
MANAGING LOCAL WISDOM IN ENGLISH TEACHING MATERIALS

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Abstract

The national system of education of Indonesia has emphasized on the importance of developing students' competence and building characters according to the philosophy of national culture Pancasila. This also applies to English language teaching (ELT), that is, to develop a communicative competence while integrating ideal characters as good Indonesians. This argued that English language teaching should not simply let students copy foreign cultures in their communication learning, but importantly reflect an understanding to norms and values incorporating a sense of national integrity in their English proficiency, characterizing them as Indonesians in the global community. In spite of this, such ideal objective of ELT seems difficult to attain due to foreign-dependent learning resources that many English teachers often rely on. Besides, students' learning success has often been indicated through their ability to express English in foreign ways to communicate leading them to disregard their local norms, values, and cultures. This paper will discuss an attempt to manage local wisdom content as learning resources in English teaching materials. The aim of such local wisdom content is to integrate students' communicative competence with appropriate character development. In particular, this paper will suggest how teachers could manage English materials containing local wisdom to internalize appropriate understanding and characters, and how such materials could be organized into attractive ICT based media. This would be an attempt to ignite the brighter future of English teaching and learning in Indonesia multilingual society.

Keywords: *English Teaching Materials, Local Wisdom, Character-Competence Education, ICT Based Media, Communicative Competence*

1. INTRODUCTION

English, one of the international languages, is a strategic subject in the national system of education. The aim of English is to develop students' ability to communicate internationally through which they could develop their mastery on science and technology that will, in turn, give benefit to Indonesia national development. Mastering this language will expose the existence of Indonesia as a nation in the global context and will ease Indonesia to take part in business and trading with the global community as well as to develop and share science and technology (Septy, 2015d).

Learning English cannot be separated from learning and understanding cultures particularly where this language is originally native. In a certain circumstance, learning and understanding this target language may affect students' personal traits positively or negatively. Students, for instance, may adapt what they understand into their ways of life, ways of thinking, ways to interact, by copying characters in general and attitudes in particular. Although these characters are not all wrong, but they could sometimes create conflicts with respective local cultures where students are originated. Consequently, this may have made some negative perceptions about English language teaching. Besides, English has often been considered a difficult subject.

The national system of education stipulates the importance to develop students' competence and to build their characters aiming to develop a better civil society in the future. In particular, the objective of education is to develop students' potential to have faith observing the Oneness of God, practicing noble characters, being healthy, knowledgeable, skillful, creative, and independent, which in turn they become democratic and responsible citizens for Indonesia development (GOI, 2003, Decree No 20 Article 3). This also applies to English language teaching that is not only to develop students' English proficiency, but also to build characters according to local norms and values in a sense of national culture and philosophy

Pancasila. Students' English Proficiency (i.e., integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Arslan, 2008)), is supposed to reflect the appropriate character values.

In connection with the attempts, teachers play a central role to decide what and how learning resources are referred to in managing English language teaching. This suggests that teachers have to carefully select learning resources of culturally based content for English lesson materials. In spite of this, what culturally based content of the English lesson materials considered appropriate in developing students' English proficiency as well as to build their characters will need an intensive research. This paper then suggests that managing local wisdoms as culturally related resources to develop in English teaching materials would offer a model for better future of English language teaching in Indonesia.

2. CULTURALLY RELATED CHARACTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language is used for communication and, in particular, for social and personal interactions. In a communication practice, a speaker reflects his/her personality. So, in a language learning process, developing personality becomes important as well as developing competence in English interaction.

Referring to the objective of national education, students' English learning is not only to develop English competence, but also to build character according to the sense of *Pancasila* (MOEC, 2013a:78-82, Decree No. 64 Concerning Content Standard). In this relation, *Pancasila* is a collective culture with which students should refer to in practicing their ways of life including communicative competence. In other words, the students are expected to have English competence demonstrating their national and international knowledge characterizing culturally appropriate characters as Indonesians.

There are a number of aspects related to character referred to as the English language competence. The aspects include linguistic and discourse mastery as well as social-cultural awareness and understanding, and communication strategy appropriateness (Canale & Swain, 1980; Septy, 2015c:7). Similarly, according to Lane (2001), communicative competence may include (1) ability to adapt (adaptability/flexibility), (2) ability to involve in conversation (conversational involvement), (3) ability to control conversation (conversational management), (4) ability to express empathy (empathy), (5) ability to act effectively (effectiveness), and (6) ability to act appropriately (appropriateness). This means that such communicative competence reflects character values that speakers may refer to as their cultures and these are important to develop in the students' spoken and/or written communication skills.

