

“Rumah Bahasa Surabaya” and “Mosaic” of ASEAN Socio-cultural Pillar

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Abstract— My paper aims to describe how Surabaya facilitates to strengthen ASEAN socio-cultural pillar through her special program called “Rumah Bahasa” (Language House) that has been designed for Surabaya populace preparedness to develop a new identity into a larger ASEAN Community. Language skill is a necessity to enable people interact a superblock as ASEAN community. Surabaya City Government is preparing herself to welcome ASEAN community that comes into effect at the end of this year. As the second largest city in Indonesia, Surabaya has a vital role to strengthen ASEAN socio-cultural pillar through programs. One of her notable program is by establishing “Rumah Bahasa”, a free language training for ordinary people. This program is a breakthrough since Surabaya can be an indicator of Indonesia’s preparedness to a competition and cooperation within ASEAN. Surabaya also is a home of about three million people with large differences, that has a potency to contributing the successful of the implementation of ASEAN Community. “Rumah Bahasa” facilitates the meeting of different people with different background. Language training provides opportunity, not only for meeting and gathering for Surabaya’s citizens, but it is also a “meeting point” that helps Surabaya to form itself to become a centre of activities as well as to form a metropolitan behaviour among its populace.

Keywords— Rumah Bahasa Surabaya, cultural mosaic, ASEAN socio-cultural pillar, metropolitan behavior, cosmopolitan city.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this paper is to describe how Rumah Bahasa Surabaya (RBS) that symbolize the transformation of Surabaya to become not just a metropolitan city, but a cosmopolitan one. RBS is designed to prepare Surabaya to welcome ASEAN Community. RBS is a free-of-charge language training provided by the Surabaya City Government. By observing one of ASEAN Community’s pillars¹, which is socio-cultural pillar, I use RBS as an example of creation of sense of identity and belonging among populace, and a cultural practices of urban cosmopolitanism.

RBS is located in Surabaya, the capital of East Java province. It is a center of business, commerce, industry, and education in East Java and eastern Indonesia. It is located in 796 km east of Jakarta, or 415 km northwest of Denpasar, Bali. Surabaya has an area of about 333.063 km² with a population amounted to 2,909,257 inhabitants in 2015. Surabaya also known as City of Heroes due to its patriotic history of the so-called ‘Arek-Arek Suroboyo’ (Surabaya people) in fighting the nation from foreign invaders. Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia is a home of more than three million people who come from different places around the city as well as overseas. Surabaya residents who come from various places, and diverse activities of its citizens marks Surabaya a metropolitan, cosmopolitan city.

RBS was initiated by the Mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini. Other than language training, RBS also provides IT training and business information. It runs by the local government, open, free of charge, and involving many parties including, universities and foreign representatives. Since it has been established in February 2014, RBS provides trainings for eight different languages: English, Mandarin, German, French, Japan, Korea, India and Thai, with some of them are native speakers as voluntary trainers. Among them, English, Mandarin and French are the most popular.

Surabaya is the most accommodative city to respond to the citizens’ need in learning foreign languages. To begin with, there were three foreign languages are taught in RBS, namely English, Mandarin, and Thai. According to the statistics, 60.74% of the total exports of Surabaya devoted to Asian countries, which comprise 17.36% of them to the ASEAN countries, and 70.2% of total imports came from ASEAN countries (www.surabaya.go.id). Business activities among ASEAN countries grows exponentially in recent years. This positive development gives positive signs for business people. Mandarin is perhaps the chief beneficiary of today’s people mind-set. Demand for learning mandarin has been mounted. The growth of Mandarin teaching in Surabaya over the last decade has been amazing, driven by China’s entry into the world economy.

Surabaya City Government provides some free trainings to all levels of society, including taxi, bus, *becak* (three wheel pedals), minibus drivers, tourist providers, SMEs, street vendors, and some elements of Surabaya and surrounding communities ([rumah bahasa, http://www.surabaya.go.id/dinamis/?id=5261](http://www.surabaya.go.id/dinamis/?id=5261)). Free training in RBS intended to attract people who need to improve language skills before Indonesia is entering the ASEAN Community.

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¹ ASEAN Community has three pillars: ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

Data from the Surabaya City Government Cooperation Division, on average, there have been about 1,900 people participate in each month and 13,853 participants during this year. (Riski, 2015).

