

Sundanese Cultural Integration in English Learning: Insights from Young Learners and Parents

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Abstract. Amidst globalization, there is an emerging issue to strengthen students' local identity since the trend of English teaching is shifting from using English-speaking culture materials into integrating local culture. As a multicultural country, Indonesia has great potential to incorporate local culture into education. This concept, known as ethnopedagogy, utilizes local culture to strengthen genuine Indonesian education, considering that local culture is a source of innovation and skills that can be empowered in the classroom. Therefore, this research investigates the insights of young learners (aged 10-11 years old) regarding Sundanese cultural integration in their English language learning. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm, this qualitative case study seeks to explore the students' learning experiences and insights. This research involved a class of English for Young Learners class in one of English language courses in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. Data were collected using classroom observation, interview, and field notes. The findings revealed that integrating Sundanese culture into English lessons was a novel experience for the students, differing significantly from their school-based English learning. Furthermore, this approach fostered a sense of participation in preserving culture since students had better understanding about their own culture. In addition, it contributed to improvement in attention span, excitement, memory, knowledge, English score at school, and students relationship. Also, parents appreciated Sundanese culture integration into their children's English learning. They perceived it as a means to preserve Sundanese culture while also support their cultural values and educational foundation at home and help them navigate the challenges of modern society.

Keywords: Cultural Integration; English for Young Learners; Local Content; Sundanese Culture

1. Introduction

Language and culture are inherently intertwined (Kanoksilapatham, 2020; Purba, 2011), implying that English language instruction inherently involves cultural components. Incorporating the target culture into the classroom serves as a vital aspect of the learning culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). This aligns with the concept that educators must not only understand the pedagogical methods and techniques prevalent in a society, but also comprehend the cultural underpinnings shaping educational practices within that society (Buchori, 2001). Many education practitioners have affirmed the importance of embedding learners' cultural background in teaching learning activities. Mohani (2010) asserts that teacher should be sensitive to the cultural background of the students. This consideration arises based on constructivism theory, proposed by Piaget and Bruner, that students learn best when the materials are associated with their cultural prior knowledge and experience (Pinter, 2006).

1.1. Problem Statement

Baswedan (2014) states that Indonesian governments should improve education aspects related to quality of education standard, teacher's quality and students' outcome. One of the strategies is by going into a deeper level of cultural life. However, English teaching in Indonesia has resulted in an unsatisfactory development caused by teachers being overwhelmed by too many new teaching methods (Priyono, 2004) and exposed to use Western-based culture English textbooks (Sudartini, 2009).

1.2. Related Research

Sari (2017) investigated the importance of culture as a basic teaching English language in childhood in Indonesia. Her study summarized that cultural aspect in foreign language classroom touches three spheres, namely: empathy and understanding, knowledge, and communication skill. It also provided students with a working knowledge of the language where the students will understand aspects of the traditional culture.

Next, Ratri, Widiati, Astutik & Jonathans' (2024) findings on the systematic review on the integration of local culture into English language teaching in Southeast Asia reported that local culture integration in ELT among countries in Southeast Asia gives positive impact on students' attitudes and participation in learning English. Therefore, they recommend teachers and researchers to pursue more diverse practices in integrating local culture as it offers constructive attitudes, high motivation, and good engagement in learning English.

Then, Bay et al. (2018) studied the effect of learning English based on local content and content-based materials in elementary school. She revealed that the newly designed syllabus providing a new approach for both teacher and students to learn English through local content of Gorontalo culture. Lastly, Lamusiah et al. (2023) studied local-content based textbook in teaching English for young learners with Lombok culture. Their study reported that students' knowledge, motivation, activeness, and learning improved. The developed local-based content textbook showed high sustainability and practicality, making teacher and students well-directed in the learning process.

While aforementioned studies explored the integration of local culture into English language teaching for young learners, few have focused specifically on the development of students' insights and deeper understanding of this cultural integration. Thus, this research addresses a critical gap by examining not only how local culture enhances language learning but also how it shapes students' cognitive and emotional engagement with the material. Unlike previous research that mainly highlights improvements in motivation, participation, and skill development, this research emphasizes the unique role of local culture in enriching students' perspectives and their ability to connect language learning with cultural identity.