In short, cultural awareness/understanding may become an important issue in English communicative competence. The ability to communicate should not disregard character values that are generated from cultural values, and this could be a determining resource in improving students' English proficiency. Besides, this cultural resource could relate to the process of character building. Therefore, the culturally based resources have to be considered in selecting teaching-learning materials.

3. LOCAL WISDOM IN ENGLISH LEARNING MATERIALS

What makes human becomes human is the way how human beings communicate by means of language. In this circumstance, language expressions are naturally influenced by the way they have socio-cultural features (Nuraeni & Alfian, 2012:66-70). As English language learning is concerned, then English language teaching will include learning the way to communicate according to the contexts of socio-culture (Sun, 2014; Septy, 2015b).

Language learning may contain some basic principles of life that are socio-culturally transferred through some socio-cultural values and norms (Diaz-Rico, 2004; Septy & Yatim, 2016). Such socio-cultural values and norms could be used as guidelines in daily life. According to Diaz-Rico (2004:266), culture involves belief and values, rhymes, rules, and roles. The culture has explicit and implicit patterns for living, the dynamic system of commonly agreed-on symbols and meaning, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, behaviors, traditions, and/or habits shared and make up the total way of life in constructing a personal identity.

Similarly, the socio-cultural value is called local wisdom. Especially, local wisdom is the source of conventional value naturally grown up and derived from the social and natural environments that then become philosophical-deep thoughts in controlling and developing better socio-cultural system of a certain

group of people. Therefore, referring to the purpose of education, character building could consider such socio-culturally based values/norms, local wisdoms.

To be more specific, local wisdom could be regarded as both universal and specific values possessed by groups of people. Originally, local wisdom varies among societies, and it is frequently used as the basis for a group member to have normative and ideal patterns to manage and to organize their socio-cultural system. As a multi-cultural nation, Indonesia has many local values of its traditional-socio-cultural life that could be referred to as learning resources to especially undertake character-based education. So, in this relation, English language learning should not let students to simply copy what they understand from foreign cultures, but more importantly how they can live in their own cultural values reflecting their identity and integrity in their English proficiency. It is the essence of character based teaching. Then, it is the role of teachers to manage lesson materials containing such cultural values-local wisdoms in English language teaching.

Character based teaching has also been signaled in the current system of national curriculum. Despite some weaknesses, the current national curriculum of 2013 has outlined to integrate competence and character into four main competencies; knowledge and skill (competence) and spiritual and social attitudes (characters) (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013a). In this relation, English lessons should be managed to develop not only students' linguistic mastery of English (i.e. sentence structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.), but also include characters (attitude and values). The attitudes relate to students' personality religiously and socio-culturally. Although, it is not clear what resources to refer to in developing students' spiritual and social attitudes, this paper suggests to consider relevant religious reference (i.e., Al Qur'an and Al Hadist) and local wisdoms in developing communicative competence of character values.

Then, lessons from local wisdoms, in particular, may be taken from the meaning of local legends, folklores, special places in the village, certain traditional/monumental objects, building, rivers, mount/hill, forest, and the like. The lessons from local wisdom may contain particular meaning of norms and values to understand. Table 1 lists character values and norms that could be taken from local wisdoms for developing the lesson materials.

Table 1. Personality Output (Character Values/Norms) of Local Wisdoms
(Adopted from MOEC, Regulation No. 63 of 2014)

1. Faithful	1. Skillful	1. Scientific
2. Respecting diversity	2. Thoughtful	2. Diligent
3. Tolerant	3. Well-mannered	3. Careful
4. Collaborative	4. Critical	4. Open
5. Appreciative	5. Polite	5. Wise
6. Discipline	6. Handful	6. Simple
7. Responsible	7. Sensitive	7. Sense of pride
8. Self-confident	8. Responsive	8. Aesthetic
9. Brave	9. Communicative	9. Cooperative
10. Love country	10. Independent	10. Participative
11. Regretful	11. Efficient	11. Imaginative
12. Honest	12. Obey rules	12. Integrity
13. Heroism	13. Curiosity	13. Alert
14. Willing to give	14. Not easy to give up	14. Caring
15. Giving model	15. Logic	15. Aware
16. Aware of rights and responsibilities	16. Creative	16. Sharing
17. Democratic	17. Innovative	17. Sportive
	18. Productive	18. Love tradition
	19. Respectful	19. Humble

