

Cultural Strategy: Local Values in English Teaching and Learning Process

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Abstract

Teaching and learning English have for so long been seen as approaches to superior language but ignoring the values inside. This paper has purpose on saying that local values should also cope with English language as counter-culture for foreign values. Through library studies method in this paper, the conditions and perceptions of English language are understood through tensions between local and foreign values. Local values in English teaching and learning process should be maintained to promote values in keeping its dynamic openness of identities towards others; not only foreign, but also local ones. **The main finding is to make use of English as a means or a media to promote and elevate local values to the world. It is mentioned to underline cultural local values found by putting them next to foreign ones.** Opening understanding through connections between textbooks and daily life could enhance creativity and responsibility in relations with others. Overall, interpretations on foreign languages should always be kept open to build chances and choices to elevate local values compared to foreign ones.

Keywords

Counter-Culture, Cultural Strategy, English Language, Identity, Local Values, Teaching and Learning Process

Abstrak

Mengajar dan belajar bahasa Inggris telah lama dipandang sebagai pendekatan kepada bahasa yang superior namun dengan mengabaikan budaya lokal. Tulisan ini menjelaskan bahwa nilai lokal sebaiknya bisa berdampingan dengan bahasa Inggris sebagai budaya-tandingan bagi nilai luar. Melalui metode pustaka dalam tulisan ini, pemahaman tentang kondisi dan persepsi bahasa Inggris dipahami melalui tegangan antara nilai lokal dan asing. Nilai lokal dalam proses belajar dan mengajar bahasa Inggris sebaiknya terus diadakan untuk mendukung nilai tersebut dalam kerangka identitas yang terbuka dan dinamis terhadap yang lain; baik luar maupun lokal itu sendiri. Temuan utamanya adalah **bahasa Inggris merupakan sebuah alat atau media untuk memromosikan sekaligus mengangkat nilai budaya lokal. Hal tersebut dimaknai dalam rangka menyejajarkan nilai lokal dengan nilai asing.** Membuka pemahaman tentang hubungan riil antara buku diktat dan kehidupan sehari-hari dapat mendorong kreativitas dan rasa tanggung jawab dalam relasi dengan yang lain. Secara keseluruhan, interpretasi dalam bahasa asing harus terus terbuka untuk membangun berbagai kesempatan maupun pilihan untuk mengangkat nilai lokal bila kemudian dibandingkan dengan yang asing.

Kata Kunci

Bahasa Inggris, Budaya-Tandingan, Identitas, Nilai Lokal, Proses Belajar dan Mengajar, Strategi Budaya

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Globalization does not have single consequences so that opportunities still always can be realized.¹ Meanwhile, we still can not be sure what globalization has brought us in today's

¹ Anthony Elliott and Charles Lemert, 2014, *Introduction to Contemporary Social Theory*, London:Routledge, p. 413.

era. On a hand, the process indeed brings in many opportunities to be participated in global era. On another hand, it is also dangerous because of its implications on local aspects. As the opposite of global, local aspects come to be contested in globalization. Learning English will also be contested with the existence of local values. Even we may still not totally choose between local or global aspects because of its complexities, but local values could always be disregarded by the rising English language in Indonesia.

From the passage above, cultural strategies should be built to make local values to be important in English teaching and learning process. The **main purpose here is clear; to shape local cultural values to be counter-culture for foreign issues.**² Learning local culture is different since it is about to dig own ideas rather than just clone other language. More than just dictations, it is intention to culture that should come to attain local values to face globalization. Therefore, we should take problems on how should cultural values be elevated to face globalization just like foreign one be adopted in Indonesia.

Integrating Local Values Through Character Building

The problems between language and globalization should be solved by **dynamics of cultural values**. Since we can not limit the flow of globalization, we should build such character to elevate local values so that it could be understood too from English learning. It is about crisscrossing values that should be maintained. English language is foreign one, but since it has been taught since childhood in Indonesia, wisdom of it should be understood too. Learning English is not about having prestige on language superiority, but it is a tool of communication to spread ideas. If prestige comes to be the main idea, it is just about being special which is out of having relations with others.

