

Emotional Geographies of An EFL Teacher in Asmat, Papua: Male Perspective

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Abstract

Teaching is not only about knowledge, cognition, and skill but also emotional relationships among the students, colleagues, and parents. Particularly for teaching English in rural areas in Indonesia, there are several challenges that should be handled: geographical feature of these area, their culture and the way of life, the quality of both students and teachers, and so on. This research paper investigates teacher emotions experienced by a male EFL teacher in one of rural areas while dealing with those challenges. Teacher emotions are one of significant aspect that could not be left behind in teaching and learning activity. This research will explore comprehensively the distance and closeness felt by the teacher while teaching English there. This qualitative research was conducted using a narrative case study approach. The data were collected from the participant's journal and interview. Referring to Hargreaves framework, the findings reveal 5 emotional geographies of the participant. This research contributes to Indonesian government as the one that concerns in 3T areas, EFL teachers who must handle complex situations while teaching, and other researchers who are interested in conducting emotional geographic research.

Subject Areas

Emotional Geographies

Keywords

Culture, Emotional Geographies, EFL Teacher, Rural Area, Teacher Emotion

1. Introduction

Teaching English in foreign language context particularly in Indonesia has gain some attentions. Several researches have been conducted related to teaching method and approach, book and other supporting material, teacher, student, curriculum, and so on. Those are associated with cognitive aspect of teaching and learning process. In other hand, affective aspect of teaching and learning has not been explored yet. Many research tends to focus on cognitive one meanwhile the affective aspect also plays significant part here. Particularly in EFL context, research on affective aspect focuses on foreign language anxiety. There is limited research on teacher emotion, for example, although it is important in the teaching and learning process.

Inevitably emotions emerge in the classroom activities as encountered by teachers while they are conducting the lesson. It is in line with Hargreaves's opinion mentioning

that teaching, learning, and leading are irretrievably emotional in character whether it is in good or bad way, by design or default (2000, p. 812). Whether it is intentionally or unintentionally, teacher emotions do exist in the classroom and they influence the teaching process.

This emotional practice can be seen obviously when teachers feels angry, joy, proud, disappointed and so on. Those feelings are not seen as an individual issue but rather integrated to the interaction, organization, social, and cultural contexts in which those emotions emerge (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 507). Here teacher emotions are not regarded as their sin but a complex process involving several aspects outside the teachers. Therefore it is essential to approach teacher emotions properly as the existence of emotions in the classroom may advantage or disadvantage the teaching and learning process. It will result a good or bad process depending on how these feelings are addressed.

Therefore, this research is attempting to investigate emotions experienced by a male EFL teacher who had taught in Asmat, one of rural area in Indonesia. These emotions are analyzed through emotional geographic framework proposed by Hargreaves. It is expected that this research will have contribution in promoting emotional understanding among school parties since the existence of emotions in the school context is influenced by other people; it is not merely about individual problem.

2. Literature Review

Education Most study about teacher emotions in EFL context have been done under the term language anxiety. Some studies explained about how anxiety can hinder student progress (Aida, 1994; Burden, 2004; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1987; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986 as cited by Cowie, 2011). In this study, Cowie also cited some studies for instance Bress (2006) who identified the main sources of stress among EFL teachers and Stanley (1999) who found that fear, judgement, and resistance kept the EFL teachers from engaging with the analytical process of reflection. Those studies address emotions in a specific way meanwhile there are several negative and positive emotions encountered by the teachers. Emotional geography here presents as extensive approach in addressing teacher emotions in EFL background.

Research on emotional geographies particularly in EFL background, however, is still limited on certain subject. Cowie (2011) investigated emotions of EFL teachers in Japan. These teachers did not come from Japan. To survive teaching, there, they encountered some emotional misunderstandings and should manage them well. This study emphasized on different sociocultural background as the main source of teacher emotions. The other research is from Yongcang Liu (2016) who reported a narrative study of immigrant teacher in England. The researcher took a participant from China and due to some circumstances should teach English in England. The emotional understandings and misunderstandings encountered by participant related to the teacher professional community in there are presented comprehensively. Both researchers tried to find out emotions experienced by teachers who should teach in foreign country meaning that they were challenged emotionally by different culture and working condition.

