
CHILD FRIENDLY ENGLISH BASED ON CULTURAL LOCAL CONTENT IN SURAKARTA

¹Honest Ummi Kaltsum, ²Muhamad Taufik Hidayat

¹*Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
huk172@ums.ac.id*

²*Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
mt.hidayat@ums.ac.id*

Abstract

English for elementary school in Indonesia is categorized as local content curriculum area which means the material must be designed to explore the local content. Local content covers cultural, natural, and society environment whereas these three components can become the learning design and source for English at elementary school. This paper tries to elaborate ideas about local content as a learning source of English at elementary school. The material should cover the local content, apply the appropriate approaches, and facilitate the children cognitive and character development

Key words: cultural local content, Elementary students, teaching English

INTRODUCTION

In relation to the implementation of the 2013 curriculum and the policy of English language teaching in several elementary schools (SD) Surakarta, it is found that some elementary schools in Surakarta, whether implementing the Curriculum 2013 or KTSP, still provide English content in their learning (Kaltsum and Utami, 2015:1). English in some primary schools are divided into local and extra-curricular content. It means although English is not a mandatory subject in SD Surakarta, English is still a required lesson in elementary school in Surakarta. It is understandable considering Surakarta has the potential of local culture both physical and nonphysical that can be developed so as to attract domestic and foreign tourists. Since Surakarta has a lot of the potential of local culture as interesting place to visit, the interest of English language teaching in SD Surakarta is a necessity. Based on this situation, curriculum and syllabus of English should be able to answer the regional needs and able to facilitate the appropriate teaching English for children.

In correlation to above statements, this paper aims to describe the idea of English teaching material in elementary school which covers the actual local content. Local content is an educational program whose content and delivery media is linked to the natural environment, social environment, and cultural environment as well as regional development needs where the students live (Abidin, 2014:1). The main purpose of local content is to develop the potential of students in accordance with the characteristics and potential of the region. This paper intends to explore one of three local content, cultural environment.

DISCUSSIONS

The provisions in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 Year 2003 (Depdiknas 2003) regarding National Education System mandates that the meaning of Education is a conscious and planned effort to create an atmosphere of learning and learning process so that learners are actively developing their potential to have spiritual spiritual power, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morality, as well as the skills that he or she needs, society, nation and state. Thus, education has a very strategic and decisive position in building individual private individuals in society to advance a more advanced civilization. The advanced civilization must be accompanied by skilled and educated individuals or learners. Not only skilled and educated, but learners should be directed to be able to develop himself, he must also be taught to have the burden or vocation of life to be part of the solution of the problems facing the nation and the world (Hidayatullah, 2009:3). One of them should be provided with good language skills of mother tongue or second language or foreign language (English), so that learners are able to communicate well, because language is one of communication tool.

We can communicate with each other because there is a language intermediary. Language has a central role in the intellectual, social, and emotional development of learners and is a support for success in studying all areas of study. Language learning is expected to help learners to recognize themselves, their culture, and the culture of others.

As written above, language is a means of communication, as well as English. English is a tool for communicating orally and in writing.

Communicating is understanding and disclosing information, thoughts, feelings and developing science, technology and culture. The ability of communication in the full sense is the ability to discourse the ability to understand and / or produce oral and / or write text that is realized in four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four skills are used to respond or create discourse in social life.

If a person is able to master many languages it is expected that he will be able to absorb all the information needed in the global era. A person's ability to understand a foreign language will give beneficial in this era of tight global competition. Thus the mastery of foreign languages, especially English as an international language is a requirement as well as obligations.

English for Young Learners

The development of Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has made great progress in non-English speaking countries. English for children is known as English for Young Learners (EYL). EYL itself experienced a rapid development in the early era of 2002 (Karani, 2006). This development is disturbing the observers of education, especially those who cultivate the field of teaching English as a second language and foreign languages. The attention of experts focused on what learning strategies were applied, and how to develop relevant teaching materials for early childhood in Elementary School. Since the character of early learners differs from the character of adolescent learners and adult learners, so the learning patterns applied to this group are also different. Who is The Young Language Learner? In his book *Teaching English to Children*, Scott and Ytreberg (1990:1) Young Language Learner is divided into two, namely age of five to seven years and age of eight to ten years. Meanwhile, according to Reilly and Ward (1997:3), the meaning of Young Learners are children who have not yet started compulsory schooling and have not yet started to read. This varies according to the country and can mean children up to age of seven.