There are earlier researches that have been made to show perceptions about local values on English language. First, an article made by Syaifur Rochman titled "Persepsi Pengajar Bahasa Inggris terhadap Pengajaran Bahasa Menggunakan Metode Berdasarkan Nilai-Nilai Budaya Barat (Studi Kasus di STAIN Purwokerto)".³ He explained how communicative approach in language learning should be taken in bilingual class. It is inevitable that learning foreign language should be based on customs and traditions of the language itself. Indeed, studying manuscripts on English is used to elevate science

² Budiono Kusumohamidjojo, 2009, *Filsafat Kebudayaan: Proses Realisasi Manusia*, Yogyakarta: Jelasutra, p. 53.

³ Syaifur Rohman, nd, *Persepsi Pengajar Bahasa Inggris terhadap Pengajaran Bahasa Menggunakan Metode Berdasarkan Nilai-Nilai Budaya Barat (Studi Kasus di STAIN Purwokerto)*, Menggagas Pencitraan Berbasis Kearifan Lokal, (online) in komunikasi.unsoed.ac.id/sites/default/files/61.syaifur%20rochman-unsoed.pdf, accessed on May 10th 2015.

understanding. Moreover, learning English should also include such competences as sociolinguistic, strategy, and discourse beside its grammatical orders. This communicative idea is needed to explore contextual aspects of language. Many students in Indonesia still do not take attention when are taught with things outside books. Implementations between foreign and local methods should always be explored so that learning English could also seem to put in its contextual ideas.

Second, another research by Ni Ketut Suciani, I Made Subur, and I Made Rai Jaya Widanta titled "Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berkonteks Budaya Bali: Suatu Strategi Pengembangan Budaya Global".⁴ This article was written to explain how integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum should be maintained in real connections between what is taught and its functions on daily life. Through contextual teaching and learning, English language materials are taught in the context of Balinese culture. They said that functions on English language should be correlated on topic-based language. Research and development then also should be built to shape soft skill, not just about learning textbooks. By finding themes on Balinese culture, those could be integrated with English learning. Moreover, teachers should also come to be facilitators rather than be people to dictate their disciples.

Third, another research by Sukarno titled "Integrating Local Cultures in Teaching English as a Foreign Language for Character Building".⁵ He explained that students' daily lives should be involved in teaching-learning process. By having inclusive and supportive environment, both teachers and students could focus and discuss the contents and language elements existing in the texts both in syntax and semantic aspects such as moral values, living values, and wisdoms. These features that actually should be taken for students in language learning, so that meaningful texts could also conserving cultural values and heritages. Moreover, having those ideas should also elevate appropriateness in using foreign language. Being polite, respectful, and caring are examples of characters that should be lived in learning language. Those things both need teachers' ideas and sensitivity to explore cultural and foreign ideas and students' interests in knowing more than just texts but also meaningful ones.

From three earlier researches above, learning English contextually is important. It is not about studying rules but also its connections with daily lives. English is a language of the world but only to common one while its specialities still involved in cultural values.

⁴ Ni Ketut Suciani, I Made Subur, and I Made Rai Jaya Widanta, 2012, *Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berkonteks Budaya Bali: Suatu Strategi Pengembangan Budaya Global*, Stilistetika Tahun I Volume 1, Nopember 2012, <http://www.slideshare.net/fpbsikipgribali/pembelajaran-bahasa-inggris-berkonteks-budaya-bali-15880435>, accessed on May 10th 2015.

⁵ Sukarno, 2012, *Integrating Local Cultures in Teaching English as a Foreign Language for Character Building*, Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, Tahun II, Nomor 2, Juni 2012.

Therefore, studying English should also include local ones. Many things could be explored afterwards to show connections between local and foreign ideas from English perspectives. Beside, openness should be between teachers and students, so that what are taught could be accepted not just as taken for granted, but taken on its connections to learners' daily lives.