As suggested by Cowie (2011) that emotions may be especially prominent for language teachers living in a foreign country since they engage varied emotional challenges because of some changes in their work environment. These changes are mostly caused by different culture of two nations. Yet the challenge also comes from local context. It arises when EFL teachers in Indonesia should teach in rural areas in this country. Although it is in local context, the teachers still experience different culture as there are a lot of tribes with their culture living in Indonesia. They should deal with students, parents, and colleagues having different culture. Moreover, physical geography of these areas also gives some burdens for the teachers. They are in remote areas which have limited facilities and rough terrain.

In Indonesia, the emotions of the teachers are challenges by physical geography and different culture as well. Moreover, culture also influences the way man express their emotions. It is in line with Hargreaves' opinion (2000) that the ways teachers experience and express their emotions vary according to their gender, ethnocultural identity, and the stage of life and career. According to this opinion, the way male and female teacher express and encounter their emotions are different. This research is a part of my larger research about teacher emotions viewed from gender perspective. In this case, the researcher emphasizes on male perspective in seeing teacher emotions. It will present emotions of a male EFL teacher having experience teaching in one of rural area in Indonesia. The causes of teacher emotions based on male preposition will be illustrated in the findings of this research.

3. Method

A narrative case study was used in this research to investigate emotions experienced by the participant. Narrative was applied here in order narrate past events of the participant and it would be comprehensively investigate through case study. The participant of this research was a male English teacher called Pii (pseudonym) who had taught in Asmat, one of rural areas in Indonesia. He is from Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. After graduated from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia in 2014, he did some freelance jobs as translator. Then, he participated in a government program concerned with education in rural areas in Indonesia called SM-3T (graduate teaching in frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped areas or it is known as sarjana mengajar di daerah terdepan, terluar dan tertinggal) in 2015. Joining SM-3T program, Pii was assigned to teach English in Asmat, Papua. Asmat is one of regencies in Timika, Papua in which there were several villages connected by river in this regency. He was assigned to teach in one of places in that regency. At that time, he taught English for a year in a primary school there. This research will explore his emotion while teaching English in this school.

The data of this research were events and stories told by the participant while he was teaching there. They were obtained through participant' journals and interview. The participant narrated his emotional challenges while teaching English in Papua. He wrote a story of how he experienced living and teaching in different ethnic that holds different

culture and indeed thought. Moreover, he also explained the challenges of geographical feature in that place which is completely not easy. The researcher collected this journal and started to identify the story. Then she reorganized the story in the form of summary. After that it was coded with Hargreaves's emotional geographic framework and labeled as physical, moral, sociocultural, professional, and political geographies. Based on this, the researcher designed the interview. It is conducted to get more detail explanation related to the emotions emerged. The combination of journal and interview provided more comprehensive data for this research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Research Hargreaves proposed 5 terms in emotional geography as a framework to analyze teacher emotions. The findings of this research presented three of them; physical, sociocultural, and professional. Those classifications were presented more detail in the following explanation below.

Physical geography

Compared to other regions in Indonesia, Asmat, Papua was well known as one of the regions having distinctive features such as the culture, the people, and the physical geography. This region was classified as rural area by the government regarding the fact that it was still under-developed. Pii also realized these certain features as he had some imagination of his working place. He thought that it was wild and remote. It would take for days walking in a vast tropical forest to reach the village he would teach. He understood that this place would not be easy and rough. However, his imagination was not completely true. Arrived in Asmat, he saw and experienced by himself that physical geography of Asmat was quite different from what he expected before. He described the place as follows.

