

IMPROVING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF INDONESIAN CULTURE THROUGH ENGLISH LEARNING BASED LOCAL CULTURE CONTEXT

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Abstract: Learning English as a foreign language usually related to learning culture of the target language. However, for maintaining local culture and fostering Indonesian unity, the researchers try to use local cultural material in teaching English. This study aims to know students' understanding toward Indonesian culture, and to know their English speaking improvement after inserting local culture knowledge in Learning. The culture focused on this study are lampungnese, javanese, sundanese, padangnese, and palembangnese ethnic since these ethnics are dominant in students' environment. This study used quasi-experimental design. The participants were the second semester students of English Department of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu. In collecting the data the researchers employed speaking test for measuring students' speaking skill and open-ended questionnaire for knowing students' understanding on local culture. The result shows that transmitting local cultural knowledge through English learning makes students to be more familiar and understand the local culture. Moreover their awareness of cultural diversity are improved due to the fact that they more appreciate on the differences that cause an effective communication in social life. Consequently, students' speaking skill are improved through practicing English as means for transferring local culture knowledge.

Keywords: *Local Culture knowledge, English Learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is rich of culture which the society should be tolerance to cultural diversity exist in their environment. It also occurred in students' surrounding where at school they meet friends from different culture background. As Moechram (2014) stated that students are expected to respect differences existed in society and to give empathy to the society from the different culture. In reality, many young generation do not really understand culture surrounding even they do not understand their own culture. How can they comprehend others culture if they

less understand their culture. Less understanding of other cultures can cause misunderstanding in society even causes in harmonious in social life. That is why in learning English as a foreign language, it is a need to make an English class as a place for students to learn various culture. EFL teacher should use learning process as one of ways to conserve knowledge culture for young generation. In some cases, learning English as a target language in Indonesia perspective is not merely learning culture of target language. Moreover, language is part of culture. Teaching a language can not be

saparated from culture. Then in language learning, culture is also classified as the fifth skill after listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Aly: 2014). In language learning, knowledge of local culture and foreign language have to be introduced to the learners for inreasing students culture awareness and enhancing their communication competence.

Regarding to the conditions many researchers have proven the relationship between cultures and language. The relevance of cultures and learning of English as a foreign language has been researched by some previous research. Suciani et al (2012) has been investigating the concept of learning English contemporary Balinese culture for elementary school students (SD) in Bali. This research aims to develop global culture as well as facilitate students in learning English because the material they learn is familiar for students. The subject of English-language lessons based on Balinese culture can accelerate the mastery of students' English because the lessons are based on local wisdom. Furthermore Prastiwi (2013) examines the use of folktales or folklore as a medium for teaching English as a foreign language. The study aims to help students master the target language is English and facilitate teachers in teaching local culture. This research has been conducted in Solo, Central Java. The results of the study identified that the introduction of Indonesian citizens facilitates students in mastering English and makes them comfortable in using new languages. In addition to the introduction of various cultures, values, and ethnic characteristics through folklore, cultural awareness is able to build the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

The importance of knowledge about cultural differences in the context of English learning has also been done by foreign researchers. Chinch (2013) examines the perspectives and attitudes of Vietnamese learners against the different

cultures that are integrated into the practice of English language learning. The results of the study showed that participants argued that the various cultures represented in English language learning have improved their cultural understanding and their intercultural competence. While Choudhury (2014) in his research entitled "The Role of Culture in Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language" examines cultural relations and language and its role in learning English as a foreign language. In this case the culture in question is the culture of the target language.

In contrast to previous studies, this research is focused on enhancing the understanding of the culture of the archipelago through the contextual English language learning. The local culture refers to the participant culture of the various tribes in STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu. Based on the survey results, although most of the students are born and live in Lampung, not all students come from the Lampung tribe. Given Lampung is a heterogeneous area. This area is inhabited by various tribes such as Lampung, Java, Sunda, Betawi, Bali, Palembang, Padang, and Batak. In the English classroom the material presented were connected to local culture such as norms, values, habits, and customs held by the students. Then in terms of mastery of the target language is English, the focus of research is to improve students' speaking skills. In order to help students understanding of the Indonesian culture and this research used the 'Speaking' (speaking) class as a form of English learning to help improve students' understanding of the culture, in this case the depths are Lampung, Java, Sunda, Padang, and Palembang. By using this 'Speaking' learning, students are expected to be able to speak or communicate by considering the culture of the other person. Hall (2002) mentions that communicative competence does consider cultural aspects of language

learning with more emphasis on language use, but in practice, language is still regarded as a homogeneous system separate from the interaction of speakers in everyday life. About communicative ability, Zheng (2014) says that effective communication between cultures requires intermediaries to gain intercultural communicative competence or in English it is called intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