Dynamic Aspects of Local Values in Everyday Life

Dynamic points of local language can not be maintained without its distinctions on its values. Cultural values are understood in both ideas and manifestations of life, not through superiority of another. They are verbs which could shape nouns rather than just nouns to be labeled on persons. Through this view, Cornelis Anthonie van Peursen sees cultural strategies on three kinds of ideas; *myth*, *ontology*, and *functional* aspects to explain how cultural values be moved among and beyond people.⁶ On the side of *myth*, cultural values are seen as parts to be believed. People do not ask whether it is true or not since it is thought and practiced everyday. This part indicates transcendence categories of culture. It is beyond people but at the same time immanent on human life. Other side is *ontology* through philosophical ideas. In this aspect, people keep their distance to understand cultural values. Different from myth which people believe in, ontology view sees science to be more systematic than knowledge. Knowledge is there but its epistemic ideas need to be attained here. Another side is *functional* which shows cultural values in communication frames which come to work. This aspect makes people to be open for others. By opening self, identities of cultural values are understood from inside to outside, from liquidization of the self to social relations.⁷ It is not just thought or distanced, more of it, it tries to understand relations among people. By understanding relations, its dinamicity of communication could be realized because of both internal and external relations that may come within people.

Those three terms show how cultural values are enclosed in viewing sameness and otherness. We may see that each view of them is not total definition among others but cultural values are complex both in ideas and practices. Language is structure that practiced everyday but also constructed by fixed systems. Meanwhile, its semantic values bridge thought and life. Language as values should be taken in present time. In present, language is dynamic because it indicates freedom and repression within. It is freedom because it could be taken beyond common understanding while it is also repression seen from its conflict.

⁶ Cornelis Anthonie van Peursen, 1988, *Strategi Kebudayaan* (trans.), Yogyakarta: Kanisius, p. 18.

⁷ Pip Jones, Liz Bradbury, and Shaun Le Boutillier, 2011, *Introducing Social Theory*, Cambridge : Polity Press, p. 204.

Semantic perspectives of language could release minds on seeing cultural strategies also as perspective of culture. D. Paul Schafer states that there are many perspectives of cultural strategies through its sights.⁸ *General culture* indicates how there are same values among languages. It is not to generalize but to build bridges in order to shape such dialogues among civilizations. *Own culture* is seen as how people identify themselves on their own values. It is made inside people and relations among them. *Other's culture* is shown on otherness. People are different from external others. What is the same also indicates what is the other. *Creative and constructive culture* is indeed the main focus of cultural strategies. By mentioning strategies also means that the culture should always be ready to open to others. By looking at local values as counter-culture, domination of English language could be eroded. Since so, it should be constructive by not giving hatred to other language because the main idea here is to widen understanding and not to localize own values. It is ethic on openness that could be considered, not through definitions, but delimitation of contents.

Contextual Learning as Cultural Strategies

It should be said that English language is about medium in indicating cultural strategies. More than just about object to be learned, contextual learning also include foreign language in importance of character building. Having contextual ideas also mean to find connections between local and foreign values. It does not totally mean to find sameness between them, but to elevate local values in order to be understood through foreign frames.

Somehow, it is so practical that contextual ideas should be applied in the strategies. It is so relative about the values, but the structures of contextual ideas may be applied here. The purposes are also clear; to elevate local values by not undermining foreign values too. The structures then should be fit based on its classes. Fitting materials to its appropriate places may be useful for learners to find values for themselves too.

From things which have been explained above, from the problems of language and globalization to dynamic and character building values, actions should be formulated in integrating local values as cultural strategies; *First*, local and English values should not be just taken as translations between them. Translations may just about structures and rules of grammar, but contextual learning is about bringing in connected ideas between them. Tasks to translate should also issue flexibility and smoothness of language. It is not just about taking a word from a language to another, but also cultural one. Learning about synonyms

⁸ D. Paul Schafer, 2008, *Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age*, Ottawa:University of Ottawa Press, p. 25-26.

could best be a good start to compare terms and idioms among those two languages. For example, we can not say "I school in Surabaya" in translation to "Saya bersekolah di Surabaya" because it should be "I go to school on Surabaya.". There are difference between them so that we can not say that one of them is right and another is wrong. Indeed, it needs flexibility to understand the contexts between languages. It is not about translations, but relations among languages. Richness of English language could be advantages to study that language in corresponding to local values. By showing possibilities of synonyms and antonyms on sentences, students are urged to understand more about what they are learning.

