LEARNING IDENTITY OF ARABIC SPEAKING COUNTRIES STUDENTS IN MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MALANG

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Abstract. Learning identity is very crucial to help students achieving their success. By understanding student's learning identity, lecturer can provide an appropriate teaching method in the classroom. Cognitively, by implementing an appropriate teaching method based on learning identity, students will easily understand the material. This study explored Arabic speaking countries students because the increasing number of foreign students studying in Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University in 2023. Among those foreign students in this university, 52% of them are coming from Arabic speaking countries. So that, exploring their learning identity will be crucial to develop learning quality and gaining international reputation. This study examined seven Arabic speaking countries students coming from Yemen, Algeria, Sudan, and Egypt. By using qualitative research with phenomenological design, this study tried to explore student's learning identity as well as their supporting and barrier factor in experiencing teaching and learning in university. The result of this study identified four learning identities of Arabic speaking countries students those are: between active and passive student, memorizing learner, lover of writing, and Arabic language lover. During their study in Indonesia, they faced some supporting and barrier factor of teaching and learning in university. The supporting factor came from internal motivation, family support, and conducive environment, while barrier factor came from Indonesian language alphabet and Indonesian style of learning. Findings of this study certainly will enrich the literature on Arabic speaking countries students' learning identity.

Keywords: *Learning Identity; Arabic Speaking Countries; University Student*

A. INTRODUCTION

Identity has become an interesting topic in every scientific field. Identity understanding believed as a contributing factor towards individual success in every line of life. Because of this fact, many researchers connected this topic into several themes such us culture which later become cultural identity, also connected with sociology which become social identity, and also connected to education which become educational identity. Unfortunately, there are a lot of discussions on the two previous topics but very little discussion on the last one. This research will fill the gap in the discussion of the last topic. This research believed that in order to reach student's success, understanding their learning identity is very crucial.

In the field of education, many researchers focus on teacher's identity rather that student's identity. They are discussing how to build teacher's identity as a communicator (Ainiyah, 2016; Astiti et al., 2018), the way in building and developing teacher's ideal identity (Mansir, 2020; van Lankveld et al., 2017), and the importance of mastering material as an important part of teacher identity (Reeves, 2018). In fact, every teacher must also realize that every student has a diverse identity. Students may have different religious identity, cultural identity, as well as learning identity. Like other identities, learning identity can also be formed through student experiences and may change over time (Kolb & Kolb, 2012). The formation of learning identity which can change overtime by student experience requires every teacher to continuously studying that kind of identity.

Commonly, identity is actually formed by daily activities (Hjörne & Säljö, 2013; Novakova & Foltinova, 2014). The daily activities of students also influence their identity of learning. So that, teacher need to consider the learning methods based on student's identity of learning (Altugan, 2015; Anbreen, 2015; Arzu & Issa, 2014; Çerkezi et al., 2013; Villodre, 2014). In more detailed explanation, identity believed as a contributing factor in determining student's success (Altugan, 2015; Sari, 2022). Student's success means students can easily understand the lesson they learnt. The easiness of study caused by suitability with their own learning characteristic or identity. By its importance of understanding identity in the field of education, this study was conducted. This study will also valuable to lecturer in order to establish an appropriate learning method based on student's diverse identities.

This study will identify learning identity of Arabic speaking countries students in Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang. As already known, this university is projected to be a world class university and gain international reputation and recognition. This projection has written in the newest vision of the campus. The consequence of this vision is the increasing number of foreign students studying in the university. In 2023, 52% of foreign students are coming from Arabic speaking countries like Yemen, Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, and Algeria. The other 48% are coming from non-Arabic speaking countries like Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, Gambia, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. At least, by understanding the learning identity of 52% of foreign students, the reputation of the university among international students will be obtained.

The early observation found that Arabic speaking countries students have different learning characteristics or identity with mostly Indonesians. So that, they faced some difficulties in mingling with Indonesian style of learning. To get successful learning in Indonesia, they need to study harder than Indonesian students. This study will explore Arabic speaking countries students learning identity as well as supporting and barrier factors they faced during their study in Indonesia. This study will be beneficial for student itself, lecturer, and also the university.

B. METHODS

This is a qualitative research with a phenomenological design which tries to explore Arabic speaking countries students learning identity as well as supporting and barrier factors they faced during their study in Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang. This research explores 7 students who study in the first semester. Among those 7 students, there are 2 students from Yemen, 2 from Sudan, 2 from Algeria, and 1 from Egypt. The phenomenological design actually tries to explore the experience of people in a certain condition. This study used phenomenological

design because it will explore the experience of informants in forming and constructing their learning identity in their own countries.

