

Integrating Malay Local Wisdom in English Learning: Students' Perception at State Junior High School 1 in Tanjung Pura Regency of North Sumatera Province

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Abstracts

Integrating local wisdom into the English learning process is essential to preserve cultural identity and promote a more meaningful and relevant learning experience for students. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions on the importance of integrating local wisdom of the Malay community in English language learning. A qualitative approach was applied, which involved a survey of 27. The results showed that most students believe that the integration of local wisdom of the Malay community in English language learning is important. They recognized the potential benefits, including increased cultural understanding, better language learning motivation, and development of 21st century skills. However, the students also identified some challenges, such as the limited availability of learning resources that integrate the local wisdom of the Malay community and the need for better teacher training in this area. The findings of this study indicated that students were generally open to the integration of Malay local wisdom in English language learning, but there needs to be a more systematic and comprehensive effort to address the identified challenges. Implications for curriculum development, teacher professional development, and learning resource design to integrate local wisdom of the Malay community in English textbooks.

Keywords: Culture, perception, local wisdom, English, learning.

Introduction

Learning English in schools is very important in the current era of globalization that English has become an international language that is widely used in various fields, such as education, business, technology, diplomacy, and others. Adequate English proficiency is one of the skills needed to compete at the global level. In Indonesia, English language learning has been compulsory from primary to secondary education. This is in line with the government's efforts to improve the quality of human resources who can communicate and interact at the international level. Mastery of English is also an important requirement for graduates to continue their studies or enter the workforce.

Then, learning English at school also provides benefits for students' cognitive development and critical thinking skills. Through the process of learning a foreign language, students are trained to understand different language structures, vocabulary and cultures (Rakhmyta et al., 2024). This ability can increase students' flexibility of thinking and creativity. Thus, learning English in Indonesian schools plays an important role in preparing a young generation that has global competitiveness and can contribute optimally to national and international development.

Moreover, learning a foreign language, especially English, is a process or activity that a learner takes to know and understand something, and it is not limited by space and time since learning is a lifelong process (Sari, 2018; Resmi et al., 2023; Herman et al., 2024). Moreover, various factors affect the process of learning English both internally and externally (Sari, 2019; Ansari et al., 2023). Then, it is still a foreign language used by Indonesians, but it is one of the subjects applied in the curriculum that must be studied at every level of education in Indonesia (Fitriani, Tasril, Rizka, and Murni, 2023). Furthermore, it has four skills that are very important to the learners to improve language development and communication skills (Efrizah, Sari, and Putri, 2024; Judijanto et al., 2024).

However, foreign language learning, especially English, which is very essential in the modern era, should be learned without leaving the culture of the language learning community and preserve the local wisdom of the community. Moreover, local wisdom and culture are closely related which must be maintained and preserved in terms of the sustainability of culture (Purba et al., 2023). However, globalization can shift local cultural values by foreign cultural values that develop so rapidly in the lives of people in Indonesia, both those living in urban and rural areas.

Furthermore, the values contained in local wisdom are explicit and implicit conceptions that are unique to a person, group or community. A desirable value that can influence the available choices of forms, ways and purposes of action on an ongoing basis. A value that can only be inferred and interpreted from human speech, actions and materials passed down through a ritual or educational activity. Therefore, the direct function of value is to direct individual behaviour in everyday situations, while its indirect function is to express basic motivational needs.

Besides, the cultivation of local culture is very important to be given to students in addition to helping to instil a sense of nationalism and the various cultures that have been owned can be relearned, maintained and preserved together (Lubis et al., 2022). Local wisdom is very instrumental in shaping children's character education for such as religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined and responsible children (Harahap et al., 2023; Purba et al., 2024). Moreover, Rozana (2020) stated that local wisdom values implied in traditional games can develop aspects of self-development such as cognitive, social skills, moral and religious values, art, language, and socio emotional. Regarding the integration of local wisdom with English language learning, Sari and Amrul (2021) found that most learners showed positive responses regarding the integration of local wisdom in English language learning to maintain and preserve local wisdom and traditions.

Then, the potential integration of local wisdom of the Malay community in English language learning that the Malay community has a unique cultural wealth and local wisdom that can make a positive contribution to English language learning. Moreover, the integration will be effective if the content of local wisdom is included in the main teaching material that is not just tacked on

(Nadlir, 2014). In addition, the integration of the two cultures in English language learning offers various advantages including (1) fostering intercultural awareness, (2) developing a sense of sensitivity to cultural differences, (3) fostering a sense of pride in local culture, (4) developing local wisdom, (5) developing an understanding of low context culture, and (6) developing real experience-based English language learning (Margana, 2009).

