

Integrating Local Customs in Mini-Drama Project to Improve Speaking Confidence and Promote Contextual and Fun Learning for Multilingual and Multiethnic EFL Classes: What Do College Students Think?

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Abstract

This research is aimed to ascertain the integration of local customs (indigeneous languages, traditional costumes, local folklores) of Sasambo communities in mini-drama activities for multilingual and multiethnic EFL classes to improve student's speaking confidence and promote contextual and fun learning based on the students' perspectives. This study investigated the students' perceptions on: (a) forming groups with mixed ethnic and language background members; (b) using traditional costumes in mini-drama performance; (c) theming the mini drama based on local Sasambo folklores; and (d) the students' overall perception on integrating local customs in mini-drama project. Data of this survey research were collected through a questionnaire, interview, and classroom observations. A total of 238 first-semester students from various study programs at the University of Mataram were involved. The results show that the majority of students expressed positive and very positive views towards the integration of local cultures in mini-drama project. They responded positively to setting the group in mixed ethnic and language backgrounds to perform the mini-drama (96.2%), wearing traditional costumes for mini-drama performances (92%), theming mini-drama based on the local Sasambo folklores that translated into English (94.5%), and showing positive impacts of integrating local Sasambo customs (indigeneous languages, traditional costumes, local folklores) in a mini-drama project on improving the students' speaking skill, confidence, and happiness (92.8%).

Keywords: Roleplay, Mini-Drama, Local customs, *Sasambo* tribes, Project-based Learning.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa terhadap integrasi budaya lokal dalam proyek mini-drama berbahasa Inggris di kelas EFL yang terdiri dari multi-etnis dan multi-bahasa. Secara khusus, ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa tentang: (a) pembagian kelompok mini-drama beranggotakan multi-etnis dan -bahasa; (b) penggunaan busana daerah dalam pentas mini-drama; (c) penggunaan cerita lokal sebagai tema mini-drama; dan (d) manfaat kegiatan mini-drama terhadap peningkatan keterampilan berbicara dan percaya diri mahasiswa. Penelitian survei ini menggunakan angket (kuesioner), wawancara, dan observasi yang melibatkan 238 mahasiswa semester 1 dari berbagai program studi di Universitas Mataram. Hasil temuan menunjukkan mayoritas mahasiswa memiliki persepsi positif dan sangat positif terhadap integrasi budaya lokal dalam kegiatan bermain mini-drama dalam bahasa Inggris. Di antara integrasi yang dimaksud adalah: (a) pembagian kelompok bermain mini drama beranggotakan campuran multi-etnis dan -bahasa (96.2%); (b) penggunaan busana tradisional masyarakat Sasambo dalam pentas mini-drama (92%); (c) penggunaan tema kisah rakyat dari *Sasambo* yang diterjemahkan ke bahasa Inggris (94.5%); dan (d) manfaat integrasi budaya lokal dalam kegiatan mini-drama terhadap kemampuan berbicara, percaya diri, dan rasa gembira mahasiswa (92.8%).

Kata kunci: Bermain Peran, Mini Drama, Budaya Daerah, suku Sasambo, Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek

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INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of language learning in schools and universities is to 'produce' students that have a good command of English in oral and written communication be it for general, educational, or career purposes. In fact, many Indonesian EFL learners still find it problematic to speak and write in English fluently and accurately even for responding to simple questions. The 2018 OECD Program

for International Student Assessment (PISA) report shows that Indonesian students score among the lowest in reading proficiency that place 73rd out of 79 countries measured, with 371 points Indonesia just sits below the international standard score. Our neighboring countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei rank 2nd (549 points), 13th (505 points), 57th (415 points), and 60th (408 points), respectively. Indonesia is just above the Phillipines that sits in 78th position with 340 points (The Jakarta Post, December 2019; Wikipedia, November 2022). Meanwhile, the 2022 EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) report – that measures the world’s English proficiency level with over 2.1 million samples worldwide – shows that Indonesia is in the 81st position out of 111 countries with 469 points that makes us sits in Low Proficiency Band. Other SEA countries such as Singapore are ranked 2nd (642 points, Very High Proficiency), Phillipines 22nd (578 points, High Proficiency), Malaysia 24th (574, High Proficiency), and Vietnam 60th (502, Moderate Proficiency), respectively. Indonesia is just above Myanmar that sits in 93rd (437, Very Low Proficiency) and Thailand 97th (423, Very Low Proficiency) (EF EPI, November 2022).