1.3. Research Objectives

Based on the issues above, this research investigates young students' insights on Sundanese cultural integration in their English language learning. It is hoped that the use of local content in English content do not only develop students' cultural understanding, but also as a way to revitalize the culture and safeguard Sundanese culture through English language learning.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Young language learners

According to Pinter (2006), the age groups of young learners are from five to fourteen years old. They are characterized to psychologically have natural curiosity towards other languages and are generally eager and receptive (George, 2002 in Kismadi, 2004). Kismadi (2004) adds that they are also spontaneous, flexible and willing to participate in activities, which help to reinforce the acquisition of language. However, the main issue in teaching language to young learners should begin with the consideration that every child is unique and they have substantial differences within, such as cultural differences (Pinter, 2006). Specifically, young learners are venturing beyond their experience in their first language and culture, to a point where their identity and subjectivity are being opened up to new possibilities (Carr 2003, in McKay, 2006). Regmi (2011) opines that the integration of local content and English teaching should be tailored to suit the needs of a particular community, as elaborated below:

“Research has also shown that the cognitive abilities of children who are in the process of learning a second language improves as they make certain deductions about their own language and compare it to the language they are learning. At a later stage, children will often begin to look at other cultures, comparing it with their own while finding about the

others. This can bring a deeper understanding of their own culture and tolerance of other cultures." (Kismadi, 2004)

The aforementioned theory implies that teaching culture is appropriate to be taught to young learners. Seelye (1984) mentions that the culture can be integrated during the first two years of foreign language study. It means that it is appropriate to be implemented in English teaching in Indonesia, since it starts from primary level. Moreover, the result of Azim Premji Foundation's research (Reddy, 2007) discovers that the effectiveness of primary education is dependent on how effectively the learning in the school is related to the situation at home/surrounding. Therefore, the effectiveness of teaching culture to young learners will be very beneficial with parents' support at home.

2.2 Cultural Integration in English Learning

Pidarta (1997) asserts that culture is inseparable from educational processes. Correspondingly, seen from cultural perspective, education is an instrument to develop national characteristics, strengthen and form national identity (Ali, 2009). Thus, education nowadays should transmit cultural aspects from one generation to another and teach the students to appreciate the socio-cultural resources in their community (Khisbiyah, 2000). Therefore, integrating culture is promising to be conducted in education where Regmi (2011) believes that the culture of both teacher and learners plays an important role in language learning environment. Teaching culture is promoted for children to develop the skill necessary to live together peacefully with others (Meyers, 2012).

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) state that using local culture in teaching is beneficial since it is: (1) hands-on, (2) conceptually accessible, (3) prompts effective language use and acquisition of language skills, (4) encourages integrative project, and (5) teachers' friendly. It means that the teaching content is easy to prepare since the teachers is familiar with his/her and the students' cultural background. Interestingly, the students can be involved in several hands-on projects where they are required to participate actively and personally. This can lead to an effective language learning.

McKay (2006, p. 16) believes that language teachers need to understand the cultural background of children, their skills, and abilities in their first language and the range of experience and knowledge they bring to their foreign or second language learning. Later on, the teacher can create students' harmonious social relation, since they develop teaching material that adopts local knowledge that is appropriate with the local needs (Khisbiyah, 2000). Regmi (2011) proposes that English teachers have to believe that local content is not only necessary but is the most effective way of teaching or learning a language. Peck (1991) and Kilickaya (2004) suggests that in foreign language teaching, teacher should use cultural content and authentic materials, and develop students' cultural background-based material. McKay (2003, in Huang & Wang, 2008) asserts that local culture should be introduced in teaching materials rather than overloading students with Western culture. Besides that, the language textbooks should include the element of target culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999).

2.3. Integrating Sundanese Local Content into English for Young Learners Classroom

Regarding to teaching culture in general, Peck (1991, p. 366) suggests that the teacher should: (1) learn all about the students' culture, and use it as subject matter; (2) plan activities that will be interesting, fun, and slightly novel; and (3) respect the students' attitudes about what 'school' should be like. Specifically, in the classroom the teacher can use song and rhymes, drawings, artifacts, stories, making contact with real people, and projects or topics to teach culture to young learners (Brewster et al., 2003) by employing content-based instruction. It is a method that emphasizes the learning about something, rather than learning the language (Davies, 2003), where the students simultaneously acquire subject matter expertise and greater proficiency in English, and as a medium of instruction (Raphan & Moser, 1994, in Quincannon & Navés, 2000). Moreover, Peachey (2003) affirms that content-based instruction is a more natural way of developing language ability, and one that corresponds more to the way we originally learn our first language.

