

## The Value of Local Content in ELT Materials in Indonesia

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v7i2.243>

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### ABSTRACT

The new paradigm on the position of English in the world has shifted as now English was no longer the property of native speakers. This shifting paradigm challenge the traditional assumption of English teaching world on whether English teachers should incorporate local or target culture in their teaching materials. This is a qualitative research using critical literature review method. The topic being discussed in this article is how to incorporate local value in English language teaching materials. The issue is analysed from various perspectives, they are: world Englishes, English as International Language, culture and identity, materials development and how they shape the idea of how English teaching materials in Indonesia should be developed. In order to do that, the researchers implemented four criteria of a good ELT materials proposed by McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara, (2013). As the result of the research, we provide two suggestions. They are creating a team of book developers and providing alternatives ELT materials based on different learning styles, text genres, or even viewpoint towards an issue.

**Keywords:** EIL, world Englishes, ELT, materials development, local content

#### Article History:

Received 04<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Accepted 08<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Published 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022



### INTRODUCTION

The application of English in Indonesia was increasing and it was become the subject of investigation on pedagogy. Though the more people use it, English still considered as a foreign language and people did not use it in an Anglo-Saxon way. Language classrooms in Indonesia filled with local learners and non-native teachers and textbooks was utilized for the academic resources. Alcoberes (2016) argued that South East countries (including Indonesia) using English materials not only for academic purposes but also to promote intercultural awareness so that when someday the students grow up, they would be able to apply English competencies they got in the real life and work field as well understand their own culture and the culture of others (Afriyeni, 2020; Winingsih et al., 2021). In a wider range, English for Indonesian can be used as a tool to promote international communication in globalized world.

The notion of English as lingua-franca was now globalized. Kachru (1998) describes the needs to integrate L1 to L2 learning. This notion of “English as an Asian language” promoted the notion that English was no longer exclusively owned by western or English-speaking countries only. This new concept led Kachru et al., (2006) to the theoretical framework of World Englishes (WE) which categorized Asian English into three different part. First, it was inner circle country. This circle covered greater Asia by Australia and New Zealand, where

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Authors' Contribution: a-Study design; b-Data collection; c-Statistical analysis; d-Manuscript preparation; e-Funds collection.

English become native language and mother tongue. Secondly, it was outer circle country, where English was used as institutional additional language. English was not considered as first language there, however, people in these countries used English as official or working language in judiciary, higher education, commerce and others. English spread through colonialization and imperial expansion. The example of this countries are: Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Thirdly, it was expanding circle country. It encircled Indonesia, China, Japan among others. These countries have no direct history of colonialization with English-speaking country and the government has no mandatory rule to use English as main or second language. Yet, they still use English as a communication means in International setting.

From this point, we can clearly see the position of English in Indonesia was as a foreign language. Though English was not always used by majority of the people in daily life, thus it was important to increase Indonesian English comprehension for the importance of engagement in international context and setting as well as gaining more knowledge in other fields of knowledge, since there were many discourses using English as their medium. Besides the nature of English as a subject in Indonesia, we also need to explore nature of ELT materials in Indonesia.

Materials in language teaching help teachers in respect to its role as the ground of language learning input as well as language practice in the classroom. The form of the materials may vary in several kinds; printed materials (course books, worksheet), non-print materials (video, audio materials), and materials that accommodate both printed and non-printed (internet, newspaper, magazine, computer based) (Richards, 2001). Since its various range of types, this essay will be more focus in discussing the role of local content in printed materials. Moreover, English language teaching materials play important role in English teaching. The function of materials in teaching learning process was not necessarily to debilitate teachers nor student's role in the class. Instead, materials were able to scaffold both teachers and learners works in the class as well as served as agent of changes, as well as promoting students' culture (Normalela, 2022). Previous study on the characteristics of course books in South East Asia conducted by Dat (2008) revealed that there were three characteristics entitled imported course books, in-country course books and regional course books.

Imported books were terms used that refers to "global course books". They were the books that produced by English-speaking publisher like Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Longman, and Heinemann. Besides, the books provide visually interesting figures that stimulate student's curiosity and the texts were vary in genres and cover wide range of topics. In other hands, the limitation of this type of books are that they are occasionally showed inaccuracy in promoting cultural information and pictures that mislead students to the inaccurate information. Furthermore, the materials developed in imported books were incoherent with Indonesian curriculum goals. Large number of teachers in Indonesia prefer global course books to the local one since they believe that the imported materials were more accurate in terms of the English use (Zacharias, 2005).