Our preliminary study also show that the students’ reading and speaking proficiency is ranked in low to moderate. In doing presentation in English, for instance, many students were unable to deliver the material that was according to the task instructions. Many of them were too dependant on their laptop, phones, or text written on the Powerpoint to explain (‘to read’ to be precise) about the presented materials. This situation might be influenced by some internal and external factors. The internal factors may include low self-confidence and anxiety, lack of skill and vocabulary for doing presentation in English, lack of reading literacy, and lack of practice or simulation to improve their communicative skills. While the external factors may include ineffective teaching methods and strategies, uninteresting learning materials, irrelevant or uncontextual materials and activities that do not get the most out of the students in terms of speaking about their local knowledge of languages, cultures, people, or places which are more relevant to them. Another factor such as the traditional view among English teachers that posits that teaching functions and formulas is more important and more convenient than teaching the communicative one. So it is no surprise to find some EFL teachers at junior high school level teaches about grammar and tenses instead of encouraging the students to actively speak in a more communicative and collaborative activities. Similarly, in universities, one may find first-year students are taught about how to solve grammar exercises, giving not much attention on the students’ oracy skills such as doing interviews, role-playing, discussions, or presentations. Again, we may be surprised to find many EFL students lack of competence in answering questions, expressing opinions, making presentations, explaining issues about their local customs. These are hindrance to effective language learning in our schools and universities. To achieve the ultimate goals of our language learning in Indonesia context, teachers, therefore, must strive to provide students with contextual learning materials, fun activities, and meaningful experiences.

In relation to the principles of language learning, it is very crucial to provide input-rich environment, meaningful communication, language immersion, active engagement, contextualized learning, error correction and feedback, motivation and persistence, flexibility and adaptability, cultural awareness, and patience and perseverance. Input-rich environment posits that language learners benefit from being exposed to a rich and diverse input of the language they are learning that included hearing and reading a wide range of authentic texts such as books, articles, conversations, and other forms of communication in the target language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Meaningful communication involves using language in context to convey and understand meaning, rather than just memorizing isolated words and phrases by engaging language learners in authentic and meaningful communication with native speakers or other learners to develop their language skills (Richards, 2005). Language Immersion posits that immersing oneself in an environment where the target language is spoken can greatly accelerate language learning that can be achieved by traveling or living in a country where the language is spoken, or by creating an immersive environment through language exchange programs, language meetups, or online language communities (Ellis, 2019). Active engagement posits that learners should actively participate in the learning process by speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the target language through regular practices and application of language skills in real-life situations for developing fluency (Dewey, 1986; Han, 2014). Contextualized learning posits that language learning is most effective when it is contextualized and meaningful to the learner. Connecting new language skills to real-life situations and personal interests helps learners make connections and reinforces learning (Roberts, 2003).

In addition to that, error correction and feedback principle posits that learners should receive constructive feedback on their language use, including corrections of errors, to help them improve their language skills. It is important to view errors as a natural part of the learning process and not be discouraged by them (Schmidt, 1992). Motivation and persistence posits that learners must set clear goals, maintain a positive attitude, and persevere through challenges. Having a strong motivation and commitment to learning a language will help learners stay motivated and achieve their language learning goals (Dweck, 2010; Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014). Flexibility and adaptability posits that language learners should be flexible and adaptable in their learning approach. They should be willing to try different strategies, methods, and resources to find what works best for them. Being open to different learning opportunities and adjusting the learning process based on feedback and progress is important for successful language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2022). Cultural awareness principle posits that language and culture are closely interconnected. Understanding the cultural context of the language being learned can greatly enhance language learning. Learners should strive to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity, which includes learning about the customs, traditions, and social norms of the speakers of the target language (Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch, 2013).

