

Integrating Local Culture Into the English Language Teaching and Learning Process

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi integrasi budaya lokal dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di tingkat sekolah menengah atas. Dalam konteks globalisasi dan dominasi budaya asing dalam bahan ajar bahasa Inggris, penting untuk menjaga identitas lokal dan memperkaya pengalaman belajar siswa melalui pendekatan kontekstual dan bermakna. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan 42 responden yang terdiri dari guru dan siswa dari berbagai daerah di Cirebon. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terbuka Goggle Form. Untuk memahami persepsi pengalaman, serta praktik pengajaran yang melibatkan unsur-unsur budaya lokal. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi budaya lokal dapat meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa, memperkuat rasa identitas budaya mereka, dan mendorong penggunaan bahasa Inggris dalam konteks yang relevan dengan kehidupan mereka. Elemen-elemen budaya seperti folklore, tarian tradisional, makanan khas, dan festival lokal digunakan secara kreatif dalam kegiatan pembelajaran. Namun, tantangan juga muncul, seperti kekurangan sumber daya, kesulitan dalam merancang materi berbasis budaya, dan kebutuhan akan pelatihan guru yang mendalam. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan yang mendukung inklusi sistematis budaya lokal dalam pengajaran bahasa asing, serta penguatan kapasitas guru dalam menerapkan pendekatan berbasis budaya.

This study aims to explore the integration of local cultures in the English language learning process at the high school level. In the context of globalization and the dominance of foreign cultures in English teaching materials, it is important to preserve local identity and enrich students' learning experiences through contextual and meaningful approaches. Using a qualitative approach, this study involved 42 respondents consisting of teachers and students from various regions in Cirebon. Data was collected through the Goggle Form open questionnaire. To understand the perception of experience, as well as teaching practices that involve elements of local culture. The results of this study show that the integration of local cultures can increase students' motivation to learn, strengthen their sense of cultural identity, and encourage the use of English in contexts relevant to their lives. Cultural elements such as folklore, traditional dances, special foods, local festivals are used creatively in teaching and learning activities. However, challenges also arise, such as a lack of resources, difficulties in designing culturally-based materials, and the need for in-depth teacher training. This study recommends the development of education policies that support the systematic inclusion of local culture in foreign language teaching, as well as strengthening the capacity of teachers in implementing culture-based approaches.



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INTRODUCTION

The integration of local culture into the English language learning process has become an increasingly important pedagogical immersion, especially in multilingual and multicultural contexts such as Indonesia (Xu & Li, 2021). As English becomes increasingly dominant as a global language, there are concerns about the marginalization of local identities, cultural values, and traditional practices (Hasan Alisoy & Said et al., 2018). Therefore, educators are faced with the challenge of maintaining students' cultural roots while preparing them to participate in global communication. This research aims to explore how local cultural culture can be meaningfully integrated into the English teaching and learning process, as well as how students respond to such integration.

In practice, many English teaching materials in Indonesia are still dominated by Western cultural contexts, such as the United States or the United Kingdom ((Azhary & Fatimah & Mahardika, 2018). Although exposure to global cultures has its own value, the use of contexts far from students' daily lives can lead to alienation in the learning process. Teaching English in the context of local culture can increase students' emotional closeness to mystery, motivate them to learn, and foster critical thinking skills (Haryanti et al., 2021). In addition, students will also be accustomed to conveying their stories, values and culture in English, which is an important skill in intercultural communication ((Kramsch, 2018). The local culture referred to in this study includes traditions, customs, values, art, and historical narratives that originate from certain regions (Botangen et al., 2018). Local cultural elements used in the context of learning include traditional clothing, traditional dances, typical foods, festivals, folklore, and the living habits of the surrounding community. By integrating these elements into English lessons, the learning process becomes contextual and meaningful (Mashudi et al., 2022). In addition, it also fosters a sense of pride in one's own culture. For teachers, the use of local culture in language teaching allows for more authentic communication and strengthening of cultural literacy.

