

INTEGRATING BENGKULU LOCAL CULTURE INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION TO ENHANCE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS AT SMP NEGERI 05 KOTA BENGKULU

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh pengintegrasian budaya lokal Bengkulu ke dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris terhadap kemampuan berbicara siswa di SMP Negeri 05 Kota Bengkulu. Desain penelitian kuasi-eksperimental dengan pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan, yang melibatkan kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Kelompok eksperimen menerima pembelajaran berbicara yang menggabungkan konten budaya lokal Bengkulu, sedangkan kelompok kontrol diajarkan menggunakan materi konvensional. Data dikumpulkan melalui penilaian berbicara pra-tes dan pasca-tes yang dievaluasi menggunakan rubrik penilaian analitik yang mencakup kelancaran, pengucapan, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan relevansi konten. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada kelompok eksperimen dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol, yang ditunjukkan oleh skor peningkatan yang lebih tinggi dan hasil uji statistik yang menunjukkan perbedaan signifikan pada tingkat 0,05. Pengintegrasian tema budaya lokal meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, partisipasi, dan kemampuan siswa untuk mengembangkan ide selama kegiatan berbicara. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa penggabungan budaya lokal ke dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap pengembangan kemampuan berbicara siswa dan mendukung praktik pengajaran yang responsif secara budaya. Disarankan agar guru bahasa Inggris mengintegrasikan konten budaya lokal yang bermakna ke dalam kegiatan kelas untuk menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang lebih menarik dan relevan secara kontekstual.

Kata Kunci: Integrasi Budaya Lokal, Keterampilan Berbicara, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, Pengajaran Responsif Budaya, Siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of integrating Bengkulu local culture into English language instruction on students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 05 Bengkulu City. A quasi-experimental research design with a quantitative approach was employed, involving an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received speaking instruction incorporating Bengkulu local cultural content, while the control group was taught using conventional materials. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test speaking assessments evaluated using an analytic scoring rubric covering fluency,

pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and content relevance. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group, as indicated by higher gain scores and statistical test results showing a significant difference at the 0.05 level. The integration of local cultural themes enhances students' confidence, participation, and ability to develop ideas during speaking activities. The study concludes that incorporating local culture into English instruction contributes positively to the development of students' speaking proficiency and supports culturally responsive teaching practices. It is recommended that English teachers integrate meaningful local cultural content into classroom activities to create more engaging and contextually relevant learning experiences.

Keywords: *Local Culture Integration, Speaking Skills, English Language Teaching, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Junior High School Students*

A. INTRODUCTION

English has long been positioned as a global lingua franca that enables communication across nations, cultures, and disciplines. In the context of globalization, mastery of English is no longer perceived merely as an academic requirement but as a crucial competence that determines students' access to information, higher education opportunities, and participation in international networks. Among the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing speaking is often regarded as the most visible indicator of language proficiency. Students who are able to express ideas orally in English are frequently perceived as more competent, confident, and communicatively capable. However, in many Indonesian junior high schools, students' speaking proficiency remains relatively low. Learners often demonstrate hesitation, limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence when required to speak English in classroom settings. One of the underlying causes of this issue is the limited contextualization of learning materials. English instruction in many schools still relies heavily on textbooks that prioritize foreign cultural contexts, such as Western daily life, traditions, and social practices, which may feel distant from students' lived experiences. When learners encounter unfamiliar cultural references, they may struggle not only linguistically but also conceptually. As a result, speaking tasks become mechanical rather than meaningful. Students may memorize dialogues or repeat sentences without fully internalizing their communicative purpose. This situation indicates a gap between language instruction and learners' sociocultural realities.

