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Chapter 10

Integrating Sundanese Culture into The English Teaching and Learning Process in the Higher Education Context

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Abstract: *In an increasingly globalized society, it is becoming more important to incorporate local cultures into educational frameworks, particularly when teaching non-native languages. This article explores the integration of Sundanese culture into the English language teaching and learning process in higher education. Focusing on the dynamic interaction between local cultural elements and foreign language acquisition, the study underscores the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and traditions to enhance the learning experience. Drawing from recent research in language pedagogy, cultural studies, and education, the article discusses the potential benefits of such integration in fostering culturally responsive teaching, improving language acquisition, and enriching student identities.*

Keywords: *Cultural Integration, English Language Teaching, Higher Education, Language pedagogy, Sundanese Culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective and meaningful language acquisition has long been acknowledged to be facilitated by incorporating culture into language instruction (Kramsch, 2017). Integrating local cultural components into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can help close the gap between the target language and students' native identities, leading to deeper comprehension and engagement. A notable cultural group in Indonesia, where several civilizations cohabit, is the Sundanese, whose rich customs, beliefs, and practices offer a special chance for educational integration.

The ongoing integration of culture into language education is still a major issue in the more considerable pedagogical authority. Historically, Western-centric viewpoints have been dominant in English language teaching (ELT), with minimal regard for the variety of cultural backgrounds of students (Liddicoat, 2020; Liddicoat et al., 2020). The latest developments in global educational practices emphasize integrating local culture to foster more relevant and contextualized learning experiences (Cheung et al., 2013). Native to West Java, Indonesia, the Sundanese culture offers a rich legacy, including its language, arts, social norms, and values, all of which are underrepresented in popular language courses. Including this cultural knowledge in English language instruction in Indonesian higher education could provide a more inclusive and comprehensive learning environment that preserves students' cultural identities while promoting their English competency.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although a lot of literature has been produced on incorporating general cultural components into teaching foreign languages, less attention has been paid to particular cultural groups, especially in Indonesia. Western cultures have been the subject of most studies on cultural integration in EFL settings, and the influence of indigenous cultures in non-Western nations has not been examined. This study addresses the underrepresentation of indigenous cultures, particularly Sundanese culture, in English language education within Indonesian higher education. Although English is a crucial global lingua franca (Jenkins, 2018; Llorca, 2020), its teaching in Indonesia often excludes local cultural perspectives, resulting in a curriculum detached mainly from students' cultural realities (Marcellino, 2015). This lack of cultural integration limits students' engagement and potentially diminishes their ability to connect deeply with the language. Furthermore, as English becomes increasingly necessary for global communication, teacher educators must rethink traditional pedagogical approaches to language learning by integrating local cultural elements to enhance relevance and engagement (Herdi et al., 2023).

3. OBJECTIVE

Integrating Sundanese culture into the English teaching and learning process in higher education, particularly at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bogor Raya in West Java, Indonesia, is multifaceted. It aims to enhance cultural awareness, improve language skills, promote intercultural competence, foster critical thinking, support character education, and encourage active student learning. By achieving these objectives, educators can create a more enriching educational experience that prepares students for local and global contexts.

4. RELATED WORKS

Scholars have been interested in integrating culture into language learning for many years. The contributions of culture to language learning have been extensively covered in the literature, with particular attention paid to the effects of integrating both the target and local cultures into language instruction. In this section, we review some of the significant scholarly works that address the intersection of culture and language teaching, especially in non-Western contexts, emphasizing integration of indigenous cultures such as the Sundanese culture, into English language curricula.

4.1 Cultural Integration in ELT

A growing body of research in applied linguistics and language pedagogy stresses incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into language learning. Kramsch (2017) emphasizes the need for culture in language education since she contends that learning a language is inseparable from understanding culture. She says that including culture in the classroom helps students to develop "intercultural competency," which lets them negotiate cultural variations and enhance their language ability. Byram (2020) supports this viewpoint by highlighting the importance of foreign language students interacting with the language and the cultural context in which it is used through his concept of "intercultural communicative competence." These fundamental theories contend that cultural content improves the educational process by promoting global awareness and making learning more relevant. Integrating local culture into English language teaching can enhance the learning experience for students. It allows students to see the relevance of the language to their everyday lives and helps them connect better with the language by reflecting on their cultural backgrounds (Wutun et al., 2018). Hence, many academics support switching from Western-dominated, standardized curricula to

resources representing a range of ethnic origins (Baker, 2021; Hakim, 2022; Pirhonen, 2024).

Integrating Sundanese culture into English Language Teaching (ELT) can significantly enhance the learning experience for students. Here are some effective examples of how meaningful learning can be achieved through this integration:

a. Cultural Projects and Activities

Students can engage in projects that explore Sundanese traditions, such as traditional dances, storytelling, drama, music, culinary arts, and crafts. For instance, a project could involve students researching and presenting the significance of their *Sunda* culture in drama or storytelling performances. This helps them practice their English language skills and deepens their understanding of their cultural heritage.



Figure 4.1 Drama Lutung Kasarung Reborn

DILE PROJECT 2022: Lutung Kasarung Reborn - YouTube

b. Language Games Incorporating Local Context

Creative learning methods, such as language games that incorporate Sundanese cultural references, have been shown to improve language skills. For example, teachers can create vocabulary games using Sundanese terms and their English equivalents, allowing students to learn new words while connecting them to their cultural context. This approach has improved students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Seftika et al., 2017).