Kampung-kampung di Asmat sulit dijangkau karena kampung-kampung di Asmat itu seperti pulau-pulau yang dipisahkan oleh sungai-sungai yang lebarnya bisa berkali-kali lipat lapangan sepakbola. Jadi, satu-satunya moda transportasi ke kampung-kampung, yah, hanya dengan transportasi air saja, seperti speedboat, perahu fiber, dan sebagainya. (It was difficult to reach villages in Asmat because they like islands separated by rivers which many times wider than a football field. So, the only means of transportation there was water transportation such as boat, fiber boat, and so on.)

Quite different from his expectation, Asmat was a regency consisted of several villages connected by river which was very wide. The people lived and did daily activities in the villages although sometimes they went to the forest for food gathering. The school in which Pii taught also situated in the village. So, it was easy to go to school for him.

The difficult part came up when he had to travel to this village from his place in Toraja, South Sulawesi. To reach Asmat, he had to deal with some transportation. First, he needed to go to Makassar. It took about 8 hours taking bus. Second, he went to Timika and it took two and a half hours using plane. Third, he shipped to Asmat and it was around 12

hours. According to him, the most tiring of his trip was the third one when he took a ship to go to Asmat. It was his first trip going somewhere using a ship and he shocked. He explained, "*Kita harus desak-desakaan naiknya sama nyari tempat. Kalau telat dan penumpang banyak, berarti nggak dapat tempat* (We had in a rush going to the ship. If there were many passengers and we were late, we would not get a seat)". He was boring taking this ship in a long duration since he just slept, read, and talked with others. It was also annoying because the schedule of the ship was uncertain. Moreover, it was also not safe travelling on the ship alone. According to him, he was afraid that his belongings would be taken if he was careless. The condition was even worse since some of passengers were drunk in the ship. It was so unpleasant for him.

The other thing that worried him was about the transportation across the villages in Asmat. If people wanted to go to other villages, boat was the only way to do that. It means that water transportation was needed to go from one village to another one. It was something new for him that he was much dependent on water transportation for daily activities. He was fine with this kind of transportation, however it turned out to be very difficult later. The problem came out since only some people had this boat meanwhile all people there were dependent on this.

Jadi, apabila kita ingin ke ibukota kabupaten misalnya, kita harus mencari-cari transportasi sehari-hari sebelum hari-H. Kita harus tanya kesana kemari untuk mendapatkan transportasi yang tujuannya sama dengan kita. Jadi, istilahnya kita 'ne-beng' di perahunya orang. Jadi, tak jarang kalau ada kegiatan di ibukota kabupaten, misalnya, kita sudah sehari-hari tiba, setelah menumpang di perahu orang, karena khawatir tak ada transportasi lagi kalau sudah hari-H nya. Dan begitu pun sebaliknya ketika kembali ke tempat tugas lagi. (For example, if we wanted to go to the district, we had to search for the transportation days before the date. We had to go around and asked the people (who have boat) whether they would go to the same destination as us or not. In other words, we hitchhiked on their boat. So it was common for us, if there were events in which we had to come to the district, we already arrived there days before the date. It was caused by a worry that there would be no transportation that could be used at the date. It went the same when we came back to the village.)

In that place, many people needed boat as their transportation meanwhile the availability of it was not sufficient. The number of the boat is not proportional to the number of passengers. So, they had to prepare it well if they wanted to go somewhere. Instead mostly they could not do that. Pii added that it would be so inconvenience if we had something urgent to be done and there was no boat that can be used.

Sociocultural geography

Teaching English in Asmat particularly in primary school did not sound easy for Pii. He was nervous at the first time coming to the class. He said that he did not have any experience teaching primary school students. Also, he did not familiar with the students' character and what material that was suitable for them. He used to think that it was not that

hard to be a good teacher. According to him, being passionate about teaching his students was the key to be a qualified teacher. Unfortunately, it was not as what he thought. He needed more than passion in teaching here. However, he tried hard to deal with that inconvenient.

One of problems that came up there was the students' disruptive behavior. He explained that it was common for them to fight in the class. They also did not want to work and befriend with other students in that class. Related to this phenomenon, Pii guessed the causes as follow.

