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**STRENGTHENING LOCAL CULTURE AWARENESS  
IN TEACHING WRITING; A CASE STUDY  
AT MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF PAREPARE**

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**Abstract**

Local culture content approach in education has long been discussed and there are still some arguments on its position in education. Regardless its issues, as a teacher I believed that local culture has significant position in education. Therefore, in my teaching, I always attach culture value in it as a shape of my awareness toward it. This study based on a personal experience in teaching writing for beginner students at English department of Muhammadiyah University of Parepare. The study explores the interference of local culture knowledge in affecting students' idea forming in class of writing. The participant of the study was the 2nd semester students; class A and B in 2012/2013. The study design applied was case study. It revealed in the study that the use of local culture based material in writing can ease students in mapping their writing ideas as well as reinforcing their awareness toward their local culture. Students enjoyed writing as the material given is familiar to them while at the same time they can strengthen their local culture awareness. Also reinforcing local culture knowledge in teaching English can help widen student's knowledge on writing.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Local Culture, Strengthen, Teaching Writing

**Abstrak**

*Penguatan Budaya Lokal dalam Pengajaran Writing; Suatu Studi Kasus di Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare. Pendekatan konten budaya lokal dalam pendidikan lama telah dibahas dan masih ada beberapa argumen pada posisi dalam pendidikan. Terlepas dari isu-isu yang, sebagai guru, saya percaya bahwa budaya lokal memiliki posisi penting di bidang pendidikan. Oleh karena itu, dalam mengajar saya, saya selalu melampirkan nilai budaya di dalamnya sebagai bentuk kesadaran saya ke arah itu. Studi ini didasarkan pada pengalaman pribadi dalam mengajar menulis untuk pemula siswa di Departemen bahasa Inggris dari Universitas Muhammadiyah kota Pare. Studi mengeksplorasi gangguan pengetahuan budaya lokal dalam mempengaruhi siswa ide membentuk di kelas menulis. Peserta studi adalah mahasiswa semester 2; kelas A dan B di 2012/2013. Desain studi yang diterapkan pada studi kasus. Itu mengungkapkan dalam studi bahwa penggunaan bahan budaya lokal dalam menulis dapat memudahkan siswa dalam pemetaan ide-ide menulis mereka serta memperkuat kesadaran mereka terhadap budaya lokal mereka. Siswa menikmati menulis sebagai materi yang diberikan akrab bagi mereka sementara pada saat yang sama mereka dapat memperkuat kesadaran budaya lokal mereka. Juga memperkuat pengetahuan budaya lokal dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris dapat membantu memperluas pengetahuan siswa menulis.*

**Katakunci:** kesadaran, budaya lokal, memperkuat, mengajar menulis

## **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia including its culture has been commonly discussed. There are already many programs designed for teachers of English in improving their method of teaching and the importance of cultural attachment in teaching held by local or main government. As we know, teaching this international language cannot be separated with teaching the culture as it is embedded in the language itself. The kind or type of language is a portrait of cultural background as Stuart Hall (1997) said that language is one of the media to represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings. Through language as a media, our thoughts, ideas and feeling are represented in a culture.

Regarding this issue, as a teacher of English in faculty of teacher and education who teaches some English subjects like writing, speaking, semantic and some others, I found some interesting facts concerning cultural value in teaching. In teaching English as foreign language, I suppose to share the culture knowledge of English as part of the language to efficacy the English language teaching. Nevertheless, at the same time, as an Indonesian and Buginese, my local culture value is in myself that sometimes affect my way of teaching. Thus I have been in deep thinking about the place of local cultural in teaching foreign language such as English. It is undoubtedly, English culture in teaching is in the language itself, though there is a need to persist the local culture awareness for an English teacher and for the learners as well. This problem challenges me to harmonize English language teaching and local culture value in my class. There are some steps I do to actualize it and I will describe it in this paper.

### ***Language and Culture***

It has been a common knowledge for teachers of English that when they teach English in the class, the teaching material used has been provided by culture value in it. When we teach for instance about season, we will tell our students there are four kinds of seasons: winter, summer spring, autumn and in Indonesia, there are two season; rain and dry. This way of teaching is mostly applied by teachers of English intentionally as a part of their teaching. It is unquestionably that culture attachment in language teaching cannot be detached.

In English Foreign Language class, the use of literature text such as novel, story book, poems, etc can be empowered as it helps students a lot learning the culture of the language they learn. These literary text have many functions; language enhancement, authentic material usage, genuine language input for students. This statement is also stated by Floris (2004) that literature texts give many benefits for learners of English such as they can help learners enrich their language, deepen foreign culture knowledge, enhance students' sensitivity language variety, exploring students' involvement into 'another world'. For that reason, the use of literature texts can be a good source in EFL class.