The second type was in-country course books. In-country course books or domestic course books were materials produced by Indonesian publishers itself. Books classified in this sector were made accordance with the particular curriculum practiced in that country. The benefit of the books in this manner were: the books voicing the national identities, beliefs, cultural existence and anything related with that country, readings provided in the books also familiar with the pupils, and the concluding goal of them was to prepared the students in facing any summative and formative test conducted by teachers or school. On the contrary, the rich amount of familiar content may result in students' unwillingness to learn, for they have already knew the cultural aspects discussed. Another weakness was there would be several linguistics inaccuracies since the texts were translated from mother tongue to English.

Lastly, it was regional course books. These books were written by non-English speakers in particular country then imported and accepted as learning materials in several others country. This practice mostly found in some schools at Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam where the books were originally from Singapore. The benefit of these books were similar with in-country course books because basically they were produced and used among ASEAN countries themselves. However, the weakness of these materials was that it will demonstrate the different English proficiency levels among those countries. Books written by Singaporean may have higher standard that cannot be coped with Vietnamese or Indonesian because Singapore was an outer circle country in which English was used daily compared with expanding circle countries like Vietnam and Indonesia where English was used as medium of Instructions only in formal setting as foreign language.

The dominant type of books presents for Indonesian students shift through time. About 15 years ago, domestic materials were most common for Indonesian students, especially those comes from state schools. Their affordability was the main factor why the books were popular. The second most common was global materials. Because of its higher price makes this book frequently utilized in private schools, educational institution which, in Indonesia, was stereotyped with the affluent ones. Regional books were the most unlikely. Trust issue may be the cause why these books were unfamiliar. Indonesian tend to believe that because it was English then the books have to be written by native authors. But, now, global materials tend to be most favorable books among students and parents (Zacharias, 2005). Zacharias added that locally-published materials were often poorly edited. Such circumstance makes the high amount of global books, which were mostly well-developed, takes over the local books' position.

#### **Existing Condition and Previous Research in Related Fields**

Prior research conducted by (Zacharias, 2005) points out that 67% of teachers' in Indonesia prefer using global books to domestic books. Besides the availability and better quality content as mentioned in the background, teachers also believed that materials from English speaking countries natural, authentic, realistic, and original content that provide appropriate exposure for the students to learn English. Since the course books developed by the people who consider English as first language, the content may not suitable with the speaker who consider English as foreign language, like Indonesia. It may cause several impediments. The problems may occur if teachers prefer to use global books can be divided into four kinds.

The first one is declining cultural sensitivity. It refers to the circumstances where there was inability to be aware that differences and similarities between people among various cultural background exist. Sometimes there were words and behaviors which was acceptable in one region but considered taboo in others. In the earliest part of this writing I provide the example of "standing under the mistletoe" that was inappropriate in Indonesia since it may not in line with the norm and culture of Indonesian learners. It could be an interesting topic somewhere else, but should not be presented in Indonesian learners' textbook. This cultural differences may result in anxiety experience by the students (Yanti & Hardi, 2019).

The second one is different levels between the books and the learners. One of the role of the materials was to facilitate students in their learning process. The books they used must be understandable, in terms of the language used. Once I taught my students using Native-English publisher's book, they barely succeeded to fully comprehend the instructions and passage. It was not easy for my students since the English proficiency levels must be vary. The books, since developed by native, were comprehensible to native students, but not for Indonesian students.

The next one is inequality view point for those who have different cultures. The notion of promoting one cultures in an English textbook of learners from other cultures was so that students can appreciate what it meant to be culturally different. Students expected to be aware that respecting others beyond classroom was also important. In fact, Tomlinson et al., (2001) found something different. For instance, in the Language in Use Intermediate

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Classroom book, the learners listen to people from different countries comparing their countries to Britain (p. 60). In the Wavelength Pre-Intermediate Course book, Julia tells her friend about her holiday in India. The India's immigration officials laughed at her and ask her go back to the plane as she did not have a valid visa (p. 39).

In the first examples, British lifestyle was treated as a reference for comparison. While the book exploit the good side of British, it also showed inappropriate side of India. Another example in (Dat, 2008) shows that in Opportunities Pre-intermediate (2000: 36), which describes a woman wearing a headscarf in Indonesia as a form of social oppression by saying, "Nowadays, Indonesian women don't have to cover their heads, but they usually wear traditional clothes." without mentioning the significances of wearing headscarf as common practice by Indonesian Muslim women. The lifestyle stereotyping which the existed in the books tend to present the bad side of those non-native people.

