

BRIDGING CULTURE AND LANGUAGE: INDONESIAN PRE- SERVICE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATING LOCAL WISDOM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

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Abstract: This study examined pre-service teachers' perceptions of integrating local wisdom into English language skills courses, focusing on its effects on student engagement, comprehension, and overall learning experience. Using a mixed-method survey design, the research collected data through a closed-ended questionnaire supplemented by open-ended responses. Participants were students from the English Education Study Program, and descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were employed to analyze the quantitative data. The findings indicated that students experienced increased motivation and reported a stronger understanding of the cultural and social dimensions of language when local wisdom was integrated into the curriculum. Qualitative insights further emphasized the importance of three key factors: culturally relevant materials, knowledgeable instruction, and varied pedagogical strategies. This study's unique contribution lies in its demonstration of how local cultural integration enriches language learning. Practical implications include the recommendation for continuous curriculum adaptation to foster a meaningful fusion of language instruction and local cultural knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of local wisdom into educational practices has become increasingly significant in a globalized context, serving to foster cultural identity and improve learning experiences (Zidny, Sjöström & Eilks, 2020; Mazurkevych et al., 2024). By incorporating local cultural elements into language and other educational curricula, it will not only enhance student engagement and motivation but also aids in the development of a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Studies indicate that culturally relevant pedagogy contributes to a stronger sense of identity and belonging among students, bridging their personal experiences with academic learning (Allen et al., 2021; Kudumo & Ngcoza, 2023). Furthermore, integrating local wisdom has

been found to support critical thinking by encouraging students to analyze, reflect upon, and appreciate their cultural heritage within a modern educational framework (Taimur & Sattar, 2020; Wibowo, Anis & Rahman, 2023; Qorib & Afandi, 2024). These findings underscore the potential of local wisdom to act as a powerful pedagogical tool that enriches learning while promoting cultural continuity and resilience.

Local wisdom, encompassing the knowledge, values, and traditions of a specific community, is integral to education as it links students to their cultural heritage. Incorporating local wisdom into English language skills courses enhances the curriculum and increases the relevance and significance of the learning experience for students. This approach holds particular

significance in Indonesia, where a variety of cultures and languages coexist, providing a unique opportunity to integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary educational practices. Abdullah et al. (2023); Ferary (2023); Srichampa (2024)

In Indonesia, proficiency in the English language is essential for personal and professional advancement. Pre-service teachers, as future educators, must possess language proficiency and the capability to incorporate local cultural contexts into their teaching practices. Understanding and valuing local wisdom enables pre-service teachers to develop inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that align with their students' experiences (Rigney, 2023). In Indonesia, the integration of local perspectives is crucial, as English is frequently viewed as a foreign language. This approach can effectively bridge the gap between students' linguistic backgrounds and the target language (Dewi, 2024; Maryansyah et al., 2024).

Studies indicate that students' perceptions of their learning environment have a substantial impact on their motivation and engagement. Examining pre-service teachers' perceptions of incorporating local wisdom into English language skills courses offers important insights into their preparedness for implementing culturally relevant pedagogies (Prihatmojo et al., 2024). This knowledge can inform curriculum design, ensuring it addresses the diverse needs of students and promotes respect for local cultures. Additionally, it fosters critical thinking and reflective practices in pre-service teachers, allowing them to connect language learning with their cultural identities (Karim et al., 2024).

Although there is growing recognition of local wisdom's significance in education, empirical research on its integration into English language teaching remains scarce, particularly within the Indonesian context. Current studies show that students' perceptions of their learning environment significantly impact motivation and engagement (Schweder & Raufelder, 2024), yet little research has focused on pre-service teachers' perspectives on incorporating local wisdom into language courses. This study seeks to address this gap by examining Indonesian pre-service teachers' perceptions of integrating local wisdom into English language skills courses. By exploring these perspectives, the study aims to deepen understanding of how local wisdom can enhance English language education and better prepare future teachers to navigate multicultural

classrooms. In doing so, it offers novel insights into designing curricula that foster respect for local cultures, support critical thinking, and connect language learning with students' cultural identities, ultimately contributing to culturally relevant pedagogy within Indonesia's educational landscape.