Furthermore, intercultural English learning provides more opportunities for students to be more active and critical of other languages and cultures (Miftakh & Wahyuna, 2018). Then, Liddicoat et al (2003) said that English language learning based on an intercultural approach involves the functions of language, culture and learning in a single educational approach. It begins with the concept that language, culture and learning are fundamentally interrelated and places this interrelationship at the heart of the teaching and learning process. Language and culture teaching is an intra- and interpersonal process that leads to a nuanced understanding of how language and culture influence how people see the world, how people communicate about the world, and how they reflect, perceive and communicate. Blended culture-based English learning is applied to preserve local culture which currently tends to be neglected due to the influence of the target culture which is integrated in the English language learning process (Margana et al, 2015). Culture-based second language learning involves at least three aspects, namely (1) information about native English-speaking communities (history and geography), (2) information about behaviour, value systems, habits, and so on, and (3) information about results. artworks.

The selection of culture-based learning materials helps students to learn a second language because the material presented is authentic and found in real life (Peterson, et al, 2003). The integration of both cultures, both the target language culture and the origin language culture, is since language learning cannot be separated from culture. This implies that second language learning can be carried out comprehensively if the cultural context of the target language is understood by students. Furthermore, to be able to learn the target language and culture, students must activate the local cultural knowledge they already have. Activating local culture helps students grasp the concepts of the target culture by looking for similarities and differences between the target culture and local culture.

In addition, Margana (2009) said that integrating these two cultures in learning English develops students' cognitive and metacognitive abilities to master the target language. Integrating local culture and target culture can be done in various ways starting from planning language learning activities, selecting and developing English learning materials, developing learning media, developing evaluation tools, implementing learning activities, assignments, and so on. Margana et al (2015) stated that in English language learning needs to combine these two cultures or what is known as blended culture-based English learning so that students have a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the target language by referring to the target culture and local culture which allows for cultural assimilation and acculturation. Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom in English learning will enrich the learners' knowledge about the international language without eliminating their own culture. Thus, integrating local wisdom values into the learning process strengthen learners' awareness of local culture and nurtures character development (Sakti, Endraswara, and Rohman, 2024)

However, there is a gap in English learning at school with the local wisdom preservation that the learning process is carried on by using the existing curriculum which is not included the local wisdom in the textbook. Therefore, the problem will occur when there is no synchronous between students' knowledge of the subjects based on the curriculum and the reality of their local wisdom in the community (Nurmalinda and Zulfa, 2024). This gap becomes the challenges in the Malay area in integrating rich local wisdom into more contextualized and meaningful learning practices for learners. More systematic development efforts are needed to strengthen the relationship between English language learning and Malay cultural identity. The main objective of this study is to explore and understand students' perceptions towards integrating Malay local wisdom into English language learning.

Furthermore, the objectives of this study include to identify students' understanding and attitude towards Malay local wisdom and its relevance in English learning that will explore students' views on the potential, benefits, and possible challenges of integrating local wisdom in English learning. Besides, this study tries to find students' perceptions of the potential impact of integrating local wisdom on their motivation, cultural understanding, and English language skills that it will explore students' views on how such efforts can enrich the learning process and build more contextualized English competencies. By deeply understanding students' perceptions, this study is expected to provide valuable information for the development of English language curriculum, teaching materials and learning practices that are more responsive to local cultural contexts. This is expected to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was employed to explore and understand social phenomena (Munthe et al., 2024). This study applied descriptive qualitative design by administering questionnaires to 27 students grade 8 at Junior High School 1 in Tanjung Pura Regency Nort Sumatera, Indonesia. The respondents consisted of 14 female and 13 male students. The open questionnaire was administered to them that items included the length of time of English learning, frequency of learning in the class in a week, the opinions about English became one of compulsory subject at school, it was one of international language in the world, Malay culture needed to be preserved, integrated food, handicrafts and traditions of Malay community in English learning and used English texts by describing their daily activities. Moreover, the items also triggered them to clarify the reasons of their answers about their perception regarding the integration of Malay local wisdom in English learning. After collecting the data, then they were by using Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) that consisted of data condensation, data display and data verification/conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analysing the data from the students' answers in open questionnaires, it could be figured the findings in the following description:

1. The students' perception of integrating Malay local wisdom in English learning

Table 1. The Students' Perception

No	Items	Answer	Frequency	Total
1	The length of time of English Learning	3 years 4 years 5 years 6 years 7 years 8 years 9 years	3 7 2 4 4 3 4	27
2	Frequency of English learning in the class in a week	Twice a week	27	27
3	English as one of compulsory subject at school	Yes	27	27
4	English as one of international language in the world	Yes	27	27
5	Malay culture needs to be preserved	Yes	27	27
6	The skills need to be acquired to maintain Malay culture	Yes	27	27
7	Integrate food of Malay community in English learning	Yes	27	27
8	Integrate handicrafts of Malay community in English learning	Yes	27	27
9	Integrate traditions of Malay community in English learning	Yes	27	27
10	Using English texts by describing daily activities	Yes	27	27

The data in table 1 indicated that there was a variation in the length of time of English that the range between 3 years to 9 years, English subject was taught by the teacher twice a week. All the respondents agreed that English became one of compulsory subject at school, it became one of international language in the world. Moreover, regarding Malay local wisdom, they agreed that Malay culture needed to be preserved, the skills were needed to be acquired to maintain Malay culture. Then, they also agreed that the food, handicrafts and traditions were integrated into English learning by conducting English texts that described their daily activities.

