

IMPLEMENTING LOCAL CULTURE INTO ENGLISH PROMOTING CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH TEACHING

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Abstract: This study aims to critically examine the methods used in teaching foreign languages, especially English, which frequently pay less attention to the accompanying intercultural conversation. It also makes a different recommendation for how to support and advance character education in this nation. It is a prevalent misconception that foreign cultural norms that are not necessarily compatible with our own values are always incorporated into English language teaching procedures. This study employs qualitative research and is based on social science fields like anthropology, sociology, and psychology. In light of this, the qualitative research techniques provide detailed and additional probing and questioning of respondents. According to the national education objectives, it appears that the best way to solve this issue is to incorporate Indonesian local cultural values into English language teaching methods in order to promote character education, which is widely believed to play a significant role in fostering, enhancing, and preserving the nationalistic spirit of our next generation.

Keyword: local culture, teaching and learning, English, character education

INTRODUCTION

Most people agree that education is the most important factor in a country's development. One may argue that investing in education is an investment in the creation of human capital, which is the cornerstone of future economic development and prosperity for any nation, including Indonesia. In the Act of Republic Indonesia on National Educational System, our government even defines education explicitly as: conscious and well-planned effort in creating a learning environment and learning process so that learners able to develop their full potential for acquiring spiritual and religious strengths, develop self-control, personality, intelligence, and other desirable traits, 46 morality and good character that one needs for oneself, for the community, for the country, and for the State. Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, Tahun II, Nomor 1, February 2012. National education is defined as education that is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, is entrenched in Indonesia's national traditions and religious beliefs, and is adaptable to the demands of a constantly changing world. (Chapter 1 Articles 1 and 2 of the Act of Republic Indonesia on National Educational System.

According to this concept, education is frequently described in terms of the methods teachers and institutions employ to affect the growth and learning of their students (Nucci and Narvaéz, 2008:5). Given that it would be difficult to achieve the objectives of our national educational system without involving all factors impacting the effectiveness of educational practices, it appears very vital to pay close attention to the practices of our educational system in our country. Parents, aspects of schools (including instructors, pupils, and facilities, etc.), and the government as well. Therefore, it is urgently necessary to conduct a critical analysis of the educational practices in this nation in order to produce a better generation in the future that can uphold the religious, national, and cultural values of this nation while also remaining actively receptive to the needs of the ever-changing era.

However, given that education is seen to have the best possibility of giving students a direct encounter with a foreign culture, this particular study seeks to take a deeper look at the typical procedures of English language instruction in our nation. This particular study also tries to suggest a fresh perspective in the practice of teaching English language by using the local cultures to support character education in Indonesia, in keeping with the national educational objectives.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative research and is based on social science fields like anthropology, sociology, and psychology. In light of this, the qualitative research techniques provide detailed and additional probing and questioning of respondents. Additionally, the researcher or interviewer seeks to comprehend their intentions and emotions. In order to draw conclusions from market research, it can be helpful to understand how your audience decides.

Qualitative research, as defined by Creswell (2014), is a type of market research that focuses on gathering information through open-ended and conversational contact.

This approach focuses on "what" and "why" people believe the way they do. Consider a convenience store that wants to increase customer traffic as an example. A thorough investigation reveals that more guys are coming into this store. Conducting in-depth interviews with prospective customers is a fantastic way to learn why ladies weren't coming into the store.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Usual Practice of Teaching English in Indonesia

English has been ranked as the most significant foreign language worldwide, not to mention in this country, Indonesia, due to the requirement to study and use it for communication. Most of our academics concur that for the next generation to be fully engaged in the global community, they must have a strong command of the English language. Due to this, English is now one of the core academic topics. The majority of parents even think it's best for kids to start learning English at a young age. This has increasingly been the fundamental justification for including local English material in elementary schools, and even in some kindergartens.

