



The Role of Cultural Content in Teaching Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of cultural content in teaching reading comprehension. This research is (1) to analyze the teachers' way to teach the cultural content in the classroom in teaching reading comprehension; (2) to find out whether teachers have an awareness of the importance of cultural learning in the form of cultural content in learning English; and (3) to find out the teachers' responses to teach cultural content in reading comprehension. The research used qualitative research. The instruments used in this research were documentation, observation, and interviews. This research involves three English teachers as participants of SMKN 02 Rangkasbitung. The research findings show that cultural content on teaching reading comprehension was found to have been applied by the three English teachers. In class X, it was found that the teacher represented international culture in descriptive texts with material on the history of Hagia Sophia. Then, in class XI, it was found that the teacher represented target culture in the procedure text with the material How to Make Sandwich. In class XII, it was found that the teacher represented source culture in descriptive texts with Baduy Culture material. Next, the English teachers have realized the importance of learning cultural content on teaching reading comprehension. The last, the teachers gave a positive response and argued that cultural content can improve student's learning processes in reading comprehension.

Keywords: cultural content, reading comprehension

Introduction

The relationship between culture and language very close because both are mutually exclusive affects speakers of deep languages communicate and interact. Jeremy Harmer (2003) one of the language teaching goal is so that students can communicate well orally or in writing correctly and fluently. English education does not only take in learning language components which include grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and language skills consisting of writing, speaking, listening and reading, but language learning must involve learning beyond establishment to English culture. This can help students understand reading comprehension against a cultural

background that students know. Cultural studying in language learning could very importance thinking about the important role of cultural knowledge in smoothing it intercultural communication. The relationship between culture and language cannot be separated if one wishes learn a language. Gulbinskienė and Lasauskienė (2014) has stated one of the main motive behind teach English as foreign language is to improve EFL learner's intercultural communication skills, the ability to effectively interact with native speakers of other languages and cultures.

Based at the data above, it's far very critical for English teachers to take not of the factors of English subculture in studying



English so that students are able use the language they found out to communicate. For students, cultural knowledge English will help them recognize the conditions they face while reading English text. In addition, the commitment in culture for the network with using language additionally applies to their knowledge and tolerance of different cultures.

In the context of learning a foreign language such as English, students cannot use English as the target language effectively and precisely in communicating because they do not have background knowledge about the culture of the target language. Therefore, the teacher's role is very important to introduce the culture that exists in the target language to students so as not to cause misunderstanding or even pragmatic failure to interact. In communicate and interaction. For example, in the context of asking someone's age, it is a natural thing in Indonesian culture, but this cannot be asked to people outside the West because for them it is a matter of privacy and it is not polite to ask.

According to Ritlyová (1994) students improve their perceptions of overseas cultures and their very own through gaining focus of overseas languages. The purpose of cultural education is to raise student's attention and increase their interest about the culture and family culture of the destination. However, due to lack of time, loss of cultural understanding or lack of education in what factors of culture, teachers every so often do not discuss cultural problems in the classroom

during the learning process. Furthermore, in some cases where the goal language is to take into consideration a foreign, solving too many cultural problems may be seen as promoting the values of foreign language and undermining nearby values although teacher can find the majority of studies on some aspects of the teaching of culture.

Afriani (2019) one of the goals of learning English in Indonesian is so that students are successful examine English textual content. Because reading is a complicated skill. So that students can recognize that means of the textual content they read and easily and fun, students have to realizes how writing must be read (pronounced), language structure and vocabulary. In addition, students must also understand cultural components in English. This could be very crucial even though the text that is being read isn't always particular spoken about culture, but culture factors will nevertheless color the contents of the textual content. When it comes to reading English texts, an important factor of reading comprehension is the amount of background knowledge the reader has. Although sometimes the reader may change the symbols printed in the text to the sound in the word accurately it does not guarantee the students reading comprehension. Cultural background knowledge affects students reading comprehension. The integration of cultural content in the curriculum has an important role in students reading comprehension.



Furthermore, in teaching English on reading comprehension, teachers must also incorporate cultural content into their teaching. Learning the cultural content of the language being studied makes it easier for students to learn the language. There are still many students who do not realize the importance of cultural content in language learning. Knowing the speaker language culture makes it easier for students to understand the context of the language being studied. Teachers are expected to give an active role in the learning process.

The research questions are given as follows. (1) How teachers teach the cultural content in the classroom in teaching reading comprehension? (2) Are teachers aware of the important role cultural learning in learning English? (3) How do teachers respond to learning cultural content in reading comprehension?

