



Lecturers' Attitude in Teaching Foreign Cultural Values in English Language Classroom: Balancing Global Perspectives and Local Identity

Rianny Puspitasari¹, Anit Pranita Devi², Shafira Anastasya Dewi³
rianny@unsap.ac.id¹, anit.pd@unsap.ac.id², shafiraanastasya4@gmail.com³

^{1,2,3}Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Sebelas April, Sumedang, West Java

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore lecturers' attitudes and the challenges faced in teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning. This research employed descriptive qualitative and hermeneutic phenomenological designs in which the research instruments used were documentation, observation, and interview. This research involved lecturers of the English Literature study program of one private university in Indonesia. The results of the data analysis showed that the lecturers' attitudes towards teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning varied. However, in general, the majority of lecturers realize the importance of integrating foreign cultural values (in this case English culture) as part of English language teaching and choose to modify materials about conflicting English cultural values. They argued that providing information about foreign cultural values that conflict with local culture is still important, but it should be accompanied by reinforcement that these values do not follow Indonesian culture. The challenges reported by the lecturers included the difficulty of finding sufficiently representative and up-to-date reference sources, the use of authentic materials that require lecturers to deliver content that contains negative cultural values or is contrary to local culture, and the strengthening of national values and local culture so that students are not easily exposed to foreign cultural values. From the student side, the challenges were the lack of motivation, learning ethos, and English skills when understanding English-language reference sources. Future researchers are advised to expand the study of the impact of using authentic materials containing foreign cultural values on student perceptions and attitudes.

Keywords: *attitude; teaching foreign culture; EFL classroom; national identity*

Introduction

Lecturers play an important role in an educational process, in addition to students and teaching materials. Their contributions are essential in facilitating the teaching-learning process in the classroom. They are responsible for delivering and directing students to achieve the objectives of a lesson. Lecturers with good competence are able to carry out the learning process so that learning objectives that have been determined in the lesson plan can be achieved effectively (Adya Winata et al., 2020).

Furthermore, teacher competence includes pedagogical, personal, social, and professional dimensions learned through professional education, as stated in Law Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, Article 10, Paragraph 1. As professional educators, teachers or lecturers need to master the field of study taught (disciplinary content) and various knowledge related to learning approaches (pedagogical content), which the latest developments in science and technology should continuously develop. Mastery of these two areas will develop a nurturant effect, namely personal and social competence, which supports professional competence and pedagogical competence (Ratminingsih, 2015).

However, in the context of foreign language classrooms, foreign language lecturers face a particular dilemma. On the one hand, the task of foreign language lecturers is to bring students to an understanding of cultures outside themselves, by learning habits, values, and beliefs, which means distancing learners from the character of the Indonesian nation. However, the lecturers also have a responsibility to promote Indonesian cultural heritage, ensuring that their students maintain a strong sense of national identity that distinguishes them as citizens of Indonesia.

Moreover, there is a close relationship between culture and language since both influences how speakers interact and communicate. The culture manifests itself through language (De Giosa, 2009). One's identity will be formed through interaction with language and culture. The two are inseparable. Cultural identity will be formed through the language ((Hamidi & Belkaid, 2023), as well as the way of thinking and attitude toward life. Thus, even foreign language acquisition can directly or indirectly shape a person's cultural identity and way of thinking.

In the context of language learning, learning cultural values cannot be separated (Dewi et al., 2020; Mazlina & Azlina, 2019; Mukti et al., 2020; Syairi, 2013). Culture is part of language, and language is part of culture (Brown, 2007). Although language and culture are two different fields, they have a close relationship and influence each other (Kuo & Lai, 2006). However, there is a concern that foreign language learning will distance students from their identity as Indonesians. Furthermore, some worry that through foreign language learning, 'cultural colonization' occurs in the name of globalization and modernization (Santoso, 2014).

In this regard, in foreign language learning there is an emphasis on the need to place a greater portion on the source culture than the target culture. Everyone perceives the world in their native language which means that it will be very easy for learners to learn the target language by using authentic materials derived from the source culture. This view considers that emphasizing the target culture may threaten the original culture and further there will be a tendency for learners to follow the target culture and forget the source culture (Cakır, 2006). On the contrary, some explain that the target culture should be explored and integrated more for foreign language learners because it will improve communicative competence in foreign language learning (Turkan & Çelik, 2007).

