desire to return homeland), (6) Solidarity (a strong ethnic group consciousness based on a sense of distinctiveness), (7) Alienation (they are not fully accepted by host land), (8) Empathy (there is a feeling of empathy or co-responsibility with ethnic members who live in different countries), and (9) Tolerance (they have a distinctive creative and tolerance for pluralism in host land). Since the participants have moved to Indonesia, there must be a way for language adaptation. It is also needed to find out the language solution they used to communicate with their Indonesian family and friends.

There are seven kinds of language solution: Lingua Franca, Koineization, Creolization and Pidginization, Language Mixing, Language Shifting, Mix Language, and Borrowing and Loanword. However, the study

about diaspora features and language solutions of Indonesian diaspora has not been conducted frequently. Moreover, the previous studies available did not provide specific discussion about diaspora features and language solutions. Also, the researcher uses Zhao (2015) theory to add more perspectives and deeper analysis about Indonesian diaspora. Thus, these theories help to fill the gaps by providing future discussion about Indonesian diaspora by answering these questions: (1) What are the diaspora features and language solutions shown by the participants when they lived in the USA and after they moved to Indonesia?; and (2) How do the participants maintain their host land culture while they lived in USA and adapt themselves after they moved to Indonesia?

METHOD

Data collection

The data were obtained from the interview of the two American-Born Indonesian participants (Javanese). They are Indonesia who were born in the USA. Both of them are siblings. They had lived in the USA for more than 5 years. They moved to Indonesia when they were 7 and 9 years old. The participant 1 was the older sister and the participant 2 was the younger sister. The participants were asked some questions related to the research purposes so that the answers were the data needed. The data used was in the form of the sentences from the interview that had been transcribed. The data were chosen based on the conformity related to their behavior and experiences as Indonesian diaspora.

The data were collected from the interview of the two participants. The researcher arranged some questions regarding with the data needed to be answered by the participants. Then, she conducted video call with the participants and recorded it. The participants were asked some questions regarding their behavior and experiences as Indonesian diaspora. Then, the researcher listened and transcribed the interview. Supporting data was also used when it was needed.

Data analysis

In the first stage, the researcher read and selected the above research-related data. Then, the researcher discovered the main words to indicate the

particular discourses in detail that emerge in the data. Next, the data consisted of diaspora phenomenon key terms were interpreted to be classified into reasons and/or impacts “not speaking Indonesian” by Zhao (2015) and the feature of diaspora and language solutions proposed by Cohen (2008). Other sources were also possible to be used for the analysis so that it added more perspectives. Finally, the researcher concluded the aims and the findings of this study.

FINDINGS

During the interview, the participants used both Indonesian and English. Therefore, the data presented in translation is when the participants answered in Indonesian. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked them to tell about their experiences when they still lived in the USA, such as how they knew about Indonesia and its culture. At first, the participants mentioned that their parents talked to them in English:

Excerpt 1:

Ayah sama mama kalo ngomong ke kita pakai Bahasa Inggris, kebanyakan pakai Bahasa Inggris. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

My dad and mom talked to us by using English, mostly in English. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

From the excerpt 1 above, it can be known that although they are Indonesian and their parents can speak Indonesian, they choose to use English mostly as daily communication. It seems that their parents are aware of the USA's situation since the major language there is English. This excerpt seems to align with Zhao's (2015) idea about the language barrier in American society. They could be pictured as "not competent" people if they are not able to speak in English fluently. Besides, the participants also mentioned that their parents were not always at home and they were taken care by a nanny:

Excerpt 2:

Mama sama ayah kerja terus, tapi ada pembantu, jadi kita mandi sendiri... pembantunya orang sini. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

Mom and dad were always working, but there is a nanny, so we took a bath ourselves... the nanny is American. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

Since their nanny is also American, their parents seemed to think that the participants should have an ability to speak English fluently rather than Indonesian or Javanese. Moreover, the communication at school also used English. It resonates Zhao (2015) about Emphasis on education is one of the

reasons why these American-Born Indonesian participants were taught mostly English rather than Indonesian. This situation impacts the language as a marker of race and nationality and the criterion of authenticity (Zhao, 2015), which emphasizes that language is an identity marker. This notion also underpins Crystal (2003) this phenomenon can be a serious threat to accelerate the extinct of minority languages while languages are the key to differ one social group from other social groups and as the evidence of linguistic distinction. In this context, the compulsion to speak English fluently makes the participants lose their national language since it considers as minority language in the USA. Moreover, English is the dominant language globally, and the power of English in its native country is stronger. Therefore, it seems that people who live there have no chance to not following the regulation. Morgan (2007) emphasizes that power relations are always entangled when certain language or identity are formalized. In addition, the excerpt 2 implicitly shows one of diaspora features “dispersal” and “motivation” (Cohen, 2008) since their parents dispersed from homeland and moved to USA for working. On the other hand, their parents still taught them a slight about Indonesian and the culture when they were in USA:

