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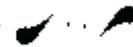
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## Pre-Service Teachers' Perception towards the Position of Culture in English Language Teaching in Indonesia

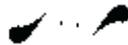
Fikri Yansyah<sup>1</sup>



### Abstract

This study was reasoned to find out the Pre-Service of English teachers' perception towards the position of culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia. The subject of this study was 100 students of English Education Study Program of State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang that were chosen randomly. This study employed the adapted Questionnaire from Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) which developed by Mahboudi and Javdani (2012) to obtain the data. The results data were presented in the form of percentages and inferences. It revealed from this study that the Pre-Service of English teacher in Indonesia realized the important position of culture in ELT in Indonesia. Lastly, this research was concluded with some important points and also the significant recommendation.

**Key Words:** Culture, Perception, Culture in ELT in Indonesia



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## **Introduction**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century requires the inhabitants to master the international language to communicate with people in the universe. One of the most important languages in today's society is English. It is becoming the channel among the nations in this universe. This language is also extensively used by many populace due to its importance (Sasaki, Suzuki, & Yoneda, 2006; British Council, 2013). It is now broadly used all over the globe in all aspects of life, for example, diplomacy and international communication, tourism, business, education, science, computer technology, media and internet (Genç & Bada, 2010). Therefore, English is strongly important in communicating people.

More, in Indonesia, people put English as a foreign language, but nobody denies the value of it. English is becoming the compulsory subject that students must accomplish. That is why it is taught and studied as important language inside the classroom (Panggabean, 2015). Starting from the schools until university period, the students in Indonesia would at least face some reading in English during their education (Lauder, 2008). Thus, English is positioned as one of the essential languages in Indonesia.

Additionally, the process of teaching and learning the language specifically English would employ many major components. Accordingly, Richards (2001) assumed that one of the most important components in a language program is the materials or sources given to the students. The use of teaching materials has the main effect on the process of language teaching (Nguyen, Warren, Fehring, 2014). As a result, language materials place a fundamental role in the process of edifying.

Furthermore, one of the most important language materials is cultural content. The 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). Also, language concurrently imitates culture and is shaped by it (Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012). Besides, studying a second language devoid of studying its culture looks imprecise and incomplete (Erfani, 2014). Hence, cultural aspects must be inserted in the education scheme and process.

Next, the attachment of cultural content in language education would give major impacts. Gorjian & Aghvami (2017) said that a cultural aspect is ominously beneficial in terms of language skills, levitation cultural consciousness, altering attitudes to native and target civilizations, and influence to the education profession. 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). In short, the cultural content would give many advantages to the students.

In contrast, some educationalists concern that English with the culture might bring the bad effect on Indonesian cultures, norms, and values. They assumed that western cultures are not suitable to meet the eastern culture. Lauder (2008) said that in Indonesia there is long concerned that the widespread knowledge of English would have a harmful effect on Indonesian because the culture form the United Kingdom and the United State of America might transfer the liberal understanding. As a result, this debatable notion has triggered the investigation of the position of culture in English language teaching in Indonesia.

What is more, similar research had ever been conducted by some researchers. Önalın (2005) tried to find out the perspective of EFL teachers towards the place of culture in ELT in Turkey. The result showed that the teachers had positive attitudes towards culture in ELT. The second was conducted in Iran by Mahboudi & Javdani (2012). They attempted to find the attitudes of the Iranian high school and university learners towards the way culture is addressed in ELT (English language teaching) in Iran. The study revealed that Iranian learners had negative attitudes toward culture in ELT in Iran. However, this type of study has never been conducted by Indonesian researcher yet. It might be significant and important to discover how Indonesian sees the position of culture in ELT in Indonesia for better improvement.

Furthermore, this study would find out the Pre-Service of English teachers' perception towards the position of culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia from the perspective of students of English Education Study Program of State Islamic University Raden Fatah. This would also discover how cultural content supposes to be inserted in ELT in Indonesia. Hopefully, this study would be fundamentally important in shaping the people mindset for the future of ELT in Indonesia in terms of cultural aspects to make some developments.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Language and Culture**

Many professionals had put high contemplation towards the affiliation between language and culture. Lust (2006) 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). Cultural context is expressed in terms of one's stances, views, character physiognomies, principles, prospects and many more (Gardner, 2007).

Furthermore, language is a fragment of culture and it is profoundly rooted in culture; therefore, language teachers cannot pay any 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 public. Thus behaviors, manners, nods, carriages, and principles can be transferred from one civilization to the other civilization (Gorjian & Aghvami, 2017).

As language and culture have an indissoluble and conjointly reliant relationship (Choudhury, 2013; Chahak & Basirizadeh, 2012; and Ho, 2009). Tantri (2013) 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).

Besides, Cakir (2006) 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) theorized that language education relates on cultures associated with the language in the matter in order to conquer other humanistic arguments, called, a thankful community of other humanities and their cultures, and in order to upgrade the efficiency of interaction and dialogue. To sum up, 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 (Cakir, 2006; Wang, 2011; and Moirano 2012). Correspondingly, Asgari (2011) 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 of public society. As the result, students cannot accurately study the language until they have also studied the cultural situations in which the language happens (Aoki & Granville, 2015; and Choudhury, 2013).

Erfani (2014) 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 the 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) 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 to turn into both linguistically and interculturally skillful learners (Ho, 2009).