The same statement was written by Karani (2006), that is, early childhood learning group is a group of children who are studying in elementary school, which is categorized aged between 6-12 years. They are known as Young Learners. The characteristics are: (1) Power of imagination and fantasy is very high, (2) Always active, (3) Spontaneous action to the surrounding environment, (4) Still very egocentric. The uniqueness has a positive effect on the pattern and style of learning English in elementary.

The Young Learners have the ability to:

- (1) Interpret meaning of a sentence,
- (2) They can guess the meaning of a utterance or speech through intonation and gesture,
- (3) They can quickly be taught to communicate in simple (English) language because they do not feel shy and afraid of wrong,
- (4) They have limited ability to use the language component actively.
- (5) They often learn indirectly, for example by hearing stories or fairy tales,
- (6) They are very fond of something fun,
- (7) They can quickly respond to a word,
- (8) They easily understand concepts that are concrete,
- (9) Curiosity is very large,
- (10) Active talking and moving can not be silent, but has the power of low concentration / short (short attention span).

Similarly, in the second language learning process, there are many similarities between learning a mother tongue and learning a second language. This means how a child learns a second language, can use the way just as he learned the first language. This is in line with the writings of Asher in Fauziati (2009:90) namely the second language learning follows the naturalistic process of first language learning.

Related to language learning, this Young Learners group, said by Cameron in Karani (2006) as active learners and active thinkers. They are in the process of optimal development, both the development of general knowledge and the development of language skills. Thus, it will be more optimal if second or foreign language learning starts early. This is in line with the writings of Bumpass in Kamal (2007:137) ie

One of the considerations of introducing a foreign in the elementary level according to Bumpass is the enthusiastic and interested of young children as they respond with ease, correctness, and pleasure, becomes a satisfying arguments instead of giving it to secondary level.

Furthermore, Bumpass offers two major advantages of introducing foreign language to children Firstly, young children own an auditory perception and memory so they can learn to repeat sounds quickly and accurate and can retain the new learning without problems. Secondly, children have fewer inhibitions and respond with greater ease and less – consciousness, ever present problems, which often experiences by adult students.

Since children have different characteristics from adult, the learning method must also be different from adult. The statement is supported Fauziati (2010:89)

Teaching English to Young Learners involves more than merely teaching the language. Both social and cognitive development of learners

as well as the linguistic need to be taken into account when planning for and working with the five to twelve age group. From experience, the best way to teach children English is to not only get them physically involved within the lesson, but also to create the illusion that they are simply playing games.

Culture

Culture generally means as habit or custom of a particular society. We can find many definitions of culture. Taylor writes culture as a the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor, 1871). Besides, Linton defines culture as the sum total of knowledge, attitudes and habitual behavior patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society (Linton, 1945). Both Tylor and Linton have similar statements that culture is one habit in particular society.

According to Ki Hajar Dewantara in Suparlan (2014), culture as well as knowledge has three main elements called *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa*. The sense of cultural essence is *cipta* for example is the art of dance. With the creation of a dance, one intends to convey certain cultural values through a particular movement symbol in the dance. Other examples are painting, sculpture, literary art both poetry and prose. With the existence of *cipta*, we can easily analyze the cultural value.

Cultural elements in the form of *rasa* are the action of human pattern in the form of behavior in such as customs, norms, and rules that bind a society, called as a cultural system or cultural values. The third cultural manifestation is a work that is *karsa* such as Borobudur temple. Since people live within their culture, they are able fulfill their needs. There are plenty of societies in this globe so culture can be different things to different people. There are three cultural phenomena namely ideas, activities, and artifact (Koentjaraningrat 1979; Parson & Kroeber 1958; Honingmann 1959:11-12). This definition is in line with the definition of culture by Ki Hajar Dewantara. He states that culture conveys three components; *cipta* (action), *rasa* (ideas) and *karsa* (artefact). We can say that culture has multi-layered since it has many levels. The lower level is somewhat like values, norms which are less visible. These values, norms and basic truths require questioning and interpretation, and address the question of ‘why’ cultures teach people to act in one way but not another. Going up to the higher level we find behavior and artifact or cultural product which is visible. In the latter level we can find language, rituals, and symbol

that mark cultural groups. The table below maps the cultural component from many experts.