Excerpt 3:

Ayah sama mama ngajarin bahasa Indonesia tapi cuma sedikit. Contohnya makan, mandi, kayak gitu. [...] Kami pernah tanya “Bahasa Indonesianya ini apa?” tapi jarang. Seperti “ma what is the meaning of tahu? Bakso too”. Kalo nggak “ma itu apa ma?” tapi tanyanya pake Bahasa Inggris. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

My dad and mom taught us Indonesian but just a little. For example, makan (eat), mandi (take a bath), something like that. [...] We ever asked “Bahasa Indonesianya ini apa?” (What is the Indonesian of this?) but it was rare. Like “Ma, what is the meaning of tahu (tofu)? Bakso (meatball) too”. We also asked like “Ma, itu apa ma?” (Ma, what is that?) but we asked in English. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

Excerpt 4:

Mama sama ayah memperkenalkan budaya Indonesia dan Jawa kayak makanan, baju khas gitu pernah, baju daerah, makanan kayak soto, sama nasi goreng, mi goreng, nasi. Karena kebanyakan disini makan roti [...] Ayah kadang masak soto, rawon, bakso. [...] Ayah masih dengerin dangdut. Aku suka dangdut. (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

Mom and dad introduced us about Indonesian and Javanese cultures such as food, national costume. Food such as soto (yellow soup), fried rice, rawon (black soup), rice. Here (in the USA), we often ate bread. [...] My dad sometimes cooked Soto, rawon, and meatball. [...] Dad still played dangdut (at home). I like dangdut (Indonesian music). (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

In excerpt 3 and 4, it can be seen that their parents still taught and answered them whenever they asked about Indonesian. It means that they understand a little about the basic Indonesian, as the examples in the excerpts. This situation resonates Zhao (2015) that the impact of lacking speaking national language is cross-generational communication. It is shown when they moved to Indonesia. They told that they could not understand what people talked about:

Excerpt 5:

[...] whenever people talk (in Indonesian or Javanese), I can't understand what they said. [...] They tried to speak to me by using English. I didn't understand what they talked about. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

In the excerpt 5, she told about when she moved to Indonesia for the first time. She explained that she did not understand when people talked in Indonesian or Javanese since she only knew the basic Indonesian. Also, she said that the people tried to speak English to them, yet she still could understand. There is a cross-language in this situation where the participants only knew the basic Indonesian language and people who tried to talk to them only knew about the basic English, since the participants did not understand. It made their communication with them were cut at the moment (Zhao, 2015).

Furthermore, in excerpt 4, they mentioned that their parents introduced them to Indonesian and Javanese culture in few ways, such as cooking Indonesian food, teaching them about national costume, and listening to Indonesian music (*dangdut*). It shows that they still maintain the culture of their homeland even when they live far from it. This kind of maintaining is possible to be the form of missing the homeland, recalling memories of their homeland culture, introducing the culture to their children so they will not feel foreign to their homeland. Participant 2 even admitted that she liked *dangdut*. It can be classified in the diaspora features by Cohen (2008) as "memory" and "maintenance" since there is a collective memory about their homeland and the willingness to maintain their locality and culture. It also supports Sung's (2014) notion about glocal identity (blending of global and local identity). It means that the participants do the global activity such as speaking English, which is not their national or local language, but still maintain their local identity, or it can be called hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). Besides, they also mentioned that they gathered with other Indonesian people to celebrate Independence Day of Indonesia:

Excerpt 6:

Kami pernah diajak waktu acara 17 Agustus. Kami berkumpul di lapangan untuk merayakan 17 Agustus. (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

We were invited to the celebration of Indonesia Independence Day. We gathered in a yard to celebrate it. (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