2. The reasons of integrating Malay local wisdom in English learning

Table 2 The reasons of integrating Malay local wisdom in English learning

No	Items	Answer	Frequency	Total
1	The reasons of English are needed to be learned	it is compulsory to communicate it is important to speak fluently	15 1 10 1	27
2	The reasons of English as one of compulsory subject at school	it is compulsory it is important	19 8	27
3	The reasons of English as one of international language in the world	to communicate it is important	16 11	27
4	The reasons of Malay culture need to be preserved	it needs to be preserved live in Malay society one of Malay tribe	24 1 2	27

No	Items	Answer	Frequency	Total
5	The reasons of the skills need to be acquired to maintain Malay culture	they are important	11	27
		to preserve the Malay culture	4	
		to introduce Malay culture to other tribes	5	
		live in Malay society	2	
		to maintain the culture	2	
			3	

Table 2 showed that there were variations of respondents' answers regarding the reasons of English were needed to be learned at school since it was compulsory subject at school, it was needed to communicate, it was important, and it was needed to speak fluently in English. Moreover, English became one of international language in the world since it was used to communicate, and it was very important in the world. Furthermore, regarding the integrating of Malay culture needed to be preserved since it needed to maintain by them. Besides, they lived in Malay society and belonged to this tribe. Finally, they answered that the skills needed to be acquired to maintain Malay culture since they were important, preserved Malay culture, introduced Malay culture to other tribes, lived in Malay society and maintained the Malay culture.

In sum, it was found that their perception towards the integration of Malay local wisdom in English learning tends to be positive since it improved their motivation, confidence, understanding, cultural identity, cross-cultural communication skills, and efforts to preserve Malay culture as well as increase better contextualization for them in learning English. Hence, these findings indicated that they were interested and enthusiastic about the integration of local wisdom in English learning since they could learn English while recognizing and learning about their local culture. Moreover, the learning combination between elements of local language and culture was considered more interesting and meaningful for them. Through the integration of local wisdom, they could have not only better understand English but also, they could connect English concepts with local cultural contexts that were familiar to them.

Furthermore, this made English learning easier them to acquire and remember, it was considered that the integration of local wisdom in English learning could help them preserve and strengthen local cultural values. Then, relationship between English learning materials and local cultural contexts made them more motivated, more involved and interested in learning English since it was relevant to their lives. Finally, the integration of local wisdom in English learning was an effort to help them develop intercultural competence, therefore, they could consider the differences and similarities between local cultures and foreign cultures learned through English.

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of Malay local wisdom can have a significant impact on students' perception and motivation in English language learning. Moreover, the students who know Malay local wisdom in English learning tend to have a better understanding of Malay culture, and it helps them build a bridge between their home culture and English culture as well facilitates the learning process. Moreover, the integration of Malay local wisdom increases their intrinsic motivation in learning English, and they feel that learning English becomes more relevant to their lives and culture therefore they are more interested and motivated. Then, they feel more confident in expressing

themselves and communicating with the presence of Malay cultural elements in English learning, and they no longer feel foreign or lose their cultural identity when learning English. Furthermore, the integration of Malay local wisdom helps them understand cultural differences and uniqueness in the context of English learning, and it promotes cross-cultural communication skills, which is very important in the current era of globalization. In addition, English learning materials that integrate Malay local wisdom tend to be more contextual and relevant to students, they can more easily understand and apply English concepts in a cultural context that is familiar to them. Therefore, their perception towards the integration of Malay local wisdom in English learning tends to be positive since it increases motivation, confidence, understanding, cultural identity, cross-cultural communication skills, and efforts to preserve Malay culture as well as increase better contextualization for students in learning English.

SUGGESTIONS

According to the findings, it could be suggested to:

1. **Curriculum and Learning Materials Development:** It is suggested to integrate content that focuses on the local wisdom of the Malay community systematically and comprehensively into the English curriculum and learning materials, develop learning materials that utilize Malay traditional stories, proverbs, and customs to enrich the English learning process. Ensure a balance between the development of English proficiency and the preservation of Malay cultural identity in the learning materials.
2. **Teacher Professional Development:** It suggested to provide training and workshops for English teachers on how to integrate Malay local wisdom into learning, facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices among teachers in utilizing Malay local wisdom for English learning, and encourage teachers to develop creativity and innovation in designing learning activities that utilize Malay cultural elements.
3. **Resource and Infrastructure Support:** It is suggested to enrich school libraries and learning resource centres with books, media and other resources that integrate Malay local wisdom, and facilitate student and teacher access to digital resources that present Malay cultural content that can be integrated

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