The previous study of this study organized through Afriani (2019). This study aims to determine the role of culture in learning foreign languages, especially English. This research using qualitative descriptive research methods. The research subjects needed in the study were several English teachers in the North Bengkulu region. Teachers were interviewed to obtain information and data. There were four teachers interviewed to get the information needed by researchers. The results of the study indicate that teachers have begun to realize the importance of introducing cultural literacy in language classes, especially English as a

foreign language. In this study have similarities in the research method to be carried out, namely using interviews with English teachers to find out information and data about the role of cultural content in learning English.

Theoretical Review

The correlation between culture and language is strongly correlated to the reason learning language that students automatically learned the culture of the native speakers of that language even students learn their own cultures and other cultures used the target language they learners learned. As Byram and Sarries (1991) indicate that if language and culture are not education together, students can suppose that the foreign language is similar to their own language it can be used in the same way in the same situations as their first language, which does not is obviously not always the case. Therefore, the introduction cultural content in the field of targeted source and culture in the material of English language teaching can be useful for the students to see the difference between two cultures and make an intercultural understanding. Therefore, as an indivisible unit, a language in culture or culture in the educational language has an effect on their being to each other. Whereas the occupation of culture in teaching a language can develop student of intercultural awareness it is important to focus on correlation between language and culture in English language teaching.



Language is a means to transmit a certain derivation culture, while culture is from which the use of a language appropriate. Consequently, culture can not be deserted in the language learning. As the matter of fact, the cultural contents are implant in the educational curriculum. As the result, there must be a cultural contents integration to learning four skills of language. The cultural content, must be implicate integrated into reading ability. The cultural present in reading can be in the form of cultural words and sentence of geography, occupations, past times, historical events, and personalities.

It is necessary to integrate cultural contents in reading materials to help students improve their reading comprehension ability. There are some studies are related to the consequence of teaching cultural content on reading comprehension. One of them is research which is be in control of Razavi and Gilakjani (2020) related to certain productive indication in terms of improving reading comprehension past education of cultural content. Awareness of teachers of cultural content can help students learn more effectively. Cultural content provides an exposure to the language of life, which is missing a foreign language student. That cultural teaching in English language teaching involves cultural knowledge. This cultural knowledge will assist students in understanding and comprehending the texts. In this way, the contents of culture are necessary due to their role in the information of student's

cultural schemata to help them in comprehending reading texts. Represent of cultural contents in teaching materials. They should supply correct and up to-date information, current realistic pictures, current contextual phenomena are not separated facts, and correlate the historical and contemporary materials. Furthermore, cultural contents should not stereotype some cultures.

It recognizes the language of the instructional classrooms which not only teaches the structure of grammar and vocabulary but also include the cultural content in the learning and teaching process. Including cultural content is contemplate productive to encourage cultural awareness among non-native students. The promotion cultural awareness is important to help students develop their interest and curiosity towards this globalized world. Therefore, students are attracted to improve their communicative experience, since students should to communicate in multicultural conditions. However, cultural content that will be integrated should be providing in a balance between source, target and international culture.

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999) there are three types of cultures that can be presented in language material or textbook: target culture which include the culture of the countries of the internal circle, source/local culture that related to students own culture and international culture which aims based on the variety of cultures around the world.



First, the source culture materials refer to materials with presenting language student's own culture. The purpose of the source culture materials is accommodating students need to talk about their culture with guest and help students to be more aware of their own cultural identity. Second, the materials of target culture refer to materials with presented with the culture of English native speaker's countries such as The United States and The United Kingdom. The manuals of this category are the most popular materials of the instruction in the context of English Foreign Language. The objective of the target culture materials generally exposes users to the cultural contexts of the target language. Third, the material of International culture refers to materials with presented a wide variety of culture in countries where English is not used as first or second language but as an international language such as in Indonesia and Brazil. The objective materials of the international culture are raising user's intercultural awareness and allow users familiar with various socio-cultural contexts.

McKay (2003) has stated some rules on how cultural content are carried out in the teaching of English. First, the material must develop certain conditions that students encourage them to consider on their own culture in connection to others in order to create a sphere of intercultural. Second, the gap between cultures should be emphasized, therefore students know the assumptions

present in the books and how the topic, could be discussed.

Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) has explained that there are four type of sense sorts of culture that can involve language teaching: 1) the aesthetic sense, 2) the sociological sense, 3) the semantic sense and 4) the pragmatic (or sociolinguistic) sense. The first is the culture with capital C which contains aesthetic sense. It Includes means for media, cinema, music (seriously or popular) and literature. Large C culture has to do with economic, social, and political history and the great politicians, heroes, writers, and artists of a country. The second is culture with a small c, small c culture refers to the way people live, which reflects the sociological sense. There are the organization and nature of the family, of home life, of interpersonal relationships, material conditions, work and leisure, customs and institutions. Since this are of culture therefore choose the important point as the content. The third is a semantic understanding that explains how a conceptual system that represents in a language and deals with all our perceptions and thoughts. Many semantic areas (example; food, clothes and institutions) are unique because they relate to a certain way of life. However, some of the most common conceptual areas can have similarities in different companies that use the same language, such as a relationship between time and space, emotional states, colors. The fourth is knowledge in the background, social and parallel skills that make it to communicate.



These skills are belonging in the pragmatic sense, the ability to use the right language exhibitors of various communication functions, the ability to use the right Plastering Schemes. Yeganeh and Raeesi (2015) awareness of the convention, which regulates interpersonal relations (state question, liabilities, licenses where it differs from the student culture) and knowledge of the most important rhetorical conventions id different letters species, as different variety of letters and embassies, that fill out forms of advertising.

Peterson and Coltrane (2002) had stated that the lessons of cultural content should be carried out on the unvalued fashion in which the distinction between the source culture and the target culture do not clash with each other. According to Peterson and Coltrane there are many ways can used by teachers to teach cultural content in the classroom such as; Semantic materials, Proverbs, Role-play, Students as a source of culture, Ethnographic, and Literature.

Teacher can suggest students with the aid of using introducing culture-particular subjects of history, politics, economics and geography to their study room situations. These techniques to stimulate conversation on a selected subject matter can reveal learners to extended recognition approximately the target culture. In addition, activities in real-lifestyle situations, together with role playing and discussions may be included as a part of classroom teaching to expand communicative

competence in intercultural communication. Therefore, foreign language getting to know programs have to educate college students to become aware of cultural variations and the styles observed in intercultural communication.

Evenddy, Nurlery, and Marfu'ah (2021) have stated reading comprehension enables readers to make decisions and understand written texts. Reading comprehension is an ability to increase the readers personality meaning with a given text. In other cases, reading comprehension is also known a continuity and text extraction process. On the other hand, reading comprehension strengthens in building mental images of the text read. Reading comprehension is a complex process, there is interaction between students who already have previous background knowledge of the text. It can be said that reading comprehension is the process of transferring meaning from the text and then building meaning from what is obtained in reading.

Method

The research used qualitative research, describing phenomena that occur in the process English learning are related with the role of culture in it. There were several teachers being interviewed about whether in learning English they use cultural content, and how they think about the role and influence of this cultural content on the improvement of students' English learning.



The researcher conducted documentation, observation and interviews to learn more about the role of cultural content on teaching reading comprehension, as well as helped to know whether cultural content that teachers used in class and whether teacher aware of the important learning cultural content on teaching reading comprehension.

These documents help researchers get more data based on how teachers teach cultural content in learning and schools. The researcher asked the teachers lesson plan, and the textbooks that became the teaching reference in the classroom to review and use them as additional and compatible information.

Observations in this study are comments made to see how teachers teach and how the cultural content taught by teachers in learning reading comprehension in class. Researcher looked at whether the teachers had understood and realized the importance of the cultural content taught in reading comprehension learning to improve student's ability, the researcher also looked at the role of the cultural content taught by the teacher in the reading comprehension learning that was carried out. In this study, interviews were managed with several English teachers at schools to get facts and particular about the role of cultural content taught by teachers, and how teachers teach culturally charged learning in learning reading comprehension. The researcher used in-intensity interviews which

became an adjustment in collecting this information.

The data analysis techniques used in this study are data analysis techniques from Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono (2012). Miles and Huberman suggested that the activity in the analysis of qualitative were achieved interactively and continuously until they were finished, so that the data was saturated. Activities in the data analysis, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

The English teachers of SMKN 02 Rangkasbitung were the subjects of this study. There were three teachers in the school.

The topics of interview with the teacher could be described as follows:

Table 1. The Interview Guidelines

Aspects	Indicators
The Role of Cultural Content on teaching Reading Comprehension	The role teachers teach of cultural content on teaching reading comprehension
The awareness of teachers about the importance teaching cultural content.	Teachers awareness of the importance of teaching cultural content in learning reading comprehension
The response of teachers about learning cultural content	Teachers response to the cultural content contained in learning reading comprehension

Result

Learn a language not only to know the structure of grammar. More than accordingly, to study the language and other culture. Based learning culture is a plan to create an educational domain and design educational experiences by integrate culture as a part of learning process. Culture learning based on the recognition of culture as a fundamental for



education as an expression of the communication of ideas and communication of knowledge. In culture-based learn, culture becomes a media for students to transform their observations into in creativity forms and principles of source culture.