METHOD

This study employed a survey design to examine pre-service English teachers' responses to a questionnaire about the integration of local wisdom into English language skills courses. The participants were randomly selected from a pool of 320 students in the English Education Study Program, with a final sample size of 150 determined by Slovin's formula at a 0.05 margin of error. The primary instrument was a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The questionnaire consisted of seven sections: (1) demographic information, (2) students' perceptions of local wisdom in learning, (3) assessment of the relevance of local wisdom in learning, (4) understanding and relevance, (5) impact on motivation and engagement, (6) relevance for the workforce and learning, and (7) open-ended feedback. Each section focused on specific aspects of students' experiences and attitudes toward integrating local wisdom, providing a comprehensive view of their perceptions. Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics—including means, standard deviations, and frequencies—were used to summarize responses across each section. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated, yielding a score of 0.85, which confirmed the questionnaire's consistency in measuring the intended construct. For the qualitative data derived from open-ended responses, a thematic analysis was conducted. Responses were systematically coded to identify common themes, which were then grouped into categories that highlighted key insights into students' views and the perceived impact of local wisdom integration. The findings were presented through both statistical summaries and thematic interpretations to provide a nuanced understanding of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the integration of local

wisdom in English language skills courses and its impact on students. The responses were subjected to statistical analysis to calculate the mean values, which were used to assess the level of agreement among the respondents. Three categories agreement levels are defined based on the mean scores; a low level of agreement is reflected by mean score between 1.00 and 2.33, a moderate level of agreement is indicated by a mean score between 2.34 and 3.66, and a high level of

agreement is represented by a mean score between 3.67 and 5.00

1. Students' Perceptions of Local Wisdom in Learning

There were ten questions which were given to the participants of the study regarding their perception of local wisdom in learning English

Table 1. *Students' perceptions of local wisdom in learning*

Students' Perceptions of Local Wisdom in Learning	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. I feel that the integration of local wisdom in English Language Skills courses (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) helps me better understand Indonesian culture.	54 (36%)	64 (42.7%)	28 (18.7%)	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)
2. The local wisdom embedded in the English Language Skills courses is relevant to learning English.	42 (28%)	72 (48%)	31 (20.7%)	4 (2.7%)	1 (0.7%)
3. I feel motivated to learn when local wisdom is included in the English Language Skills courses.	56 (37.3%)	63 (42%)	31 (20.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
4. The integration of local wisdom in the English Language Skills courses makes the learning process more engaging.	57 (57%)	64 (42.7%)	26 (17.3%)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.3%)
5. The local wisdom shared by the lecturer enhances my understanding of the cultural context of the English language.	50 (33.3%)	70 (46.7%)	27 (18%)	3 (2%)	0 (0.0%)
6. I find it easier to understand the material in the English Language Skills courses when local wisdom is used as examples in the lessons.	48 (32%)	63 (42%)	33 (22%)	4 (2.7%)	2 (1.3%)
7. I believe that the integration of local wisdom is important to preserve local culture.	66 (44%)	75 (50%)	6 (4%)	2 (1.3%)	1 (0.7%)
8. The lecturer frequently connects the content of the English Language Skills courses with local wisdom during the learning process.	33 (22%)	67 (44.7%)	45 (30%)	5 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)
9. I feel that the local wisdom embedded in the English Language Skills courses is relevant to my needs as a future English teacher.	44 (29.3)	77 (51.3%)	27 (18%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)
10. I feel that the integration of local wisdom in the English Language Skills courses makes me prouder of Indonesian culture.	67 (44.7%)	66 (44%)	16 (10.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)