This technique has provided some benefits in language learning, such as: (1) Making language learning more interesting and motivating (Peachey, 2003); (2) Widening students' knowledge (Peachey, 2003); (3) Fostering independent learning (Troncale, 2005); (4) Improving learning and easy to remember by students (Teddick et al., 2001); (5) Intrinsically interesting and cognitively engaging (Teddick et al., 2001); (6) providing opportunities for the students to use the content knowledge and expertise (Teddick et al., 2001); and (7) ensuring the classroom activities are cognitively demanding this enriching students' cognitive development (Teddick et al., 2001).

Thus, in choosing appropriate Sundanese contents that fit young learners' characteristics, several teaching aids like games (physical movements), songs, and story were developed from Sundanese culture. The variety of Sundanese games were used as pre-activity in the classroom to attract and prepare the students to learn. The games are *ucing sumput*, *oray-orayan*, *paciwit-ciwitlutung*, *engkle/sondah*, *sorodot gaplok*, *jeblag panto*, *babandringan* and *bebentengan*. Besides that, some Sundanese songs like *oray-orayan*, *trang-trang kolentrang*, *ayang-ayang gung*, *hompimpah*, and also *tokecang*. In addition, some Sundanese toys (as authentic media and artifacts) can also be used to support the classroom activities, such as *egrang*, *kelom batok*, *rorodaan*, *gatrik*, *gasing*, *bedil jepret* and also *sumpit*. On the other hand, these games not exclusively belong to Sundanese culture, since these games have similarity with other traditional games in other parts of the world. However, these games can be used as a starter for the students to know and sustain Sundanese culture.

Those aforementioned techniques were implemented to introduce the richness of Sundanese culture, as well as its wisdom in English for Young Learner classroom, since Sundanese people should possess five characteristics, namely *cageur*, *bageur*, *bener*, *singer* and *pinter* (Sulaeman, in Hadinoto, 2009). *Cageur* means that they should be physically and spiritually healthy. *Bageur* means that they must be kind to everyone. Then, *bener* means doing things truthfully. Next, *singer* means keep doing self-correction through introspection. Last, *pinter* means smart both in religious and other non-religious fields. In the end, it is expected that the student will still keep their local identity through those five characteristics whenever dealing in global community.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study. It focuses on the examination of the case with a reference to a previously developed theory (Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011) and offers a rich and thick description as the end of the product (Merriam, 1988). Therefore, this case study is a rich and thick description of Sundanese local content implementation during English for young learners class as seen from their perspective,

3.2. Participants

Ary et al. (2010) state that case study design focuses in a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program. Thus, this research is intended to deeply and intensively examine the multifarious phenomena that constitute the use of Sundanese local content in an English for young learners' classroom in one of English language courses in Bandung. This site was chosen for at least three reasons. First, the students used Sundanese language at their home. Therefore, it was expected that the students were familiar with the lessons proposed in their class, especially the Sundanese cultural aspects. Second, the English teacher showed the willingness to promote Sundanese local content in her classroom. She believed that to be successful person, one must hold his/her own cultural personalities in order to survive in living with other people from different cultures. Third, the site was feasible since the researcher was one of the teachers in this language course.

The participants of this research were students in Starters 2 level. In this language course, there are four levels of classes, namely: Starters, Movers, Flyers and Clever. This class consisted of three

students and all of them are Sundanese. They use Sundanese language at their home and with their family.

3.3. Data Collection

This research uses three instruments, namely classroom observation, interview and document analysis.

The classroom observations were conducted 10 times to capture the 'lived reality' during learning activities. The two first observations were conducted to obtain students' background, behavior, learning attitude, and learning style preferences. Then, this information was made as basic information to prepare lessons suiting students' needs and characteristics. These observations were conducted to observe the implementation of Sundanese local content in the English for Young Learners classroom. In details, it also investigated teacher's way in implementing the lesson and also the students' responses toward the lesson. The students were interviewed in a group, where all of them were asked the same questions at the same time. It was done to get at what people really think about issues in a social context where the participant can hear the views of others and consider their own views accordingly (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 452). The interview aimed to investigate teacher and students' perspective about the use of Sundanese local content in their English classroom. There were three students participated in the classroom. Student 1 is a boy. He was 11 years old and a 6th grade student. Student 2 and 3 are girls. They were 5th grade students. The students' interview was conducted after their Progress Test 2, in a form of group interview. The questions for the interview consisted of 28 questions, ranging from students' standpoint about their English learning using Sundanese local content compared to English learning at school, local language experience, preserving culture, parents' comment, students' favorite lesson and activity, and students' suggestions.