Other factors that determine learning success besides having well-planned curriculum are, among others, teacher's guidance and supportive feedback, student's learning method, learning environment, parental involvement, and integrated curriculum. The role of teacher's guidance and supportive feedback is very important to help students understand and develop which skills needed in learning. A good teacher can help students achieve learning outcomes better by providing guidance and appropriate support that suits the students' needs (Hattie, 2012; Hattie & Yates, 2013). Student's learning method is very important to help them understand and develop which skills needed. A good curriculum must support creative and effective learning to help students actively involve in the learning process (Gardner, 2000; Gardner, 2011). Learning environment factors such as physical facilities and class atmosphere influence the students' learning success, according to Paulo Freire. A conducive and democratic learning environment that frees students to express their opinions and to think critically can help them feel comfortable and more engaged in learning process that allows them to achieve better study results (Paulo Freire in Shor, 2002). The role of parents (adults and family) in assisting the students' learning is also very important. Parents can help increase the students' motivation, give emotional support, and help them practice the skills learned at school (Tellado & Sava, 2010; Vygotsky, 2012). Integrated curriculum can help students understand and connect concepts learned in various subjects. Integrated curriculum can also help improve students' ownership of their learning process and increase their interest to study. The three components consists of deep learning goals, new pedagogies, and technology that he believe will result in more far-reaching transformation for future education (Fullan, 2015). Therefore, besides good curriculum, other factors such as teachers, learning methods, learning environment, parental involvement, as well as integrated curriculum can affect student's learning success.

In relation to the use of roleplay or drama to improve students' speaking skill and confidence/motivation, there are several local and international studies that reported its positive contribution or effect. First, a study by Krebt (2017) that conducted controlled and experimental groups to 40 iraqi college students using pre-test, treatment, and post-test who took a new identity roleplay and learn to use a FL for every day interaction. The results showed that the role play technique significantly improved the students' English speaking ability of the experimental group. There were significant improvements in the quality and quantity of conversations, use of vocabulary, and ability to convey thoughts effectively and think critically. Krebt also found that role play techniques provide support and opportunities for students to be more active in learning.

Second, a study conducted by Rojas and Villafuerte (2018) examined the influence of role-play (RP) techniques in English classes to improve the speaking skills of EFL students in Ecuador. The result showed that RP, supported by various teaching and learning approaches, such as TBLT, CL, CLT, and ESP, is considered as an educational method that strengthens students' ability to

communicate naturally and meaningfully with peers about their daily activities and future professional environment.

Third, a study conducted by Neupane (2019) examined the effectiveness of role playing techniques in improving English speaking skills of the experimental group that was taught using role playing techniques and the control group that was taught using traditional grammar based techniques. The results of the study showed that there was a significant increase in speaking ability in the experimental group who studied with role playing techniques. As part of the project-based learning, implementing roleplay or mini drama in teaching speaking contributes positively to the students' speaking ability (Vân, Tiên, & Khang, 2022; Firdaus & Septiady, 2023) as well as to improve students' confidence and motivation through fun and happy learning (Kurniawati, 2013; Afifah, 2017).

In line with the background of the study above, this paper seeks to provide information about the students' perceptions towards the integration of local customs in a mini-drama project for multilingual and multiethnic EFL classes with four main focuses: (a) to find out the students' perceptions on setting a mini-drama project in a mixed multilingual and multiethnic group; (b) to find out the students' perceptions on performing the mini-drama project wearing traditional costumes of *Sasambo* tribes; (c) to find out the students' perceptions on theming mini-drama story that based on *Sasambo* folklores; and (d) to identify the impacts of integrating local customs (indigenous languages, traditional costumes, local folklores) in a mini-drama project on EFL students' speaking skill, confidence, and happiness.