As a result, lecturers face obstacles in deciding which content between source culture and foreign culture to emphasize in learning. Emphasizing source culture content can strengthen students' cultural identity and reduce cultural ego among students, even lecturers themselves. However, focusing on source culture content does not help students to openly accept cultural differences, which in the current era of globalization is very influential. On the other hand, emphasizing foreign cultural content in learning provides intercultural understanding and can improve foreign language competence.

A number of existing studies have mostly discussed the relationship between culture and language teaching for instance how cultural aspects and multicultural education play a role in foreign language teaching (Prayoga et al., 2018; Suyitno, 2017). Additionally, the importance of polyculturalism in foreign language learning in higher education is also highlighted (Chaika, 2021). Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, Munandar & Newton (2021) investigated Indonesian teacher's pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices regarding culture and interculturality particularly among senior and vocational high school teachers in Indonesia.

Further, Fatmawati discussed how EFL instruction can be a strategy to preserve local culture in which the EFL teacher needs to provide cultural appropriation in their instruction (2021). On the other hand, Santoso view that foreign language learning has the potential to become an opportunity for hegemony (Santoso, 2014). With regards to lecturers' perspective in teaching foreign cultural values in EFL classroom, Tu and Duy (2024) have conducted research in Vietnamese context with the focus on their views about students' development of interpersonal skills, cultural openness and adaptability. Based on the review of the latest previous studies, it can be considered that there has been limited focus on how Indonesian lecturers' approach foreign cultural values in the EFL classroom. Therefore, this research is intended to fill the gap. It is important to explore how Indonesian lecturers face challenges in balancing local culture preservation with introducing foreign cultural values especially in EFL classroom.

Therefore, based on the background above, this research has two main objectives, namely to find out lecturers' attitude in teaching foreign cultural values in English language teaching, and to analyze challenges the lecturers encounter in English language teaching and the content of cultural values in it. The results of this study are expected to make a positive contribution to the English language learning process and to be a source of reference for English lecturers in Indonesia in developing their teaching, especially when dealing with foreign cultural values.

Method

This research is categorized as descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative research is used to describe a phenomenon (Guillen, 2019), in the context of this research, which is the attitude of lecturers in teaching foreign cultural values in English language classrooms. This research can also be categorized as a hermeneutic phenomenological study because this research aims to interpret and identify the attitudes and experiences of the research subjects. This is in line with the purpose of hermeneutic phenomenological studies (Kafle, 2013; Kendrick, 2018; Yin, 2003). The subjects of this research are eight lecturers at an English Literature study program at a private university in Indonesia. Specifically, the participants were selected based on their teaching experience. They have at least five-year teaching experience and have sufficient exposure to teaching cultural content in EFL classroom. In addition, they voluntarily agreed to take part in this study and they are willing to share their perspectives and

experiences.

In this study, several research instruments were used to increase the validity of the research (Cohen et al., 2017). The research instruments used were documentation of the lesson plans, observations, and interviews. Documentation and observation were employed to obtain data regarding the attitude of lecturers in teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning as a whole. Documentation of the lesson plans provides evidences on how the lecturers structure the lesson and integrate the foreign cultural contents in the instruction. Further, the observations were intended to investigate how the lecturers implement the lesson plans they have prepared and how they approach the teaching of foreign cultural values.

Meanwhile, interviews were conducted to find out deeper insights of the lecturers regarding their approach on and challenges faced in teaching foreign cultural contents in the teaching-learning process. By combining research instruments (triangulation), the risk of limited data obtained will be reduced and the validity of the research results will increase (Alwasilah, 2000; Guillen, 2019). The data collected from each instrument were analyzed to answer the research questions. The data analysis techniques covered: data reduction which involved sorting and organizing the data from all the instruments and relating it to the objectives, data categorization which involved categories of the lecturers' attitude and the challenges they faced, data display in which all the data were displayed in tables based on their categories; and data interpretation which involved connecting the results and interpreting them based on relevant theories.

