Incorporating Local Culture Values in English Teaching Materials: A Lecturers' Perception

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Abstract

This study explores lecturers' perceptions of integrating local cultural values into English teaching materials. The aim is to understand how local culture enhances student engagement, critical thinking, and cultural awareness in English language learning. A quantitative descriptive method was used, involving six English lecturers from Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire included items on demographic information, cultural integration, and teaching application. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns in lecturers' perceptions. The findings show that all lecturers (100%) integrate local culture, such as stories, proverbs, arts, and traditions, into their teaching. Most (83.3%) believe this makes learning more engaging and helps preserve local heritage. Additionally, 66.7% agree that cultural comparisons promote critical thinking, while 50% find local examples useful in explaining language concepts. The study concludes that integrating cultural values supports character development, classroom inclusivity, and meaningful learning. These results suggest that cultural integration is an effective approach to balance local identity and global language education goals.

Keywords: *Local Cultural Values, English Teaching Materials, Lecturers' Perceptions, Cultural Integration, Language Education*

Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds into language education. Language learning involves not only mastering grammar and vocabulary but also understanding the social and cultural contexts in which communication occurs. Educators are increasingly called upon to design instructional materials that reflect learners' lived experiences. This approach aligns with the broader aim of fostering inclusive and meaningful learning environments that validate students' identities and promote deeper engagement. By considering the cultural backgrounds of learners, language teachers can create more relevant and relatable content, ultimately enhancing both motivation and comprehension in the classroom. For instance, researcher emphasize that incorporating culturally relevant content and instructional strategies in English language classrooms enhances student motivation and fosters a positive learning environment, promoting a deeper understanding of language concepts and a sense of belonging among students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Yuliantari et al, 2023).

Teaching materials in language teaching should consider students' cultural backgrounds, as language and culture are deeply interconnected (Arshad et al., 2020; Miqawati et al., 2024). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is essential to integrate both the culture of the English language and the learners' native culture. The underlying implication is that language and culture are inextricably intertwined (Tomlinson, 2023). Incorporating local cultural elements can significantly support the learning process for non-native English speakers. For example, conducted a systematic review of ELT practices in Southeast Asia and found that integrating local cultural content consistently improved learners' attitudes, motivation, and engagement in English classes (Ratri et al., 2024).

In the context of English classrooms, reseacrher highlights two key reasons for incorporating local culture into teaching materials (Nurdiana, 2017). First, it serves as a medium to foster a spirit of nationalism and a sense of closeness among students. When students encounter familiar cultural elements in their learning materials—such as local stories, traditions, or daily life contexts—they feel more personally connected to the lessons. This relevance not only increases engagement but also helps students appreciate their own cultural roots. Second, it reinforces cultural and national identity through the content presented in the teaching materials, ensuring that learners remain connected to their heritage while engaging with the English language (Mahmud, 2019). By integrating local culture into English education, students are not only learning a global language but also gaining a deeper understanding and pride in their own cultural identity. This balanced approach helps prevent cultural alienation and promotes a more meaningful and contextualized language learning experience.

Integrating local culture into English teaching materials significantly enhances students' engagement, comprehension, and overall learning experience. When educational content reflects students' own lives, traditions, and cultural contexts, it becomes more relatable and meaningful, fostering a deeper connection to the material. This relevance helps students to better grasp abstract language concepts by linking them to familiar experiences, which can improve retention and application. Moreover, it encourages active participation as students feel their backgrounds are valued and represented, boosting their confidence in using the language. Ultimately, this culturally grounded approach creates a more inclusive classroom environment that respects and celebrates diversity while promoting effective language learning.

This is supported a research which found that using locally embedded strategies such as video projects and discussion-based learning not only improved students' English proficiency but also reinforced cultural pride and identity (Herdi et al., 2023). Similarly, researcher emphasized that teaching materials designed with attention to local culture—particularly along Moran's cultural dimensions (products, practices, and perspectives)—create more culturally responsive and motivating classrooms for pre-service English teachers across various Indonesian provinces (Azhary et al, 2024).

