

**THE INCLUSION OF LOCAL CULTURAL CONTENTS
IN ENGLISH CLASSES: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS**

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Abstract

This research is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach using a survey method. This research seeks to analyze and explain the perceptions of English teachers who teach Junior High School students toward the integration of local cultures in English Language Teaching descriptively and supported by percentage figures. The population of this research is all the English teachers of JHS (Junior High Schools) in Jambi City. The total number is 105 teachers. The sample in this study is the representative of English Junior High School teachers in Jambi city. Those are 40 teachers as the participants. The data in this research are collected by sharing a questionnaire on a piece of paper. Based on the findings, teachers has Language teachers normally think about how to create a cheerful classroom to make learners feel comfortable in the classroom and motivate them to persist with the class. In this point, learners' local culture assists English teachers as they share some sense of interest and humor.

Keywords : Teachers' perception, local culture

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that is rich in culture. Therefore, society should be tolerant of cultural diversity in their environment. For the many Indonesians who still live in their home regions, customs and traditions remain a part of every day: the Toraja of Sulawesi continue to build traditional houses due to their social importance; the focus of a Sumbanese village remains the gravestones of their ancestors due to the influence they are believed to have in daily happenings. These are not customs offered attention once a year – they are a part of life.

In this case, English teachers, especially, have to develop students' potential and their local culture. Neff and Ruscynski (2013) stated that to communicate effectively and honestly, students of a foreign language need linguistic and intercultural competence. In this regard, a language teacher should be aware of local culture, target culture, and norms and values. Along with the target culture, teachers need to integrate local culture and its norms and values in the foreign language classroom. Stressing the need for local culture, Sudartini (2015) opines that the underlying reason for inserting local culture is for the sake of national identity. In this regard, local culture is local wisdom that promotes character education and assures national identity. The insertion of local cultural values can prepare the learners' cultural background and identity which ultimately forms nationalism in their minds. Therefore, the sole emphasis on Teaching Language and target culture makes foreign language learning incomplete and handicapped.

Even so, it is difficult to address a cultural issue in a language classroom. It is challenging for teachers to have proficiency in the target culture, Teaching language, native culture, and teaching methods. Byrnes (2008, as cited in Frank, 2013) says many EFL teachers have had no formal training in incorporating cultural elements. There are no universally accepted criteria that instructors can use as a guide. Choudhury (2014) claims that learners' own culture is not dealt with as an abstract concept; they need to be involved.

In addition, the current English textbooks used in Indonesia, especially in junior high school grades, only include random cultures. Most books tend to show the famous culture than the unfamous culture. It makes students and also teachers only know about the part of the culture in Indonesia and rarely discuss their own culture. Concerning the problems above, the researcher intends to conduct the study under the title **The Inclusion of Local Cultural Contents in English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions.**

LITERATURE REVIEW

Local Culture

Generally, culture can be defined from an individual's viewpoint. Culture includes various dimensions of society. It includes the way of life, dress code, food types, local customs, values, traditions, etc. Culture is 'an environment created by humans' (Tepperman et al., 1994). Culture is something that a group shares about the elements of culture: style, dress, customs, etc. In addition, UNESCO (2009) defines culture as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society and social groups that encompasses not only art and literature but also lifestyles, ways of living together, value system, tradition, and belief."

The Relationship between Language and Culture

Culture is the way of life of people who share it. It can be everything like language, religion, costume, food habits, social habits, music, and arts. In addition,

culture is how we think and understand the world and our own lives. It can vary within a country, region, society, sub-group, and family as well. Therefore, culture is a crucial tool for survival too.

Significance of Local Culture in English Language Teaching

Based on a study conducted by Saraswati et. al. (2018), it was found that local culture has its role in English language teaching, especially in speaking classes. They found that both the lecturers and students already had the same views about the role of local cultures in English-speaking classes at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Both of them agree that local cultures should exist to understand before they are asked to learn how to mediate cultures. Both agree that although the local culture teaching is significant, however, all lecturers do not teach the local culture explicitly but implicitly. The students also agree with the statement. The implicit teaching of local cultures is also affected by the availability of the textbook, which mainly provides the students with knowledge of the target culture, i.e. formal and informal speech, expression, gesture, etc. While discussing the target culture, then local culture teaching is given implicitly as the comparative variable so that the discussion can appear in the classroom.