These literary texts commonly come into two versions; the genuine literary text written by the real native English speakers and the English literary texts written

by non-English people but live in English speaking country. Some studies on the use of these kinds of literary text showed that these texts often make students get difficulties in comprehending the texts as it applies some foreign culture (Floris,2005), but in general, the texts are still being good sources for learning English.

In Indonesia setting, the materials in teaching English use both types; the genuine literary text by real native speaker and literary text written by non-native speaker as stated above. These literary text are well designed for teaching purpose. However, the local culture existence should also be being involved in these literary texts to enrich the text. Also, it can help the students to persist their awareness of their local culture. Some literary texts have facilitated the reader with the local culture content material in it which is good for the students.

### ***Common Problem in Teaching***

Teaching English as a foreign Language in a non-English speaking country like Indonesia must face many obstacles. These problems still exist and need big effort to solve it. Based on my observation and experience as a teacher of English, there are some common problems faced in teaching English such as lack of learner motivation, insufficient time, resource and materials, big population in the class and many others. Dealing on motivation, students seems lack of motivation when they learn English; students skip the class of English, lack any semblance of attention during class, chatting with friends, doodling or making unnecessary writing in their note books. Insufficient learning time, resources and materials for study is also being general problems in teaching English. Other problem in teaching English is the number of students in class is big and it results on lack of focus for teaching learning.

Renandya (2014) in his article stated that there are some problems which affect the success of teaching learning English including cognitive, affective and social dimension of language learning. He continued said that there are eight factors that play a vital position in language learning. They are role of input, output, fluency, formulaic expression, motivation, grammar, vocabulary and intensity of instruction. All of these factors affect students' successfulness in learning English. As a teacher, I do believe that the role of teacher is very important in this issue. Therefore, reinforcing teacher's responsibility should be done by the whole part of the society.

### ***Reinforcing Local Culture in Teaching***

Culture awareness in learning a language is definitely needed for the successful of learning a language. However, as a non-speaker English who teaches English, I have to consider both culture between English and my local culture that sometimes interfere my teaching. In order to balance these, I put forward both culture value in my teaching especially in my writing class.

In teaching writing as one of the subject in English Education Department, I found some interesting facts on the difficulties faced by students in writing. These difficulties cover grammar mistakes including article and noun problem, verb problems, word form, word order and sentence structure, word choice, wordiness, punctuation and mechanics, sentence and paragraph coherence, organization and

stylistic approach, documentation and use of source language. Other common mistakes appear in class of writing are switching tenses unnecessarily, excessively long paragraphs, inconsistency in spelling style, writing in the first- person in academic context, incorrect capitalization, incorrect use of articles. Another assumption on writing problem comes from Nieto (2002) in her book who said that minority students may not attempt to write because they do not see their lives, stories, and words as appropriate material for literature. These problems on writing seem being fossilized for one class to other class, from one year to other year. As a teacher who responsible for the class of writing, I have to always innovate myself with some strategies in facing these common mistakes.

Considering this issue, I try to apply one way that I assume being helpful for my students in writing that is using local culture knowledge in raising their ideas. I believe that reinforcing local culture knowledge in writing can ease them as it is familiar in their live. Nieto (200) said that teachers should connect writing assignments to students' lives and teachers should focus on what students can do as well as what students can learn. She adds here that teachers should encourage students to reflect on how they can use their writing to empower themselves and their communities.

The way that I use to empower the local culture knowledge in class of writing is by making it as one of writing topic varieties. This topic can be widen based on the needs of writing, for instance if the writing material focuses on expository writing or narrative writing, then the students may be encouraged to write about their local culture such as the traditional event or customs in their area. Though, the students still have to follow the writing steps such brainstorming ideas, first draft of writing consist of introduction, body and conclusion, second draft until final draft of writing.

Based on my observation during the class of writing, using and empowering local culture knowledge as one of writing topic can ease students in writing in English as it is familiar with them. Their idea can be arranged easily and they can write more fluently. In addition, their vocabulary on culture can improve significantly.

## **METHOD**

This study was conducted at university of Muhammadiyah Parepare in 2012 for the students of English Education Departement. The participant of the study was the 2nd semester students; class A and B in 2012/2013 academic year in class of writing. The sample was taken randomly from four classes; A, B, C and D that is only class A and B. The study applied was case study. The instruments of the research used were observation, field notes and students' writing. Then the data collected was analyzed descriptively.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study was based on a personal experience in teaching writing for first year students at English department of Muhammadiyah University of Parepare. The study investigated the interference of local culture comprehension in affecting students' idea forming in class of writing. The study proposed the use of local culture in strengthening the students' local culture awareness which seems starting fade away

in this technology world. The local culture based material which is used in this class of writing is any local tradition or local festival in their area especially in south Sulawesi area. The findings were taken from observation, filed notes and students' writing.