The inseparable relationship between language and culture has been widely acknowledged in language education theory. Language does not exist in a vacuum; it reflects values, beliefs, traditions, and social practices of its speakers. Therefore, effective English language teaching should not only transmit linguistic structures but also facilitate cultural understanding. Importantly, cultural integration in English learning does not necessarily mean adopting foreign cultures uncritically. Instead, it may involve incorporating students' own local culture as meaningful content for communication. In this regard, culturally responsive teaching becomes highly relevant. (Azahary & Fatimah, 2024) emphasize that the integration of local cultures in English teaching materials contributes to culturally responsive pedagogy by aligning instructional content with students' sociocultural backgrounds. Their study highlights that when learners encounter familiar cultural themes, they become more engaged and motivated to participate actively in classroom interaction. Integrating local culture into English instruction also supports students' identity development. Rather than positioning English as a foreign and distant language, contextualized materials allow learners to use English as a medium to express their own cultural heritage. (Tantri, 2025) argues that local culture integration in English language teaching materials enhances students' sense of relevance and ownership over the learning process. When students are invited to discuss traditional ceremonies, local folklore, regional foods, or community practices in English, they are not only practicing language skills but also reaffirming their cultural identity. This approach shifts the focus from imitating foreign contexts to articulating local realities in a global language.

In the Indonesian educational landscape, the integration of character values and local wisdom has been encouraged within the national curriculum framework. English teachers are expected to contextualize instruction to suit local needs and characteristics. However, practical implementation remains inconsistent. (Agung et al., 2025), in their review of Indonesian EFL teachers' strategies, note that while many teachers acknowledge the importance of integrating local culture and character values, they often face constraints related to limited resources, lack of training, and insufficient instructional models. This suggests that the idea of cultural integration is conceptually supported but operationally underdeveloped in many classrooms. The challenge becomes more pronounced in junior high school contexts, where students are in a transitional stage of cognitive and social development. At this level, learners require meaningful and engaging

content that resonates with their immediate environment. (Rustam & Rustam, 2025) analyze teachers' needs in integrating local culture into English teaching materials in Islamic junior high schools and find that educators require structured guidance and contextually appropriate materials to implement such integration effectively. Their findings imply that without systematic design, cultural integration risks becoming superficial, limited to inserting local names or images without deeper pedagogical alignment.

Speaking skill development, in particular, benefits significantly from contextualized content. Oral communication tasks demand not only linguistic knowledge but also confidence and familiarity with the topic. When students are asked to speak about unfamiliar foreign customs, they may lack both conceptual understanding and emotional connection. Conversely, discussing local cultural practices can reduce cognitive load and anxiety because learners draw upon existing knowledge. (Ningsi & Febrianti, 2023), in developing a local culture-based English e-module for vocational high school students, demonstrates that culturally contextualized materials positively influence students' speaking performance. The study indicates improvements in fluency, confidence, and active participation, suggesting that meaningful content plays a crucial role in stimulating oral communication. Despite these promising findings, research focusing specifically on the integration of Bengkulu local culture in English speaking instruction at the junior high school level remains limited. Bengkulu, as a province rich in cultural heritage—including traditional dances, regional folklore, local ceremonies, and distinctive culinary traditions—offers abundant authentic material for language learning. Yet, English instruction in many schools in the region continues to rely primarily on standardized textbooks that do not explicitly reflect local cultural elements. This disconnect may contribute to students' limited engagement and reluctance to speak.

SMP Negeri 05 Kota Bengkulu, as one of the public junior high schools in the region, provides a relevant setting to explore this issue. Observations in similar educational contexts suggest that students often demonstrate passive participation during speaking activities. They may respond with short, rehearsed answers and avoid extended interaction. Such patterns indicate that speaking tasks may not sufficiently stimulate authentic communication. If learning materials were designed to incorporate familiar cultural themes such as describing local festivals, narrating regional legends, or

promoting Bengkulu tourism sites in English students might perceive speaking activities as more meaningful and purposeful. From a pedagogical perspective, integrating Bengkulu local culture into English speaking instruction aligns with communicative language teaching principles. Communicative competence involves not only grammatical accuracy but also sociocultural appropriateness. When students practice explaining their own cultural traditions in English, they develop both linguistic and intercultural communicative competence. Moreover, this approach prepares learners to act as cultural ambassadors who can introduce their local heritage to broader audiences.