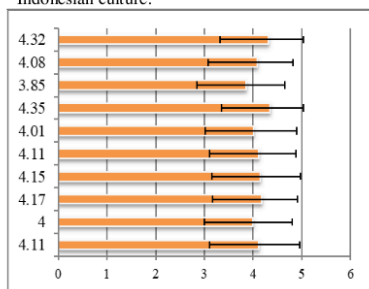


Figure 1. *Students' perceptions of local wisdom in learning mean and standard deviation results*

The results from Table 1 and Figure 1 reveal a strong consensus among the students regarding

the integration of local wisdom into English language skills courses. A significant majority, 78.5%, agreed that such integration enhances their understanding of Indonesian culture, with only 18.8% expressing neutrality and 2.6% disagreeing. The mean score for this statement was 4.11, reflecting a high level of agreement. Similarly, 76% of respondents felt that local wisdom is relevant to English learning, while 20.7% were neutral and 3.3% disagreed, yielding a mean score of 4.00, indicating strong agreement. In terms of motivation, 79.3% agreed that the inclusion of local wisdom motivated them to learn, with 20.7% neutral. The mean score for this statement was 4.17, further confirming a high level of agreement. Additionally, 80.7% of respondents believed that integrating local

wisdom made learning more engaging, while 17.3% were neutral, and only 2% disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 4.15.

The role of local wisdom in enhancing understanding of English cultural contexts was also acknowledged by 80% of respondents, with 18% neutral and only 2% in disagreement. This statement achieved a mean score of 4.11, reflecting broad agreement. When asked if the use of local wisdom made course material easier to understand, 74% agreed, 22% were neutral, and 4% disagreed, with a mean score of 4.01. Moreover, the importance of integrating local wisdom for cultural preservation was strongly supported, with 94% of respondents agreeing, 4% remaining neutral, and 2% disagreeing. This statement received the highest mean score of 4.35, indicating overwhelming support. Regarding the frequency with which lecturers connected course

material to local wisdom, 66.7% agreed, 30% were neutral, and 3.7% disagreed, with a mean score of 3.85, showing a somewhat lower, though still high, level of agreement. Finally, 80.6% of the students affirmed the relevance of local wisdom to their needs as future English teachers, with 18% neutral and 1.4% disagreeing, resulting in a mean score of 4.08. The statement that integrating local wisdom increased pride in Indonesian culture was supported by 88.7% of respondents, with 10.7% neutral and only 0.7% disagreeing, leading to a mean score of 4.32

Assessment of the relevance of local wisdom in learning

There were five questions which were given to the participants of the study regarding their perceptions of the assessment of the relevance of local wisdom in learning English

Table 2. Assessment of the relevance of local wisdom in learning

Assessment of the Relevance of Local Wisdom in Learning	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The local wisdom taught in English Language Skills courses is relevant to the competencies needed in the workforce.	22 (14.7%)	64 (42.7%)	49 (32.7%)	8 (5.3%)	7 (4.7%)
2. I feel that the local wisdom presented in the English Language Skills courses enhances my understanding of social values.	47 (31.3%)	81 (54%)	20 (13.3%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)
3. The inclusion of local wisdom makes learning in the English Language Skills courses more contextual.	36 (24%)	82 (54.7%)	30 (20%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)
4. I feel that the integration of local wisdom makes learning in the English Language Skills courses more practical and applicable.	37 (24.7%)	74 (49.3%)	35 (23.3%)	4 (2.7%)	0 (0.0%)
5. The local wisdom included in the English Language Skills courses helps me develop critical thinking skills.	37 (24.7%)	80 (53.3%)	29 (19.3%)	3 (2%)	1 (0.7%)

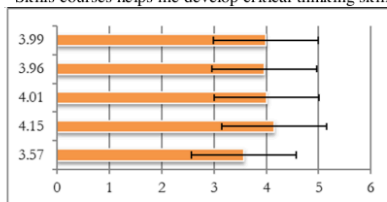


Figure 2. Assessment of the relevance of local wisdom in learning mean and standard deviation results

According to the data in Table 2 and Figure 2, a majority of students, 57.4%, agreed that the local wisdom taught in these courses is relevant to the competencies required in the workplace, while 32.7% expressed neutrality, and 10% disagreed, indicating that they did not find the local wisdom relevant to workplace needs. The mean score for this statement was 3.57, reflecting a moderate

level of agreement. Additionally, 85.3% of respondents agreed that the local wisdom integrated into these courses enhanced their understanding of social values, with 13.3% neutral and only 1.3% disagreeing. The mean score for this statement was 4.15, indicating a high level of agreement.