To organize the materials, themes and topics relevant to daily life could be formulated (see table 2 an example). This will need a careful selection of relevant themes and topics developing culturally based character for the English lesson materials. Having the materials like this, students could develop their

wisdom, understanding to local norms and values that could then build attitudes of social-cultural-spiritual awareness, as well as to develop their English proficiency linguistically. Excerpt 1 exemplifies character values and norms contained in developing teaching-learning materials.

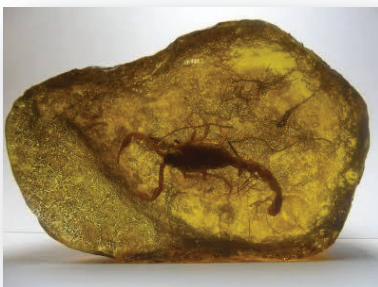
Table 2 Themes

- Health
- Geography
- Sports/Hobbi

Excerpt 1. Character values/norms of local wisdom from certain legend/object

Legend 1 (taken from student's writing project of local wisdom related material)

Object 1 (taken from student's writing project of local wisdom related material)



Flying stone may mean a disaster that will strike my village. According to the legend, if there was a disaster, the stone would vibrate, sound, or even fly. This phenomenon may last in few days. This phenomenon signaled a dispute indicating disagreements on solutions when discussing social problems in the community. So, this phenomenon teaches us to have a good communication and cooperation in finding out the best solutions when discussing the problems. This legend may refer to Al Quran QS Ar-Rum: 36.



Thousand stairs reflect a mutual relationship or reunion of villagers from two different villages. This stairs was build long before the Dutch and Japanese occupation in Solok regency. The stairs could be found on the hip of a hill called *Bukit Papan*. The hill was a border of two villages. The stairs was build to ease transportation and communication between the two villagers since then. The stairs represent a spirit of mutual relationship between people from the two different villages as referred to Al Quran QS Al-Hujarat: 10. So, this object teaches us a lesson to build a mutual relationship.

4. ICT BASED MEDIA IN ORGANIZING ELT MATERIALS

Information-Communication-Technology (CT) media might be generally referred to as audio tape, mobile phone, computer, television, radio, video tape and emails (Thapaliya, 2014: 251). In education, ICT media are referred to as a computer based or computer assisted learning in which lesson materials are organized into digital presentations. As computer becomes the main tool in presenting lesson materials, organizing lesson materials into computer will make learning more attractive and advantageous (Ibrahim, 2010; Susikaran, 2013; Ebrahimi *et al.*, 2013; Sadeghi & Dousty, 2013; Septy, 2014). This also

suggests organizing English lesson materials of local wisdom content into ICT based media would benefit both students and teacher.

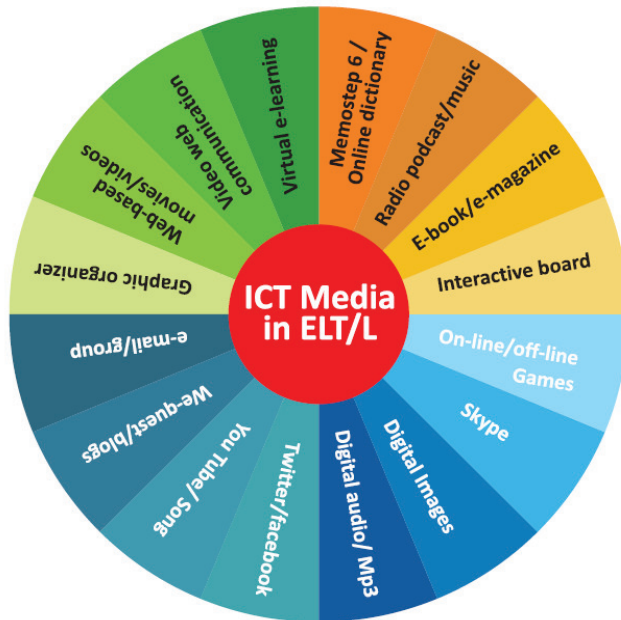
Using ICT media for teaching may at least have double benefits; (a) to ease teaching and learning and (b) to organize huge lesson materials. To ease the teaching and learning means that ICT media will ease students to understand lesson materials, as well as to ease teachers to manage classroom activities. On the other hand, the ICT media will also help teachers organize massive lesson materials into friendly-user formats.