This study uses a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' and students' views on the integration of local cultures in English language learning. A total of 42 respondents were involved in this study, consisting of English teachers and high school (Kramsch, 2018) students from various regions, data was collected through Google forms. The qualitative approach allows research to capture meanings, attitudes, and experiences that might be missed if only using quantitative methods (Rose et al., 2021). A number of previous studies have emphasized the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in language education (Don Bosco & Nambiar et al., 2021). However, studies that specifically highlight how Indonesia's local culture is integrated into English language learning are still limited. Most studies focus on curriculum or textbook analysis, while studies of classroom practices and student perceptions are rare (Karlik, 2023). This research aims to fill this gap by documenting the first-hand experiences of teachers and students when local culture is incorporated into the English learning process.

This research is also important because language and culture are inseparable. points out, every time we speak, we are referring to a particular cultural world. If English is taught neutrally or only as a Language or hanay as an International Language without the context of the local culture, students may miss out on the opportunity to express their own views and values (Alakrash et al., 2021). The integration of local cultures helps students see English not as something foreign, but as a tool to represent their identity in the global realm.

In addition, the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) in Indonesia actually encourages the strengthening of character education and cultural awareness. This opens up opportunities for teachers to include local content in various subjects, including English. However, in its implementation, there are still many teachers who face difficulties, both in terms of designing culturally relevant materials and in balancing the purpose of teaching culturally relevant material and in balancing the purpose of teaching language with cultural content. This research also raises these challenges through the experiences of the respondents.

By understanding the views of teachers and students, this study seeks to uncover the benefits and limitations of the integration of local culture in English language learning. This study examines how cultural integration affects students' interest in learning, increasing cultural knowledge, and their ability to use English in a meaningful way. In addition, this research also highlights how teachers adjust their learning strategies and create teaching materials based on local culture in a creative way.

Through the results of this research, it is hoped that a more inclusive and contextual practice of teaching English can be created. Students who learn English through content that is close to their lives tend to be more engaged, confident, and aware of the importance of cultural preservation (Khan et al., 2017). This approach also supports the broader goal of maintaining global communication (UNESCO, 2015). In summary, this study investigated how lokla culture is integrated into the English learning process based on the views of 42 respondents. The main focus is on how cultural content is selected, applied, and accepted in the classroom. The results of this research are expected to make practical contributions to teachers, curriculum development, and policy makers who want to encourage English learning based on local culture in Indonesia and other multicultural contexts. Culture, social background, and the conditions of the school environment.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the views of English Language Education study program students, English teachers and also students towards the integration of local culture in the English learning process. This approach was chosen because it allowed the research to explore the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of participants directly in a real-world context ((Xu & Li & Don Bosco, 2021). Qualitative research is especially effective for investigating educational phenomena related to culture, where subjective experiences and contextual nuances are central (Mashudi et al., 2022) The main focus is on how students respond to the integration.

Participants

A total of 42 participants were involved in this study, consisting of students of the English Language Education study program, English teachers and several junior and senior high school students from various regions in Cirebon, including urban and rural areas. The selection of participants was conducted by purposive sampling by considering their involvement in learning practices related to local culture (Herdy et al . & Wutun et al., 2018). The teachers selected are those who have tried to integrate elements of local culture in English teaching, while students are selected based on active involvement in learning activities that intersect with local cultural content.

Data Collection Procedure

This research was disseminated through an open questionnaire using a google form that was distributed to all participants to get broader answers about their experiences and opinions. The questions in the questionnaire are designed to provoke personal reflection and concrete narratives about the use of local culture in English lessons.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis steps include:

1. Data transcription: All interview data and observation notes are transcribed verbatim.
2. Open coding: The researcher reads the data thoroughly and codes the relevant pieces of data.
3. Categorization: The codes are then grouped into themes that represent common patterns in the data.
4. Interpretation: The themes were further analyzed to answer the research questions and interpreted based on theory and local context.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the data, we conduct member checking by asking participants to review their summary of findings to ensure that the data captured matches their experience (Don Bosco, 2021). In this study, it also maintains reflectivity during the research process so that the interpretation of data is not biased by personal assumptions.