Result

This study aims to analyze lecturers' attitudes towards teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning and identify the challenges faced during the process of learning English that contains foreign cultural values. The lecturers' attitudes towards teaching foreign cultural values include promoting foreign cultural values, emphasizing local culture in foreign language learning, or balancing target culture with source or local culture (Agniyoto, 2015). The research instruments used were documentation of the syllabus, lesson observations, and interviews. After all the data were collected through the three instruments, the findings were analyzed to answer the research questions that had been formulated earlier.

Lecturers' Attitude in Teaching Foreign Cultural Values

The results of the analysis of syllabus documents, lesson observations, and lecturer interviews show that lecturers' attitudes toward teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning vary. However, in general, all of the eight respondents realize the importance of integrating foreign cultural values (in this case English culture) as part of English language teaching. They consider that language teaching cannot be separated from culture because language and culture are interrelated with each other and the majority of lecturers also mentioned that language is part of language. This is in line with the statement that language learning cannot be separated from teaching cultural values (Brown, 2007; Dewi et al., 2020; Syairi, 2013).

From the analysis of the syllabus documents, it can be seen that the majority of lecturers include elements of foreign culture in the course learning materials. Specifically, of the twelve courses, ten lesson plan documents infuse the elements of cultural contents. The lesson plan (syllabus) documents show that the courses teaching does not only focus on linguistic aspects, such as grammar and language skills but also includes contextual cultural values related to the use of the language. Two lecturers, for example, use topics in the learning materials that relate to the customs and traditions of native English-speaking communities, such as history, education system, and daily habits. Specifically, these topics were used in culture specific courses like *British History* and *Survey of British Society and Culture* courses and infused in the instruction as the main topics covered along the semester. As for the question of whether teaching foreign cultural values can threaten students' identity, six out of eight lecturers consider that it largely depends on the individual learner. They argue that there is a possibility that the foreign culture threatens students' identity if they mis-position themselves internalize the foreign culture themselves and adopt the Western value system if not guided properly by the lecturers.

Furthermore, this study also explores lecturers' attitudes regarding English learning materials that contradict Indonesian cultural values. The results of the data analysis show that all lecturers chose to modify the materials about conflicting English cultural values. They argued that providing information about foreign cultural values that conflict with local culture is still important but it should be accompanied by reinforcement that these values are not in accordance with

Indonesian culture. In this way, students can understand foreign cultures without having to accept them at face value.

Identified Challenges in Teaching Foreign Cultural Values

The interview results showed that there were several challenges experienced by the lecturers in teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning. In addition, there were also challenges from the students' side that were reported by the lecturers in the interviews. The first challenges faced by lecturers include the search for reference sources that are sufficiently representative and up to date. In addition to these challenges, another challenge faced by the lecturers is that they need some time to review learning materials related to cultural content before being delivered to students because there may be differences in cultural values or word meanings from this English culture. Related to the delivery of material, there are challenges faced by lecturers, especially when using authentic materials where lecturers must deliver material or content that contains negative cultural values or is contrary to local culture, for example, content related to sexuality. Next is the challenge of providing understanding and strengthening national values and local culture, so that the students are not easily exposed to foreign cultural values. This is also related to the fear felt by lecturers that teaching foreign cultural values will erode or threaten student identity.

The challenges that arise from the student side, which were also mentioned by several lecturers in the interviews, include the lack of motivation and learning ethos of students, which is usually seen from the lack of enthusiasm for reading. This can be a serious obstacle, especially in the learning process related to foreign cultural values. If students are reluctant to read many sources to learn about foreign cultures, then their knowledge and insight will be limited. Another challenge mentioned by lecturers in the interview is when lecturers have to use English reference sources while students' English skills are still lacking. This can certainly hinder students from understanding the reference sources.