Moreover, there are also other benefits in having the ICT media in the classroom. First, students may feel that they are experiencing the learning in a real context. The ICT media can display still or animated materials that may be impossible to have in a traditional teaching mode and classroom. This is what is called authentic learning (Septy, 2007). Kelly *et al.* (2002) and Kilickaya (2004) note that the authentic learning could at least:

- affect students' positive motivation,
- provide actual cultural information,
- provide a real exposure on the target language
- relate to students' needs,
- support creative approaches to learning

As active, creative, effective, and joyful learning (PAKEM) is concerned, teaching English with ICT media also relates to the PAKEM principles (Septy, 2007). In this circumstance, students and teacher may be involved in active activities. The material designed in the ICT-media could develop students' language skills, as well as promote active learning strategies and interests. Furthermore, the ICT media stimulates active endeavor for students to find their own way to problem solving, and teachers intensively assist them to achieve objectives (Ebrahimi *et al.*, 2013:3-19; Sadeghi & Dousti, 2013:1). Therefore, teachers' ability to artistically design learning materials with which students are interested in playing and actively participating is a challenge in the current and future English classes.

Figure 1. Numerous media teacher may use in teaching



There are a number of ICT media or computer-based media that could be used in classroom processes. They are, among others, radio podcast, electronic books, electronic email (groups), movies and online videos, web-quest, power-point presentation, digital images, and the like (Septy, 2015d). Figure 1 shows numerous ICT media. To design and use these media, teachers may choose online and/or offline resources to determine types of application to use to manage local wisdom related teaching materials.

Then, in designing and presenting the lesson materials into such media, there are a number of criteria to consider. The criteria include readability (font size), colors (match colors and pictures, attract interests), clarity (zero noises), and adequacy (relevance to topic/content). As well, there are also several basic principles to note in designing the media. Among the principles are esthetic, skill, knowledge, and economy. It means that in designing the media, teacher needs to take into account some sense of arts, skills and knowledge to technical applications and knowledge about contents and materials of English language, and economical consideration as well.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

English language teaching has been prescribed as an attempt to attain the objectives of national education. The aim of education is to build a better civil society through developing students' competence and building their characters. As well, English language teaching has become an important component to develop the quality of human resources which will, in turn, become a strategic asset to develop science and technology leading Indonesia to become a competitive nation.

English language teaching could be suspected to open access for foreign cultures to infiltrate. This situation may create conflict with local/national cultures and values/norms of Indonesia. In spite of this, it all depends on how English language teaching is viewed in the framework of national development. Obviously, having English proficiency offers an opportunity for Indonesians to take part in the international competition. As well, students are potential to develop their competitive power through which they could demonstrate their English proficiency. The most important thing to take in to account is how they keep maintaining their identity and integrity reflected in their characters as well as their spirit nationalism. This relies on the management of English language teaching that should be on the right hands and handled by professional teachers, and this needs teachers' ability to manage English lesson materials promoting local wisdoms.

Teachers play a strategic role in guiding their students to develop communicative competence of English. To develop students' communicative competence, teachers should refer to culturally related

content of the teaching materials containing the practices of appropriate character, values and norms according to Indonesia cultures. This requires careful attempts to manage appropriate and culturally-friendly resources for English learning materials in order that the students could understand appropriate values and norms of their local wisdom. In short, to develop better understanding and the best practice of local wisdom, using and implementing ICT based media in the teaching materials will make learning more comprehensive.

This paper has discussed how communicative competence should be developed in relation to socio-culture awareness of characters development. This issue is important in English language teaching-learning process nowadays by offering local wisdom to manage, so that students could demonstrate their communicative competence as well as appropriate characters. Besides, this paper has also suggested some strategic attempts to develop to make English language learning interesting and challenging; using ICT based media according to the development of technology, containing character values based on local culture/local wisdoms.

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