<http://www.voaindonesia.com/content/hadapi-afta-2015-pemkot-surabaya-buka-kursus-bahasa-gratis/1894427.html>). RBS is more widely used by those working in private service providers. Several malls and hotels, for example, have been sending employees such as security guards, parking team, janitor and information officer. In addition, nurses association also sends about 80 nurses from different hospitals in Surabaya. School and university students from various universities around the city are also active participants. However, businessmen from SMEs who became one of the important target of language training, they do not actively involve and taking opportunity from RBS. Businessmen need to improve foreign language skill so that they can market their products and compete internationally (Riski, 2015). <http://www.voaindonesia.com/content/hadapi-afta-2015-pemkot-surabaya-buka-kursus-bahasa-gratis/1894427.html>).

It is true that many businesses will rely on the help of translators, but having able to speak in different language is an investment that would lead to stronger relationships with foreign clients. As Jolin (2014) puts it, some foreign companies will only consider those who have a second language. Being able to communicate with a native speaker means business is done faster and more efficiently. By offering language skills for SMEs, it is expected that they could find their client base growing more easily. In the business world, culture guides decision-making, behavior, thinking patterns and values. Having language skills it is not just about the ease of communication, knowing a language also means understanding a culture. Culture influences greatly on how people interact. Cultural sensitivity can play an important role on the personal level. Being sensitive to cultural considerations is also essential to selling products in other countries (Kaput, nd).

II. CULTURAL MOSAIC

Building ASEAN as a community means creating a collective identity. The concept of collective identity has However, since the ASEAN agreed to establish the ASEAN Community by the slogan "one vision, one identity, one community", then identity becomes an important issue for ASEAN. In addition, most of the discussion on regional integration pay attention to observing material issues such as economic benefits, while the non-material elements often if not absent, difficult to be realized. Identity in this context is a set of results from the norms, culture, values and social construction of these factors. Advocate of constructivist, Peter Katzenstein (2002), stating that changing the identity impacts on changing behavior. In searching of a new identity, ASEAN has reconstructed by reinventing itself through the launch of new initiatives designed to prove that ASEAN is still there and shows flexibility as a regional organization. ASEAN evolution of a preventive diplomacy based organization into a community, giving birth ASEAN as an institution with a new identity. ASEAN will determine the evolution of ASEAN's behavior in the days to come. The changes of behavior of a

regional organization very much depends on the change of behavior of the people within. Identity change bears many problems institutionally, nationally and individually, in particular when it comes to a cross border circumstances. People needs to adjust to a new environment. Greater people to people contact within the organization would help them to get acquaintance each other. As Alexander Wendt (2004, 289) puts it, the behavior of a person is useful to explain the behavior of a state although "States are not *really* persons, only '*as if*' ones." Hence a person's behaviour can be used as analogy or metaphor of something.

The ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint mentions that this pillar aims to

"contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced". (www.asean.org)

The Blueprint is the foundation for the Surabaya City Government to materialize and take a real action by establishment of RBS. RBS is a meeting point; Its dynamics reflect how differences are managed and facilitates people-to-people connectivity, which is one of important ingredients of socio-cultural aspects of ASEAN Community. RB is giving way of "mosaic" metaphors, mixtures of various ingredients that keep their individual characteristics. Surabaya and her populace transform to become a cultural mosaic. Cultural mosaic if forged from intensive, peaceful interaction based on awareness on their differences. As Chao and Moon (2005, 1) suggest, "a cultural mosaic² is presented as a framework to identify demographic, geographic, and associative features underlying culture". As a big city, Surabaya has a unique collage of multiple cultural identities resulted a complex picture of the cultural influences.

The role of Surabaya in developing a socio-cultural aspect within ASEAN community is driven by the awareness of her populace about the importance of being an integral part of ASEAN citizen. It is true that many segment of her society are unaware of the existence of this regional organization, but a sense of collective awareness has been strengthened in the other segment of the populace, particularly among middle-class population. The Surabaya City Government has conducted many efforts to introduce ASEAN Community to her populace. This measures help to improve awareness that Surabaya and her populace will be soon being an integral part of a huge "ASEAN family". By this way RBS plays a role as

² The term cultural mosaic is employed by Chao and moon (2005) as "a metaphoric conceptualization of multiple indicators of cultures used to describe an individual. A taxonomy is presented that redefines the usual ethnic interpretation of culture to include associative, demographic, and geographic factors". Although their analysis lies in individual level, I employ cultural mosaic in a higher level whereby similar to individu, I identify Surabaya as a city with a single entity.

an identity formation to larger ASEAN Community with its own way. This identity formation is hardly taking place without the active role of the state. State herself holds many reasons to become a primary facilitator to make this things taking place. Surabaya transforms herself into a massive development since Mayor Tri Rismaharini³ in power in 2010.

