

## The Position of Culture in Elt in Indonesia

Fikri Yansyah<sup>1)</sup>

fikriyansyah11@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The teaching of English language in the 21st century will always be tied with the cultural aspects as language and culture are inseparable. The objective of this study was to find out students' perception towards the position of culture in ELT in Indonesia. The research participants were 100 students of English Education Study Program of Islamic State University Raden Fatah Palembang that were chosen randomly. Questionnaires and interviews were employed as methods in obtaining the data. The result of the study showed that the prospective English teachers in Indonesia realized the important position of culture in ELT in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *culture, perception, culture in ELT in Indonesia*

**Abstrak:** Pengajaran bahasa Inggris di abad ke-21 akan selalu berhubungan erat dengan aspek kebudayaan sebagaimana bahasa dan budaya merupakan satu-kesatuan. Artikel ini bertujuan mencari tahu persepsi siswa terhadap posisi budaya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di Indonesia. Subyek dari penelitian ini adalah 100 mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris UIN Raden Fatah Palembang yang dipilih secara acak. Dalam penelitian ini, angket dan juga wawancara digunakan untuk memperoleh data. Dari penelitian ini didapatkan bahwa calon guru bahasa Inggris di Indonesia menyadari pentingnya peran budaya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di Indonesia.

**Kata-kata kunci:** *budaya, persepsi, budaya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di Indonesia*

---

<sup>1)</sup> *Lecturer at UIN Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia*

Language education is indispensable to our students' achievement in the world of the forthcoming life, especially in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (P21) mentioned that acquiring other languages and absorbing the culture of the people who express them is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill that is vivacious to success in the worldwide atmosphere in which our pupils will live and work (2017, p. 2). For that reason, the teaching of English language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will always be tied with the culture.

The instigation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century portrayed concentration to the vigorous part of culture in language classrooms and sharp culture as an ultimate portion of the second and or foreign language learning method, and the foremost point that remains is discovering actual ways for assimilating culture and language that concoct the learners to commune and work together efficiently in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Dema & Moeller, 2012, p. 76-77).

It is commonly acknowledged that language is an element of culture and that it works a very central role in it. Language concurrently imitates culture, and is prejudiced and shaped by it (Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012, p. 88), because language is culture. Studying a second language devoid of studying its culture looks imprecise and incomplete (Erfani, 2014, p. 318).

Next, it would be intricate, if not unrealistic, to teach a language without teaching some sorts of its culture (Neff & Jr 2013; and Hilliard, 2014), as language is one of the artefacts of culture (Yule, 2010, p. 267).

Gorjian & Aghvami (2017, p.71) recommended that a culture class is ominously beneficial in terms of language skills, levitation cultural consciousness, altering attitudes to native and target civilizations, and influence to the education profession.

At utmost, the cultural features are envisioned to give many advantages to learners as they can enable them bear into both linguistically and interculturally proficient learners (Ho, 2009, pp. 72-73). What's more, the cultural substance could offer to broaden students' opinion about culture and invest them to advance social manners such as tolerance and admiration for diversity or is famous as multicultural competence (Troncoso, 2010, p. 91).

More specifically, in terms of English for

education, the teaching of culture should create learners alert of speech acts, subtexts, propriety, that is, proper or improper attitudes, as well as provide them with the chance to act out being an affiliate of the target culture (Gorjian & Aghvami, 2017, p. 77).

In contrast, educationalists in Indonesia have long concerned that the widespread knowledge of English would have a harmful effect on Indonesian culture, morals and behavior. This threat has usually been depicted as an hazard of western "liberal values" which is exciting because English of course condenses all of the values from the U.K. and the U.S.A. plus conventional and other values and not only the liberal ones (Lauder, 2008, p.12).

This debatable notion is triggered the investigation of the position of culture in English language teaching in Indonesia.

### **Language and Culture**

Many professionals had put high contemplation towards the affiliation between language and culture. Lust (2006, p. 9), mentioned that language is first and primary figurative. Sounds, words and sentences signify and catch eternity of possible significances and purposes. While, culture could be demarcated as the transmissible ethics, idea, and ways of living which are shared by societies of the same public party (Kawar, 2012, p. 105). Cultural context is expressed in terms of ones stances, views, character physiognomies, principles, prospects; etc (Gardner, 2007, p. 13).

Furthermore, language is a fragment of culture and it is profoundly rooted in culture; therefore, language teachers cannot pay no attention to the role of culture in teaching language skills. Further, language teaching and learning are not disjointed from culture and all its elements. These elements are existing in interpersonal communication amongst people in the publics. Thus behaviors, manners, nods, carriages and principles can be transferred from one civilization to the other civilization (Gorjian & Aghvami, 2017, p. 71-77).