The excerpt above that they were still involved in celebrating one of Indonesia national days with other Indonesian people. Besides as a diaspora feature “memory”, it is also considered as “solidarity” because it is a consciousness of the differences between native citizens and diaspora of another country (Cohen, 2008). Therefore, there is a strong sense of their ethnic group celebrating their country Independence Day. Furthermore, the participants also told the story about their school when they were still in USA:

Excerpt 7:

Kami sekolah di Islamic school. Orang-orangnya campur. Ada yang dari Arab, Amerika, Asia. [...] Gurunya ada yang dari Arab, ada yang enggak, campur - campur. (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

We studied in Islamic School. The students were mixed. There were Arabian students, American students (white people), Asian students. [...] Some of the teachers were also Arabian, some were not (other races), they were mixed. (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

Excerpt 8:

[...] We had lunch at school. We ate beans and tacos or like anything, Arabian food and something like that. [...] (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

From the excerpts above, their parents put them on Islamic school where the students were from the same homeland as them. She mentioned that there were other races of students such as Arabic, American (white people), and Asian. The students except American (white people) also can be considered as diaspora of other countries with different cultural backgrounds. The situation includes as “tolerance” in the diaspora features (Cohen, 2008). It is indicated by their openness about plurality around them. She also pointed out the menu of the food at school for lunch, such as beans, tacos, and Arabian food. Their school seems to support the tolerance among their students with different races by changing the food menu. As it is known that taco is the traditional food from Mexico. That kind of activities can increase the tolerance among them. Besides, the participants also shared their story about their struggle to learn Indonesian and Javanese when they moved to Indonesia. The researcher asked them how they finally could speak Indonesian and Javanese:

Excerpt 9:

Just practicing, my aunty taught me. She made a list in Indonesian from English. She translated it, like chicken, Ayam. (Participant 2, 25/5/2021)

Excerpt 10:

We learnt Javanese from friends and Bu Umi, my teacher at school. Like when we have assignments she will help me in, like, translated and stuff. She translated from English to Indonesian and Indonesian to Javanese. [...] They (friends) talked and then I ended up following them. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

Excerpt 9 and 10 explain how the participants learnt Indonesian and Javanese. Learning to speak Indonesian is one of the language solutions "lingua franca". In Indonesia, the Indonesian language can be considered lingua franca since Indonesian first language is mostly local language and Indonesia is a multilingual country. Yet, nowadays the majority of Indonesian people have used Indonesian (Kirkpatrick, 2010). This phenomenon is quite interesting since the participants are Indonesian, but they struggle and survive in their homeland. It seems that there is a willingness for the participants to overcome the impacts of not speaking Indonesian while they lived in the USA. There is also a consciousness for being Javanese by having desire to learn Javanese. Sung (2014) called it as local identity since there is a tendency of the participants to show their locality. It is shown by the ability of the participants to talk in Javanese when they play with friends, such as:

Excerpt 11:

Rek, ayo mlaku-mlaku, menengo, rek ayo dulinan. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

Guys, let's take a walk, be quiet, let's play. (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

In this part, learning Indonesian and Javanese seem to be an investment for the participants. Norton (2013) points out that someone's identity and investment are related. Norton (2013:6) emphasizes "Investment must be seen within a sociological framework, and seeks to make a meaningful connection between a person's desire and commitment to learn a language, and their complex and changing identity." The participants learn Indonesian and Javanese because those languages are their investment to survive in Indonesia and continue their education or even career. It is also recognized as a symbolic source for their culture. There is also identity shifted since they moved to Indonesia. They tend to be more local. Besides, it also shows the diaspora feature of orientation because of their willingness to return homeland (Cohen, 2008). Moreover, they also admitted that they still got difficulties in pronouncing the languages, especially Javanese:

Excerpt 12:

My difficulties are speaking it. Indonesian, that was not hard (pronunciation), but Javanese the pronunciation was hard, like 'nggeh' ('yes' in Javanese). (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

The difficulties can be seen when she sent messages containing the double "G" word. For example, the word "nggak" (means "no" in Indonesian and Javanese). She texted it "nga" instead of "nggak". Moreover, she used language mixing to resolve the difficulties if they felt hard to pronounce it or did not understand the meaning. She stated:

Excerpt 13:

Iya memang gitu. Sampai sekarang kalo nggak tahu maksudnya pake Bahasa Inggris. Kayak "let's go buy jajan" atau "let's beli ice cream". (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