Another interview was administered to the teacher who was a bachelor of English Education Department of Indonesia University of Education and currently pursuing her master degree in the same university. She has been teaching English for Young Learners for about 6 years. In relation to the data collection, the teacher interview was conducted by asking her 29 questions about teacher's barriers and experience, her opinion about lesson plan, media and Sundanese content, the use of reflective journal and her perception about students' behavior and progress.

Document analysis was one by analyzing researcher's field notes, students' work and performance and parents' survey. The lesson plans give the researcher insight about how successful the lesson carried out in the classroom, whether they were well-implemented or not. The students' work and performance provide the researcher with the data about students' understanding and how well they performed the task in the classroom. The parents' survey provides data about how the parents support their child's learning at home and how they realize the importance of preserving culture.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data from classroom observation were analyzed from the field notes and video to answer the first research question. The field notes were used to get deeper comprehension of classroom activities and how the lesson plans were carried out in the classroom. The video was used to capture the students' behavior in the class, which field notes might not successfully capture. The data from interview were used to study the teacher and students' standpoint regarding the use of Sundanese local content in their classroom. In analyzing the data, the researcher transcribed the interview, categorized them based on the students' learning experiences and parents' insights, and interpreted them into themes of research findings and codes (see Table 1). The data from the documents analysis were taken from lesson plans and students' work. They were used to support the findings that answer all of the research questions.

Coding is a typical qualitative analytical approach that involves several steps, namely: inferring the significant from research instruments, examining the classifications from the repeated themes, refining the patterns by more theoretical constructs, making implicit a set of generalization, and formalizing the theoretical constructs and making inferences (Scott &

Usher, 2011). The findings were categorized based the following themes, sub-themes and codes.

Table 1. Themes of Research Findings

Themes	Specific phrases and codes
Cultural Identity and Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Sundanese culture (CP/Cultural Promotion) • Children's pride in preserving culture (PR/Pride in Culture) • Classroom as a place to build cultural awareness (CA/Cultural Awareness)
Educational Outcomes and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping students with global skills (GS/Global Skills) • Strengthening children's educational foundation at home (EF/Educational Foundation) • Enhanced memory, better English score (AI/Academic Improvement)
Engagement and Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were engaged and motivated (EM/Engagement/Motivation) • Enthusiasm brought into home (EO/Enthusiasm at Home)
Cross-cultural understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' better understanding about the culture (CC/Cultural Connection) • Parental role in promoting culture at home (PR/Parental Role)
Classroom Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of interesting local-content based activities (VA/Variety of Activities) • Building rapport between teacher and students (TR/Teacher-Student Rapport)

3.5. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research, a systematic approach was employed through triangulation and peer examination, specifically the inter-rater reliability test. Triangulation involved the use of multiple data sources (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 452), such as interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, to cross-verify information and capture a comprehensive view of the subject under study. This approach helped to identify recurring themes and codes, which were consistently present across all instruments. The consistent patterns found in the data reinforce the reliability of the findings, as the repetition of themes from different sources strengthens the conclusions.

In addition to triangulation, the research also utilized peer examination to ensure the accuracy of the observations. Two independent classroom observers were involved, and an inter-rater reliability test was conducted to assess the degree of agreement between them. Each observer rated the same set of classroom activities using a predetermined rubric. The inter-rater reliability was calculated by comparing the observers' ratings across all observation items, and a high agreement rate of 93% (see Table 1) was achieved. This high percentage indicates a strong consistency between the observers' evaluations, further validating the accuracy of the observation instrument. By combining these methods, the research procedure ensures a robust assessment of validity and reliability, providing confidence that the findings are both well-supported and replicable.

4. Findings

The findings of this research are divided into two themes.