Figure 4.2 Sundanese Letter Games

c. Storytelling and Folktales

Utilizing Sundanese folktales in the classroom can serve as a rich resource for language learning. Students can read or listen to stories in English based on Sundanese folklore, followed by discussions or creative writing assignments where they express their interpretations or create new endings. This method promotes engagement and allows students to relate personally to the content while practicing their English skills.

d. Cultural Reflection Activities

Incorporating activities that encourage students to reflect on their cultural identity can enhance meaningful learning. For example, students might write essays or discuss what being Sundanese means to them and how it influences their perspectives. This fosters language skills and encourages critical thinking about their cultural values and identity (Kita Ngatu & Basikin, 2019).

e. Interactive Media and Technology

Interactive media showcasing Sundanese culture, such as videos of traditional ceremonies or music, can make lessons more engaging. Students can analyze these materials in English, discussing themes, vocabulary, and cultural significance, thus bridging their local culture with the target language effectively (Anon, 2024; Seftika et al., 2017).

This strategy fosters a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students can use their cultural knowledge to understand language in relevant ways. In addition to improving students' enthusiasm and engagement, this method cultivates cross-cultural communication abilities, which are essential in our increasingly interconnected world (Huang, 2023; Lai, 2013; Tambunan et al., 2021).

4.2 The Importance of Local Culture in the Indonesian ELT Context

Incorporating local culture into ELT materials and practices makes learning more relatable for students. Educators can engage students more effectively using culturally relevant content, such as local stories, traditions, and customs. Research indicates that when students see their culture reflected in their learning materials, they are more motivated and better able to connect with the language being taught (Anon, 2012; Herdi et al., 2023).

Research highlights various effective strategies for integrating local culture into ELT. Techniques such as contextualizing topics, using local literature, conducting discussions on cultural practices, and creating projects exploring local traditions have enhanced students' understanding and use of English. These strategies improve language skills and encourage critical thinking about cultural differences and similarities (Herdi et al., 2023; Yusniawati & Lestari, 2021).

4.3 Cultural Integration and Indigenous Knowledge

In addition to promoting student engagement, integrating Sundanese culture into language teaching has significant implications for cultural preservation and identity reinforcement. Incorporating indigenous knowledge into ELT materials can make learning more relatable and meaningful for students. Research indicates that when local wisdom is integrated, students find it easier to understand and engage with the content, leading to improved language acquisition (Wulandari, Sundari, and Ellysafny 2020). By integrating indigenous knowledge, educators play a vital role in preserving local cultures and traditions. This approach helps students appreciate their heritage while learning a global language, ensuring that cultural identities are maintained in an increasingly globalized world (Leonard, 2022; da Silva et al., 2023).

Character development can benefit from the moral principles and values frequently reflected in local wisdom. Character education programs benefit from including these elements in ELT since they foster a sense of responsibility and appreciation for students' cultural heritage (Anon, 2012). Students who are exposed to indigenous knowledge develop intercultural understanding. Understanding various cultural viewpoints helps students communicate more effectively in various contexts and prepares them to participate in global citizenship (Dewi et al., 2022).

4.4 Theoretical and Pedagogical Models of Cultural Integration

The theoretical underpinnings of cultural integration in language teaching can be traced to sociocultural theories of learning (Newman & Latifi, 2021; Utami, 2016), which emphasize the role of culture in cognitive and linguistic development. Rooted in the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky, the constructivist learning theory emphasizes that students construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with their environment. In the context of cultural integration, this means designing learning activities that allow students to explore their cultural identities while engaging with new languages. This approach encourages active participation and critical thinking (Kouicem & Nachoua, 2018; Pardjono, 2002).

Cultural model theory emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness in language education. It posits that understanding cultural models, shared beliefs, and practices within a culture can enhance students' cross-cultural awareness and communication skills. By applying this theory, educators can create lessons that reflect students' cultural backgrounds, fostering a deeper connection to the language being learned (Batiste, Denby, and Brinson, 2022).

In recent years, there has been an important shift in pedagogical methods supporting cultural integration into language learning. The "intercultural communicative competence" (ICC) approach is one such model that highlights the significance of comprehending and navigating cultural variations in communication (Byram, 2020). Byram claims that ICC is the perfect framework for incorporating local cultural content, like Sundanese, into language learning since it seeks to enhance students' capacity to communicate with others from diverse cultural backgrounds appropriately and successfully. Educators can use role-playing activities, cultural conversations, and comparisons of Sundanese and English cultural customs to promote intercultural competency while enhancing language skills.

Theoretical and pedagogical models of cultural integration are essential for improving the relevance and engagement of English Language Teaching for students. Educators can establish a dynamic learning environment that values and appreciates cultural diversity by integrating practical approaches such as project-based learning and community involvement, and frameworks such as cultural models' theory and constructivist learning theory. This integration enhances language proficiency and cultivates intercultural competence in students, equipping them for a globalized world.

5. CONCLUSION

Integrating local culture into English language teaching and learning is a critical study area, particularly in diverse and multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. Research supports the idea that embedding Sundanese culture into English language instruction allows students to connect their learning with their cultural identity. The student's educational experiences are much enhanced when Sundanese culture is incorporated into the English teaching and learning process in higher education. Along with improving language skills, it promotes character development, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. To prepare students for global citizenship, educators are encouraged to adopt culturally responsive teaching strategies that showcase Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage.

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8. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization, M.L.K., E.S, and M.T.; writing original draft preparation, M.L.K.; review and editing, all authors. The research, analysis, and manuscript were shaped by the input of all authors, who have reviewed and approved the published version of the work.

9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

We certify that the article is the original work of the authors and co-authors. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This manuscript has not been submitted for publication, nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify that all Authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity, and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to ICGSPB.

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