Furthermore, 78.7% of respondents believed that the inclusion of local wisdom made the learning of English language skills more contextual, while 20% were neutral, and 1.3% disagreed. The mean score of 4.01 reflects a strong level of agreement with this statement. When asked whether the integration of local wisdom made learning more practical and applicable, 74% of respondents agreed, 23.3% remained neutral, and 2.7% disagreed. The mean score for this statement was 3.96, suggesting that respondents largely felt the inclusion of local wisdom contributed to more practical learning.

Lastly, 78% of respondents agreed that local wisdom helped them develop critical thinking skills, with 19.3% expressing neutrality and 2.7% disagreeing. The mean score for this statement was 3.99, again reflecting a high level of agreement.

Understanding and relevance

There are three questions which were given to the students of the study regarding their perceptions of understanding and relevance between English teaching material and local wisdom

Table 3. *Understanding and relevance*

Understanding and Relevance	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The integration of local wisdom in the teaching materials of English Language Skills courses helps me better understand local culture	44 (29.3%)	76 (50.7%)	26 (17.3%)	3 (2%)	1 (0.7%)
2. The local wisdom embedded in the English Language Skills courses is relevant to learning English.	38 (25.3%)	69 (46%)	38 (25.3%)	5 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)
3. Teaching materials that integrate local wisdom make learning in the English Language Skills courses more contextual and meaningful.	36 (24%)	78 (52%)	33 (22%)	3 (2%)	0 (0.0%)

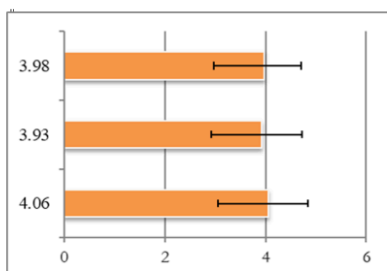


Figure 3. *Understanding and relevance mean and standard deviation results*

The findings reveal a significant majority, 80%, affirmed that the inclusion of local wisdom in course materials greatly enhanced their understanding of local culture. In contrast, 17.3% maintained a neutral stance, indicating no strong opinion, and 2.7% disagreed, suggesting they perceived minimal impact on their cultural understanding as shown in Table 3. The corresponding mean score of 4.06 indicates a high

level of agreement, emphasizing the positive influence of local wisdom on cultural comprehension as shown in Figure 3.

Similarly, 71.3% of students acknowledged the relevance of local wisdom to English language learning, with 25.3% remaining neutral, and 3.3% disagreeing. This statement achieved a mean score of 3.93, signifying substantial agreement. Furthermore, 76% of participants agreed that integrating local wisdom into course materials made learning more contextual and meaningful, while 22% adopted a neutral position, and 2% disagreed. The mean score for this aspect was 3.98, reflecting a high level of consensus on the value of contextualizing English language learning through local cultural elements.

Impact on motivation and engagement

There are three questions which were asked to the participants of the study regarding impact on motivation and engagement from the integration of local wisdom in English learning

Table 4. *Impact on motivation and engagement*

Impact on Motivation and Engagement	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. I feel more motivated to participate in the English Language Skills courses when the material includes local wisdom..	39 (26%)	72 (48%)	32 (21.3%)	6 (4%)	1 (0.7%)
2. The integration of local wisdom makes learning in the English Language Skills courses more engaging and interactive.	45 (30%)	72 (48%)	29 (19.3%)	4 (2.7%)	0 (0.0%)
3. I feel that local wisdom enhances my engagement in the learning process of the English Language Skills courses.	40 (26.7%)	71 (47.3%)	33 (22%)	6 (4%)	0 (0.0%)