Table 1. Challenges in Teaching Foreign Cultural Values

No.	Side	Challenge
1	Lecturer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finding out representative and up-to-date references• Time needed to review potential differences in the

		cultural materials in values or meaning
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of negative cultural value esp. related to sexuality • Strengthening national or local values when teaching foreign cultural values
2	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of motivation and learning ethos of students • Low English proficiency skills

Discussions

In the study program curriculum document in the graduate profile achievement points, there are listed graduate achievements in the attitudinal aspect at point (d) it is stated that students are able to act as citizens who are proud and love the country, have nationalism and a sense of responsibility to the state and nation and in point (e) it is stated that students are able to appreciate the diversity of cultures, views, religions, and beliefs, as well as the original opinions or findings of others. This shows that the study program encourages students to maintain their love for the country and nation, but on the other hand, they are also open to diverse foreign cultures and appreciate them. Therefore, this provision becomes a guideline for lecturers in teaching foreign cultural values as a form of appreciation for cultural diversity but still maintaining students' love for the nation and state.

Teaching Foreign Cultural Values

Although language and culture are two different fields, they have a close relationship and influence each other (Kuo, 2006). Based on this view, some lecturers consistently integrate elements of foreign culture in the learning process to help students understand the context of cross-cultural communication, especially for lecturers who teach courses that are thick with cultural content such as *Survey of British Society and Culture*, *British History*, *Translating Specific English Text*, and *Subtitling* courses. Courses such as *Survey of British Society and Culture* and *British History* are very close to the content of cultural values because they are the main material according to the name of the course which explicitly mentions the word culture. *Translating Specific English Text* and *Subtitling* courses are indirectly related to cultural values because students must understand the cultural

context to accurately translate texts from English to Indonesian or vice versa.

From the analysis of the documents, it can be seen that the majority of lecturers include elements of foreign culture in the course learning materials. However, from a total of 9 (nine) lesson plans, three (3) lesson plans do not contain foreign cultural values in the lesson because these courses are not directly related to foreign cultural content, especially in courses that focus more on linguistic skills, for example *Responding and Inferring*, *Essay Writing*, and *Speaking for Professional Purposes* courses. Nevertheless, in practice, during classroom observations, six lecturers continued to integrate and link learning materials with foreign cultural values even though it was not formally stated in the lesson plan document. This indicates that the lecturers realize the importance of integrating foreign cultural values into English language learning. This is also echoing Chaika (2021) that acknowledging other culture's differences is essential to open students' minds and to foster their cultural identity.

Moreover, in terms of the threat to students' identity through the teaching of foreign cultural values, most lecturers assumed that it depends on the individual learners. It is possible when the student's mis-position and internalize the foreign culture themselves and adopt the Western value system. This was revealed from the statement of one of the lecturers in the interview:

"If someone studies abroad, speaks fluent English, understands the cultural context, internalizes the foreign cultural values, then adopts the Western value system, it will shift the understanding of the local culture".

This concern is in line with what Santoso stated that some are concerned that through foreign language learning, "cultural colonization" occurs in the name of globalization and modernization (Santoso, 2014). This is also related to the results of Munandar's & Newton's (2021) study that teachers view that EFL learning as 'oppositional' to students' cultural or religious identity.

However, there is also a possibility that the teaching of foreign cultural values will not threaten students' identity if they are able to position themselves as learners and their local culture is strong and dominant when interacting with native speakers. This is in accordance with what one of the lecturers said in the interview:

“It will not threaten identity if the context is in teaching and learning activities only. Local culture is eroded not because of foreign learning but due to weak strengthening of local culture.”

This statement is in line with Nahak's statement which explains the lack of interest of the younger generation in preserving local culture so that the prestige of local culture has decreased when compared to foreign cultures (Nahak, 2019). Therefore, foreign language learning, in this context is English, will not threaten students' identity if they still hold local cultural values and there is a commitment and effort made consistently to preserve these local cultural values. From both perspectives, it confirms what Hamidi and Belkaid affirm that language is a part of identity (Hamidi & Belkaid, 2023).

In addition, this study also discusses lecturers' attitudes regarding English language learning materials that conflict with Indonesian cultural values. In this case, lecturers face a dilemma: whether to teach foreign culture as it is, to improve students' communication competence, or not to teach materials that are considered contrary to local culture. There are several approaches that lecturers can take. First, lecturers can teach the material in accordance with native cultural values, with the aim that students better understand the target culture and are able to interact more effectively with native English speakers. This approach is in line with a view that emphasizes the importance of integrating the target culture into foreign language learning (Turkan & Çelik, 2007). Another option is to ignore or even not deliver materials that contain values that are contrary to the local culture for fear that this will disturb students' identity. The third alternative is to modify the learning materials, where the lecturer still teaches the foreign cultural values by giving an explanation that some of the values taught are not in accordance with Indonesian norms and culture or by integrating local culture in the explanation. Thus, students still get insights into foreign cultures but are not influenced to adopt values that are contrary to their identity.