Adding to this body of evidence, a study conducted by a researcher at Universitas Cokroaminoto Palopo demonstrated that incorporating Sulawesi folktales into reading comprehension instruction significantly improved students' reading achievement (Upa et al, 2018). The study, which used a quantitative method involving pre-test and post-test designs, revealed a notable increase in the students' average score from 5.05 to 7.30, with a t-test significance value of 0.001. This suggests that using culturally familiar texts such as local folktales can enhance comprehension by connecting content to students' background knowledge and cultural context—key elements in facilitating deeper understanding.

Research by demonstrated that incorporating Javanese local wisdom into English learning materials for secondary school students in Semarang led to improved understanding and retention of lessons (Wulandari et al., 2020). The study found that using familiar cultural elements, such as traditional songs and local stories, not only made the learning process more enjoyable but also enriched students' knowledge of their own culture, thereby supporting character education and cultural awareness.

Similarly, researcher explored the integration of the Lahbako Dance—a traditional dance from Jember, Indonesia—into English language teaching findings indicated that using such authentic cultural materials motivated students and enhanced their cultural awareness, making the learning experience more engaging and effective (Miqawati et al., 2024). By presenting familiar cultural practices through English instruction, students were able to relate more personally to the lesson content, which improved their participation and interest in learning. Additionally, the integration of local culture helped students appreciate the richness of their heritage while simultaneously developing their language skills in a meaningful context.

Furthermore, a study developed customized English learning materials for nursing students in Palopo City, South Sulawesi, by incorporating aspects of Luwu culture. The inclusion of local names, traditional attire, and cultural sites in the learning materials received positive responses from students, who reported increased interest and a better understanding of the content (Lestari et al., 2024). This approach not only made the materials more relatable but also strengthened students' sense of cultural identity and pride. As a result, students became more engaged in classroom discussions and demonstrated improved motivation to learn English. Taken together, these studies collectively highlight that integrating local culture into English teaching materials not only aids in language acquisition but also promotes inclusivity and a sense of identity among learners. By engaging with content that resonates with their cultural background, students are more likely to participate actively in class discussions, share their perspectives, and develop a deeper appreciation for both their own and others' cultures.

This culturally responsive approach is closely linked to the broader concept of material adaptation, which emphasizes the importance of placing learners at the core of the educational process. Material adaptation empowers learners linguistically and fosters autonomy, positioning them as active participants in the learning process (Tomlinson, 2023). Teachers, in this context, act as facilitators who provide meaningful stimuli for language exposure and diverse learning strategies. Incorporating students' culture as a foundation for material development aligns seamlessly with this perspective. By embedding cultural elements familiar to students, materials not only become more engaging and relevant but also encourage critical awareness of their cultural identity in relation to global contexts.

However, it is important to approach cultural integration in ELT with balance and caution. It is warned that relying solely on local culture to design English Language Teaching (ELT) materials may result in students developing a skewed understanding of the broader world (Jalaluddin et al, 2020). Therefore, while local culture can enrich the learning experience, it should be complemented with global perspectives to help learners develop both a strong sense of self and an openness to intercultural understanding.

Another key feature in materials adaptation is learner-centeredness and the development of critical awareness. In this approach, learners are viewed as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. One effective strategy aligned with this principle is project-based learning, where students engage in real-world tasks such as community or design

projects that require them to collaborate, think critically, and make decisions. These projects encourage learners not only to manage tasks but also to identify problems, propose actionable solutions, and reflect on the outcomes (Tang, 2023). This hands-on experience deepens their understanding of both content and context, enhances problem-solving skills, and nurtures a sense of responsibility. When local cultural elements are embedded in these projects, students also gain deeper appreciation of their heritage, while building communicative competence in English in meaningful, culturally grounded ways.

This research aims to explore lecturers' perceptions of incorporating local cultural values into English teaching materials. The study seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of this integration, uncover lecturers' attitudes towards the approach, and provide recommendations for developing culturally responsive English teaching materials. By doing so, the study contributes to creating a more inclusive and culturally relevant framework for English language education.

Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate lecturers' perceptions of incorporating local cultural values into English teaching materials. The primary objective was to identify the perceived benefits, challenges, and practical applications of integrating cultural content in English language instruction, particularly in the context of higher education. The population of this study consisted of lecturers teaching in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja (UKI Toraja). The sample included six English lecturers, all selected using purposive sampling. The criteria for selection were: (1) a minimum of ten years of teaching experience, (2) active involvement in developing teaching materials, and (3) experience teaching culturally diverse student populations. These criteria ensured that participants possessed deep pedagogical insight and practical experience in contextualizing learning materials.

Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this research. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections: (1) Demographic information, including participants' years of teaching experience, educational background, and involvement in material development, (2) Perceptions of local culture integration, which included items measuring agreement with statements about the value and impact of using local cultural content in English instruction, and (3) Application of cultural values in classroom materials, where participants reported on the frequency and types of cultural integration they practice in their teaching.

The instrument used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). It was designed to assess the degree of agreement with various statements related to the integration of local culture in English teaching. The instrument was reviewed for content validity by two language education experts prior to distribution, ensuring the relevance and clarity of each item.

To facilitate participation and ensure accessibility, the questionnaire was distributed online via email. Participants were given two weeks to complete and return their responses. Ethical considerations were strictly upheld. Each participant received an informed consent form explaining the research objectives, their right to withdraw at any time, and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Participation was entirely voluntary. For data analysis, a descriptive statistical approach was applied. All responses were compiled and analyzed using percentage analysis to identify trends and patterns in the data. This technique was appropriate

for the small sample size and the descriptive nature of the research questions. The analysis aimed to capture the general tendencies in lecturers' views, the extent to which they integrate local culture, and their perceived benefits or limitations of such integration in English language education.

This methodology enabled the researchers to gather in-depth insights into lecturers' real-world experiences with culturally responsive pedagogy. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on material development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings and provide a foundation for future research on culturally inclusive curriculum design in Indonesian higher education.

Results

Here is the table of findings based on the results of the study on lecturers' perceptions of integrating local cultural values into English teaching materials:

Table 1. *Summary of Findings on Lecturers' Perceptions of Local Cultural Integration*

Aspect	Response Summary	Percentage
Use of Local Cultural Content	All lecturers integrated cultural content (stories, proverbs, arts, festivals, history)	100%
Enhanced Engagement and Relevance	Cultural elements made materials more relatable and engaging	83.3%
Preservation of Local Traditions	Language learning supports the continuation of traditions	83.3%
Promotion of Critical Thinking	Comparing local and foreign cultures fosters critical analysis	66.7%
Concept Clarification Using Local Contexts	Local examples help explain English concepts	50%
Inclusive Classroom Environment	Cultural integration creates inclusive and respectful learning atmosphere	50% (Strongly Agree)
Character Development	Students' character formation is supported through exposure to cultural values	66.7%

Table 1 summarizes key findings on lecturers' perceptions regarding the integration of local culture into English language teaching. The data was collected from six lecturers in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja (UKI Toraja). These participants represented diverse teaching backgrounds, with most having 10 to 15 years of experience teaching English. This indicates that the respondents are seasoned educators with substantial classroom exposure and insight into the role of cultural relevance in language instruction.

1. **Use of Local Cultural Content (100%).** All lecturers (100%) reported integrating elements of local culture into their teaching materials. These elements include traditional stories, proverbs, local arts, cultural festivals, and historical content. This unanimous response reflects a shared understanding of the importance of using local culture as a bridge in English language instruction, helping to connect students with the learning material more meaningfully.

2. **Enhanced Engagement and Relevance (83.3%).** A large majority (83.3%) agreed that incorporating cultural elements made learning materials more relatable and engaging. When students see their own culture reflected in the content, they feel more connected to the subject matter, which boosts their motivation and encourages more active participation in class.