METHOD

This research involved 275 first-semester students from several study programs at Mataram University who were taking the general English 1 course, that is, a course for 1st year students of both English and non-English department students scientific from Saintek and Soshum majors. Some of these study programs included English Education Program (95 respondents), Biology Education Program (57 respondents), Development Economics Program (83 respondents), and Sociology Program (40 respondents). Out of a total of 275 respondents who were asked to fill out the online questionnaire, only 238 respondents submitted their answers that comprises 86.5%. English 1 course implemented the project-based learning that based on the latest Outcome-based Education (OBE) curriculum that obliged lecturers to implement either the Case-based Learning (CBL/PBL) or Project-based Learning (PjBL) or the combination in the syllabus as part of the students' tasks/projects. In English 1 course, we implement both the Case-Based Learning approach in the form of mini-presentations about local customs that discussed topics about indigenous languages, local foods and drinks, local people, and local tourism objects. We also implemented the Project-based Learning in

the form of mini drama project that performed live in the classroom which was videorecorded and uploaded on social media.

Data were collected through questionnaire and interview. Interview was conducted right after each of the teaching and learning activity had completed. Meanwhile, the questionnaires was conducted online using Google Forms. The questionnaire items were made in multiple-choice format, and the answer options were presented in a four- to five-option Likert scale. Upon the creation of GForm questionnaire, the link was distributed via WhatsApp groups. After completing and submitting the answers online, the respondents' answers were grouped based on the type and number of questions, and displayed in graphical form.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

EFL Students' Regional Identity by Regency

The following data refers to the regional identities of students based on their regency. The respondents' regional identities were categorized into 8 groups, namely, Bima and Dompu regency, North Lombok regency, West Lombok regency, East Lombok regency, Central Lombok regency, Mataram City, other areas such as Java and Bali. The results of the survey indicate that the highest percentage of students identified with East Lombok regency at 28.76%, followed by Mataram City at 18.45%, and West Lombok regency at 14.16%. Bima/Dompu and Sumbawa regencies had relatively similar percentages at 12.45% and 10.30%, respectively. Central Lombok regency with 7.30%. Other regions outside of West Nusa Tenggara province were identified by 3.86% of the participants, while KLU was identified by 3.43% of the participants. Finally, Bali province had the lowest percentage of students identifying with it at 1.29%. (See Figure 1).

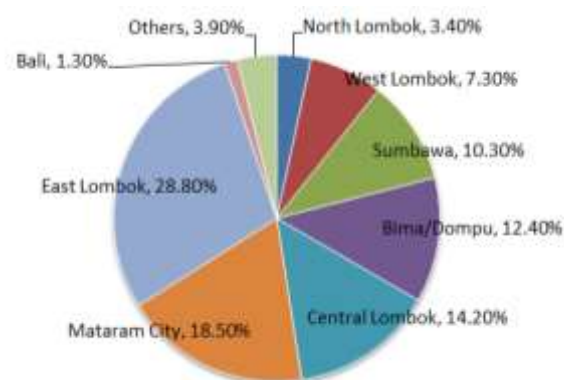


Figure 1. EFL students' regional identity by regency.

EFL Students' Perception on Setting Mini-Drama Project in a Group of Mixed Multiethnic and Multilingual Members

Figure 2 pertains to perceptions of performing mini-drama project in a group of mixed multiethnic and multilingual members. Out of the total respondents, 35.7% reported liking mini-

drama groupings very much, while 60.5% of the respondents reported liking them. Only a small proportion of respondents reported disliking mini-drama groupings, with 2.1% reporting dislike and 0.4% reporting dislike it very much. A further 1.3% of respondents reported neither liking nor disliking mini-drama groupings. Overall, the majority of respondents reported positive perceptions towards mini-drama groupings, with a relatively small proportion reporting negative perceptions. (See Figure 2).