4.1. Young learners' responses to Sundanese local content in the English classroom

There were three students in the class: Student 1, Student 2 and Student 3. Student 1 was born in Kalimantan, but he was raised in a Sundanese cultural environment due to his father's family background, while Student 2 and 3 were both born and raised in cities in West Java. This similar students' background fostered a shared sense of pride in preserving Sundanese culture. This is further reinforced by *Rebo Nyunda* campaign, where schools required all teacher and students to wear Sundanese *kebaya* (for female) and *pangsi* (for male) and also speak Sundanese every Wednesday. The students' prior exposure to Sundanese culture in their schools contributed to their enthusiasm for learning English through Sundanese contents. They also used Sundanese language at home with those who they believed can speak Sundanese too.

Each student had distinct characteristics that influenced their engagement with the materials. Student 1 was highly physical; he liked racing games, doing role-play and playing cards. His favorite topic was 'Sundanese Clothes and Accessories'. Student 2, who had exhibited traits of high-achieving student, preferred structured activities like completing task on-time and following teacher instruction closely. Her favorite topic was 'Tourism Places in West Java' and her favorite activity was doing role-play and writing activity. Student 3, although a new addition to the class, adapted quickly and demonstrated a talent for crafting activities, such as making booklet. Her favorite topic was also 'Tourism Places in West Java'.

The students had been attending the English for Young Learners (EYL) course for approximately five months, although Student 3 joined later. They noted that the small class size, with only three students compared to the 35 students in their school classes, allowed for more engaging and interactive learning experiences [see Excerpt #1]. They expressed a preference for the diverse teaching techniques and activities used in the course, including games and media that they felt were lacking in their school lessons. Interestingly, they also reported improvements in their English scores at school as a result of attending the course as they acknowledged during interview [see Excerpt #2]

Excerpt #1: "Learning English here is very fun and better than at school. Here, we played games, but at school we focused on textbook only." (Student 2)

Excerpt #2: "(My parent said) that the classroom activity (here) was good. They're happy because my score increased and now 9 or 8 compared to previous semester, which was under 6." (Student 1)

The integration of Sundanese content into English lessons proved to be a successful approach, as it leveraged the students' prior knowledge and cultural familiarity. The students felt proud to learn English through materials connected to their cultural heritage, such as traditional clothing, food, and customs. This sense of cultural pride translated into increased engagement and participation. As observed in the classroom, the students exhibited prolonged attention spans and high levels of excitement during most activities. They involved in classroom discussion and could link their vocabularies with their experience. However, challenges such as unclear instructions and occasional distractions from external noise led to periods of boredom or confusion. For example, Student 1 sometimes became demotivated when he felt less competent than his peers or when he could not really understand the instructions. Students 2 and 3, despite being high-achievers, also experienced moments of disengagement but generally remained focused and willing to participate.

4.2. Benefits experienced by students and parents

Learning English using Sundanese local content was a novel experience for all three students. Initially, one student found the approach unfamiliar, but over time, she grew more comfortable and interested in the lessons [see Excerpt #3]. Besides that, parental support played a crucial role in maintaining the students' enthusiasm for learning.

Excerpt #3: *"Initially, it was weird to learn about Sundanese culture during English class. But, the lesson gets better and I enjoy it because I can preserve my culture"*. (Student 2)

During classroom observation, the students demonstrated consistent engagement and attentiveness. They shared their knowledge and experience about the culture, finished their task on-time, and showed great excitement. Their vocabulary and understanding of English improved significantly, and they were able to recall lesson content with ease. The teacher confirmed these observations, noting that the students were more enthusiastic and participative compared to their previous learning experience [see Excerpt #4]. Additionally, the variety of activities, from role-playing to crafts, kept the lesson dynamic and enjoyable for the students. One student even remarked that this learning approach made them Sundanese language at school easier [see Excerpt #5]

Excerpt #4: *"My teaching performance got better and I feel more comfortable with the local content lessons. These kinds of lessons are new for me and the students and I observed that the students were seen more excited and cooperative."* (Teacher)

Excerpt #5: *"At school, the Sundanese class was more difficult. But here in English course was easier"*. (Student 3)

The use of media, including song, booklet, Power Point slides, traditional games tools, and map of West Java, further enhanced the students' learning and led to better understanding about the culture [see Excerpt #6]. Previously, they had limited exposure to these types of materials in their school classes. Both the teacher and students acknowledged that the integration of these creative teaching aids was a unique aspect of the course. The students were particularly proud of the learning products they created, such as the puppet boxes, and were eager to share their work with others, seeking feedback from family and friends.