Concepts of Perception

Perception is a word that is closely related to human psychology. It has been defined in various ways. Further, Adediwura and Tayo (2007) show the process of having perception. They explain that “every impression that comes in from outside, be a sentence, something we hear, an object or vision, no sooner enters our consciousness than it is drafted off in some certain directions or others, making a connection with other materials already there and finally producing a reaction.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach using a survey method. Gay (2000) stated that the descriptive quantitative method uses to determine and describe how things are test analyzed. Moreover, Kountur (2005) that descriptive research has the following characteristics: it relates to the current situation, describes only one variable or several variables but is described one by one, and the variables studied are not manipulated.

The population of this research is all the English teachers of JHS (Junior High Schools) in Jambi City. The total number is 105 teachers. The sample size is very dependent on the error tolerance used. The maximum research error tolerance level in this study is 15% (0.15). Therefore, the sampling by using the Slovin formula formula is as follows :

$$n = \frac{105}{1+105(0.15)^2}$$
$$n = 6,268$$
$$n \approx 6$$

Meanwhile, from the computation above, the total sample of this study is at least 6 English teachers.

A questionnaire will be used as this research instrument. It is because, as Sukardi (2012) claimed that a questionnaire is a tool for efficient data collection that can reach a large number of respondents who live far away. In this research, a close-ended questionnaire will be used. All of the respondents marked their answers, which were arranged based on the Likert scale. The Likert scale in this study has five

categories. They strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), undecided (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point).

To interpret and present the findings, the researcher will use descriptive statistics by focusing on the mean for the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the scale was used to specify the level of disagreement and agreement according to Wimolmas (2012).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Teachers' Perceptions Related to the Local Culture

One of the SMPN 4 participants said, "It is a custom, behavior, or habit that has been passed down from generation to generation and is a characteristic of a place." Likewise, a teacher remarked, "acquired habits." "A creation and a habit of society that has wonderful principles," a teacher once said.

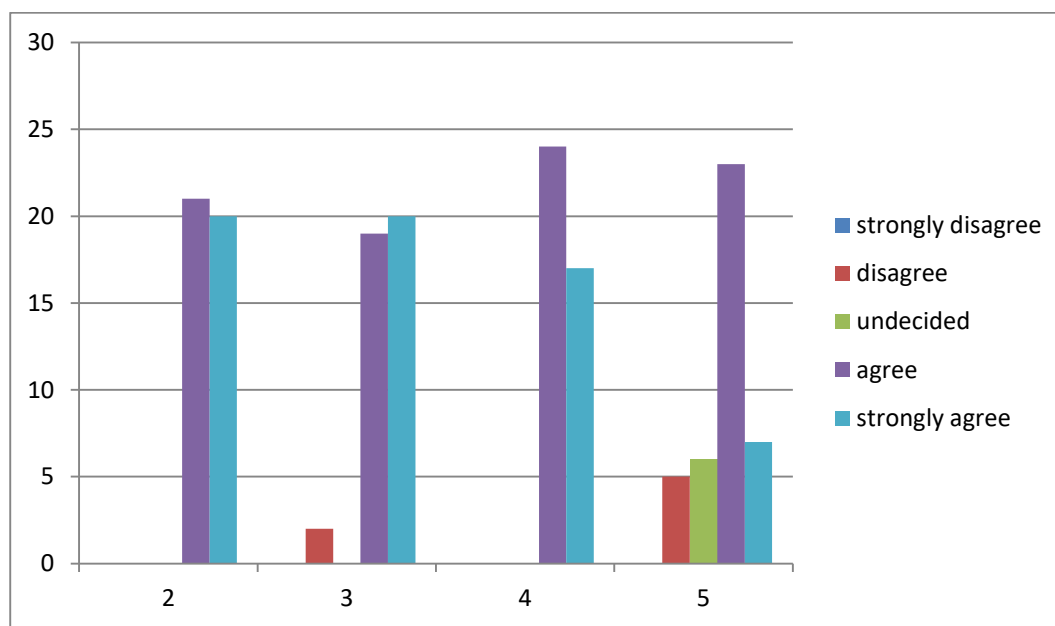


Figure 1. Percentage of teachers' perception to the local culture

The information from Figure 1 showed that the highest frequency was reported by 53% of respondents who agreed with the questions. According to the research, teachers agree that there is a connection between language and culture. Language and culture have a beneficial relationship, according to teachers' perceptions, which are positive as seen by the high percentage in the chart above.