Ada beberapa perilaku siswa yang cukup mengganggu di kelas: mereka saling memukul, sering kali ribut di dalam kelas, dan mereka seperti terbagi dalam dua kubu berdasarkan dari mana asal daerahnya. Di sekolah saya siswa berasal dari 2 desa yang berbeda dan biasanya ada ketegangan antara penduduk dua desa tersebut. Mungkin inilah mengapa ada beberapa siswa yang tidak mau bekerja sama dengan siswa lain yang berasal dari daerah yang berbeda. (I found some disruptive behaviors in my class: students punched each other, they created much unnecessary noise, and the students had cliques based on which village they are from. In my school students came from two different villages and there was usually some tensions between the two villages. This was probably why some students from one village didn't want to work with those from the other village).

The student's background or in this case the village they come from, based on his explanation, played significant role in the emergence of tension between the students. They came from different village although all of them belong to Asmat. Their villages were not far. It was just separated by a river. However, this such thing created a difference that mattered for them. This difference created a tension that hindered the learning process. They did want to cooperate with their classmates and even punched the others. Pii was aware of this problem. He said, ***"The case was challenging because it seemed I couldn't make them to work in harmony."*** Having this problem in his class, he tried to find a solution.

Saya menemukan sebuah cara untuk mengatasi persoalan ini ketika saya minta mereka membawa bekal sarapan ke sekolah setiap minggunya, hari itu disebut Rabu Berbagi. Pada hari tersebut kami akan sarapan sama-sama dan makanan yang kami bawa harus dibagi dengan yang lain. Awalnya beberapa siswa tidak mau melakukannya, tetapi akhirnya mereka melakukannya juga. Hal ini, dalam beberapa hal, menyelesaikan problem di kelas saya, yaitu ketika mereka tidak mau bekerja sama dengan siswa dari desa lain. (I did find some solution to it when I asked them to bring their breakfast to school once every week, a day that we called, "Rabu Bagi", or "Sharing Wednesday" in English. In this day, we would have breakfast together and what we had for breakfast had to be shared with others. At first, some students didn't want to share their breakfast, but eventually they would. This, to some degree, resolved issue I had in class, in terms of students not wanting to work with their

peers from another village).

As stated by Pii, at the first time the students were reluctant to share their food. However, they eventually did that since this was an obligatory program in their school. From this experience sometimes, those who are in charge need to make or do something to fix the problem. It worked for this case. After that the classroom situation in his class was getting better. The students were not really fragmented by their background and it was good for teaching and learning activities.

Professional geography

Pii was a new comer in that school. He was just sent to that school due to SM-3T program and indeed it was his first time living and teaching in one of villages in Asmat. He was from other province and it was possible that he felt different in this new situation since he interacted with new people having different value and culture.

As a new comer, Pii was trying to make a good relationship with his colleagues by doing his job well. However, he felt not good about the situation there. In that school he found some teachers who were not fully committed to their line of works and took time to disapprove many things that he found good. He explained the situation below.

Terkadang kesal juga menghadapi oknum guru yang menurut saya jauh dari pandangan saya bagaimana seorang guru harus bertindak. Misalnya saja ada masalah, sejauh yang saya lihat, mereka hanya bisa menyalahkan orang lain dan tak bisa mengintrospeksi diri sendiri. Tugas yang diberikan biasanya tak dikerjakan dengan baik. Awal-awalnya saja berjalan lalu satu atau dua bulan kemudian, sudah dilupakan. Mereka juga nampaknya tak mau berusaha lebih untuk mencari jalan keluar dari masalah yang dihadapi. (Sometimes it was annoying dealing with some teachers, in my opinion, who did not do something they supposed to do. For example, they tended to blame the others instead of looking at themselves when they had problems. They usually also did not do their duties well. It was only at the beginning that they did the work. One or two months later, they forgot all of them. Moreover, it seemed that they did nothing more to find the solution of their problems.)