Excerpt #6: *"I become more knowledgeable (about Sundanese culture) than my friends at school"*. (Student 1)

Despite the overall success, there were some barriers during certain activities. Occasionally, students experienced confusion due to unclear instruction or an unsupportive learning environment. For example, external noise sometimes distracted the students, which led to moments of disengagement and not focusing on teacher's instruction. Additionally, students struggled when they did not fully grasp a task or felt discouraged by their peers' performance. The teacher employed several strategies to overcome these challenges, such as giving praise, adjusting activities to match the students' abilities, and creating additional tasks to re-engage demotivated students.

Parental involvement also played a significant role in supporting the learning process. Parents were asked to comment on their children's work and assist with home-based tasks, such as decorating puppet boxes. They appreciated the integration of Sundanese culture into the lessons, acknowledging that it aligned with their efforts to preserve cultural traditions at home [see Excerpt #7]. According to a survey administered to the parents, they felt that Sundanese culture would benefit their children's future development, especially as they navigate the complexities of modern culture [see Excerpt #8].

Interestingly, one parent of Student 3 mentioned that after just one month in the course, her child had already made noticeable progress in English. She compared this positive experience to her child's previous course, which did not offer the same level of engagement or development. The parent expressed satisfaction with the course's focus on both language skills and cultural preservation. The parents also stated that the Sundanese culture has an important role for their children's development in the future, as they believed that some certain modern culture are not appropriate. Accordingly, the parents have raised their children by teaching them the values of Sundanese culture, like the language, arts and etiquette.

Excerpt #7: *"I teach my kid the value of politeness and manners of Sundanese culture, I believe that both having foreign language skills and local culture wisdom are important"*. (Parent of Student 1)

Excerpt #8: *"My daughter's first language was Sundanese. Now we speak both Bahasa Indonesia and Sundanese language at home. English learning is important to address the development of today's era in a positive way"*. (Parent of Student 3)

The parents also affirmed they wanted their children to have the personality of Sundanese people who have international skills. Precisely, they wanted their children to be able to introduce their local culture to the world citizen through their ability in using English. They also believe that once their children master English, they will be able to participate and compete internationally, to understand English textbooks, to communicate in English, to have their children more successful than the parents. One of the parents admitted that they regret for not having sufficient English skills since it burdened their own career. They could not teach English or even help their child to do the homework, so that was the reason to take their child to learn English at the course [see Excerpt #9]

Excerpt #9: *"I taught Sundanese language as my daughter's first language, also its manner and arts. I agree that local content is important in English learning, because it should be introduced to the world through English skills. We as parents have not that ability to teach English. We want our daughter to not experience our barrier in career due to lack of English skill."* (Parent of Student 2).

After the conclusion of the eighth classroom observation session, the mother of Student 3 approached both the teacher and the researcher to share her observations. She expressed her satisfaction with the current English course, noting a marked improvement in her child's progress. She further stated that her child's previous experience with another English course had been less effective, as it did not contribute significantly to her child's development in English. According to the mother, Student 3 also acknowledged that she had made noticeable progress in English, despite having only been enrolled in the current course for one month.

5. Discussion

The discussion is elaborated into three themes below.

5.1. The Role of Sundanese Cultural Integration in Enhancing English Learning

The findings indicate that Sundanese, as the second-largest local language in Indonesia, provided a rich and culturally relevant context for learning English. The inclusion of local Sundanese content, aligned with the learning objectives, allowed students to engage more deeply in their lessons by connecting new language skills to their prior cultural knowledge. The variety of Sundanese elements offered—ranging from language to traditional practices—helped create a culturally responsive learning environment. This not only made the students feel more connected to the material but also increased their interest in the lessons. According to Faizal (2011) and UNESCO (2003), integrating local culture into education can build tolerance and cultural awareness among students. The classroom thus became a space where learners showed ethnic pride, building both language proficiency and cultural understanding. This supports the constructivist approach where students learn best when the material is connected to their own cultural experiences (Pinter, 2006).