In order to analyze the result of this study, researcher will use cultural identity theory by Stuart Hall. Hall explain two main concepts in his theory those are 'identity as being' and 'identity as becoming'. Identity as being defined as "identity that influenced by social environment where the individual firstly live in, while identity as becoming is identity that influence by the new social environment that different with the first one" (Hall, Stuart & Du Gay, 1996; Hall, 1990). According to the theory, identity as being is based on history, time, and place that happen in the past, while identity as becoming is based on time and place that happen in present time. By considering the identity as being of the students, it's extremely beneficial for both lecturer and students.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

Arabic speaking countries students suggest that learning characteristic of their countries plays significant role in determining their learning identity. Commonly, the learning characteristic of students in each country has some similarities. The similarities have already summarized by researcher in four learning identities of Arabic speaking countries those are; between active and passive student, memorizing learner, lover of writing, and Arabic language lover.

Between Active and Passive Student

The first learning identity of Arabic speaking countries student is between active and passive student. Most of learning in their country constructs student to be a good listener. The only method used by teacher is lecturing method. The lecturing method provide student to be a passive learner. This method is caused by learning in school that based on specific book. Teacher focusing on understanding book rather than exploring student's way of thinking. Students from Egypt and Sudan explaining that the original way of learning is to listen teacher's explanation and understand the whole material comprehensively. This original way of learning constructed student to be a passive listener.

In fact, learning characteristic as mentioned above apparently provide some opportunities for question session. In this session, students are actively engaged in learning. Students from Algeria mentioned that desire of questioning is determined the understanding of the material. They added that question should only be about the material existed in the book, nothing more than that. This habit of actively engaged in question session makes them have a very strong desire to ask everything they don't understand. By this fact, the learning identity of Arabic speaking countries students is between passive and active student. Passive because of they just listen to teacher explanation, but active while question and answer session is begin. Called in between the two because the active is just limited on asking question about the text without any critical thinking. Called passive because if the text already understood, the question will be nothing. This identity influenced by learning environment coexist in the history of their teaching and learning experience. This data suitable with Hall theory of Identity of Being that influenced by social environment where the individual firstly live in (Hall, 1990). The environment of Arabic speaking countries student has constructed their identity based on their experience in their schools.

Memorizing Learner

The second learning identity of Arabic speaking countries student is memorizing learner. The informants suggest that most of subject learnt are Islamic subject which requires students to

memorize the material. Therefore, memorizing lesson's material become a habit in all lessons. This habit also produces Arabic speaking countries student having very strong memorization. This habit also carried out in language lesson. Students tend to memorize the texts studied in the lesson and copy them when needed and during examination. Informants also explained that rather than trying to understand the text comprehensively, it is easier to memorize all the text. They also believed that this skill is completely needed as a Muslim student. Muslim is required to have memorized a lot of Qur'anic verses and hadith in order to maintain the originality and truth of religious argumentation or theorem. By this data, Students from Arabic speaking countries constructing their learning identity as memorizing learner rather than comprehensive and critical understanding learner.

The reason stated by the informants above showed that their learning identity construction is completely influenced by their learning environment, teachers, and the subject they mostly studied. This learning identity also strengthen Hall's theory of identity as being which stated that identity as being is represented 'who we really are' based on the construction of their environment (Hall, Stuart & Du Gay, 1996; Hall, 1990). The environment in the same side turns out to very strong influence towards shaping and constructing the learning identity of students (Novakova & Foltinova, 2014). The desire to strengthen religious identity also ultimately influences a construction of student's learning identity. Unfortunately, this desire applied to all lessons that actually require more understanding rather than just memorization. But in the end, because the learning environment have very strong influence to them, memorizing learner become the second learning identity of Arabic speaking countries student.

Lover of Writing

The third learning identity of Arabic speaking countries student is lover of writing. Because of most of learning in their countries are requires student to be a good listener, the only thing student's do is writing while teacher explaining the material. This habit finally constructs student's learning identity who like writing rather than speaking. Speaking or presentation in their perspective is considered harder than writing. Informants from Yemen and Egypt argued that they love listening and writing more than presenting in front of class. this argument is caused by the habit of listening, writing, and there is no habituation of presentation in their educational system. Informants from Algeria stated differently, they argued that sometimes presentation is applied in their learning, but if they were given the choice between presenting or writing, they would still prefer writing. This argument also showed that Algerian students have more presentation skills that Yemeni, Sudanese, and Egyptian students.

This learning identity, like previous identities is also influenced by the environment in which they learnt. The theory of Stuart Hall also strengthened by this data. Hall's theory of identity as being also correlated to the formation of the third learning identity of Arabic speaking countries students. In order to maximize student's capability and skills, teachers need to consider this kind of learning identity. As already mentioned, learning identity can be a consideration to determine an appropriate learning method which can maximize student abilities and skills (Anbreen, 2015; Arzu & Issa, 2014). This effort can be carried out with the goal of ensuring student success in their learning, because considering learning identity of students believed as a contributing factor toward student's success (Altugan, 2015). The success means student can easily understand material and will feel a joyful learning. Cognitively, the goal of all teacher is to make their student easily understand the material. One way to reach this goal is by considering student's learning identity.