This situation made him feel not comfortable working with other teachers. Between him and his colleagues were different value of being a good teacher. They did not agree on how to act professionally. Pii argued that the teachers should do something when having problems but his colleagues had different point of view. Instead of finding the solution, they liked to blame other people. This condition created such a bad atmosphere for teacher's relationships. Pii, as a new teacher there, were not sure what should he do in such situations.

Setiap kali mereka menjelek-jelekkan guru lain di sekolah, saya hanya diam. Saya khawatir kalau langsung berkonfrontasi dengan mereka malah akan membuat keadaan semakin buruk dan ini akan merusak hubungan saya dengan mereka baik di dalam maupun di luar sekolah. Saya sudah melihat banyak hal terjadi, akan tetapi hal seperti ini belum pernah terjadi pada saya sebelumnya hingga saya bekerja di sekolah ini dan berhubungan dengan mereka. (Every time they badmouthed others

in school, I only took my silence. I was worried that confronting them would only make things worse, and it would hurt my relationship with them, in and outside the school. Sure, I had seen these things happened, but it had never occurred to me, personally, until I worked with the particular teachers.)

Pii just kept silent when he had different opinion with other teachers. He did not want to ruin the relationships between him and the teachers. So he just let them do whatever they wanted to do including badmouthing the others. He wanted to go extra miles to help the students. Yet, his colleagues seemed not okay with that. Even his colleagues accused those who built a good relationship with the villagers as merely ingratiating them. Pii said that it felt like they were insulted when some people want to work hard and do good things. It was becoming more irritating for him that he talked less and less to them and avoided them.

4.2. Discussion

This research is trying to investigate teacher emotions of EFL teacher in rural areas in Indonesia. The findings showed that the male teacher who taught in this area experienced several emotions. These emotions were afraid, annoyed, challenged, bored, worried, and so on. They came up and the teacher felt them clearly. These feelings are not a matter of private individual anymore since something outside the individual gives significant influence on these emotions. In other words, these emotions are caused and influenced by something external for instance students, parents, and other colleagues. In regard with the findings of this research, the teacher felt worried when he was at the ship because it was possible that someone steals his belonging. In other occasion he felt challenged by the situation in which the students in his class seemed separated into two groups. In addition, he also felt annoyed because the teachers there did not do what they supposed to do. All of emotions presented here are not a matter of the male EFL teacher only but it is rather caused by his environment. The emotions exist in interactions and relationships rather than as individual experiences (Hargreaves, 2000). This result is also in line with opinion that seeing emotions as a social experience (Harre, 1986; Lutz, 1988; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990; Lynch, 1990 in Zembylas 2007).

According to Hargreaves (2000, 2001, 2005) there are 5 dimensions that caused teacher emotions: physical, moral, professional, sociocultural, and political. It means that the emergence of those emotions is influenced by those five causes. Meanwhile Cowie (2011) emphasized that the study of teacher emotions is necessary for language teachers living in a foreign country since they encounter some differences related to culture, social, and linguistic. This research supports Cowie's argument mentioning that those differences contribute to the emotions experienced by the teacher. However, this research emphasizes that the physical geography of the place where the teacher is working also significantly determines the teacher emotions. Particularly in Indonesia which is famous for its varied culture and its archipelago, physical geography of rural area here is very important because it significantly contribute to the emotions encountered by the teacher.

The teacher feelings are much influence by this geography.

5. Conclusion

This research aims at investigating emotions experienced by a male EFL teacher having experience in teaching in one of rural areas in Indonesia. In regard with Hargreaves' framework, it presents three emotional geographies namely physical, sociocultural, and professional geography. In physical geography, the teacher felt worried because it was not safe taking ship to Asmat. He also said that the transportation in that place made him inconvenience. Related to sociocultural geography, the social background of the students caused some troubles in the classroom. However, he was challenged to solve this problem or at least reduce the tension between the students. In professional geography, he felt worried and powerless dealing with the teachers who do not have the same value in education as him. However, the findings of this study only explore one participant representing male perspective. It is recommended that further research related to gender perspective in emotional geography will be conducted. More female teachers and more male teachers are needed to conduct this research so comprehensively that it will completely represent gender.

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