From learning cultural content students can choose knowledge about the culture of the language being studied. It can also raise awareness and motivate students in learning English and studying other cultures. When students who have prior knowledge read a text, the student will more easily understand the text he reads than students who do not have prior knowledge. But this has problems because the cultural content material is not implied in the lesson plan. This depends on how the teacher's awareness and understanding used to achieve cultural content material. The understanding of one's own culture is important for students so that they can accept their own culture and be able to describe it to others. In addition, a perception of their own culture as well make them can better appreciate their own culture and make them understand the importance of culture.

Learn the culture to be an important part to learn a language. In addition, require for communication in this era of command today that people can communicate with other people who have a cultural background and different countries. This communicates with other people from a different backgrounds cultural background and way reasonable to be important things in our daily life. In addition,

this can't be capable in a language if students had no sensitivity of that culture, and find out how the culture is connected to language or culture. Therefore, teaching a language cannot be separated from the learning the culture because language is section of culture and culture is section of language. Two are connected to each other so that they cannot be separated from each other. This also means that if students learn English as an international language, then students should also get to know more about the west culture to use Language English well and contextually. Learning the culture of a language can save people from misunderstanding and conflict.

Teacher who was interviewed and observed the reading comprehension learning process was an English teacher who taught in grade X. From the results of interviews and observations made by researcher, it was found that teachers were aware of the importance of learning cultural content in teaching English, especially teaching reading comprehension. The teacher has also applied cultural content in learning reading comprehension which teacher teaches to the students in class. The teacher responded well, that students before learning the target language would be better off studying the culture because it would improve and facilitate students in the learning process.

At the time of observations, the researcher found that the 10th grade English teacher taught the history of the Hagia Sophia Mosque and used descriptive texts to explain



international cultural content. International culture point to all cultures around the world except cultures from source culture country and target cultures countries. The 10th grade English teacher was found to use semantic materials in the form of a picture of the Hagia Sophia Mosque which was displayed on a focus screen in the form of a power point presentation. In addition, the English teacher who teaches grade 10th tends to use verbal explanations for students on teaching reading comprehension. The teacher explains about the history of Hagia Sophia Mosque which is part of international culture. In learning reading comprehension in grade 10th taught by an English teacher in grade 10th, it can be represented that what is taught in teaching reading comprehension is included in the category of aesthetic sense is not found. Likewise, it is also included in the category pragmatic sense, which is about background knowledge about The Hagia Sophia Mosque. As well as semantic sense where there is learning about life that has happened at The Hagia Sophia Mosque, but in sociological sense namely literacy about the history of The Hagia Sophia Mosque.

From the results of interviews and observations made by researcher, it was found that teachers who taught in class XI were aware of the importance of learning cultural content in teaching English, especially teaching reading comprehension. The teacher has also applied cultural content in learning reading comprehension which teacher teaches

to the students in class. The teacher responded well, that students before learning the target language would be better off studying the culture because it would improve and facilitate students in the learning process. the researcher found that the 11th grade English teacher taught the procedure texts how to make sandwich to explain target cultural content. Target culture points to the culture of the Inward circles“ countries such as, USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The 11th grade English teacher was found to use semantic materials in the form of a picture of the Procedure Texts of How to Make Sandwich which was displayed on a focus screen in the form of a power point presentation. In addition, the English teacher who teaches grade 11th tends to use verbal explanations for students on teaching reading comprehension. The teacher explains about the procedure texts about how to make sandwich which is part of target culture. In learning reading comprehension in grade 11th taught by an English teacher in grade 11th, it can be represented that what is taught in teaching reading comprehension is included in the category of semantic sense, namely literacy about popular sandwich food in England. Likewise, it is also included in the category pragmatic sense, which is about background knowledge about Sandwich. As well as sociological sense where there is learning about home life in England, which usually eats sandwiches as a staple food made from bread, is different from Indonesia, which uses rice as



a staple food. Aesthetic sense it is not found in learning cultural content on teaching reading comprehension in grade 11th taught by an English teacher in grade 11th.