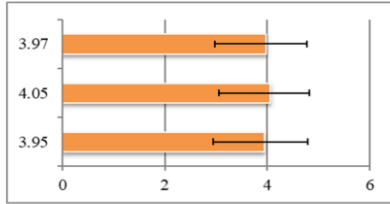


Figure 4. Impact on motivation and engagement mean and standard deviation results

The survey results indicate a strong agreement among respondents about the motivational impact of incorporating local wisdom into English language skills courses. A majority, 74%, agreed that they felt more motivated to participate in these courses when local wisdom was included in the material. Meanwhile, 21.3% held a neutral view, reflecting uncertainty, and 4.7% disagreed, suggesting that they did not feel an increase in motivation due to the integration of local wisdom. The mean score for this statement was 3.95, reflecting a high level of agreement among

respondents.

Additionally, 78% of respondents agreed that the integration of local wisdom made the learning experience in English language skills courses more engaging and interactive. In comparison, 19.3% expressed neutrality, and 2.7% disagreed, indicating they did not find the courses more interesting as a result. The mean score of 4.05 further emphasizes the respondents' positive perception of this integration. Furthermore, 74% of participants agreed that the inclusion of local wisdom enhanced their engagement in the learning process, while 22% remained neutral, and 4% disagreed. This statement had a mean score of 3.97, signifying strong agreement overall.

Relevance to the workforce and learning

There are two statements which were asked to the students of the study regarding their perceptions of relevance to the workforce and learning from the integration of local wisdom in English courses

Table 5. Relevance to the workforce and learning

Relevance to the Workforce and Learning	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The local wisdom included in the English Language Skills courses is relevant to the competencies required in the workforce.	33 (22%)	63 (42%)	49 (32.7%)	4 (2.7%)	1 (0.7%)
2. Learning about local wisdom helps me understand the broader social and cultural contexts in the use of English.	43 (28.7%)	76 (50.7%)	29 (19.3%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)

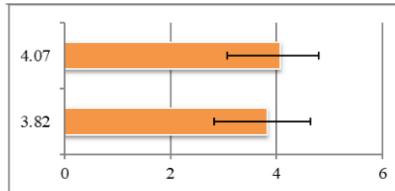


Figure 5. Relevance to the workforce and learning mean and standard deviation results

The results in Table 5 and Figure 5 show that 64% of respondents agreed that the inclusion of local wisdom in English language skills courses is relevant to the competencies needed in the workplace. Meanwhile, 32.7% expressed a neutral stance, indicating uncertainty, and 3.4% disagreed, suggesting that they did not find the integration of local wisdom relevant to the necessary workplace competencies. The mean score for this statement was 3.82, indicating a relatively high level of agreement among respondents. Furthermore, 79.4% of respondents

agreed that learning about local wisdom helped them better understand the broader social and cultural contexts in using English. In contrast, 19.3% remained neutral, showing indecision, and 1.3% disagreed, indicating that they felt local wisdom contributed less to their understanding of these broader contexts. The mean score of 4.07 demonstrates strong agreement, reflecting the importance of integrating local wisdom for a more comprehensive learning experience.

Feedback

To complement the quantitative data gathered from closed-ended questionnaires, qualitative insights were collected through open-ended responses aimed at exploring the integration of local wisdom in English language instruction.

Key strengths

The respondents highlighted several key strengths in the integration of local wisdom within English language courses. A significant number identified teaching materials as the primary strength, with

Respondent 1 stating that,

"...integrating local wisdom into the course enhances the relevance of materials, enriches students' cultural identity, fosters an inclusive learning environment, and encourages innovation based on local culture"

Similarly, Respondent 2 noted that,

"...the material's relevance to daily life, enriched by local wisdom, makes learning more contextual and easier to understand"

Respondent 3 expanded on this by noting that,

"...the integration of local wisdom in English courses provides relevant context and enhances the learning experience, allowing students to better appreciate their own culture while learning English, ultimately improving language skills"

In addition to teaching materials, instructor expertise was also identified as a key factor in successful integration. Respondent 4 emphasized,

"...the strength of the delivery method and content alignment between local wisdom and English language education"

Lastly, the pedagogical approach was highlighted, with respondent 5 stating that,

"...context-based problem-solving encourages creative thinking and innovation by embracing effective local solutions, it offers a fresh approach to existing challenges"

These three factors were interlinked, as each contributed to creating an enriched learning experience grounded in local wisdom.