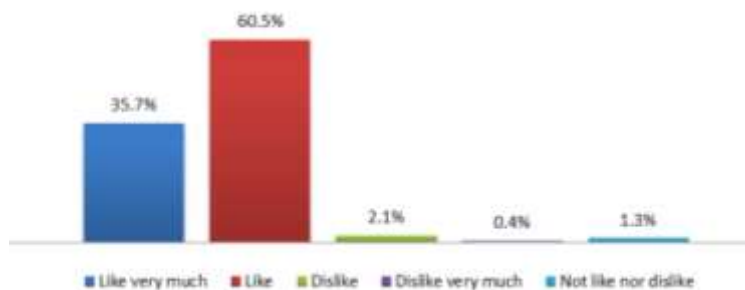


Figure 2. EFL students' perception on performing mini-drama project in a group of mixed multiethnic and multilingual members.

Based on the data provided, it appears that the majority of the respondents (96.2%) either like or very much like mini-drama groupings in a mixed multiethnic and multilingual setting for EFL students. This suggests that incorporating mini-drama groupings in teaching can be an effective strategy for collaborative and communicative learning among EFL students. Collaborative learning involves students working together to achieve a common goal, while communicative learning emphasizes the importance of language use in real-life situations. Mini-drama groupings allow students to work together to create and perform a short skit, which involves using language in a communicative and contextualized way.

The fact that only a small percentage of respondents (2.5%) dislike or very much dislike mini-drama groupings suggests that this approach is generally well-received by EFL students. The positive perception of mini-drama groupings among EFL students can also foster a positive classroom environment, which can lead to increased engagement and motivation.

EFL Students' Perception on Performing Mini-Drama Project in Local Costumes of Sasambo Tribes

The following data refers to how students perceive the mini-drama activity in English using *Sasambo* traditional costumes. The breakdown of responses is as follows: 45.8% of respondents found the activity "very interesting", 46.2% found it "interesting", 3.4% did not find it "interesting", none of the respondents found it not "interesting at all", and 4.6% were neither interested nor disinterested. (See Figure 3).

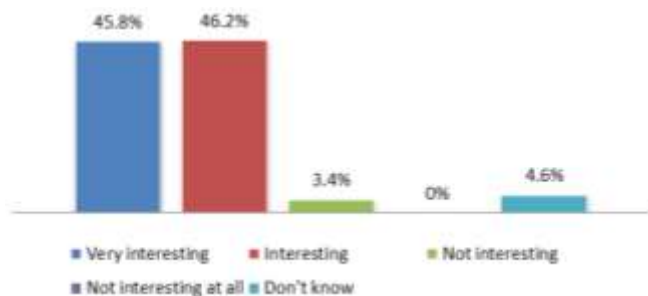


Figure 3. EFL students’ perception on performing mini-drama project in local costumes of *Sasambo* (Sasak, Samawa, Mbojo) tribes.

The data indicates that a majority of students (92% combined) found that performing the mini-drama activity by incorporating *Sasambo* traditional attires to be interesting. This is a positive sign for the effectiveness of the instructional strategy. Furthermore, it is worth noting that none of the respondents found the activity to be “not interesting at all”. This suggests that the activity was engaging enough to generate at least some level of interest from all students who participated in the survey. However, it's important to acknowledge that 4.6% of respondents were neither interested nor disinterested. The data suggests that incorporating fun and culturally relevant activities into EFL instruction, such as the mini-drama activity using *Sasambo* traditional costumes, can be an effective way to promote a positive and engaging learning experience for students.