The last one is the contain of the books does not contribute to the students' needs of immediate use of the target language. Relevancy of the contain of the books was also important since students needed to know what was the benefit they will get after learning the materials. In the introduction, we have already mentioned one example of this irrelevancy concerning with parking meters which did not exist in Indonesia context. Another example was when a teacher from Ivory Coast admits, "...all the exercises are about unusual things for our country. We are a hot country and also have Muslims. The exercises are about snow, ice, cold morning, water cisterns; writing and publishing EFL books and making wines. I can tell you I can't do making wine and smoking pot in my country!" (Jolly & Broliitho, 1998, as cited in(Dat, 2008). This was in line with Fadoli (2022) who argued that context and background knowledge would help learners understand and communicate better.

Declining cultural sensitivity, different levels between the books and the learners, inequality view point for those who have different cultures, as well as the contain of the books does not contribute to the students' needs of immediate use of the target language were the reason why we need to do a research about how to incorporate local value in ELT materials in Indonesia. It is because language teaching was not only about deciding what was the suitable materials to use, but also we have to work with specific group of learners and specific set of aims(McDonough et al., 2013). In order to do that, we have to step backward to the process of materials development. Material developments and evaluation process play significance role to make the coursebooks effective.

## METHOD

This is a research using critical literature review method. What it means by using critical literature review method is that in this research the authors analyze the topics of the implementation of local and target culture English materials in Indonesia based on existing knowledge. By using existing knowledge to analyze a topic, literature review method would be helpful as it will help synthesize previous research more systematically (Tranfield et al., 2003). By synthesizing previous research systematically, a literature review article would help readers to understand the topic better.

The object of the research is the issue about how to incorporate local value in ELT materials in Indonesia. In order to do that, the researchers implemented four criteria of a good ELT materials proposed by McDonough *et al.*, (2013). After that, this issue was also using top down analysis starting from a very broad concept namely World Englishes and then scrutinize to a more specific topic namely English as International Language, culture and identity in language teaching, English as identity construction and finally discussion about English materials in Indonesian teaching and learning context.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Materials Development



Materials development referred to all processes made use of by practitioners or teachers who produce or use materials for language learning. This process covered materials evaluation, adaptation, design, production, exploitation and research. As materials developed was made for specific group of learners, then teachers have to ensure that the resource were suitable for their local context (McDonough et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2007).

There are several criteria of a good material based on McDonough et al., (2013) propose four parameters: The first one is usability factor. It dealt with how the materials can be used in learning, as a core or just supplementary materials. The second one is generalizability factor. Some parts of the materials may be useful for particular group of learners of individual, but it did not necessarily suitable with other groups. The third one is adaptability factor. It deals with how it is possible that some part of the materials to be added, extracted or used in another context or modified for local circumstances. The last one is flexibility factor. It dealt with how rigid the sequencing or grading. The less steeply-graded the materials, the more flexible the material was.

From those explanations it can be clearly see that one of the important factor of materials development was adaptability factors. Learning materials considered appropriate when it can be integrated with local values. In conclusion, it was rational that localization of the materials plays significance role in English language teaching materials. The next question is, what was the definition of localization?

The term localization derived from the words local that have the meaning as restricted for particular region. But, since localization become the hotly discussed issue in the field of materials development (Tomlinson, 2012), the interpretation of localisation was expanding. To define localization, one uses the term "flexibility" (Masuhara et al., 2008). Flexibility appears to accommodate the needs to satisfy learners across countries with various styles, preferences, cultural identity, and background. In addition, flexibility was a course book quality that allows teacher to make adjustment to make the books fit with the teaching context by adapting, diversifying, selecting, contextualizing, utilizing strategies, blending, expanding, among other decisions that can maximize the teaching and learning impact (Dat, 2015).

The term "Humanizing" also propose by (Tomlinson, 2012) to promote localization. Tomlinson observed the need to cater different characteristics of students by humanize the course books. The books have to be able to accommodate students' interest, enthusiasm, views, attitude as well as connecting it with their minds and match it with sociological realities of group of learners. Many books failed to accomplish this "humanizing" factor and it lead to the minimum engagement of the students towards the learning process. In brief, localizing the materials was not only adapting the content and context of the materials to the local one, but also to adjust it so that it can be match with students' sociological realities of the learners.