In speaking, Burns (quoted in Goh: 2013) categorizes two approaches in speaking teaching: First is a direct approach. This approach focuses directly on the development of isolated speech skills and relates to the precision of sentence structure and other forms of language, especially the pronunciation. Then, the second approach is called the indirect approach. This approach focuses on speech production during communicative activities, such as group work or in pairs, and it is more related to the fluency of speech. Burns (in Goh: 2013) adds that this approach involves students in practicing the language used for specific purposes and functions. As an example. Students are asked to describe an image to their partner who has not seen the image. The basic assumption of this indirect approach is that when students practice how to speak in class effectively, they will transfer the development of their speaking skills through communicative activities to the real situation. This study is about improving students' understanding of Indonesian culture through contextual English learning in the 2nd semester students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Education Year 2016/2017 academic year. By using this English learning ('Speaking' learning), students are expected to be able Enhance their understanding of some cultures in Indonesia, as well as improve their ability to speak and recognize texts in English.

2. METHOD

This research used quassy experimental research design. The treatments that were given to the correspondent in this research is contextual speaking learning of local culture. The design of this study used only one group. The subject of this research is the 2nd semester students of the STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu that consist of 23 students where their cultural backgrounds are varied, such as Lampungnese, Javanese, Sundanese, Padangnese, and Palembangnese. To obtain the data, the instrument used is a test consisting of pre-test and post-test. The test type was speaking test that aims to determine the students 'speaking ability. Then observation and open ended questionnaire were also employed to know students' understanding and perception of the culture existed in their environment.

The research procedures are firstly, the researcher gave pre-test in speaking. The researcher held a dialogue with the participants one by one. They were asked about their own culture and others culture. Secondly, the researcher gave information and delivered teaching material about five cultures in general. Thirdly, the participants were asked to describe their own culture. Having told about their own culture, they have to describe other cultures. Fourthly, the participants told about legend, myth, fairy tale, and fable both from their culture and others culture. Fifthly, the participants delivered argument and opinion related to cultural diversity. Sixthly the researcher provided post-test in form of monologue speaking. Lastly, participants answered open-ended questionnaire.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students understanding on Indonesian culture

The result of observation and questionnaires showed that before treatment most of the participants could not explained their culture in detail. They

also do not care to their friends' culture. Sometimes they viewed others only from their own perspective without considering the reason why their friend who has different culture acts differently. Having talked about various cultures. The participants are able to identified their own culture. They also explain about traditional food, instruments, custom, and habit. They conducted discussion about cultural diversity, the role and the influence of culture. Having listened various information of cultures, they got language input. Therefore they get cultural knowledge, they can explain other cultures and respect the cultural differences.

Excerpt 1

At the first, I though Padangnese people are stingy. After geting information from my friends that people from Padang is not stingy but they manage expending carefully because most of Padangnese people are businessman. I understand them and more respect them. (Im)

The participant shows possitive attitude toward custom from other cultures. She has changed her negative perception into possitive perception after getting information and detail explanation about persons' character from certain ethnic.

Excerpt 2

I never go to east java, but I know Bromo mountain from my friend's story. It gives me prior knowledge about the history of Bromo, the condition and its description. It is really interesting. I am interested to go there. (May)

A Javanese participant described a famous destination in east Java. She described in detail and showed the picture to the class. Consequently, it is attracting her friends, May, to visit Bromo mountain.

Excerpt 3

I was born and grow up in Lampung. When my lecturer asked me about

“Siger”. I could say nothing. Eventhough I know that it is famous but I could not explain the meaning of Siger.(Dell)

People who live in Lampung does not automatically understand about famous symbol in Lampung. The topic given in speaking class has fostered Dell's awareness to learn and understand the characteristic of Lampung ethnic.

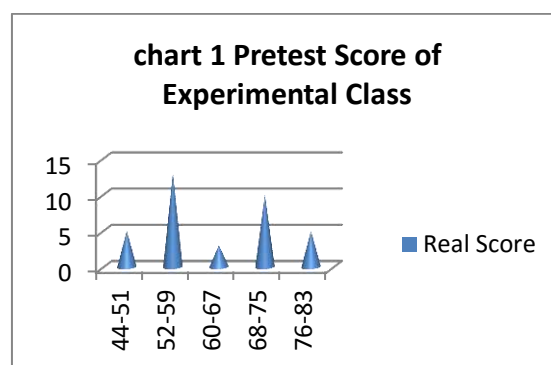
Excerpt 4

When my lecturer said that the speaking topic was about Indonesian culture. we were very excited. But when we were asked to talk about our culture. It was more interesting. We were enthusiastic involved in speaking class. All of us got turn to speak up. (participant)

The participants expressed their pleasure when talking local culture in speaking class. They assume that this kind of learning material gives stimulus for them to speak up. Then, they are challenged to master the material related to local culture because they think that it would be embarrassing if they could not accomplish the task well. They tried hard to transmit it in English. In other words bringing local culture as a material in learning English has fostering students motivation in Learning English.