The results showed that all lecturers chose to modify the material that conflicted with local cultural values. Most lecturers assume that students are mature learners who are able to think critically. Students are considered to be able to determine the cultural differences themselves without losing their identity.

However, in this case, lecturers still play an important role in directing students to think critically, especially when faced with cultures that contain values that are contrary to Indonesian culture. This view is in line with the theory of cross-cultural understanding presented by Kramersch, which states that language learning must include an understanding of both the target culture and the source culture (Kramersch, 2019). The goal is for students to be open-minded to foreign cultures, but still maintain their own cultural identity.

In addition, classroom observations showed that lecturers' approaches to teaching foreign cultural values varied. Some lecturers constantly integrate foreign cultural values into learning, especially in courses that specifically discuss British culture. However, there were also interesting findings where some lecturers chose not to discuss certain cultural values, especially those related to sexual content. For example, in the *Translating Specific English Text* course, when students were given an assignment to translate a song and the lyrics contained sexual lyrics, the lecturer chose not to discuss it. This is because the topic is considered taboo and violates Indonesian cultural norms, so the lecturer feels no need to discuss it in depth. In addition, the lecturer thought that the content did not need to be discussed further because it was irrelevant to the focus of the material at that time, namely translation strategies.

This approach reflects the lecturer's sensitivity to local cultural norms, as well as showing that teaching foreign cultural values is always done by considering the local cultural context of the students. Furthermore, the lecturers can sort out foreign cultural content based on the learning needs. If it is not relevant to the lesson objectives, foreign cultural content, especially those that conflict with local culture, does not need to be conveyed too far. Apart from being irrelevant, this will take up learning time that should be used to discuss more important material according to the course objectives.

Several Challenges Faced in Teaching Foreign Cultural Values

One of the challenges faced by the lecturers is finding sufficiently representative and up-to-date reference materials. For example, the lecturer who taught the course *Survey of British Society and Culture* recognized that the textbook used as a reference in the course was a quite old publication and therefore not necessarily in line with the cultural values of British society today. The lecturer reported that there are no books that comprehensively cover the topics used in the

course yet. This is an obstacle for the lecturer to convey the target culture authentically. However, she also mentioned the solution for this was to use more up-to-date supplementary materials from other media, such as videos from YouTube.

Moreover, another issue is potential differences in cultural values and word meanings between the local and the Western cultures. The lecturer gave an example of the concept of greetings in the context of British culture, where good morning is usually said until 11 o'clock, but in Indonesian culture, 11 o'clock marks the beginning of noon. This is in line with Setyaji's findings that there are differences in the meaning of concepts in English and foreign cultures (Setyaji, 2014). To communicate material like this more clearly and not cause cultural misunderstanding, lecturers should first learn the cultural content well before delivering it to students.

Conclusion

From the results of the research, it can be concluded that lecturers' attitudes towards teaching foreign cultural values in English language learning vary, but the majority of lecturers realize the importance of integrating these values as part of teaching. The lecturers generally choose to modify foreign cultural materials that conflict with local culture, by still providing related information but emphasizing that these values are not in line with Indonesian culture. The main challenges faced by the lecturers include the difficulty of finding representative and up-to-date references, the use of authentic materials that contain negative cultural values, and efforts to provide a balanced understanding between foreign cultural values and strengthening national values. From the student side, the challenges include low motivation and limited English language skills when understanding English references. This research emphasizes the importance of better pedagogical strategies in integrating foreign cultural values into English language learning without sacrificing local cultural identity, as well as the need for increased resources and more representative and relevant teaching methods. Limitations of this study include the limited scope of one study program in one university and the lack of student perspectives. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers expand the scope of respondents and examine further the use of authentic materials containing foreign cultural values on students' perceptions and attitudes.

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