Research Ethics

Before data collection is carried out, we provide complete information about the purpose of the research and ensure the confidentiality of the participant's identity. Ethical research practices were maintained in accordance with the Principles outlined by (UNESCO, 2015). All participants voluntarily gave informed consent. This research is also committed to not harming participants both physically and psychologically during the process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

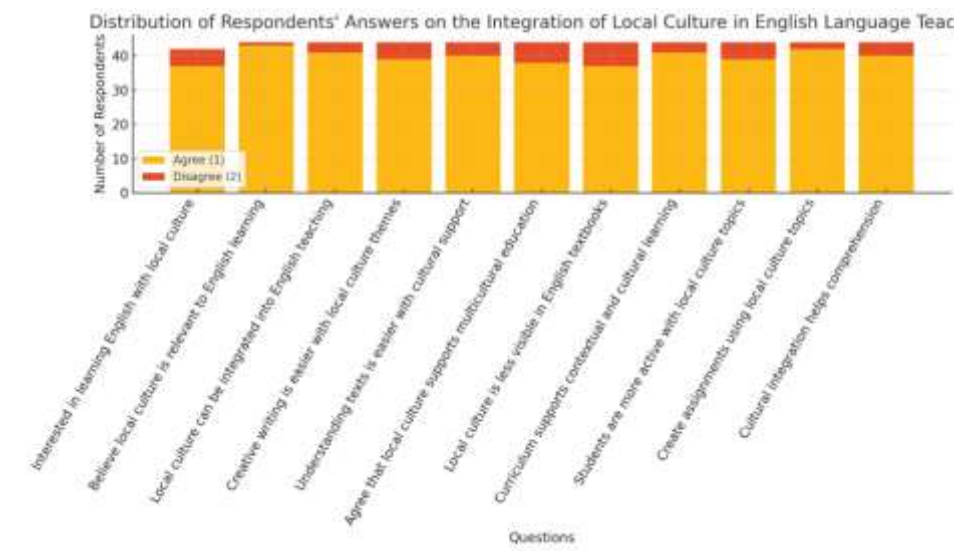


Figure 1. Results

1. Respondents consider integration with local culture relevant
Some respondents agreed that English learning that integrates local culture is considered relevant and contextual. This indicates an awareness of the importance of local values to support students' understanding of the material.
2. Trust in local culture as a source of learning increases
The high level of agreement on the statement of belief that local culture is worthy of being used as a source of learning reflects that respondents view local culture not only as a complement, but also as a primary source that can enrich learning content.
3. Local culture is considered to facilitate the understanding of material
Many respondents agreed that the local culture-based material makes it easier for students to understand the concepts being taught, especially since this approach feels closer to their everyday experiences.
4. Local cultural integration supports multicultural values
The positive response to this statement confirms that the integration of local culture is not only about cultural preservation, but also support for multicultural education that creates an attitude of tolerance and openness.
Local culture is considered not optimal in books or the current curriculum On the statement "local culture is less evident in textbooks/teaching materials", most respondents also agreed, which shows a gap between expectations and the reality of the current curriculum. This is an important input for curriculum designers to make more room for local content.
5. Respondents rated students as more active and enthusiastic when learning with local cultural topics
Approval of this statement confirms that a local culture-based approach encourages active participation in the learning process, whether in discussions, assignments, or other classroom activities.
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8. The integration of local culture helps to understand vocabulary and the context of the use of local culture in the creation of assignments and English texts is considered to help students interpret context and meaning, which is important in the development of linguistic competence.

Overall, this diagram shows that approaches that integrate local culture in English learning have received a very positive reception from respondents. This supports previous findings that contextual approaches based on local culture increase learning motivation, enrich understanding, and strengthen students' cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis from the distribution of respondents' answers, it can be concluded that the integration of local culture in English learning received very strong support from the respondents. The majority of them agreed with various statements that emphasized the importance of local culture as a relevant, easy-to-understand, and able to increase student motivation and engagement.

This integration is not only considered to be able to enrich learning content, but also serves as a medium to strengthen students' cultural identities and foster multicultural attitudes. These findings indicate that local culture-based approaches have great potential to be adopted more widely in English language learning practices, especially in the context of education in Indonesia.

However, respondents also highlighted that the representation of local culture in textbooks or learning materials is still not optimal. Therefore, real efforts are needed from teachers, curriculum makers, and material developers to better accommodate local culture in the English teaching process so that it is more contextual and meaningful for students.

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We sincerely hope that this journal will provide meaningful insights for the development of English language learning based on local culture and serve as an inspiration for future research.

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