Teachers' Perceptions Related to the Inclusion of Local Cultural Content in English Language Teaching

Regarding item number 6, which is talk about how local culture is applied in ELT, according to the survey results, 98% of the respondents use local culture as part of their curriculum. This indicates that the most well-known ELT topic is the local culture. The following information will be provided for numbers 7 through 9.

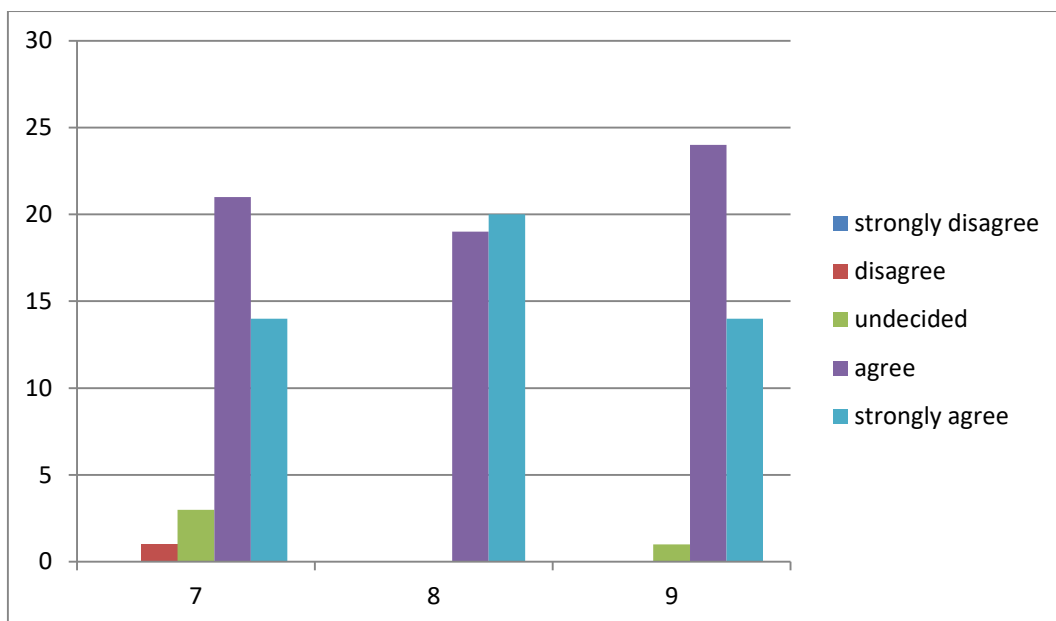


Figure 2. Percentage of teachers' responses to the inclusion of local cultural content

The information from the table above showed the highest frequency, with 41% of respondents agreeing with the questionnaire. The findings show that teachers agree that the local culture can make it easier for students to understand the lectures. They also agree that the inclusion of local culture enhanced learning.

Teachers' Perceptions of the inclusion of Jambinese culture

There are 5 questions that related to the local culture, from item number 10 to number 14. For number 11, which local cultural aspects had been included in ELT based on the results of the questionnaire, it is Tourist attractions (Objek Wisata) received 33 votes, food & beverages (Makanan dan minuman) received 28 votes, and the norm (Nilai Dan Norma) received 28 votes. Items 10, 12, 13, and 14 will be described below.