Following the logic of globalization, the state is increasingly forced to react to new, often external, forces. These forces encourage Surabaya to be Southeast Asia's most successful cities, showing by her achievements. According to Portabella (2010),

“A big city only can be so in a sustainable and sustained manner over time if it manages to deepen into its own soul and project it all over the world while taking over other identities and assimilating them. Cities creating a strong dynamic link between their own personality and internationalization develop solidly and consistently over time, with a significant economic result.”

Using an analogy of Barcelona's Catalan identity (Portabella 2010), Surabaya transforms herself to become a unique, intrinsic cosmopolitanism place. Surabaya's strong personality and identity give her not just a economic value added but also a socio-cultural icon, a successful city branding creation by setting her own values and lifestyle. Good governance practices also gives herself an essential way to a modern, hospitable city among other big cities in Indonesia. Surabaya can also proud herself with good reputation as a consolidated city that can be a hub for creating and facilitating ASEAN socio-cultural pillar. Contrary to the one theories of globalization about the widespread tendency that globalization necessarily implied cultural homogenization, cultural practices in Surabaya does not follow this logic. Surabaya experience cultural divergent and vibrant urban life. In this matter, RBS encourages the celebration of differences that have been shown by people involved. Being a cosmopolite, according to Hannerz (2006, 6), is “an intellectual and esthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, and an ability to make one's way into other cultures”.

The attitude of Surabaya populace and her city government to be a part of a larger ASEAN Community is relevant to cosmopolitan behavior. The dynamics of activities to welcome the 'new era' are reflected in their awareness, which is become an essential part of constructing a new identity. As a modern city, Surabaya mobilizes a notion of cosmopolitanism; hence Surabaya deserves to be called as 'cosmopolitan city'.

³ The Mayor of Surabaya was crowned the third best mayor of the world by the World Mayor, which is an international nonprofit organization that encourages the creation of good governance. Among many achievement by the mayor are: Best City of the Asia-Pacific region in 2012 Citynet version; 2. Sustainable City Award ASEAN, enviromentally Award 2012; 3. Mominee of 10 most inspiring women in 2013 by Forbes Magazine in 2013; 4. The two award categories in the event of the Asia-Pacific FutureGov Award 2013, the data center through the Surabaya City Government Data Center and Data Inclusion through Broadband Learning Center (BLC). Get rid of the 800 cities in the Asia Pacific region; 5. Parks Bungkul awarded in 2013. The Asian townscape Award from the United Nations. Risma awarded the Mayor of the Month as the best mayor in February 2014; Awarded Socrates Future City Award category of the European Business Assembly (EBA) in April 2014. (Radar Surabaya 2015)

Cosmopolitanism⁴ is understood as implying a particular stance towards difference in the world, one that involves an openness to, and tolerance of, diversity (Young, Diep, and Drabble 2005, 1). The attribute as cosmopolitan city, other than marks her new identity, it can be instrumental as a part of her efforts to market herself and to define particular development paths.

The vibrant of culture among the Surabaya populace has made the city possess a social capital and cultural capital that enables the city to become a pleasant home of people from different background. Social capital as Bourdieu (1986) puts it, is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” Whereas cultural capital, is forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society. Social and cultural capital are interlinked to form a certain identity to a given city. Hence, there is an interconnection between area and humans. The concept of 'identity' refers primarily to the identity of people living in the city environment. Identity of the city bears on the identity of those living in it, and *vice versa*: the urban environment reflects human needs and values (Haapala, nd).

III. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the establishment of RBS is to improve people's ability to speak different language other than their own so that people could easily communicate with foreigners, especially when they doing business. This measure was taken by the Surabaya City government as an effort to prepare Surabaya and her populace entering ASEAN Community. Thus the ability to speak foreign language is seen as crucial to success in a globalized economy. However, suggesting learning languages based on business purposes is rather flawed, since learning a language is for life, not just for business and commercial gains, or other practical benefits. Learning language is a necessity for a cross cultural understanding among people of different background. Indeed, RBS has come to this objective, making RBS more than a language training but also a meeting point that facilitate people to people connectivity.

With a population of over 3 million, Surabaya is the second largest city in Indonesia. The city is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the country, with more than 50% of her populace are migrants from other parts of Indonesia. Surabaya has experienced a dramatic social and cultural change and has transforms herself to be a multicultural city that signifies a sense of cosmopolitanism. The city may form a positive sign that helps to live up ASEAN socio-cultural pillar. RBS provides a social and cultural basis to live up Surabaya as a city with a divergent lifestyle.

⁴ Lexical definition of cosmopolitan are: a). belonging to all the world; not limited to just one part of the world. b). free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices, or attachments; at home all over the world. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cosmopolitan>);

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