Areas for improvement

When asked about areas for improvement, respondents mentioned various elements, though these were closely related. A common suggestion was to diversify teaching materials, with Respondent 6 noting,

"... I think it is essential to develop more learning materials that integrate various aspects of local wisdom"

Similarly, Respondent 7 emphasized the importance of materials that truly reflect local wisdom and relevance within texts or

conversations. Additionally, Respondent 7 suggested,

"...specialized teacher training to integrate local wisdom effectively and the development of assessment tools to measure its impact on English language skills"

Some respondents pointed out the teaching approach as an area for enhancement, suggesting more varied pedagogical methods. Respondent 8 recommended,

"... we could use diverse Pedagogical Approaches, such as incorporating case studies, field projects, or group discussions to ensure in-depth and applicable understanding of local wisdom"

Respondent 9 proposed incorporating media such as video projects or field studies at historical sites to provide contextual learning experiences. However, a few respondents felt that no changes were necessary, with Respondent 10 stating,

"...I believe the integration of local wisdom in this course is already sufficient."

Additional suggestions

Respondents offered further suggestions on integrating local wisdom more effectively into English language learning. Many suggested increasing exploratory and collaborative activities that involve direct student engagement. For example, Respondent 11 proposed,

"...creative Projects that encourage students to integrate local wisdom with English, such as writing essays, preparing presentations, or creating multimedia projects on local traditions"

Respondent 12 emphasized using

"...local contexts in materials, teacher training for integrating local wisdom, collaboration with local communities, inclusion of local content in extracurricular activities, and comprehensive data analysis to assess student perceptions."

Respondents also recommended revising teaching resources by using culturally-rooted texts and materials. Respondent 14 advised,

"...incorporating texts, stories, and instructional materials rooted in local culture and encouraging students to create projects or presentations that blend local wisdom with English"

Respondent 15 suggested practical exercises like speaking or writing activities related to local wisdom, such as essays or presentations about local traditions or folklore.

The positive student perceptions toward integrating local wisdom into language skills courses reveal a deeper engagement with their own cultural identity, which appears to enhance their interest in learning. When students see their cultural heritage and values reflected in their studies, it validates their experiences and creates a sense of belonging in the academic environment (Hinman, 2021). This aligns with research emphasizing the benefits of culturally relevant pedagogy, which advocates for learning experiences that draw from students' own backgrounds (Donahue-Keegan, Villegas-Reimers & Cressey, 2019). The integration of local wisdom supports the notion that learning is not only about acquiring language but also about understanding one's place within it, which can profoundly affect students' sense of identity and self-esteem. For example, Kinossalo, Henna & Intke-Hernandez, (2022) argue that embedding cultural knowledge into language learning strengthens identity and self-awareness, fostering a stronger personal connection to the subject matter. By including familiar cultural references, teachers make language learning more accessible, bridging any divide that might exist between students' home lives and academic environments. Moreover, studies have shown that students are likely to feel a more profound attachment to learning materials that resonate with their cultural identity, which can significantly enhance retention and application of knowledge beyond the classroom (Patton, 2023). This also aligns with theories of sociocultural learning, particularly Vygotsky's emphasis on social and cultural influence in cognitive development. Language learning, from this perspective, becomes an activity that is as much about understanding one's cultural context as it is about linguistic competence. By integrating local wisdom into the courses, teachers can meet learners where they are, making abstract concepts more tangible and relevant (Dolo & Kuai, 2023). This connection between cultural familiarity and motivation is vital, as it not only increases student satisfaction but also prepares them to view English as a tool for expressing their identity rather than just a subject to pass (Chen, 2023). Research also supports the idea that culturally relevant materials can reduce language anxiety, a common barrier in language acquisition, by fostering a classroom

environment where students feel understood and respected (Lau & Shea, 2024; Alisoy, 2024).