As language and culture have an indissoluble and conjointly reliant relationship (Choudhury, 2013; Chahak & Basirizadeh, 2012; Ho, 2009). Tantri (2013, p. 39) undertakes that language is invincible, absolute and liable greatly by the culture. Languages translate more than information. They also are both a mode and an expression of the cultural morals of the people that use

them (Lauder, 2008, p. 17).

Besides, Cakir (2006, pp. 154-155) reasoned that language is linked to civic and cultural value, language is assumed to be a social and cultural phenomenon. Language and culture are indistinguishably linked, this bond of language and culture is widely documented, conversational behavior and cultural structures are unified, as there is relative between the system and substance of a language and the principles, values, and essentials present in the culture of its utterers.

As well, Byram (2013, p. 4) theorized that language education relates on cultures associated with the language in matter in order to conquer other humanistic arguments, called, thankful community of other humanities and their cultures, and in order to upgrade the efficiency of interaction and dialogue.

The point is language and culture are devoted. Language bears from culture and culture would exist with the presence of the language.

### **Culture in ELT**

As language and culture are indivisible, it is wholly crucial to take in culture in the language education procedure (Moirano 2012; Wang, 2011; and Cakir, 2006). Correspondingly, Azgari (2011, p. 889) also references that the native language is cultured along with the behaviors and attitudes of the communal group, and these techniques and attitudes become term through the language. In this way the language is a central portion of the action public society. As the result, students cannot accurately study the language till they have also studied the cultural situations in which the language happens (Aoki & Granville, 2015; and Choudhury, 2013).

Erfani (2014, pp. 318-319) indicates that language is a culture. Learning a second language deprived of learning its culture looks vague and imperfect. Cultivating a language does not specify the simple exhibition of some information about the form, words and phonetics of that language, but it should contain cultural element. Hence, in order to converse a language well, one has to be able to undertake in that language, and alleged is effectually prominent.

Accordingly, Mekheimer (2011, p. 44) contended that culture was approved to the center as it became a remarkable facet of the English language education (ELT) curriculum. The insertion of culture as an imperative

component of language presentation to its novices has been openly itemized in many TEFL resources as one of the key aims of foreign language teaching. Additionally, the envisioned cultural rudiments are supposed to supply many advantages to learners as they can enable them turn into both linguistically and interculturally skillful learners (Ho, 2009, p. 72-73).

Therefore, the idea of English education is to promote students' comprehensive English capability by absorbing language and its culture. In efficacious instruction and learning of both language and cultural contextual knowledge, cultural preamble donates to nurture students' cultural consciousness of target language. Thus, students can expand their English comprehensive ability and cultural interface of the target language. This finalizes the target of foreign language teaching (Wang, 2011, p. 230).

### **Culture in English Materials in Indonesia**

Richard (2001) confers that materials are the crucial elements in most language programs while Pardo and Téllez (2009) presuppose that language learning materials establish a critical aspect in assembling an valuable teaching and learning situation.

The cultural content also appears in English Material in Indonesia. Unfortunately, the result of some research showed that only there is little proportion of cultural material in the textbooks. Also, the result from Sorongan, Susanti & Syahri (2014) and Yansyah (2016) showed that there is imbalance proportion between local and target language culture material in English language textbooks in Indonesia.

### **ELT in Indonesia**

An abundant social explanation of English in Indonesia from Independence to the present-day would essentially encompass information about the role that English has cooperated in civilization at great, and in certain part in commercial, policy, education and the broadcasting. However, constrictions such as limited time and the struggle of following down satisfactory sources made this dreadful. Concisely, however, it is probable to notice that English has playacted a significant role in education as it is a required subject in schools and it is improbable that university students would ample there courses without being allocated at least some readings in English. For the time being, commerce people discovery progressively that concepts for

accomplishment in managing are available in English. It is fairly common to bargain people living in the country's big towns will eagerly settle that everyone desires English to some scopes (Lauder, 2008, p.10).

Nowadays, in Indonesia, the teaching of English as a foreign language appears to be on the intersection due to two different curricula execution. Curriculum deviations are obligatory; however, the modifications should not be counter productive to the accomplishment of expected learning capability. The curriculum projects have fluctuated from the 1980 Curriculum, the 2006 Curriculum, and the 2013 Curriculum, to remark only a few. The fluctuate has provoked a sort of negativity and positivity among language teachers, educationists and specialists as well (Tantra, 2015, p. 1).