EFL Students’ Perception on Theming the Mini-Drama Project Based on Sasambo Folklores

The following data refers to the students’ perceptions about theming the mini drama based on the local folklores of *Sasambo* community. The results are as follows: 45.8% of respondents say that performing mini-drama activities in English with a theme based on *Sasambo*'s local folklores is “Very Challenging”, 50.4% of respondents say that it is “Challenging”, 2.1% of respondents say it is “Not Challenging”, 0.8% of respondents sy it is “Not Challenging At All”, and 0.8% of respondents say it is “neither challenging nor boring” (See Figure 4).



Figure 4. EFL students’ perception on theming the mini-drama project based on local folklores of *Sasambo* (Sasak, Samawa, Mbojo).

The above data shows that the majority of students enjoy mini-drama activities in English with a theme based on local folklore from *Sasambo*. Specifically, most students consider the activity challenging. Mini-drama activities in English with a theme based on local folklore from *Sasambo* can

help improve students' English language skills in a fun and interactive way. In this activity, students are required to work together and collaborate in scripting, translating, and performing the mini-drama in English based on the local stories inspired from the *Sasambo* folklores.

EFL Students' Perception on Integrating the Local Customs in EFL Classroom Project to Improve Students' Speaking Confidence and Promote Contextual and Fun Learning

This data refers to the students' perceptions of intergrating local customs in project-based learning to improve EFL students' speaking skill and confidence. The result is that 40.8% of respondents perceived that "Improved very much" and 52.1% of respondents found it "Improved" only. On the other hand, 5 (2.1%) respondents expressed "Not Improved" and 3 (1.3%) respondents expressed "Not improved At All". There were also 9 (3.8%) respondents chose "Not improved nor worsened" (see Figure 5).

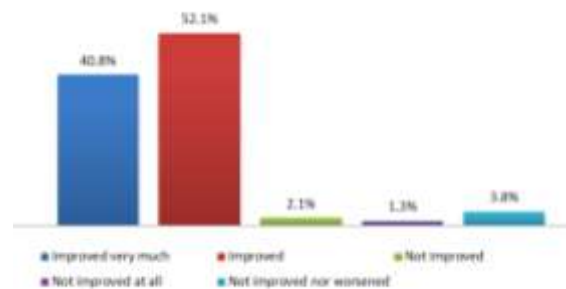


Figure 5. Students' opinion about the impact of integrating local customs in mini drama project on their speaking skill and confidence.

The data shows that the majority of students think that the integration of local culture in project-based learning can help improve their English speaking skills and self-confidence. As many as 92.9% of students stated that their skills and confidence had increased at least to a certain degree. More specifically, the majority of students felt that their English speaking skills and confidence had increased quite significantly, with 40.8% of students stating that their skills and confidence had improved greatly, and 52.1% of students stating that their skills and confidence had increased. Only a few students, namely 2.1%, felt that their skills and confidence had not increased, while 1.3% of students felt that their skills and confidence had not increased at all. As many as 3.8% of students feel that their skills and confidence have not changed at all.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above, it is likely that the respondents perceive positively on setting the group in mixed multiethnic and multilingual members, using traditional costumes of *Sasambo* tribes in mini-drama performance, theming the mini-drama project with the local folklores of *Sasambo* tribe, and improving EFL students' oracy skill and confidence. It all shows that EFL students were very positive towards the integration of local customs in project-based

learning approach with a high percentage of respondents expressing favorable views. In general, the average percentage of positive perception across all categories was is above 90%. The respondents enjoy it because it helps them communicate with other students who have different language and cultural backgrounds, as well as improving their English language skills. Additionally, mini drama tasks can enrich students' experiences by presenting realistic situations and allowing them to learn from the experiences and perspectives of others in the group. It highlights the significance of communicative and local culture-based learning for teaching EFL students. Given the students' enthusiasm and positive response towards mini-drama activities that incorporate local *Sasambo* cultures, the author suggests that educators at school and university level consider incorporating local cultures as a learning strategy to improve students' oracy skill, to build their confidence, and to boost their happiness to learn English in a more fun way.

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