Second, taking foreign wisdoms to be related to local ones is closed to contextual one. We should also open about others' values because some of them relates well in relations among people. For example, foreign ideas about appreciating individuals also relates to community. The values of queueing is good to be applied to learning language. To obey law in foreign idea is also good to be taken. To have foreign methods on educations also should be maintained on local culture as well. Meanwhile, it will be better to put them contextual by local values. Individualities on foreign values should not be taken on full manners since it could also erode relations with people. Ideas in foreign countries that children are considered adult after 18 years old and could do anything is different from Indonesian people. We still have certain values that should be kept including respecting the elders.

Third, contextual ideas should also include other aspects beside grammatical rules. Those aspects are dialects, intonations, pronunciations, idioms, and many other richness of language. For example, there are young people of Indonesia who do not know English at all but saying to be so just by talking like gangsters in United States. They may say that it is symbol of freedom, but it should not be applied in swearing words. Intonations are also important to show how foreign people show their anger, sadness, and empathy compared to local dialects. From those perspectives, we could conclude that our values are as rich as foreign one. We also have orders of language from saying good and bad things including showing emotions. It is also important about terms and idioms. In Javanese idioms, "nabok nyilih tangan" could not be translated easily in foreign language, which is the same as "redneck", "superlicious", or "ginger-haired". Contextual ideas actually show how meanings are involved in language, it is not about grammatical rules, but how it is meant and practiced by societies. We could always take examples on local practices on customs and cultural ones to maintain knowledge of learners on difference and sameness of languages.

Fourth, comparing texts between local and foreign one could be a nice contribution to contextual learning. Once teachers explained a text on English words, they could also show

its comparisons to local ones. Those texts include reading, grammar, and speaking ones. Those three are usually explained only by rules, but on contextual learning is to explore which are different from them. For example, by analyzing texts on foreign newspapers about an issue, it will be good also to show national and local perspectives about it. From that point, learners or students could understand the difference and sameness among them. Another example is about dialogue, in a dialogue on saying and giving apologize, there are differences between local and foreign people about it. Saying "maaf" and "sepurane" are much deeper than "sorry". Another example is "ndherek" is not the same with "follows" or "come after" while it could also different from "ngenger". In this point, people could understand how should relations be built in a mannered way. Comparing texts is about reading situations and conditions. By showing it that way, learning foreign language could be explained too in everyday lives. How students should behave could be seen in their practices of languages.

Fifth, teachers should also provide students **with local stories** compared to foreign ones. It is to **show how different** is the contexts among them but also values that could be taken then. It could be legends, myths, customs, or anything else. The main purpose is to show various interpretations of cultural contexts of the stories which values could be learned. For example, stories between "Damarwulan" and "Achilleus" or "Srikandi" and "Wonder Woman". This learning shall have twofold ideas at the same time; giving ideas about foreign values while indicating richness of our own culture too. The twofold ideas are given not just to show heritages, but also to build knowledge to differentiate identities. Since identities are interpretative, character building could also be explained in understanding own values. It is to show that local values also have firm grounds on identities. It is not just taken for granted, but its process to today's world is so complex. Indeed, understanding history is not meant to be ancient, but to read the process of humanity itself.

Sixth, outside relations should also be realized to apply contextual connections between local and foreign values. Those relations include making competitions on practicing English by having local values. It could be story telling contests. It should include local culture for the theme by having open interpretations within. By retelling story, the contestants could understand the contexts of local stories while saying it again in English. Beside, they could also study about meanings contained between those languages while having it ready to be told to audience. The local stories usually involve family life which have orders in normal or kingdom environments. Both orders are stated on hierarchical and equal relations among people. Languages are also different so that exploring local values could always be valuable enough to have. For example, telling story about Rara Jonggrang is different from Cinderella.

Despite the restrictions related to victims, the cultural backgrounds could not be taken as the same. It is about relations between speakers and audience that come to interpretations. Through reciprocal communications, dialogues could be built by giving interpretations about passages. Both speakers and audience should be active actors too so that it could always be a process of strategies that come to life.