Local wisdom is closely linked to fostering students' competencies both personal and professional settings. Students perceive local wisdom as not only academically relevant but also practical, as it encourages the development of soft skills such as cultural awareness, adaptability, and empathy—qualities that are increasingly vital in today's globalized world (Sakti, Endraswara & Rohman, 2024). This aligns with theories suggesting that when students learn in a way that mirrors real-world interactions and scenarios, they are better equipped to apply these skills later in life (Singha & Singha, 2024). By connecting English language skills to culturally significant practices and values, teachers are helping students bridge academic learning with practical life skills. This can be especially beneficial for students who may enter fields requiring a strong cultural understanding or who plan to work in multicultural settings where intercultural competence is essential (López-Rocha, 2021). Furthermore, culturally embedded language learning resonates with the broader framework of contextualized learning, which posits that knowledge becomes more meaningful when it is related to the learner's own life experiences. Research supports this, showing that when learners engage with materials that relate to their own culture, the learning process becomes less abstract and more grounded (Hudson, 2022).

When students engage with learning materials that reflect their own traditions and values, they develop a deeper understanding of their heritage, which can reinforce both self-esteem and cultural pride (Banfield, 2022). By embedding local cultural knowledge into English classes, teachers encourage students to see language not just as a set of rules and vocabulary, but as a medium for communicating values, beliefs, and histories (Klimanova & Hellmich, 2021). Culturally relevant education not only helps students in developing language skills but also enriches their worldview, as they become more aware of the cultural diversity that exists both within their society and globally. By situating language learning within a framework of cultural understanding, teachers create opportunities for students to appreciate both their cultural identities and the ways in which these identities intersect with the global community (Fielding, 2021).

One of the most compelling findings from the integration of local wisdom into English courses is its impact on student motivation. Students

express a higher level of engagement and motivation when the curriculum reflects aspects of their own cultural background. This heightened engagement aligns with the research findings of Lopez et al (2022) which suggests that intrinsic motivation—the drive to do something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable—thrives when individuals feel that their values and interests are acknowledged. By integrating local wisdom, teachers create an environment where students feel that learning English is not merely an academic requirement but also a means of connecting with their cultural identity. The positive impact on motivation also has practical implications (Chien, 2020). When students are more motivated, they are more likely to participate actively in class, which can lead to improved language acquisition. Active engagement is essential in language learning, as it involves practicing skills such as speaking, listening, and interacting with peers (Hiver, 2024). Culturally relevant material can facilitate this active engagement by providing students with familiar and relatable content to discuss, analyze, and reflect upon. When students see their own culture represented in the curriculum, they may feel less intimidated and more confident, which can enhance their willingness to take risks and engage in communicative activities essential for language development (Kristiawan, Ferdiansyah & Picard, 2022).

In Indonesia, a diverse country with a rapidly evolving job market, the need for English proficiency is increasing, especially as industries like tourism, hospitality, and international trade expand. However, there is a simultaneous need to retain cultural sensitivity and relevance (Azeem et al, 2022). Integrating local cultural knowledge into English lessons allows students to see English not merely as an academic requirement but as a skill that directly applies to their future professional lives (Lau & Shea, 2024). This relevance helps students understand how language skills can support their unique cultural perspectives within professional settings, giving them a distinct edge as professionals who can bridge global communication gaps while maintaining cultural authenticity. Studies in Indonesia supports the idea that workforce readiness improves when education aligns with the practical, culturally relevant needs of the job market (Nugroho, Irianto & Suryanto, 2024). So, when students understand how the material applies to their future careers, their motivation and engagement increase, leading to better

learning outcomes. Thus, embedding local wisdom into English instruction doesn't just prepare Indonesian students linguistically but also enables them to enter the workforce as culturally competent individuals who are equipped to navigate both local and international contexts.