3. **Preservation of Local Traditions (83.3%).** Similarly, 83.3% of the lecturers believed that English language teaching can support the preservation of local traditions. By embedding cultural values and references into the learning process, students not only learn the language but also deepen their understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

4. **Promotion of Critical Thinking (66.7%).** About two-thirds of the participants (66.7%) indicated that comparing local and foreign cultures in the classroom promotes critical thinking. Such comparisons encourage students to analyze, question, and evaluate cultural differences, thereby developing higher-order thinking skills in both cultural and linguistic contexts.

5. **Concept Clarification Using Local Contexts (50%).** Half of the lecturers (50%) noted that using local contexts helped clarify English language concepts. Familiar references make it easier for students to understand abstract or complex ideas, as they can relate new information to existing knowledge and experiences.

6. **Inclusive Classroom Environment (50% Strongly Agree).** Half of the respondents strongly agreed that integrating culture creates a more inclusive and respectful classroom atmosphere. Cultural integration fosters an environment where students feel their identities are acknowledged and valued, which can enhance learning outcomes and mutual respect among peers.

7. **Character Development (66.7%).** Finally, 66.7% of the lecturers believed that incorporating cultural values into language learning plays a role in shaping students' character. Exposure to local wisdom and moral values through language materials supports the development of ethical behavior, responsibility, and a strong sense of identity.

Discussion

The findings on lecturers' perceptions of incorporating local cultural values in English teaching materials reveal a highly positive outlook and underscore the significant benefits of this approach. A substantial majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that such integration makes the teaching materials more engaging and relevant for students. Specifically, 83.3% of participants noted that cultural elements enhance the relatability of the content, encouraging student interest and participation. This suggests that the lecturers see cultural integration as a tool to bridge the gap between abstract English concepts and students' everyday realities, making learning more meaningful and accessible (Idrus et al., 2023; Wibowo, 2024; Ratri et al., 2024) Such findings are consistent with pedagogical perspectives that advocate for culturally responsive teaching, which positions learners' cultural contexts as fundamental to instructional design.

Numerous studies have emphasized the inextricable link between language and culture, and the importance of incorporating local cultural values in English language teaching (Yuliantari et al, 2023). Non-native English language teachers have also expressed a general consensus on the need to reference both international and local cultures in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Ratri et al., 2024). This approach not only helps students enhance their language knowledge but also provides a meaningful cultural context for their learning (Shrestha, 2016). By fostering a stronger connection between the target language and the learners' own cultural identity, the integration of local cultural elements can promote nationalism, celebrate diversity, and instill a sense of pride in students' linguistic and cultural

heritage. When learners recognize familiar aspects of their own culture within instructional content, they are more likely to experience increased motivation, confidence, and active participation in the classroom.

Additionally, research has demonstrated that the integration of cultural content in language teaching promotes higher-order thinking skills. For instance, 66.7% of lecturers in the study believed that the comparison between local and global cultural elements fosters students' critical thinking skills. By engaging students in discussions that contrast different cultural perspectives, teachers encourage learners to reflect on the similarities and differences in social values, communication styles, and worldviews. This comparative analysis supports the development of intercultural competence and a more nuanced understanding of global diversity. Such outcomes are crucial in today's interconnected world, where students must be prepared to navigate multicultural environments both locally and internationally (Wisran et al, 2025).

Another study conducted by Kumar and supported by researcher. highlighted that both local and global cultures can be effectively integrated into English instruction, with a stronger emphasis on local culture (Shrestha, 2016; Aglasi, 2019). The purpose of integrating local culture was to promote cultural identity, increase awareness of local traditions, and instill a sense of national pride among students. Moreover, incorporating elements of local culture in EFL materials has been found to improve students' understanding of contextualized vocabulary, support customer service practices in tourism-related contexts, and foster sustainable cultural knowledge. In contrast, global culture was included in the curriculum to develop language proficiency, increase students' employability, and enhance their ability to communicate across cultures. These cultural elements were introduced through diverse instructional methods such as storytelling, role-play, class discussions, cultural comparisons, and multimedia presentations (Romrome et al, 2022). The strategic combination of local and global content allows for a balanced pedagogical approach that supports both language acquisition and cultural awareness.

