

The Realities and the Classroom

According to Kumaravadivelu (2008), “cultural realism is the notion that any meaningful cultural growth in this globalized and globalizing world is possible only if individuals, communities, and nations adopt a pragmatic approach to identity formation that entails a true understanding of the competing forces of global, national, social, and individual realities, and make a genuine attempt to translate that understanding into actionable plans.” I think cultural realism presents that cultural identity is influenced by various forces (global, national and social and individual realities) which are connected in a complex way in the contemporary world. According to the identity development, I think cultural realism accepts that the cultural identity is not static but dynamic. Cultural transformation will occur when individuals can understand and identify what is good or bad between one’s culture and other cultures. Therefore, individuals will make their own decisions in transforming and negotiating their identities based on their self-reflection and beliefs. When personal realities are reshaped, other realities (global, national and social realities) are affected because these realities are connected directly and indirectly.

Similarly to European Union (EU) by Kumaravadivelu (2008), Asean Economic Community (AEC) is another entity which aims to promote “politico-economic unification”. With the Internet, people in the countries which are the members of AEC have opportunities to learn and understand other cultures, languages, religions and politics in order to do businesses and adapt themselves into the broader environment. About the national reality, some Thai people opposed in joining AEC because they thought that the flow of immigrant and tribe people would increase unemployment rates in Thailand and also affect local cultures. To make a pragmatic choice based on global realities, my friend, for example, has identified herself as a bilingual programmer to be accepted in the globalized world.

There are two things that I will do in the classroom to help my ELLs become aware of the global, national and social and individual realities which influence their identity development. Firstly, I will ask the students to identify the similarities and differences between American cultures and their cultures in several aspects from simple (easy) issues such as greeting and dress to complicated (difficult) issues such as politics and religions. After the students finish their own work, I will ask the students who share similar cultures from the same countries to be in the same group. Each group will share and discuss about their findings, and then each group will share their opinions to the rest of the class. As a teacher, I am going to share and discuss the differences and similarities between American cultures and my cultures (Thai cultures) to the ELLs in my class. I think the more the students learn and understand other cultures besides their own cultures, the better they will become aware of the realities. Secondly, I will use online materials such as online news or articles which present cultural lives on global issues in order to allow my students to gain knowledge about American cultures and other cultures, expand their perspectives, and know how to deal with challenges occurring due to forces. I think these two

methods will foster the cultural consciousness in my students.