These days, foreign language programs tend to begin at an earlier age than in the past, not just in Europe but also on other continents (Nikolov, 2009: xiii). According to Gonzales (1995:58), who cites Nikolov, English is primarily used in the fields of international diplomacy, scientific discourse, and international trade and business because it is the language of financial and international financial transactions, the language of trade negotiations, and the medium of discourse of international business. In addition to encouraging the growth and advancements in the teaching of the English language in non-English speaking nations, this has made English one of the *lingua francas* (Woodford and Jackson, 2003).

The goal of modern English language instruction has been to get students ready to utilize the language successfully in communication. When it comes to encouraging their students to learn and use the language, English teachers have done an excellent job. They always aim to present the context of the spoken language topics being discussed through a variety of engaging exercises. Some of them even explain certain linguistic constructions in the context of the society in which they were utilized. The use of this fact in foreign language schools is quite prevalent. The primary issue may now be whether an explanation of our own culture is provided with the display of this other culture. In the country's contemporary English language education method, this question is still crucial.

What instructors often do in class is just make an effort to achieve the curriculum's stated objectives for teaching and learning. Without conducting a critical study of any potential cultural biases that may be present in the source materials, most teachers are preoccupied with identifying appropriate and pertinent materials. Finding materials that are best suited to the goals of the teaching and learning activities as outlined in the curriculum is usually what comes to mind.

There is currently a consensus that discussing English's culture is necessary for effective English language instruction. The majority of educators concur that teaching the language without also teaching the culture is impossible. Every word, phrase, and sentence must be considered in light of the language's cultural background. To put it another way, we may say that English teachers could also serve as cultural agents. Every English teacher needs to be aware of this; else, they act as both a cultural agent and a new type of imperialist force.

The way that English is currently taught to students may cause them to have a better understanding of foreign culture than their own, or it may even, in extreme cases, cause them to adopt that culture as their own and incorporate its customs and values into their daily lives. Some of our younger pupils might be more focused on learning about the foreign culture than they are on language proficiency.

The loss of our own culture, which our young generations no longer clearly understand, may be the most significant effect of the current English language education methodology. Because they prefer to adopt and act in accordance with the foreign cultural norms and values, our descendants are going to leave behind our own valuable cultural norms and values. They might even lose sight of their cultural origins. All those involved in the teaching and learning of foreign languages should prepare for this by being culturally aware of the target culture and beginning to address the local culture while introducing the target culture to their students.

In order to do this, individuals must first comprehend the idea of "culture," as this term has several definitions. Mesthrie, Swann, Deumer, and Leap's (2009:28) definition of culture is one of the definitions put out. It reads, "Culture is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share, and transmit from generation to generation." In this sense, culture is a "design for living" that establishes what behaviors are proper or acceptable within a given society. The alternative definition of culture is the one put forth by Foley (2001: 14), who sees culture as a transgenerational domain of activities that allow human beings to interact with one another in a social system. These definitions emphasize that culture is something that is passed down from one generation to the next.

Nieto (2010:136) contrasts this definition with one that reads, "the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion." This definition offers a fresh perspective on the term "culture." Nieto also demonstrates that everyone has a culture because everyone engages in social and political interactions that are shaped by history, as well as by factors such as race, ethnicity, language, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity and experience.

Nieto (2010:137-144) mentions some cultural traits in addition to this concept. The following are some of those qualities. First of all, culture is dynamic in the sense that it is active, shifting, and constantly