Incorporating local culture into English language instruction also aligns with learner-centered education principles, which emphasize the importance of engaging students' prior knowledge and experiences in the learning process. According to researcher, when students are exposed to culturally familiar topics, they are more likely to engage with the content, relate it to their own lives, and internalize language structures more effectively (Albantani et al, 2018). This notion is further supported by researcher, who argue that culturally relevant materials not only enhance students' language competencies but also contribute to the preservation of cultural identity in a globalized world (Margianti, 2022; Yusniawati et al, 2021). By embedding local wisdom, traditional practices, and indigenous expressions into the curriculum, EFL educators can create a more inclusive and empowering learning environment.

Furthermore, using local culture-based materials serves as a counterbalance to the predominance of Western-centric content in many English textbooks. While global English materials often focus on cultures from English-speaking countries, the inclusion of local culture provides learners with alternative narratives and validates their own identities. As a result, students are encouraged to become cultural ambassadors who can articulate their heritage while engaging in intercultural communication. This dual focus not only equips learners with the linguistic tools necessary for global engagement but also instills a sense of responsibility to protect and promote their local cultures. However, despite the numerous advantages of integrating local culture, scholars also caution against relying exclusively on

localized content. Researcher warn that overemphasis on local culture without exposing students to global perspectives may result in a limited worldview (Jalaluddin et al, 2023). Therefore, the goal should be to strike a balance—creating materials that are both locally grounded and globally informed. In this way, English language instruction can fulfill its dual role: facilitating effective communication in a global language while nurturing cultural identity and critical awareness.

Furthermore, recent findings by researcher underscore the effectiveness of local culture integration through practical teaching strategies. Their study identified eight specific classroom techniques—such as brainstorming, contextualizing local topics, designing culturally-relevant syllabi, and assigning video projects on cultural themes—that significantly improved students' English performance and motivation (Herdi et al., 2023). These strategies not only support linguistic competence but also cultivate cultural awareness and pride among students. Similarly, researcher explored how pre-service English teachers incorporated local culture using Moran's cultural dimensions (products, practices, and perspectives), demonstrating that such integration helps students better connect with learning materials while preserving their cultural identity (Azhary et al, 2024). Both studies reinforce the notion that the inclusion of local cultural elements provides meaningful, situated learning experiences that empower students both cognitively and socially.

In conclusion, the integration of local cultural values into English teaching materials is strongly supported by both empirical findings and theoretical frameworks. It enhances engagement, fosters critical thinking, strengthens cultural identity, and supports inclusive learning practices. By thoughtfully designing culturally enriched English instruction, educators can empower students to navigate both their local communities and the broader global context with confidence, competence, and cultural sensitivity

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore lecturers' perceptions of integrating local cultural values into English teaching materials. The results confirmed the research objective, revealing strong support for cultural integration as a pedagogical strategy. All participants (100%) reported using local cultural elements such as stories, proverbs, and traditions in their teaching. A majority (83.3%) believed this approach enhanced student engagement and helped preserve local heritage. Additionally, 66.7% of lecturers stated that comparing local and global cultures encouraged students' critical thinking, while 50% found that using local contexts aided in explaining English concepts more effectively. These findings suggest that integrating local culture into English instruction can make language learning more relevant, inclusive, and engaging. It reinforces students' identities and promotes greater motivation and classroom participation. The study also highlights the importance of equipping educators with the tools and training necessary to design culturally responsive teaching materials. However, a key limitation of this study is the small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The study was also limited to lecturers from one institution, which may not reflect broader perspectives in other regions or educational settings.

Future research is recommended to include larger and more diverse samples, and to explore students' perspectives on the use of local culture in English learning. Investigating the long-term impact of culturally integrated materials on language proficiency and character development would also provide valuable insights for curriculum developers and policymakers.

By expanding the scope of inquiry, future studies can further validate the significance of culturally grounded English language education in multilingual contexts.

Acknowledgment

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