Figure 1. Teacher's Puppet



Figure 2. Students' Puppet (named Asep, Cucu, Ceuceu)

5.2. Learners' Perspectives on Preserving Local Culture Through English Learning

The students' positive responses toward learning English through Sundanese cultural content reflect their strong connection to their heritage. The novelty of this approach, compared to their usual school lessons, kept them engaged and excited. They appreciated the integration of familiar cultural elements into their learning, which allowed them to retain information better and apply their existing knowledge. This aligns with content-based instruction, which makes learning more interesting and effective (Peachey, 2003; Teddick et al., 2001). The students' pride in their cultural background also fostered a sense of responsibility in preserving their local traditions, which, as observed, led to improvements in their attention, memory, peer relationships, and even their English scores at school. This not only reinforced cultural identity but also enhanced language learning outcomes. Furthermore, the shared cultural experiences within the classroom created a "family-like" atmosphere, strengthening students' bonds with one another, similar to findings from The Bridging Cultures Project (Trumbull et al., 2000).



Figure 3. Classroom Activities

5.3 Parents' Role and Perception in Supporting Culturally Integrated English Learning

Parental support played a critical role in the success of this culturally integrated approach. The parents observed significant progress in their children's English skills and appreciated how the learning process also reinforced their cultural identity. They expressed pride in the way their children were able to integrate English learning with their Sundanese heritage, noting that the approach not only aligned with their cultural values but also enhanced educational foundations at home. This aligns with the findings of Reddy (2007) which highlighted the importance of home environments in fostering effective primary education. Parents saw the method as a way to promote Sundanese culture while equipping their children with essential global skills. The integration of cultural content into language learning emphasizes on Project-Based Learning, created a holistic educational experience that benefited both language acquisition and cultural preservation. This reflects the World Bank's (2005) stance on the importance of local culture in global education.

It is clear that parental support plays a crucial role in local content-based English learning. This involvement serves multiple purposes: (1) promoting the preservation of Sundanese culture; (2) reinforcing the educational environment at home; (3) utilizing cultural elements as learning tools, particularly as many Sundanese individuals have begun to distance themselves from their traditional values; and (4) fostering a sense of pride in students about their cultural heritage. In this way, parents benefit by helping to establish a solid educational foundation at home while simultaneously supporting their children's English learning and the preservation of Sundanese culture.

6. Conclusion

This research concluded that integrating Sundanese local content into English classes is a promising approach that not only enhances language learning but also preserves cultural heritage. By addressing the challenge Indonesian teachers face in finding culturally appropriate materials—often dominated by Western contexts—the inclusion of Sundanese content offers a more relevant and meaningful alternative. This content aligns with young learners' prior knowledge, making the lessons more engaging and relatable. As a result, students showed increased interest and motivation, leading to improved engagement and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, this approach goes beyond language acquisition by enriching students' understanding of their own culture, fostering a sense of pride and deeper connection to their heritage. In globalization context, where there is a growing need to strengthen students' local identity, the shift in English teaching from a reliance on English-speaking cultural materials to the integration of local culture becomes particularly relevant. By incorporating Sundanese content, teachers help students maintain a strong connection to their roots while acquiring the global communication skills necessary for the future. Parents also viewed this approach positively, recognizing its value in balancing cultural identity with language proficiency. They see it as a way to ensure their children are prepared for a globalized world while still preserving their cultural roots, ultimately supporting the holistic development students both linguistically and culturally.

Limitation

This research faced limitations due to the scarcity of research on integrating local culture into English classes for young learners in Indonesia, seen from the perspective of students. The small sample size and focus on English for young learners' class may limit the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, the research was conducted in a specific cultural and linguistic context, which may not fully represent the diversity of classrooms across Indonesia.

Recommendation

Future research could benefit from involving older students, such as those in the 6th grade, who may have a firmer understanding of their culture and could provide richer material for classroom discussions. Additionally, selecting a larger class with diverse student characteristics could lead to more varied and interesting findings. Research in rural areas, where students regularly use local languages like Sundanese, could also yield valuable cultural insights and enhance the integration of local content into English lessons. Researchers should ensure that teachers are well-trained and familiar with both the cultural content and the specific educational needs of their students.

For teachers interested in incorporating local content into English lessons, it is crucial to align the cultural material with learning objectives and the students' age and characteristics. Engaging students by involving them in sharing their cultural knowledge and creating projects can deepen their learning experience. Utilizing a variety of teaching aids, such as puppets, flashcards, and traditional games, can further enhance student engagement and make the learning process more interactive and enjoyable.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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