From the results of interviews and observations made by researcher, it was found that teachers who taught in class XII were aware of the importance of learning cultural content in teaching English, especially teaching reading comprehension. The teacher has also applied cultural content in learning reading comprehension which teacher teaches to the students in class. The teacher responded well, that students before learning the target language would be better off studying the culture because it would improve and facilitate students in the learning process. The researcher found that the 12th grade English teacher taught the Baduy Culture used descriptive texts to explain source cultural content. The source culture materials point to content presented language learners own culture. In this case, the source culture points to Indonesian cultures. Indonesian is divided into many ethnics such as Acehnese, Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese and other ethnics. The presented aspects of cultures should be the stories about Indonesian legend, pictures of Indonesian people, and other side. The 12th grade English teacher was found to use semantic materials in the form of a picture of Baduy culture and used descriptive texts which was displayed on a focus screen in the form of a power point presentation. In addition, the English teacher who teaches grade 12th tends

to use verbal explanations for students on teaching reading comprehension. The teacher explains about the Baduy culture used procedure texts which is part of target culture. In learning reading comprehension in grade 12th taught by an English teacher in grade 12th, it can be represented that what is taught in teaching reading comprehension is included in the category of semantic sense, namely literacy about Baduy culture. Likewise, it is also included in the category pragmatic sense, which is about background knowledge about Baduy Culture. As well as sociological sense where there is learning about home life in Baduy. Aesthetic sense it is not found in learning cultural content on teaching reading comprehension in grade 12th taught by an English teacher in grade 12th.

The findings, it was found that the teachers accept that cultural learning present significant effect on acquirement language learning by knowing intercultural communication background and language. The teachers agreed that the final result of learning English is assist students set off speakers great intercultural without missing their own cultural recognition so that students can to communicate with other people from others cultures without worried about find a misunderstanding in communication. Intercultural dimensions in teaching language aims to develop students as speakers or mediators between cultures that can capture with complexity and more identity and to



escape the accompanying standard one's perception.

Table 2. The Research Results

Category of Culture/ Class	Aesthetic Sense	Semantic Sense	Pragmatic Sense	Sociological Sense
Class X	-	✓	✓	✓
Class XI	-	✓	✓	✓
Class XII	-	✓	✓	✓

Table 3. The Research Findings

Class X	Class XI	Class XII	Note
Teacher taught the history of the Hagia Sophia Mosque and used descriptive texts to explain international cultural content.	Teacher taught the procedure texts how to make sandwich to explain target cultural content.	Teacher taught the Baduy Culture used descriptive texts to explain source cultural content.	The way representing culture; Verbal explanation Power point presentation

From the results found that teachers gave positive responses to learning cultural content in teaching reading comprehension. According to the teachers it can have a positive influence and can improve student's understanding ability in reading text. From learning cultural content students can choose knowledge about the culture of the language being studied. It can also raise awareness and motivate students in learning English and studying other cultures. When students who have prior knowledge read a text, the student will more easily understand the text he reads than students who do not have prior knowledge. But this has problems because the cultural content material is not implied in the lesson plan. This depends on how the teacher's awareness and understanding used to achieve

cultural content material. The teachers in this study usually use an explanation of oral literacy in introducing other cultures. Teachers also usually power point presentations and videos to make it easier to deliver material in class. Not only that, teachers also usually use the role play method which contains material elements of culture to introduce and teach cultural content in the classroom.

The result of this study may enhance the findings from previous research by Afriani (2019) and Ritlyová (1994) that previous research examined only aspects of language learning. While this study examined and found a significant influence in the learning process of reading comprehension. Another update that can seen is that the teacher conveys the differences from international, local and language-speaking cultures which make students aware of other cultures and allow students to see the differences that exist between local cultures and other cultures.

Conclusion

Students who have previous background knowledge about culture or students who have learn culture through cultural content taught by the teacher will more easily understand a text that they read's in teaching reading comprehension. In addition, by teaching cultural content in reading comprehension learning, teacher will increase student's motivation about awareness of other cultures. From interviews conducted by researchers, it was found that teachers have realized that



culture is one of the keys or important things for support student success in learn languages, especially English as a foreign language, and in learning reading comprehension. Cultural content can motivate students in the learning process as well as helping students observe the similarities and differences exist among various cultural groups. The teachers have realized that a student's who already has previous cultural background knowledge is easier to understand texts or more receptive to learning than students who do not previously have cultural background knowledge.

Teachers also have full awareness of the positive influence of cultural content on teaching reading comprehension. It will help students better understand the texts they read because previous students already have knowledge of the texts they read and the

knowledge of the teachers taught in class. Teachers also give positive feedback and support the learning of cultural content in teaching reading comprehension.

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher would like to give some suggestions for other researchers; they can use this research paper as the reference to conduct the related research. Besides, can use another method in collecting data such as the questionnaire for the students to get more information. For students must have and increase awareness of the importance of cultural learning especially cultural content in learning English and teaching reading comprehension to improve and make it easier for students to understand a text. Besides making it easier for students to communicate well, correctly and acceptably with others.

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