in motion. Even in its native surroundings, culture is constantly changing as a result of political, social, and other changes in the immediate environment. Culture has many facets, second. This implies, among other things, that race or ethnicity alone cannot be used to define culture. Thirdly, culture is influenced by its surroundings since it is ingrained in its context. Fourth, social, economic, and political elements have an impact on culture. It is generally acknowledged that culture is tied to a specific setting and that the political, historical, and economic contexts in which it is located have a significant impact. Fifth, culture is socially formed and created. The primary underlying cause of this is because humans, who function as cultural agents, alter it. Sixthly, culture may be taught. It implies that culture is not inherited nor transmitted through our DNA. When kids from one ethnic group are adopted by families from another, for instance, this is very obvious to notice. Nieto (2010:144) adds that cultural knowledge is acquired through interactions with families and communities, particularly ethnic and religious culture. Most of the time, it is neither taught nor learnt consciously. That explains why it feels so effortless and natural. Culture is dialectical, to sum up. Nieto also points out that a culture does not generally embody "good" or "bad" values, but rather values that have developed as a result of historical, social, and practical circumstances. Individually, we may regard certain aspects of our own or another culture to be admirable or abhorrent.

For the sake of preserving national identity and achieving the objectives of national education outlined in the Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, it seems urgently necessary to have an innovative way of improving the practice of teaching English language in this country due to the fact that these subject offers students a diverse range of cultural experiences. Nieto (2010) argues that culture is not merely seen as something inherited but can also be something learned.

The Character Education Concept

Although children's and adolescents' moral development and character formation are not solely the result of schooling, there is general agreement that schools should support students' moral development and character formation, according to Nucci and Narvaéz (2008: 5). Education may be defined in terms of the practices that schools and teachers use to influence student learning and development.

Despite the fact that the phrase "character education" isn't specifically specified in the Act of Republic Indonesia on National Educational System, it has emerged as one of the most pressing topics in several seminars or other academic gatherings on the subject of national education. The necessity to strengthen the nation's character has also grown to be one of the government's top priorities. Two publications on the methods for enhancing the development of culture and character education were published by our government in January 2010 through the Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kurikulum and Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional.

The first book is titled *Pengembangan Pendidikan Budaya dan Karakter Bangsa*, while the second book is titled *Bahan Pelatihan Penguatan Metodologi Pembelajaran Berdasarkan Nilai-nilai Budaya untuk Meningkatkan Daya Saing dan Karakter Bangsa*. While the second book mostly serves as a general supplement for schools to conduct and integrate character education, the first book primarily serves as a kind of teachers' guideline for conducting character education in schools. Although these two volumes just offered some broad overviews of the idea of character education, they nonetheless demonstrate the government's intense preoccupation with implementing it in schools. A further examination of the idea of character education would therefore be very valuable.

Additionally, according to Nucci and Narvae (2008: 2), there are certain general divisions in the discussions around moral and character education. The debate over whether morality ultimately depends on judgements made in context or whether character development and morality are oriented on the cultivation of virtues is one major point of contention. Most traditional character educators share this viewpoint. On the other hand, those who emphasize the importance of reason and judgment base their philosophical arguments

on rationalist ethics, which emphasizes the need for moral actions to have their own independent justification based on justice or fairness standards.

This definition gives terms for the idea of character education, also known as moral education or character education. However, the definition of character in the Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2008) is the specific set of characteristics in a person or location that distinguishes them from others.

Character appears to fall entirely within the purview of morality according to the other definition of the term, which is viewed from the perspective of someone who is moralistic, or someone who wants to treat moral categories as broadly as possible and give moral terms the most frequent possible use. Therefore, character education seems to be a part of moral education, and having good character seen as being highly morally upright. The majority of people in the second half of the 20th century are not moralists, hence they have a less straightforward and limiting definition of good character (Kupperman, 1991:9).

In accordance with these criteria, character education can also be defined in different ways, as stated by Berkowitz & Bier (2005:8), specifically:

1. Character education is a nationwide movement that aims to create schools that support young people who are ethical, responsible, and compassionate by emulating and teaching strong character with an emphasis on shared universal values. Schools, districts, and states are making an active, deliberate effort to instill in their student's critical core ethical qualities including compassion, honesty, justice, responsibility, and respect for others and oneself.
2. Character education involves educating kids about fundamental human values including integrity, generosity, bravery, freedom, equality, and respect. The aim is to bring up kids to be self-disciplined, morally upright adults.
3. Character education is a conscious attempt to foster good character based on fundamental virtues that are advantageous to both the person and society.
4. Character education is any intentional strategy used by school staff, frequently in collaboration with parents and community members, to assist children and teens in developing compassion, morality, and responsibility.