We did that (language mixing). Until now, if we don't understand the Indonesian, we use English. Such as "let's go buy *jajan*" or "let's *beli* ice cream". (Participant 1, 25/5/2021)

Not only in the spoken form, the participant still got difficulties in when she texted in Indonesia. It can be seen when the researcher asked her about the interview schedule. The researcher asked her whether or not the participants had time to do the interview. The participant asked:

Excerpt 14:

Jam berapa need? (Participant 1, 24/5/2021)

What time do you need? (Participant 1, 24/5/2021)

From the excerpt above, it seems that the participant still gets confused about the language structure of Indonesian, how to combine the words, and makes a proper sentence. For the language solution, it can be seen that the participants tend to use lingua franca and language mix. They also seem to start learning about Indonesian and Javanese language and cultures. It is also considered as constructing identity. Norton (1997; 2000) defines identity construction as dynamic, multifaceted, and complex, and constructed across time and space. It is shown when the participants still lived in the USA and when they have moved to Indonesia. While they were in the USA, they tended to foreground their global or glocal identity. They tended to show their global identity by mostly speaking English, doing Western culture, etc., and sometimes glocal identity since they still maintained their locality while doing the global activity.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, they foreground their local identity. It also seems to be inseparable from the society condition that encourage them to learn about it. However, there is also a desire to be part of the social group. This attempt can be considered as the way they remove the labelling of "fake Indonesian" or "failed Indonesian" as what had happened in Zhao (2015) and also to rebuild and strengthen the criterion of authenticity and marker of race and nationality.

DISCUSSION

Relating to the previous studies, this study supports Bhatia & Ram (2004) and Macwan (2014) about the acculturation experienced by the diasporas. It happened to the participants while they were in the USA. There is a blend between homeland and host land culture such as they speak English but still listen to dangdut music. There is still an attempt to maintain their identity and belongings in the host land. Moreover, it is also in line with Fletcher (2011) and Lidskog (2016) about the maintaining the identity through entertainment. It is more attached to Lidskog (2016) since the focus is on music. The result pointed out that music associating with their homeland can develop and express their identity and recall the homeland memory to strengthen the establishment of their identity in the society. In addition, it confirms Zhao (2015) about some points of the reasons and impacts of "Not Speaking Chinese".

Nevertheless, none of those previous studies investigates about Indonesian diaspora. The context and situation are also different since this study provides two situations, diaspora's life in USA and Indonesia. Using Cohen (2008) and Zhao (2015) seems to be the nuance of this study since it is not provided in the previous studies. This study also presents other perspectives such as identity theory by Norton (1997) and identity classification by Sung (2014). It aims to broaden the connection of the result to enrich the perspective about diaspora phenomenon. However, due to the limited time and data, this study cannot provide the complete classification of the reasons and impacts of not speaking Indonesian and the feature of diaspora and language solutions. Thus, similar studies are worth conducting to find out more complete classification that can contribute more about diaspora phenomena.

CONCLUSIONS

This study showed the reason and impact of not speaking Indonesian and the diaspora features and language solution experienced by two American-Born Indonesian (Indonesia diaspora) while they were in the USA and moved to Indonesia. Their reasons are the language barrier in American society and emphasis on education with the impacts of cross-generational communication,

language as a marker of race and nationality, and the criterion of authenticity. Moreover, the diaspora features proposed by Cohen (2008) found in the study include dispersal, motivation, memory, maintenance, orientation, solidarity, and tolerance. Besides, the participants use the language solutions of lingua franca and language mixing when they have moved to Indonesia. The results of this study seem to support the previous studies that discuss acculturation and how they maintain their identity through entertainment (music). Also, it underpins Zhao (2015) classification about the reasons and impacts of "Not Speaking Chinese".

SUGGESTIONS

This study has a big potential to be developed since the classification cannot be found completely. The impact of historical and cultural connection is not available in the result of this study. It also does not provide a complete diaspora features (Cohen, 2008) and language solutions. Also, diaspora research is considered as minor research to be investigated in Indonesia. Meanwhile, many diaspora phenomena can be found in Indonesia, especially its language phenomena. Hence, this study is worth expanding by linguists interested in and going to conduct similar research. The next researchers could involve other participants with different situation since this study could not be applied in general. It is helpful to improve the results and upgrade the previous research to contribute new insights and enrich the research related to diaspora phenomena.

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