Therefore, the idea of English education is to promote students' comprehension of English capability by absorbing language and its culture. Inefficacious 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). In short, the cultural aspects of English language teaching is strongly important to be inserted to cultivate the students' understanding of English itself.

### **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 a 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) showed that there is imbalance proportion between local and target language culture material in English language textbooks in Indonesia. Lastly, as cultural content in the materials of English language teaching is important, therefore, Indonesia needs to develop the cultural material in the process and design of English language teaching.

### **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 a certain part in commercial, policy, education and the broadcasting (Lauder, 2008). That is why it is taught and studied as important language inside the classroom (Panggabean, 2015). 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 counterproductive 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 fluctuating has provoked a sort of negativity and positivity among language teachers, educationists and specialists as well (Tatra, 2015). To conclude, English has the place in Indonesia. English is one of the compulsory subjects for the students in the process of education. It is also inserted and well designed in the curriculum.

### **Previous Related Studies**

Some researchers had ever been conducted this types of study. The first was conducted by Önalán (2005). This study was investigating Turkish teachers' opinions and beliefs on the place of target cultural information in English language teaching, as well as their related practices and applications in EFL classrooms in Turkish higher education context. The study found that teachers had positive attitudes towards incorporating cultural information in their instruction.

The second was conducted by Mahboudi and Javdani (2012). The study was intended to reveal the attitudes of the Iranian high school and university learners towards the way culture are addressed in ELT (English language teaching) in Iran. The study involved 300 university and high school learners in Iran. It found that all students had an overall negative attitude towards the way culture is addressed in ELT in Iran.

Those studies were accomplished in various countries and also different respondents. The results also showed the contrasting views in which the study from Önalán (2005) showed positive attitudes meanwhile, the study from Mahboudi and Javdani (2012) revealed the negative attitudes towards culture in ELT.

## METHODOLOGY

The point of this study was to explore the mindset of Pre-Service teachers of English Education Study Program to the role of culture in ELT in Indonesia. The researcher proposed to clarify the attitude of learners in the role of culture in ELT. The study was conceded 100 students in English Education Study Program of State Islamic University Raden Fatah Palembang, which were randomly selected. The reason for 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.

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire was directed to all the participants. An adapted questionnaire from Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) which developed by Mahboudi and Javdani (2012) and along with some adjustments was employed in accomplishing the research. About 12 questions with likert scale model from the questionnaires were given to the participants. The participants could choose Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Do not know (DK) option. The obtaining results data were presented in the form of percentages. Next, the researcher related the results to the previous related studies and correlated the data with the theories and certain issues in relation to this study. Then, the discussion was made in the form of inferences. At last, the conclusion and recommendation were given after seeing all the results data.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The finding is presented as the way in presenting the overall data in relation to the results. It presented with the percentages and formulated in the model of tabulation to make it understandable. Next, the discussion was offered by the researcher by making the inferences of the study results.

### Finding

After conducting the research, it was found the results of the questionnaires. The results of the study are presented in the form of percentage and it is obtainable in the following presentation, overall data could be seen from the next following table (1).

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, under item 3 that English teaching in Indonesia does not foster learner's intercultural communication in English, the popular choice is the participants agreed with this statement and it is about 55% (55 participants). After that, the dominant participant agreed 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). Furthermore, in relation to cultural content in the textbooks, 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 to agree (item 6).

**Table 1. The result of the Questionnaires**

No	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Do not know
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 the 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 neighboring 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%

Meanwhile, most of the participants had the same idea that English textbooks should focus on an international target culture, it is about 43% the participants chose to agree also 43% chose to 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).

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).

### **Inferences**

The inferences were drawn based on the entire results of the study. First and foremost, all the perceptions above indicated that the pre-service of 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 to our own culture and value as some educationalists are afraid of (Lauder, 2008).

Next, in terms of cultural content in the textbooks. The respondents believed that there was the cultural content in English textbooks in Indonesia. They also agreed that the cultural content should cover all cultural materials namely local, target and international culture. This perception was different from the result of studies from Sorongan, Susanti & Syahri (2014) in which the cultural materials were presented imbalanced in the English material (textbooks) in Indonesia.

After that, in relation to educational policy. Most of the participants agreed that the English education supposed to start from the early period as the first grade in the Indonesian schools. They hoped that the teachers together with the students could decide the necessary and unnecessary of cultural materials in Education by themselves. Also, the government should decrease the direct influence on the education in Indonesia because most of the participants agreed that the English language teaching in Indonesia does not foster Intercultural Competence.

At all, the results of the study were similar to the study from Önalın (2005) that showed positive attitudes of the respondents. Conversely, the study was different from the research of Mahboudi and Javdani (2012) that revealed the negative attitudes of the respondents. To end up, this study supported the existence of culture in English language teaching in Indonesia.

### **Conclusion**

Obtaining the perception from the participants, this study aimed at finding out the Pre-Service of English teachers' perception towards the position of culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia. The results enhanced 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 potentially gives the contribution to the educators and government in Indonesia to improve the cultural aspects of ELT in Indonesia, such as the balanced proportion of cultural aspects in the material of English language teaching for the improvement of ELT in Indonesia. Then, the government, educationalist and all stakeholders could maximize the culture in elevating students' mastery and understanding towards English.

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