According to Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional (2010:4), character is closely related to the attitudes, behaviors, or personalities of a specific person that are developed as the result of internalizing the commonly held virtues that serve as the basis of their beliefs, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors. As a result, developing individual character must be done in order to improve the character of the nation. Individuals must make an effort to develop their character in their own social and cultural environment since they live in a certain social and cultural setting. Additionally, it is necessary to create national culture and character in educational processes that take learners into account as components of their social, cultural, and national cultural environments.

The Importance of Including Local Culture in Teaching English

In keeping with the idea of character education, English language instruction needs a lot of attention in this nation's foreign language teaching techniques in order to promote the absorption of other cultures. When you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural norms, values, and ways of being, thinking, and behaving, according to Brown via Richards and Renandya (2002:12). Since there are cultural differences between English and the local languages as well as the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, it is important that educators and everyone else involved in the practice of teaching foreign languages be aware of these differences.

Even with the provision of KM (Merdeka Belajar), the government has done its best to offer opportunities for the development of educational practices in schools, not to mention for the English subject. This curriculum, in addition to the English Language curriculum, supports the idea of incorporating the local culture into the school curriculum. The use of this curriculum increases the potential for incorporating local

culture into the practice of teaching English. The incorporation of local culture into the practice of teaching English may be regarded as crucial because this subject is frequently thought to give students a direct exposure to the foreign culture.

It should be mentioned that language and culture might be viewed as being inseparable. Language is frequently considered conceptually as a subsystem of culture within cognitive anthropology, but in practice, the structure of language as revealed by modern linguistics has typically functioned as the paradigm for understanding other aspects of culture, according to Foley (2001:19).

Linton (2009:28) adopts Foley's definition and states that culture is "the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share, and transmit from generation to generation." According to these definitions, culture is defined as a "design for living" that gives meaning to the ways and forms of accepted social behaviors, whereas language is defined as "a cultural activity and, at the same time, an instrument for organizing other cultural domains" (Sharifian and Palmer, 2007:1).

The key issues in cross-cultural communication are cultural differences. Grant and Lei (2001:10–11) identify four key issues in intercultural communication pertaining to sociocultural aspects of language, namely: 1) Subjective and objective support of sociocultural and linguistic minority students' identities; 2) constructing curriculum contents implying and reflecting the positive value of the plurality of cultures and languages; 3) developing communicative, action-oriented skills; and 4) accepting sociocultural diversity and the importance of language.

As a result, it is generally acknowledged that teaching a foreign language especially English without explaining its culture is ineffective. Educators who teach English are virtually needed to not only impart the language but also to outline the cultural setting in which this particular language is used. The learners must also learn the culture of the society that using the language they are learning. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the practice of teaching a foreign language because, in order to effectively converse using a foreign language, one has to possess both a strong command of the language and a thorough grasp of its culture.

Regarding preserving our sense of national identity, this is unlikely to be advantageous. Students or learners may view their own culture from a different angle. Some students could believe that the "new culture" is superior to the "previous one." Teachers must be able to clearly explain the idea of "Accept the differences." Understanding that there are other cultures with different norms and values from one's own culture must be clearly articulated. Teachers must take care to prevent this lesson from instilling the idea that one's own culture is inferior to a new one. Alternative methods for conducting teaching and learning in the classroom must be available to teachers.