Arabic Language Lover

The fourth learning identity of Arabic speaking countries student is Arabic language lover. This learning identity seems to be considered normal for students who use Arabic as their first or second language. But in this case, this thing considered as an abnormal condition. It's considered abnormal because their love on Arabic language leads them to the exclusivity. One Sudanese and Yemeni stated that Arabic already an international language, so they don't need to be open in learning another language. They think that mastering Arabic is already enough to communicate with people outside their country. Not all the informants agreed with this statement because another Sudanese and especially Algerian are mastering both Arabic and English. They stated that both Arabic and English are needed in international context. The feeling of exclusivity and reluctance to learn English owned by 50% of the informants.

The differences among students is influenced by environment where they firstly live in. Algerian are being open to more than one language because they have close interaction with the other language like Tamazight and French. The mastery of more than one language leads them to be more open to another language like English. All Algerian in this university are mastering both English and Arabic, while only 50% of Sudanese, Yamani, and Egypt who understand English. Hall's theory also proved that identity is actually influenced by where the student's firstly live in and construct their identity as being (Hall, 1990). Besides, their exclusivity brings to the strong identity as being which leads to difficulties in facing the new environment that will be faced in the future. Stuart Hall also stated that identity always interchangeable based on experiences faced by individual. Identity as being is not the one and only identity of individual, because another part of identity called identity as becoming is also important to be considered by every individual. Hall argued that every individual is constantly negotiating the identity; the negotiation done by maintaining the old identity and adopting the new ones (Hall, 1990). If individual feeling the exclusivity, the process of negotiating the new identity will be difficult to be achieved. But overall, based on the environment experienced by Arabic speaking countries students, their learning identity as Arabic language lover have already constructed and built.

Supporting and Barrier Factors

Based on above learning identity, while students experiencing the new educational environment, they identify some supporting and barrier factor of their learning. There are two supporting factor which support their successful learning in new environment those are: Internal and Family Support and Conducive environment. In the other side, there are also two barrier factors which obstruct their success in learning including Indonesian language and alphabet and Indonesian style of learning.

Internal and Family Support

The first supporting factor of their learning in Indonesia came from their own selves and family. The internal factor came out from their self-motivation. The motivation came from their willingness to maximize opportunity of studying in the university through scholarship. All the informants are awardee of UIN Malang scholarship. So that, they think that because this is a very valuable opportunity for them, they motivate themselves to study harder even facing many difficulties in teaching and learning activities. The motivation also came out from their family. The family encourage them to take the opportunity and solve any problem faced during their study in

Indonesia. This internal and external motivation became the first supporting factor which support their study in university.

Conducive Environment

The second supporting factor of their learning in Indonesia came from a very conducive environment inside university. The existence of caring lecturers and Arabic speaking lecturers are optimally support their stay in university. The Arabic speaking lecturers help them in solving many problems especially in the first and second month staying in Indonesia. The caring lecturers and staffs they mentioned as very helpful person in supporting some difficulties and obstacles in teaching and learning process. Besides, foreign students who already studying in the university played a very important role in guiding them both academic and non-academic life in the university. These conducive environments believed as very important factor in supporting their study in Indonesia.

Indonesian Language and Alphabet

After discussing the supporting and barrier factors, the informants also mentioned the barrier factors in their study. The first barrier factor came out from the Indonesian language and alphabet. 50% of informants are experiencing these difficulties in learning Bahasa Indonesia and writing the Indonesian sentence. As already mentioned in their learning identity, there are informants who owned an exclusivity feeling and never interact with English or another language. This exclusivity feeling led them to get this barrier factor. Because of they just knowing Arabic alphabet, it's really difficult to them to write down Indonesian alphabet. The difficulties tend to be more while they have a duty to write some lesson. They think that there are too many alphabets in Indonesia that has no similarity with Arabic like 'ny', 'ng', 'e', 'p', 'o', etc. the result of these difficulties is lack of writing any lecturers explanation in Bahasa Indonesia. The explanation they wrote in Arabic to make them easier in understanding the material. Understanding Indonesian alphabet for those who never interact with English became a very big barrier factor.

Indonesian Style of Learning

The second barrier factor is Indonesian style of learning which trained students to be actively engage in teaching and learning process. Presentation is including one of a very difficult tasks to be done perfectly and perceived as a serious barrier factor in the perspective of Arabic speaking countries students. In the other side, answering higher order thinking skill questions is also became barrier factor for them. These barrier factors came out in their first semester studying in Indonesia. hopefully, in the second semester up to last semester they will came up with the solution.

D. CONCLUSION

This article has made an attempt to explore Arabic speaking countries students learning identity in university. There are two main research questions proposed in this article as an attempt to explore student's learning identity and supporting and barrier factor they faced during studying in university. There are four learning identities identified those are: between active and passive student, memorizing learner, lover of writing, and Arabic language lover. During their study in Indonesia, they faced some supporting and barrier factor of teaching and learning in university. The supporting factor came from internal motivation, family support, and conducive environment, while barrier factor came from Indonesian language alphabet and Indonesian style of learning. This study can be an early study on understanding Arabic speaking countries students, the deepen studies on

exploring the formation of learning identity is needed in order to help them achieving their success of teaching and learning in Indonesia.

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