Table 1. The components of culture

	A	B	Conclusion
	ideas	<i>rasa</i>	values, norms, basic truth
	activities	<i>cipta</i>	behavior
Cultural components	artifact	<i>karsa</i>	artifact, cultural product, cultural heritage

A = Koentjaraningrat (1979), Parson & Kroeber (1958), and Honingman (1959)

B = Ki Hajar Dewantara (in Suparlan 2014)

Based on several definition of culture, it can be concluded that culture is the set of learned values and way of life within members of a group and has three elements namely ideas, action, and artifact. This paper describes the cultural heritages which can be designed as teaching material for elementary students later on.

Cultural Local Content

Local content is curricular activities to develop competencies that is suited to the characteristics and potential of the region, including areas of excellence and the material can not be grouped into the existing subjects. The substance of local content is determined by the school. Thus, local content contains learning that includes aspects of attitude, knowledge and skills and the need to acquire knowledge about the local values. The local values are expected to educate students to respect, maintain and preserve the existing local values and foster a sense of nationalism and patriotism.

Local content is an educational program in which its content and media are linked to the natural environment, social environment, cultural environment, and regional development needs to be taught to students. Thus the source of learning from local content can be from the social environment, cultural environment, and natural environment in which the student is located. By studying the local content, learning becomes more interesting and meaningful because the source of learning is the environment where the students are located.

It has been said that culture is a way of life in a certain society which has three components ideas, activities, and artifact and local content itself covers natural environment, social environment, and cultural environment. Besides, local content contains

learning that includes aspects of attitude, knowledge and skills and the need to acquire knowledge about the local values. From this point of view, we can say that local content is part of culture. This paper highlights local content namely cultural local content. It has been said that culture is a way of life in a certain society which has three components : ideas, activities, and artefact. To focus the discussion the cultural local content here is limited on cultural heritage in Surakarta.

We can find many cultural heritages in Surakarta to be designed as source of learning for English at elementary school. Cultural heritage is arranged into six categories, (1) areas or districts, (2) traditional buildings, (3) colonial buildings, (4) religious buildings, (5) gates, memorials, bridges, and street furniture, (6) parks and open public spaces (Agustiananda, 2012:29). Take a look at the decree of Surakarta Mayor No.646/1-2/I/2013, it is written some cultural heritage objects like colonial buildings which are Pasar Gedhe, Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat, Loji Gandrung, Masjid Agung Surakarta, Sriwedari Park, Benteng Vasternbberg, Loji gandrung, Museum Radya Pustaka et cetera.

These cultural heritage objects could be as the learning source of English for elementary school in Surakarta. These learning sources can be designed to construct the English teaching material for elementary students using the appropriate approach and curriculum. This would be our homework.

Child Friendly English Based on Cultural Local Content

English for elementary education in Indonesia is positioned as a local content means the material should be discussed about the local life or custom on the respective region where English is learned. Upon closer inspection, there is a gap between the vision and the reality. Most of English textbook for elementary education rarely discussed what is considered as their local content. Most of them just describe what can be said as a general habit or situation in daily life and do not provide any particular content where English is learned. One example is the way the author illustrates the uniform of elementary school students that is white and red. As we know one of the colour of elementary school uniform in Indonesia is white and red, and this is a general rule for all.

Since the English material should be about local content, it will be much more interesting if the textbook conveys about a kind of specific content from each region where English is learned. This content can be in the form of any cultural component. Scott and Ytreberg (1990:84) states that in teaching English to children, there are three approaches

applied; topic-based, story-based, and activity-based while storyline approach itself was specifically designed for the use at primary schools. Based on this point of view we can choose one alternative from these three approaches and elaborate the local content using the approach we choose. For example, we can use story based approach to elaborate the cultural heritage objects in Surakarta. We design the material based on the story-based approach and using cultural heritage objects as learning material and learning source.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

English for elementary school in Indonesia is categorized as local content curriculum area means the material must be designed to explore the local content. Local content covers cultural, natural, and society environment which means these three component of environment can be the learning design and source for English at elementary school. This would be beneficial for some reasons, first, students learn English contextually, and second students will be familiar with their own environment. By knowing well their local content, students will have a sense of proud toward the richness of social, culture, and nature in Indonesia as long as the curriculum also facilitates their cognitive and character development.

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