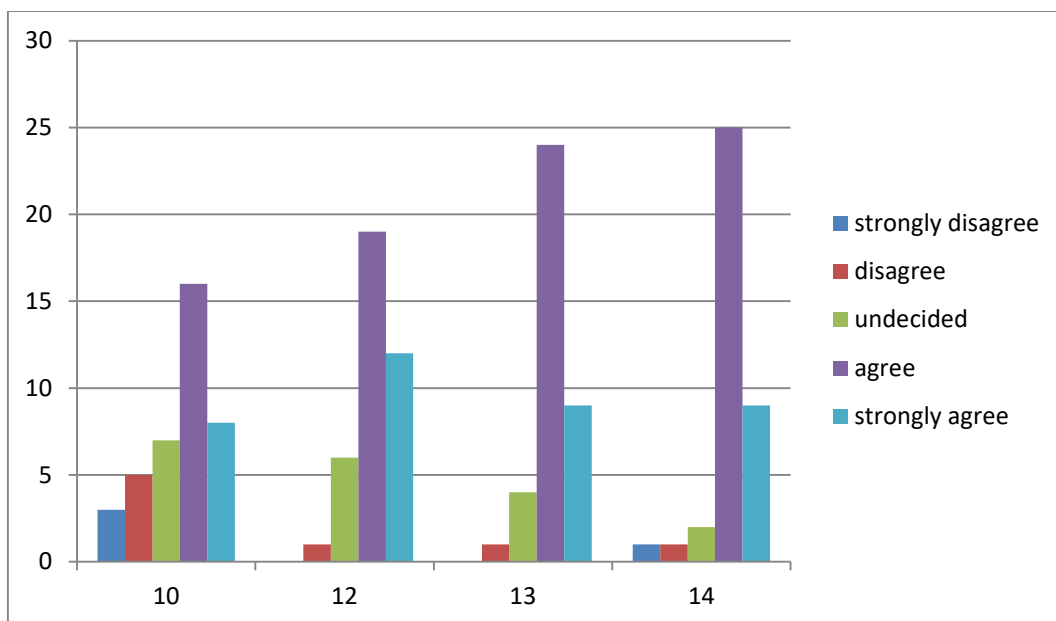


Figure 3. Percentage of teachers' perception to the inclusion of Jambinese culture

The statistics from the table above showed the highest frequency with a percentage of 55% agreeing with the questionnaire. According to the study, teachers generally agree that the English and other local Indonesian cultures are less significant than Jambinese culture. It also shows that educators agree that students' attitudes toward English classes can be improved and their appreciation of English can be increased by exposure to Jambinese culture.

DISCUSSION

Here, the researcher discusses the descriptive statistics based on the computation of the questionnaire by using IBM SPSS statistic 22. Moreover, the interpretation will be focusing on the mean for the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the scale was used to specify the level of disagreement and agreement according to Wimolmas (2012) with the mentioned criteria.

First, culture can be defined based on the opinions of teachers. They may see culture as the way a group of people behave, think, or feel. Second, teachers' perceptions of culture and language are related because they are both influenced by what they see and hear. According to Witte (2014), most scholars agree that culture and language are deeply connected.

Third, many teachers believe that people are automatically learning about the culture of a language when they can use it fluently. According to Witte (2014), the importance of the relationship between culture and language is demonstrated by the belief that learning culture means learning the language. According to the results, the mean is 4.39. Fourth, when one studies a culture, one automatically learns its language as well. The previous item is the opposite of the one before it. This statement is still consistent with the theory before. Comparison will always be a part of human nature. According to Witte (2014), the importance of the relationship between culture and language is apparent when we realize that learning culture means learning the language.

Seventh, incorporating local culture in English teaching can make it easier for students to understand the material. The study by Wutun et al. found that a certain

type of exercise can improve cognitive function. The eighth is about learning English, where incorporating local cultural content can make learning more interesting. According to Garcia (2003), learners can learn a new language by using all the things they are familiar with, which can help them construct their ability to use and share their personal experiences with others in the new language.

Ninth, incorporating local cultural content into ELT makes classes more fun and energetic. The results of the study by Wutun et al. said the interviewees noted that a lively cultural environment makes learning more enjoyable. Tenth, it is about incorporating Jambinese culture into ELT more than other local Indonesian cultures or English-speaking cultures. Eleventh, some aspects of Jambinese culture have been included in ESL lessons. Based on the data, the most materials used are tourist supplies, food and beverages, and norms. Twelfth, incorporating Jambinese culture into English language teaching can help to increase students' enjoyment of learning English. Wutun et al. (2013) found that the use of local cultural terms in English can lead learners to focus on the new forms in English.

Last, knowing Jambinese culture can make the students more comfortable with the teaching materials. The study of Wutun et al (2013) found content that is well-known and comfortable can be very effective in engaging students in learning. Based on the results, the mean is 4.05 In short, the Jambinese culture makes students more engaged in learning by making them emotionally involved.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the teachers' perspectives demonstrate that the local culture has a significant influence on the classroom atmosphere in learning English as a foreign language. The classroom becomes a cheerful situation for their students. Their students also have great desire and motivation to learn English. They found it easier for the students to learn English based on what they had in their surroundings.

Based on the research finding, the researcher tries to give some suggestions after finishing this study. Foreign language learning is greatly influenced by local culture. To design and develop the proper resources and strategies for effectively developing English language abilities, English teachers need bottom-up feedback. Local culture studies in foreign language acquisition are strongly advised to be looked into because they can assist students to practice a foreign language.

Local culture has a significant impact on learning a foreign language, which requires further analysis from a variety of angles. Future researchers are challenged to do particular studies on learners' active and participatory involvement in developing linguistic input for learning because learners are a source of culture.

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