Seventh, subjects at school should always be meant in **national frame**. Through national frame, local values then **are also protected**. Ideas on Pancasila should always be the **ground on cultural strategies**. Moreover, **second sila** of Pancasila is the most important; which is to maintain humanity. Humanity involves respect so that learning English should not mean to be superior than others. It should be taken as an account to elevate local values. Many people say that studying English is to leave home for money. After all, money does not care so much about cultural values. Moreover, having no values also mean having no ground at all. Civic education is needed to widen perspectives on cultural contexts. Indeed, we are the same Indonesian, but cultural values may build us into many different ways. However, local values should never be forgotten both by national as well as foreign frames. We can not say that Pancasila is just about ideology because it is way of life. We can not build relations among others by ignoring humanities or social justice. By giving chances for English language to be superior has made ourselves to be inferior to foreign one. At this point, stating that the relations are about superiority and inferiority is to make others as object for such subject. We do not really want such relations, of course, because we need more constructive ones. It is nice to explain to English learners to always respect others to build knowledge of humanity among others; more than just with friends but also older people or even strangers.

Eighth, language studies should always **be put in interdisciplinary terms**. It is important to put language into open ideas of social context so that what is thought could always be constructive. Both as constructed and constructive, learning foreign language can not just be taken as granted, but should be always put on process. Modern ideas are indicated by traditions of hearing but it is inadequate today. To study language is about texts so that they could talk for themselves within our environments. By having and exploring texts, teachers and students could build such reciprocity to understand the ideals and the contexts of them. By understanding texts, we could come to be open to meanings; a widened horizon one. As Jacques Derrida said, it is hospitality on people that could bring texts alive to interpretations. By having hospitality to widened meanings, more bridges could also be built between foreign and local values for people to understand more. Language is not about science which always need progress. Science may ignore humanity to prioritize its progress

but language could not be the same since it is in the world and lives among humans. It is cultural language that we speak everyday, so that by paying attention to language on interdisciplinary terms, we also care about the world of our surroundings. Let cultural texts talk, so that contextual issues could always be brought alive, to the surface horizon of understanding.

Cultural strategies are those which are really needed in today's era of globalization. We should always be ready to be dynamic by still having firm grounds to stand. We have meanings that could always be maintained in openness. They are local values on cultural ideas that could be big contributors in shaping values of life. Some people will say that local stories such as *Aji Saka* and *Timun Mas* are for children, but so does for *Cinderella* and *Beauty and The Beast* which many been rebuilt on box office film. It is not about for whom, it is about meanings contained in the culture. Language is not also just about communication, but about cultural backgrounds. The main idea to make local values to be survived is to dig, practice, discuss, and implement it to daily lives. Language is always constructed; we can not talk like British English by having Javanese dialect, of course. Beside, many people from foreign countries come to Indonesia and Java to study its cultural richness while many of us forget it by saying that "local is ancient and West is modern". We also can not say that for example, Javanese values are what stated on "Pepak Basa Jawa" because it is not that simple.

Conclusion

Education is an important point to indicate local values of local culture. It is used to elevate local values in order to face the rapid flow of globalization. We can not just abandon local values by moving to foreign values. Counter-culture should be happened to realize local values in daily life. It is language of our life. We do not wear *batik* as clothes, but values. Indeed, local values should also have perspectives on liquidity to get next to modernity. Local values are not ancient but needed in modern era. Meanwhile, English language is not superior one. It is just a common language. Since it is common, many people says on it globally, but it does not indicate everything. To be global is at the same time being local. This paradox is not about right or wrong, but reality is constructive values of culture itself.

Values are also dynamic to be interpreted. It is ethics and solidarities that should be main ideas in seeing differences among values. To make students understand is to make them open, creative, and responsible. Values are everywhere, even English language also has virtues on it. Ideas of justice and self-consciousness should also be focused in learning English. We can not just learn English by leaving our own culture. To totalize will always

build such barriers that may close relations among humans. Language should be interpreted to be option in making open dialogues among human relations on the concept of humanity.

To realize local values by putting it in education, material on local should always be coming through surface. It could be taken in many contexts or in a structured classes. Materials should always contain ethics which are needed in having nice relations among others. To put attention on local values is about to practice and also to discuss it. What should be said that culture is not to be conserved such at museums or natural conservations. It is already dynamic. It is not to put it on a big frame at our wall's house, but to practice and have it daily. We are living through language which is cultural and local. To have foreign language does not mean losing local ones. To have local values means to have community as well. We can not lose our communities just easily by having English language in our daily life.

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