Nevertheless, effective integration requires systematic planning. Cultural content must be carefully selected, linguistically graded, and pedagogically structured. Teachers need to design speaking tasks that move beyond simple description toward interactive communication, such as role-plays, interviews, storytelling sessions, and project-based presentations. The findings of Rustam et al. (2026) underscore the importance of aligning materials with teachers' instructional needs, while Azhary and Fatimah (2025) highlight the necessity of embedding cultural elements within a culturally responsive framework rather than treating them as decorative additions. Furthermore, integrating local culture into English instruction may contribute to students' affective development. Language anxiety is a common barrier in speaking classrooms. By using familiar cultural topics, teachers may create a more supportive learning environment that reduces fear of making mistakes. Tantri (2025) suggests that contextualized materials enhance students' engagement and participation, which are essential components of successful speaking practice. Increased participation leads to greater exposure to language use, which in turn supports skill development.

In light of these considerations, integrating Bengkulu local culture into English learning at SMP Negeri 05 Kota Bengkulu represents both a pedagogical opportunity and a research necessity. Although previous studies such as those conducted provide empirical and theoretical support for cultural integration in English language teaching, contextual research focusing on specific regional settings remains essential. Each local context possesses unique cultural characteristics and educational challenges that influence implementation outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how the integration of Bengkulu local culture in English instruction can enhance students' speaking skills. By grounding speaking activities in culturally familiar content, the study aims to address

persistent issues of low confidence, limited participation, and minimal communicative interaction. Ultimately, this research is expected to contribute not only to the improvement of speaking proficiency but also to the development of culturally responsive English pedagogy that honors local identity while preparing students for global communication.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design with a quantitative approach to examine the effect of integrating Bengkulu local culture into English language instruction on students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 05 Kota Bengkulu. The research involved two groups: an experimental class that received English speaking instruction integrated with Bengkulu local cultural content, and a control class that was taught using conventional materials without explicit cultural integration. The participants were seventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling based on class similarity and teacher recommendation. A speaking pre-test and post-test were administered to measure students' improvement. The speaking test was designed to assess fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and content relevance using an analytic scoring rubric. The integration of local culture in the experimental class included topics such as local traditions, traditional dances, regional folklore, and tourism sites in Bengkulu, which were incorporated into communicative speaking tasks such as storytelling, role-play, and oral presentations. This design was chosen to provide measurable evidence of the effectiveness of culturally contextualized instruction in enhancing students' oral proficiency.

The procedures of this study were informed by previous research on local culture integration in English teaching. (Darma et al., 2025) applied a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how local culture was incorporated into English learning processes, emphasizing the importance of contextual relevance in instructional practices. (Miqawati et al., 2024) highlighted the role of authentic materials and cultural awareness in strengthening English language teaching through qualitative data collection and systematic analysis stages, including data reduction and conclusion drawing. Although the present study adopts a quantitative quasi-experimental framework, it draws conceptual guidance from these studies in designing culturally meaningful learning

activities and ensuring pedagogical alignment. Data in this research were analyzed using statistical techniques, including mean score comparison and t-test analysis, to determine whether there was a significant difference between students' speaking performance before and after the treatment. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to evaluate the effectiveness of Bengkulu local culture integration in improving students' speaking skills

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study were obtained from the comparison of students' speaking scores in the pre-test and post-test administered to both the experimental and control groups. The speaking assessment focused on five components: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and content relevance. The experimental group received instruction integrating Bengkulu local culture into speaking activities, while the control group was taught using conventional materials without explicit cultural integration. The descriptive statistics of students' speaking scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Gain Score
Experimental Group	62.40	80.75	18.35
Control Group	63.10	71.20	8.10

Table 1 shows that both groups experienced improvement after the instructional treatment. However, the experimental group demonstrated a significantly higher gain score (18.35) compared to the control group (8.10). The initial pre-test means indicate that both groups started at relatively similar proficiency levels, which supports the comparability of the groups before treatment. To determine whether the improvement was statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was conducted on the post-test scores. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Independent Sample t-Test Result of Post-Test Scores

Variable	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significance Level (α)	Result
Post-Test Scores	3.87	0.000	0.05	Significant

The significance value (0.000) is lower than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, the integration of Bengkulu local culture into English instruction had a positive and significant effect on students' speaking skills.

