



THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL CULTURE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the influence of local culture in English language learning among students. Based on interviews with a number of participants, it was found that local culture has a diverse impact on the understanding of English materials. Most participants recognized that the integration of local culture, such as vocabulary related to local traditions and customs, made it easier for them to understand English materials. However, there was also a view that the influence of local culture is limited, especially for students who are more accustomed to global culture. The main challenge arises when the learning materials are related to foreign cultures, such as Thanksgiving celebrations, which some students find difficult to understand due to the different cultural contexts. In addition, local dialects and accents also affect students' English pronunciation, which shows the importance of intercultural awareness in language learning. Based on these findings, it is suggested that the English curriculum should integrate more local cultural elements to make it more relevant to students' lives. The use of an intercultural approach that emphasizes understanding of cultural differences is also recommended, to help students connect learning materials to their experiences. Training for teachers on the importance of cultural context in language teaching also needs to be improved. Thus, the results of this study underscore the need for adaptations in English language teaching that take into account the local culture and cultural diversity of students to create a more inclusive and effective learning experience.

INTRODUCTION

Language and culture have a mutually influential relationship, where both play an important role in learning English as a second or foreign language. Culture not only affects how students understand the language, but also how they process information, adjust to the learning context, and use the language in daily communication. This study, *The Influence of Local Culture on English Language Learning: Perspectives of Students from Different Cultural Backgrounds*, aims to explore how local culture influences students' experiences, challenges



and strategies in learning English. By drawing on the perspectives of students from different cultural backgrounds, this research provides insights into how cultural values, norms and traditions influence the process of learning English as a global language.

In the context of English language learning, the role of culture is significant. Zein, Sukyadi, Hamied and Lengkanawati (2020) point out that English language education in Indonesia is influenced by the unique local cultural context, which affects students' motivation, engagement and outlook towards English. On the one hand, English is seen as a global necessity; on the other hand, students are often confronted with the differences between local values and foreign cultures contained in the language. A similar point is also highlighted by Rose, McKinley, and Galloway (2021), who emphasize the importance of integrating cultural diversity in English language teaching. They propose pedagogical approaches that reflect students' multicultural and multilingual realities, making learning more relevant and inclusive.

Culture not only shapes the way students learn but also affects their emotional and cognitive aspects during the learning process. Lindquist, Jackson, Leshin, et al. (2022) highlighted that cultural norms influence the way students think and feel, which in turn affects their learning success. For example, culture can affect students' confidence or anxiety levels when interacting with a foreign language. Patricia Pérez-Arce (1999) also revealed that students' cultural framework affects the way they process language information and understand linguistic structures. Other research by Markham (2001) and Al-khresheh (2020) shows that students tend to understand learning materials better if they are culturally relevant, such as in listening or reading tasks.

Cultural awareness also plays an important role in the development of certain linguistic skills, such as grammar and vocabulary. Mashudi et al. (2022) found that an understanding of English culture helped EFL students in Indonesia improve their grammar skills. In addition, Gashi (2021) highlighted that intercultural awareness enabled students in Kosovo to overcome cultural and language barriers, allowing them to communicate more effectively. However, while these benefits are significant, English language learning in remote areas faces major challenges. Nathania, Munasikin, and Misrita (2024) explain that English language teaching in rural Central Kalimantan is limited by minimal resources, lack of teacher training, and limited access to learning materials that are appropriate to students' local culture.

In the context of globalization, cultural responses to language are becoming increasingly relevant. Siregar (2022) explains that language is an important cultural element in responding to globalization, both as a means of adaptation and as a tool to preserve local identity. In English



language learning, students are often at the crossroads between accepting the global culture brought by English and protecting their local cultural values. This demands a learning approach that not only focuses on linguistic aspects, but also pays attention to cultural dimensions. Kim (2020) suggests that holistic language teaching, which integrates language and cultural learning, can help students learn more thoroughly. Sun and Yin (2022) also emphasize the importance of creative context-based approaches to support students from different cultural backgrounds.

This research aims to provide an in-depth picture of how students from diverse cultural backgrounds perceive the influence of local culture on their English language learning. By utilizing insights from previous studies, this research aims to provide practical recommendations that can help create a more inclusive English language learning environment that respects cultural diversity. This approach is important to ensure that English learning not only improves students' language skills, but also builds a broader understanding of culture in an era of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the influence of local culture on English language learning. The research participants consisted of 15 third-year students of an English education program at an Islamic institution in Indonesia, representing various cultural backgrounds such as Banjar, Dayak, and Java. This approach allowed the researcher to explore their experiences, challenges and learning strategies in depth.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews designed to explore the influence of local cultural values, norms and traditions on the learning process. Data was analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and relevant themes that supported the research objectives. This approach is expected to provide in-depth insights into the relationship between local culture and English language learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Local Culture on English Language Learning

The interview results show that local culture has a diverse impact on English language learning. Most participants acknowledged the relationship between local culture and English language learning, although the intensity varied. One participant stated that,

"Ada kaitannya, terutama dalam kosakata terkait budaya lokal seperti wisata atau tradisi." "There is a connection, especially in vocabulary related to local culture such as tourism or tradition."

However, some participants felt that local culture had only limited influence or was even irrelevant, as mentioned,

"Saya tidak merasa budaya lokal banyak berhubungan dengan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris." "I don't think local culture has much to do with English learning."

This response reflects students' views on the importance of cultural context in helping them understand the material better, in line with the study of Mashudi et al. (2022) who emphasized the relevance of local culture in improving grammar and vocabulary learning.

Ease of Understanding Materials with Local Cultural Elements

The majority of participants found it easier to understand English materials that integrated local culture. One participant gave an example:

"Ketika mengartikan kata yang berkaitan dengan budaya lokal, seperti istilah adat atau tradisi, itu lebih mudah." "When interpreting words related to local culture, such as customary terms or traditions, it is easier."