### **The Value of Local Content**

Since we believe that local content was valuable to be integrated in the ELT materials, we propose three arguments why it was rationale. First, it was personal involvement that could help learners to use language to communicate effectively, affectively, and cognitively. When the materials used in class was related with socio-cultural condition of the learners, then they can relate with the passage discussed. This condition referred as "cultural appropriation", a condition where learners own a foreign language and culture by adopting and adapting it to their needs and interest (Kramersch (2014) as cited in Munandar & Ulwiyah, (2012)). Besides, affective and cognitive participation of the students would help them processing the acquisition of language. Processing occur when there was personal involvement as well familiarity with local customs and occupation (Munandar & Ulwiyah, 2012; Tomlinson, 2012). For example, if there were a teacher or lecturer who were teaching in an Islamic institution in Indonesia, a reading passage about the benefit of fasting would be

much more likely encourage students' motivation than if it was about how to build a snowman in winter.

Second, it provides familiar lexical and cultural items that helps students to be involved with the learning process. We cannot put aside the fact that students would learn about intercultural competence and social awareness through English subject. But, the main goal of the learning a new language was to be able to master the language itself. Since the subject was English, not social science, then the betterment of students English proficiency was the very first thing that need to be catered. This was why adjusting course book with the local content will help students understand the instruction better, that hopefully resulted in students better English comprehension. Furthermore, teaching English adopting (not adapting) the target culture makes it difficult for students since they might find lexical or vocabulary items that they are unfamiliar with (Kristiawan, 2012). An instance why familiar words are important provided by Tomlinson (2012). He once encouraged the learners to study by building-up a library which contained with linguistically-simple readings so that learners could access the texts without glossaries. This method proven to encourage students to learn English.

### **The Drawbacks.**

As beneficial as the local content might be, they were not without drawbacks. An English course books with no localization were mostly promote independent learning that was very important to boost students' English skill. Nonetheless, Indonesian students were not accustomed to the notion of independent learning. No matter how good it might be, if this style introduced to the students all of sudden, they will spend more time to be familiarized with independent learning style than truly learn English.

Also, it often imagined that other cultures were needed since students need to broaden their horizon as well have the knowledge of cross-cultural understanding. Although the basis idea of this claim was valid, it suffered from a flaw in its understanding of the concept of localization. To make the materials local was to make them acceptable in particular group of learners. It was\* not necessarily throwing away course books with global perspectives, but make some adjustment to make it suitable for learners. Teachers could drop the parts that not suitable with the local context then replace it with the more suitable one.

The next questions are about how the importance of understanding other cultures if local content has the biggest proportion? There are 2 main consideration regarding this question. Firstly, most of the global materials, as I explained above, did not truly respect the idea that we are equal social beings. The books showed stereotyping or saw one group of people was less capable than others. Secondly, the notion of localization was not to eliminating all of non-native culture of the target learners. It was just by adding what was necessary and take out the unnecessary. So, cultural awareness still can be taught by equipping learners with beliefs, values, and behavior of their own then try to discover what was important in other cultures so they can understand what was appropriate and what was inappropriate. Besides, course materials need to provide opportunity for the students to become themselves in new language as well as respecting others (Dat, 2006).

### **The Implication**

Localization affect not only the contain of the material but also the learning styles. Most of Indonesian teachers tend to teach grammar and focusing on drilling and memorizing vocabulary items and grammar formulas. This notion need to be adjusted since the localization of the materials can accommodate students' engagement with the surrounding. Teachers have to be more creative to see the maximum potential usage of the materials. Many of the course books exclusively provide cognitive approach without considering other approaches (Tomlinson et al., 2001). Teachers also need to encourage themselves to respect learners as individual and try to engage them personally in many activities.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is the time for teachers and materials developer to give more attention to the course books and any related ELT materials to make them more suitable with target learners. Particular individual or group of learners have different cultural sensitivity, ideology, and even learning styles. Course books need to be created in a relevant manner to many context and open to evaluation and modification. Below are suggestions that may be useful for teachers to teach ELT materials with local content value. The first is creating a team of book developers. We suggest a team of book developers and evaluators should be formed. The team consist of people who share the same enthusiasm and vision but could be with different specialization. This team may consist of teachers, linguist, socio-cultural expert, and artist among others. The exact way has been demonstrated by Tomlinson when he and his team wrote materials for learners in Namibia (Tomlinson, 2012). This team hopefully can have developed materials that suit a group of learners. The second one is providing alternatives ELT materials. Materials developers should try to provide different materials based on different learning styles, text genres, or even viewpoint towards an issue. These will help teachers to choose what is the suitable for them the most. By providing these 2 approaches, we hope that students could get a better English teaching materials and eventually help them to learn English better.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks to Journal of English Language and Education for publishing this article.

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