Students' speaking skill

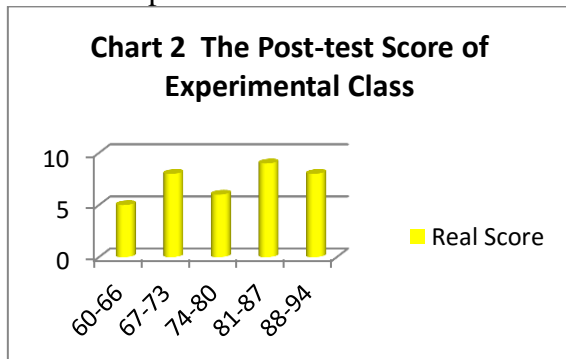
The chart below shows the pre-test score of experimental class:



The chart above shows that students' capabilities in speaking skill are fair to poor. There were five students who got

score 36-43. There was no student who got score 44-51, three students gained 52-59, ten of them got 60-67, and five students earned 68-75. The mean score of experimental class pretest score was 58.98.

The chart below shows the post-test score of experimental class:

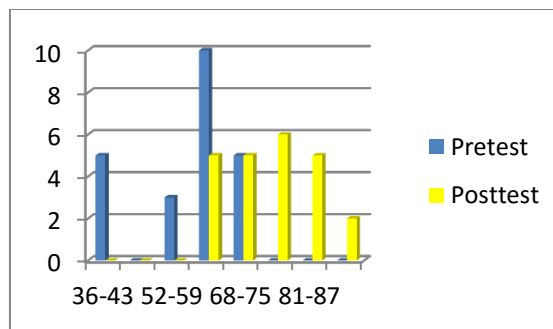


From the chart, it can be seen that students' ability in speaking is excellent to very good category. The students who got score 60-66 were five. The number of students who gained 67-73 was five. There were six students who got 74-80, five students earned 81-87, and two of them got 88-94. The mean score of experimental class posttest was 75.17. The table and the chart below shows the difference between the pre-test and post-test:

Table 1. The Data Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-test in Experimental Class

Data Description	Scores	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Number of Subjects (N)	23	23
Mean (M)	58.98	75.17
Standard of Deviation	11.52	48.52
Ranges	39	34
Maximum Scores	75	94
Minimum Scores	36	60

Chart 3. The Difference between Pretest and Posttest of Experimental Class



Based on the chart, it can be seen that there are no significant differences between pre-test and post-test in experimental class. There were some improvements in the score of post-test. It was shown that the lowest score in pre-test was ranges 36-43 while in post-test it was ranges 60-67. Only some students showed an improvement from lower to middle score such as from ranges 36-43 to 60-67. There was no students who got score 76-94 in pre-test, but in post-test some of students got it.

The result of participants' score identify that they made impressive improvement in speaking skill. At the preliminary phase, they have less difficulty in grammatical sentence, and have big problem in pronunciation and content. Moreover their vocabulary mastery was also limited. Having practiced to speak about local culture. They got enhancing in speaking. Because they keep practicing to pay attention on their friends' speaking, they got language input such vocabulary and the way how their friends pronounce the words properly. Then each participants have chance to speak up. Thus, the participants obtained many vocabularies that assist them elaborate their content when talking about local culture and they are able to improve their pronunciation.

Students Understanding in Recognizing Genre Text

Having practiced speaking during the lesson. The participants are able to identify the generic structure, language feature, and social function of descriptive

text, narrative text, and hortatory exposition. They can describe people, thing and place well. They are able to tell the story related to the cultures. They have ability to explain something and give argument to the topics given. This finding supports previous research (Aly, 2014; Prastiwi, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that culture and language are always contiguous. Learning a target language (English) not merely associated with the culture target language but also related to cultural background. Learning English based on local culture content is beneficial to socialize and conserve local culture. It is required to develop language learning material. For instance, all of learning material including text, dialogue, monologue, and the exercise cover topics related with local culture. Thus, transmitting local cultural knowledge through English learning gives some advantages. It makes students to be more familiar and understand the local culture. Moreover their awareness of cultural diversity are improved due to the fact that they more appreciate on the differences that cause an effective communication in social life. Students' speaking skill are improved too through practicing English as means for transferring local culture knowledge.

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