Further analysis of speaking components showed that the most noticeable improvements in the experimental group were found in fluency and content relevance. Students appeared more confident and were able to elaborate their ideas more naturally when discussing familiar cultural topics such as local festivals, traditional dances, and regional tourism sites.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating Bengkulu local culture into English speaking instruction significantly enhances students' speaking performance. The higher gain score achieved by the experimental group suggests that culturally contextualized materials provide meaningful learning experiences that stimulate students' participation and confidence. When students were asked to describe familiar cultural practices or narrate local folklore in English, they showed greater enthusiasm and willingness to speak compared to when they discussed unfamiliar foreign contexts.

This result aligns with the argument that language learning becomes more effective when instructional content reflects students' sociocultural backgrounds. The familiarity of the topic reduces cognitive burden, allowing learners to focus more on language production rather than struggling to understand the context. As observed during classroom implementation, students in the experimental group engaged more actively in role-plays, storytelling sessions, and oral presentations. They demonstrated improved fluency and were more willing to take risks in speaking.

The improvement in content relevance indicates that students were able to organize and develop their ideas more coherently when discussing local cultural themes. This suggests that integrating local culture does not only support linguistic development but also strengthens communicative competence. By articulating their own cultural identity in English, students practice authentic communication rather than memorized dialogue.

In contrast, although the control group also showed some improvement, the increase was less substantial. Conventional materials that emphasize foreign contexts may still

contribute to learning, but they do not provide the same level of emotional and contextual engagement. The limited improvement in the control group highlights the importance of contextualization in English language teaching.

Overall, the results confirm that culturally responsive instruction plays a crucial role in enhancing speaking skills. The integration of Bengkulu local culture into English teaching at SMP Negeri 05 Kota Bengkulu not only improved students' speaking scores but also fostered greater classroom interaction and confidence. These findings suggest that English teachers should consider systematically incorporating local cultural content into speaking activities to create more meaningful and effective language learning experiences.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the integration of Bengkulu local culture into English language instruction has a significant and positive effect on students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 05 Kota Bengkulu. The statistical analysis showed that students who were taught through culturally integrated speaking activities achieved higher post-test scores compared to those who received conventional instruction. The substantial gain in the experimental group indicates that contextualized learning materials contribute effectively to improving fluency, vocabulary use, content development, and overall speaking performance.

The findings also demonstrate that culturally relevant topics enhance students' confidence and classroom participation. When learners are encouraged to speak about familiar cultural practices, traditions, and local identities, they become more engaged and motivated to express their ideas in English. This suggests that meaningful and context-based instruction reduces speaking anxiety and supports authentic communication. Therefore, integrating local culture into English teaching is not only beneficial for linguistic development but also for fostering students' cultural awareness and communicative competence.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of adopting culturally responsive teaching approaches in English language classrooms. English teachers are encouraged to systematically incorporate local cultural content into speaking activities to create more

relevant, engaging, and effective learning experiences. Future research may explore broader implementation across different grade levels or examine long-term impacts on students' communicative competence.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that English teachers systematically integrate Bengkulu local culture into speaking instruction through well-designed communicative activities such as storytelling, role-plays, discussions, and project-based presentations rather than relying solely on textbook materials. Cultural elements should be embedded meaningfully in lesson objectives and assessment criteria to ensure that integration supports both linguistic development and communicative competence. Schools are also encouraged to provide professional development programs, workshops, and collaborative platforms to help teachers develop culturally responsive materials and effective speaking assessment strategies. Without structured planning and institutional support, cultural integration may remain superficial and ineffective. Furthermore, future researchers are advised to involve larger samples, apply mixed-method approaches, or investigate long-term impacts on students' motivation and intercultural competence to strengthen empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of local culture integration in English language teaching.

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