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted by employing the questionnaires and also interview section as the way in obtaining the data. The point of this study was to explore the mindset of university students of English Education Study Program to the role of culture in cultivating their English. The researcher proposed to clarify the attitude of learners to the role of culture in ELT in whole and textbooks and contented in certain in enlightening their English language.

### **Participants**

The study was conceded 100 students in English Education Study Program of State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang, which were randomly selected. The reason of choosing the English Education Study Program is because their perspective is really important for the development of English language teaching in Indonesia. Also, it is crucial to choose the participants because they might understand with all the terms in English education.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments developed for the study were as follows:

#### *Questionnaire*

One of the ways to gain the answers to the research question was by directing a questionnaire to all the students. Questionnaires encircled closed questions because they were easier for quantification. The researcher adapted these questions from Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009), with

their adjustment. At the research, about 12 questions were given to the participants.

The Likert Scale delivered an easily calculable set of solutions for closed questions. The participants could choose Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Do not know (DK) option. The use of difficult words or difficult grammatical constructions was avoided.

#### *Interview*

The interview was conducted in supporting the data of the questionnaire, the researcher confirmed the answer from the questionnaire to dig deeper information.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

After conducting the research, the researcher found the result of the questionnaires. The result of the study is presented in the form of percentage and it is obtainable in the following discussion, over all data could be seen from the table below.

The students' perception was clearly discussed and showed from each item. The students' perception towards question 1, is most of the students agreed that there is little place for culture in textbooks in Indonesia in which 60% agree (60 participants) with the statement. Related to question 2, the majority of the students disagreed that the content materials or textbooks are superficial and it is about 44% (44 participants) from all over the participants.

Next, English teaching in Indonesia does not foster learner's intercultural communication in English, the popular chosen is the participants agreed with this statement or about 55% (55 participants) believe with it (item 3). The dominant participant disagreed that the teaching of English should start as early as the first grade in the Indonesian schools, the data is about 79% (79 participants) from all over the data (item 4). English textbooks should focus on target culture and 44% (44 participants) disagreed with this idea (item 5). English textbooks should focus on local culture and about 52% (52 participants) participants chose agreed (item 6).

Meanwhile, most of the participants had the same idea that English textbooks should focus on international target culture, it is about 43% the participants chose agree also 43% chose disagree (item 7). Question 8, most selected English input is neutral and artificial and most of the participants or about

53% (53 participants) do not know with this idea. After that, English teachers and students should be permitted to decide what is culturally necessary or unnecessary and 62%

(52 participants) agreed (item 9). Almost all English teachers know the significance of natural and authentic texts and 52% (52 participants) agree with that idea (item 10).

**Table 1. Result of The Questionnaires**

No	Item	A	D	DK
1	There is little place for culture in textbooks in Indonesia	60%	31%	9%
2	The content materials or textbooks are superficial	28%	44%	28%
3	English teaching in Indonesia does not foster learner's intercultural communication in English.	30%	55%	15%
4	English should start as early as the first grade in the Indonesian schools.	79%	19%	2%
5	English textbooks should focus on target culture.	40%	44%	16%
6	English textbooks should focus on local culture.	38%	52%	10%
7	English textbooks should focus on international target culture	43%	43%	14%
8	English input is neutral and artificial	30%	17%	53%
9	English teachers and students should be permitted to decide what is culturally necessary or unnecessary.	62%	12%	26%
10	English teachers know the significance of natural and authentic texts	52%	10%	38%
11	Indonesian students could have better opportunities in English were taught as effectively as it is being taught in the neighbouring countries.	88%	4%	8%
12	The government should decrease its direct influence on the education in general and English teaching in particular.	41%	21%	37%

Note: N: 100 A: Agree D: Disagree DK: Do Not Know

Fantastically, 88% (88 participants) agreed that Indonesian students could have better opportunities if English were taught as effectively as it is being taught in the neighboring countries. At the last, from question 12, most of the participants agreed that the government should decrease its direct influence on the education in general and English teaching in particular with 41% (41 participants).

### Discussion

All the perceptions above indicated that the prospective English teachers in Indonesia approved that culture is really important in ELT in Indonesia. This idea also argued the notion that we have to avoid English and its cultural elements and values because it would bring the harmful for our own culture and value.

It is also known that according to all participants, the position of culture in ELT in Indonesia is really important. It could be seen from the result of each item's percentage. Also, it's important to let the teacher and the students decide the necessary

and unnecessary cultural aspects in English language teaching in Indonesia. Another view is, all the participants agreed that, in teaching the cultural content, we can not only focus on one culture only but all the cultural aspects, namely local, target and also international culture, this perception is different from the result of studies from Sorongan, Susanti and Syahri (2014) and Yansyah (2016), in which the cultural materials are presented imbalance in the English material (textbooks) in Indonesia. Other important aspect is, the government should decrease the direct influence to the education in Indonesia, and the participants hoped that the government can give more opportunities for educationalists to take part.