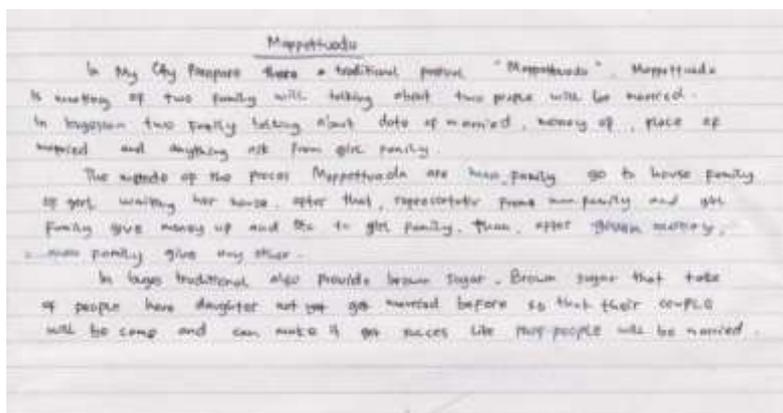
Observation was done during the process of class writing for one semester. The observation during the study covered the situation, students' activities, students' response toward local culture based material. The situation in the class of writing run normally; students learnt, did assignments, did group discussion and did some writings. Students' activities covered the work of the assignments in the writing module, did peer reviewing, did some individual writing related to the material given. During the class of writing, one of the materials given was local culture based material. The students were given a selected theme which was link to the local culture knowledge. The students' response toward the theme was positive. They were happy when the teacher asked them to make a short writing dealt with local festival in their area. They were quite familiar with it as they already have previous knowledge on it.

Based on the field notes during the study, it revealed in the study that the students enjoyed practicing writing by using local culture knowledge as it is recognizable for them. Also the local cultural background eases them to improve their idea to write. Commonly, building idea to write and continue it until being a complete essay is not a simple thing to do, however by empowering the students' local culture knowledge, making a complete essay is not as difficult as it is used to be. The familiarity of the theme eased them to run their idea and form it into essay.

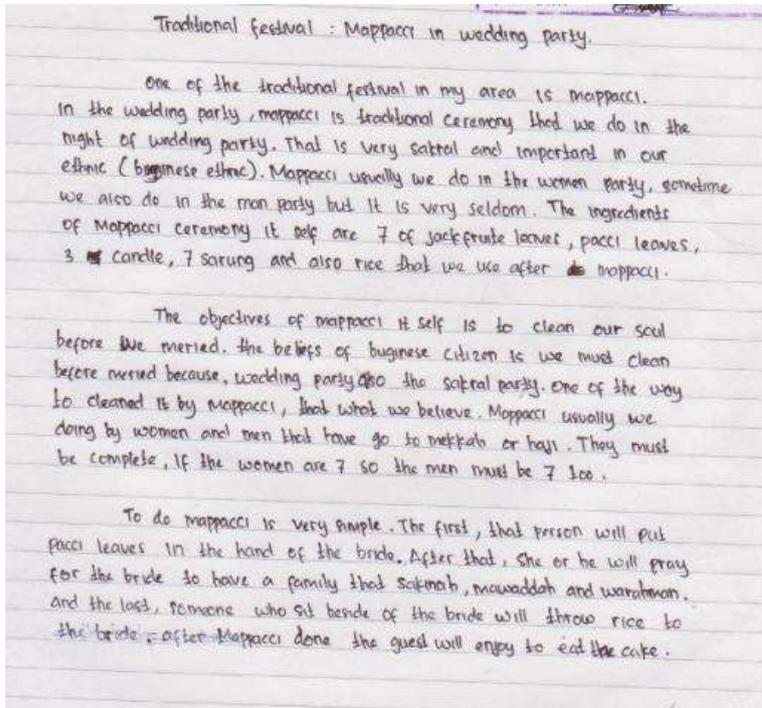
The data taken from students' writing showed that the students' writing became more regular; including the organization, content, mechanics. Moreover, they can write quite fluently as the theme given was familiar to them and they have prior awareness on it. The selected theme in writing such as local festival in their area also can strengthen their awareness toward local culture which seems fade away and changed by foreign culture; hiphop music, Korean style, middle east movies.

Below are some students' writing related to cultural theme

### Student 1



## Student 2

**CONCLUSION**

Local culture awareness is still need to be kept in teaching foreign language by reinforcing local culture knowledge of the students in the process of learning. In teaching English especially in class of writing, the usage of local culture knowledge is applied by putting it as a variety of writing topic in their writing class. This activity helps students a lot in writing as the topic given has been familiar for them. It makes them easy to access and gather the ideas, organize them to be a good paragraph/writing as the concept is already in their mindset. Reinforcing the usage of local culture knowledge can be a good way in improving students' writing skill and reserving their own local culture.

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