The interview responses reveal a strong consensus on the benefits of embedding local wisdom in English language courses. Respondents appreciated how teaching materials grounded in local culture make learning more accessible, with several noting that cultural relevance fosters a sense of belonging and improves engagement. Students who see their heritage reflected in learning materials are more likely to feel respected and valued (Jimura, 2023). This aligns with the idea that culturally relevant pedagogy not only supports engagement but also empowers students to see their own traditions as sources of knowledge and pride (Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). Respondent noted that when course materials incorporate familiar, daily-life examples, the language becomes more “contextual and easier to understand.” Studies on culturally relevant education also highlight how such an approach can support cognitive and linguistic development by framing new concepts within familiar cultural contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In this way, students simultaneously learn language skills and reinforce their cultural identity, a combination that could enhance both personal and academic growth.

The responses also highlight the teacher expertise as a key factor in successfully integrating local wisdom. Respondent emphasized alignment between delivery methods and content, which reflects an understanding that effective teaching relies not only on materials but also on how they are presented (Milligan, 2019). Teachers in Indonesia, especially those versed in local customs, can bring language instruction to life by connecting English concepts to regional stories, folklore, or societal practices. In doing so, they validate students' cultural backgrounds while broadening their perspectives. This approach is increasingly valued in Indonesia, where educational reforms advocate for both global skills and cultural preservation (Mariyono, 2024). Despite the strengths, respondents also identified several areas for improvement, primarily related to resource diversity and teaching approaches. Respondent expressed a need for more varied materials that reflect different facets of local wisdom, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach may not capture the full spectrum of

Indonesia's cultural landscape (Aimar & Jigyasu, 2022). Given the diversity, where regional cultures and languages vary widely, expanding resources to include local contexts across the nation could enrich English instruction for students everywhere. This could mean developing supplementary materials that highlight local proverbs, customs, or industries, ensuring that students from all regions feel represented.

The integration of local wisdom into English language instruction highlights a promising approach to making learning both culturally meaningful and pedagogically effective. The strengths identified—such as culturally relevant materials, the expertise of instructors, and innovative teaching methods—showcase the potential of local wisdom to enrich students' learning experiences and foster a deeper connection to their cultural heritage. However, the areas for improvement noted by respondents also provide valuable insights, underscoring the need for diverse and authentic materials, enhanced teacher training, and varied instructional methods to ensure that local wisdom is thoroughly and effectively embedded in the curriculum. Additionally, suggestions for hands-on, collaborative projects reflect an ongoing desire to promote active, engaging, and contextualized learning experiences. Overall, these findings suggest that by thoughtfully balancing local wisdom with English language skills, teachers can create a learning environment that is not only skill-building but also culturally resonant, thus preparing students for both academic and real-world applications. This approach supports a holistic view of education, where language learning serves as a bridge between global knowledge and local identity, fostering both linguistic competence and cultural appreciation.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, integrating local wisdom into English language courses could bring about positive effects, showing that cultural relevance enhances student motivation, engagement, and comprehension. The findings reveal that the majority of students found learning more relatable with local cultural elements, fostering respect for both the English language and their cultural heritage. Students expressed that culturally enriched materials provided a meaningful connection between their identities and global communication skills. To build on these benefits, the study recommends specific strategies for curriculum design: incorporating more diverse

cultural content, integrating experiential and collaborative activities that link English to real-world contexts, and adopting a modular approach to balance local and global perspectives. This approach would cater to diverse student needs, making English language education more relevant and impactful. Additionally, providing professional development opportunities for teachers in culturally responsive teaching methods could enhance the effective integration of local wisdom into the curriculum. For future research, examining the long-term effects of culturally integrated curricula on student outcomes and comparing impacts across different regions in Indonesia would offer valuable insights. Expanding the study to different educational levels or subjects could also help to refine strategies for effectively embedding local culture into broader educational practices.

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