However, a minority stated that the integration of local culture did not always have a significant effect, especially for those who were already accustomed to the global context. This is in line with Gashi's (2021) research, which shows that students need intercultural elements to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers.

Challenges in Learning Without Local Cultural Links

Some participants found it difficult to learn English materials that were not relevant to the local culture, especially because the foreign context was difficult to understand. One response:

"Materi tentang budaya asing, membuat saya kesulitan membayangkan konteksnya." "Materials about foreign cultures, make it difficult for me to imagine the context."

However, there are also those who do not find it difficult because they are already familiar with global culture-based learning. This response supports the study of Lindquist et al. (2022), which states that learning success is influenced by students' ability to adapt their way of thinking to different cultural norms.

Influence of Local Dialect and Accent

Some participants revealed that local dialects influenced their pronunciation in English. Sample response:



"Saya kadang keceplosan menambahkan partikel Banjar seperti 'eh' atau 'lah' saat berbicara bahasa Inggris." "I sometimes accidentally add Banjar particles such as 'eh' or 'lah' when speaking English."

Meanwhile, other participants stated that the local culture does not have a significant impact on how they speak or understand English.

These challenges in pronunciation reflect the importance of intercultural awareness in improving students' speaking skills, as suggested by Rose et al.'s research. (2021).

Local Culture as an Aid or a Challenge

Participants' views varied, with some seeing local culture as a tool, while others saw it as a challenge.

"Budaya lokal membantu saya memahami konteks pembelajaran, tetapi juga menciptakan tantangan dalam menerjemahkan konsep lokal ke bahasa Inggris." "Local culture helps me understand the learning context, but it also creates challenges in translating local concepts into English."

Others see these challenges as value-added:

"Tantangan dari budaya lokal memaksa saya berpikir lebih kritis dan kreatif." "The challenges from local culture force me to think more critically and creatively."

These results support the findings of Nathania et al. (2024), which showed that although local culture can be a barrier, context-based teaching can help students overcome these challenges.

The results of these interviews show that local culture plays a significant role in English language learning, although the impact varies depending on each student's background and understanding. Most participants considered that the integration of local cultural elements in learning materials facilitated their understanding, especially in terms of vocabulary and cultural context. For example, terms related to local traditions or customs provide a clearer picture for students, making it easier for them to relate the concepts to their daily experiences. This is in line with the opinion of Mashudi et al. (2022) who emphasize the importance of incorporating local cultural elements to improve students' language skills, especially in the aspects of grammar and vocabulary.

However, there was also a different view, where some participants felt that the influence of local culture on English language learning is quite limited, even irrelevant for those who are more accustomed to global cultural contexts. This indicates that although local culture has added value in some cases, its influence may be more pronounced in situations where students



are not familiar with other cultural variations. Gashi's (2021) research supports this view by showing that cultural diversity in learning can help overcome linguistic and cultural barriers that often arise in foreign language teaching.

Furthermore, the challenges faced by some participants in learning material that is not directly related to local culture, such as discussions about foreign cultures, underscores the importance of adaptation in language learning. Some students find it difficult to understand concepts that are not familiar to their culture, as shown in the statement about the difficulty of understanding foreign cultural contexts such as Thanksgiving. This response reminds us of the importance of developing learning materials that can connect students' experiences with global contexts. Lindquist et al. (2022) argue that students who can adapt their thinking to different cultures tend to be more successful in language learning, and this should be a concern for language curriculum developers.

In addition, the influence of local dialects and accents on English pronunciation is also an important concern in this study. Some participants revealed that the habit of using local particles or their regional accent can affect the way they speak English. This challenge underscores the need for increased awareness of proper pronunciation and the importance of learning standardized accents in an international context. It also shows that in the language learning process, intercultural awareness and adaptation to English pronunciation norms are essential to help students improve their speaking skills, in line with the recommendations of Rose et al. (2021).

Finally, the mixed views regarding local culture as a help or a challenge show that local culture can be a valuable element if appropriately utilized in language teaching. While some students felt that local culture helped them understand the learning context, others felt that the challenges posed by cultural differences stimulated them to think more critically and creatively. This finding supports the opinion of Nathania et al. (2024), who stated that context-based teaching, although it can present obstacles, still provides opportunities for students to develop their thinking skills.

The results of this study show that the integration of local culture in English language learning can improve students' understanding, but requires adjustment and support from educators. A context-based approach that includes elements of local culture can make the learning experience more inclusive and relevant, as suggested by Kim (2020). Therefore, it is important for English language teaching to accommodate cultural diversity and consider the challenges that may arise in the process.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that local culture has a significant influence on English language learning, although the impact varies between students. The majority of participants felt that integrating local culture, such as vocabulary and terms related to local traditions or customs, can facilitate their understanding of English materials. However, there were also those who felt that local culture had only a limited impact, especially for those who were more accustomed to global culture. In addition, materials related to foreign cultures, such as Thanksgiving, caused difficulties for some students in imagining the context, as they were not familiar with the culture. This shows that English teaching that does not pay attention to the local cultural context can cause difficulties for students in understanding the material taught.

As a recommendation, the English curriculum should integrate more local cultural elements to make the material more relevant to students' experiences. The use of contextual and intercultural approaches is also important, especially for materials related to foreign cultures, so that students can more easily relate them to their lives. In addition, English language teaching needs to be supported with training for teachers to understand the importance of cultural context in the learning process and to overcome challenges that arise regarding local dialects or accents. Finally, raising intercultural awareness among students is also very important so that they can adjust to different cultural norms in English language learning. Thus, English language learning can become more inclusive, relevant and effective for students from different cultural backgrounds.

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