### CONCLUSION

Obtaining the perception from the participants, this study enhances our knowledge that, the prospective English teachers in Indonesia realize the important position of culture in English language teaching in Indonesia. This study also disputes the idea from some educationalists

in Indonesia that English and its cultural elements bring a hazard for education in Indonesia.

This study is potentially gives the contribution for the educators and government in Indonesia to improve the cultural aspects in ELT in Indonesia, such as the balance proportion of cultural aspects in the material of language teaching.

## REFERENCES

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and Partnership for 21st Century Skills P21. (November, 2017). 21st Century Skills Map. Retrived from [https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/21stCenturySkillsMap/p21\\_worldlanguagesmap.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/21stCenturySkillsMap/p21_worldlanguagesmap.pdf)
- Aoki, M. A., & Granville, P. (2015). Washington state K-12 world languages learning standards. *Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*.
- Asgari, A. (2011). The compatibility of cultural value in Iranian EFL textbooks. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(4). -
- Byram, M. (2013). Language teaching and its contexts. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 1(1), 1-26.
- Cakir, I. (2006). Developing cultural awareness in foreign language teaching. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE*, 7(3), -
- Chahak, S. M., & Basirizadeh, F. S. (2012). The study of culture on foreign language teaching. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2(6).
- Choudhury, M. H. (2013). Teaching culture in EFL: Implications, challenges and strategies. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 13(1), 20-24.
- Dema, O., & Moeller, A. J. (2012). Teaching culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century language classroom. Paper presented at Centarl States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language. Nebraska, NE.
- Erfani, S. M. (2014). Source culture, targets or Interculture?: Iranian English language teachers' perception of culture. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)*, 6(1), 317-337.
- Gardner, R. C. (2007). Motivation and second language acquisition. *PORTA LINGUARUM*, 8, 9-20.
- Gorjian, B., & Aghvami, F. (2017). The Comparative Study of EFL Teachers and Learners' Perceptions on the Importance of Teaching Culture. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Learning*, 3(3), 71-78.
- Hilliard, A. D. (2014). A critical examination of representation and culture in four English language textbooks. *Language Education in Asia*, 5(2).
- Ho, S. T. K. (2009). Addressing culture in EFL classrooms: The challenge of shifting from a traditional to an intercultural stance. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 6(1), 63-76.
- Kawar, T. I. (2012). Cross-cultural differences in management. *International Journal of Business and Social Science [Special Issue -March 2012]*, 3(6), -
- Lauder, A. (2008). The status and function of English in Indonesia: A review of key factors. *MAKARA, Sosial Humaniora*, 12(1), 9-20.
- Lust, C. B. (2006). *Child language acquisition and growth*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahboudi, H. M. & Javdani, F. (2012). The teaching of English in Iran: The place of culture. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 3(5), 87-95.
- Mekheimer, M. A. (2011). Impact of the target culture on foreign language learning: A case study. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Communication*, 7(1), 43-52.
- Moirano, M. C. (2012). Teaching the students and not the book: Addressing the problem of culture teaching in EFL in Argentina. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, 6, 71-96.
- Neff, P., & Jr, J. R. (2013). Tasks for integrating language and culture teaching. *English Teaching Forum*, 2, 12-20.
- Pardo, N. A., & Téllez, M. F. (2009). ELT materials: The key to fostering effective teaching and learning settings. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 11(2), 171-186.
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Sorongon, D. A., Susanti, R., & Syahri, I. (2014). An analysis of local and target culture integration in English textbooks. *Lingua, Jurnal Bahasa & Sastra*, 15(1).
- Tantri, N. R. (2013). English as a global language phenomenon and the need of cultural conceptualizations awareness in Indonesian ELT. *IJ-ELTS: International Journal of 1 English Language & Translation Studies*, 1.

- Tatra, D. K (2015). Teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia: A literature review. *Lingual: Journal of Language and Culture*, 4(1).
- Troncoso, C. R. (2010). The effect of language materials on the development of intercultural competence. In Tomlinson, B and Masuhara, H. (Eds.), *Research for materials development in language learning*. (pp. 83-102). London, United Kingdom: Continuum.
- Wang, J. (2011). Culture differences and English teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2).
- Yansyah, F. (2016). Local and target language culture proportion in English Textbooks: “English on sky 2” and “when English rings a bell VIII.”(Undergraduate Thesis.) State Islamic University Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The study of language* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.