As a result, it is necessary to have a fresh viewpoint on the practice of teaching English as a second language by incorporating the local culture. Applying this new viewpoint to language instruction stems from the need for educators to incorporate the spirit of character education in order to preserve national identity. In the course of teaching foreign languages, they must be conscious of the internalization of foreign culture. In order to prevent their students from developing a new semantic frame of their own culture, they must be extra cautious when interpreting texts with cultural content. Wherever possible, teachers should incorporate local cultural elements or local knowledge into their lessons to help students learn about the local topic. Maintaining the students' grasp of their own culture is going to prove crucial.

In this context, "local culture" is synonymous with "tradition," which is described as "inherited behavioral customs that are still practiced in the society, resulting from the judgments or assumptions that everything that has previously existed is the right ones" (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2005:1208). The phrase "tradition" is related to another term with a similar meaning, "traditional," which is an attitude or a set of behaviors that always adhere to ingrained norms and practices.

From an archaeological standpoint, the terms tradition and local culture refer to what Wales (via Poespowardojo, 1986:30) defines as "the sum of the cultural characteristics which the vast majority of a

people have in common as a result of their experience in early life" (local genius; Koentjaraningrat, 1986:80). While Anderson (2006:6) refers to the phrase "local genius" as "cultural artefacts of a particular kind." According to these definitions, the phrase "local genius" refers to the expression of a society's personality as seen in the orientation of the society's ways of life and ideas that are typically utilized to see and face the outside world and are shown in their everyday behaviors.

Given these notions of local culture and the importance of preserving national identity, it is going to be extremely useful to incorporate local cultural values and norms into the practice of teaching English as a second language. Incorporating local cultural values can be a different strategy for ensuring that students are conscious of their national identity and cultural heritage when they encounter or learn about a foreign culture ideology assimilated in the process of teaching English.

It is widely accepted that cultural acculturation occurs when people from different cultures, especially those from the West, communicate with each other informally. This is frequently followed by the unconscious internalization of the foreign culture through the use of various media, not to mention English language instruction. The fundamental outcome of this cross-cultural interaction is the development of Western cultural values as the dominant ones toward Indonesian identity and nationalism. The idea that nationalism is actually important for upholding national identity has been put forth by Anderson (2006:1–15), who sees nationalism as more than just an imaginary phenomenon that needs to be constantly rebuilt and maintained by the entire society.

Therefore, the integration of a foreign culture (Western culture) in the practice of teaching English as a second language warrants serious concern since it could lead to us becoming the targets of a new form of Western imperialism and colonialism. The integration of local culture into the practice of teaching English as a second language meets its relevance and significance in relation to the significance of developing, maintaining, and conserving nationalism for the nation-state of Indonesia.

The incorporation of the local culture into the practice of teaching English as a second language can take the form of choosing resources that reflect local cultural norms and values, as well as providing further justification for any foreign cultural norms encountered throughout the teaching and learning of English.

But without the help of everyone involved in the practice of teaching English, including instructors, textbook publishers, parents, and the government, this insertion of local culture is unlikely to be successful.

CONCLUSION

It is well known that the main goal of English language instruction has been to get students ready to utilize the language successfully in communication. The majority of people concur that in order to effectively teach English, one must also address the language's culture, hence teaching a language is impossible without also teaching the culture. However, this could cause the pupils to have a better grasp of foreign culture than their own, or even, in an extreme case, could cause them to adopt foreign culture as their own and assimilate its traditions and values into their daily life. All those involved in the teaching and learning of foreign languages should prepare for this by being culturally aware of the target culture and beginning to address the local culture while introducing the target culture to their students.

Because teaching the accompanied culture cannot be separated from the practice of teaching the English language, and because maintaining national identity is important, it proves useful to incorporate local cultural values and conventions into the practice of teaching the English language. Incorporating local cultural values can be a different approach to prepare students' cultural backgrounds and identities, which can also help them become more aware of their nationalism when they encounter or learn about a foreign culture ideology internalized in the practice of teaching English. One of the objectives of character education is to foster a sense of national cultural awareness (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010:7).

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