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The Correlation Between Local Cultural and Students' Negative Attitude in Rural English Classroom

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Abstract. Students' low quality in English subjects at the Senior High School level in Indonesia especially in rural areas proves that there are still problems that hinder the English learning process. The issues that inhibit English classrooms are the local cultural context and students' negative attitudes. This study aims to describe the correlation between students' and teachers' experiences in dealing with those aspects in ELT classrooms in rural areas. The qualitative approach and the case study were used in the study with the interview and observation as the instruments of the research. The participants were 26 students, and 3 teachers of SMA Negeri Benlutu So'e - East Nusa Tenggara. The study results indicated that students and teachers found it difficult to learn English in rural areas since there was a strong correlation between the local cultural influences and students' negative attitudes in ELT classrooms. This can be seen from the results that the rural environment left the students behind in their English education background and lack of learning resources and facilities. The local cultural factor affected the student's ability to use the local language more often. Besides that, students' negative attitudes also caused them students not motivated to participate in English class. The study concluded that the schools and governments should review their policies in applying English learning in rural schools. It is expected that teachers and students can get the solution to avoid the problems in learning English to achieve the main goal of learning.

Key words: *local culture, negative attitude, rural area.*

1. Introduction

English as an international language has become a part of the curriculum in Indonesia. The importance of English has made English as a mandatory subject at almost every level in schools, from the lowest level in kindergarten to college level. Since English become a required subject in Indonesia, the government views this as a necessary skill for students' present and future needs, so it is needed to require all the skills in English such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, (Fithrotunnisa, et al, 2023). English is a foreign language in Indonesia as a result students who enrolled in Elementary, Junior, and Senior High Schools as well as college students may experience a variety of experiences learning English in the classroom. For example, the pronunciation, the meaning of a term that changes depending on the sentence's context, the many grammatical structures, and the verb usage which constantly changes depending on the incident's timing all demonstrate the foreignness of the text. The aforementioned factors will make learning English challenging. Furthermore, even after students have studied English for a long time, mastering the language in some Indonesian schools has not yielded very positive results, especially for schools in rural areas. When students are asked to talk in English, they students

still find it difficult to do so because of the lack of vocabulary or have only learned a small portion of the language. This does not match the length of time kids have to learn English.

The fact that the learning processes in the classroom are intended as a process towards developmental changes in learning activities, it occurs for the wish to make a change in students' self-learners in the form of knowledge, skills, or attitudes and behavior performed with the interaction between learners with teachers in a learning environment. However, in learning English some factors caused the process of English teaching-learning process in rural environments to not go well. Those aspects are the local cultural context and students' negative attitudes. The first factor that inhibits the English teaching-learning process is the local cultural context which is related to Indonesian students' custom. (Sudartini, 2012) describes local culture as the manifestation of society's personality which is reflected in the orientation of the society's ways of life and beliefs that are commonly used to see and face the outside world manifested in their daily behaviors. The reality in East Nusa Tenggara shows that people are commonly friendly and polite to one another, especially toward older people. This can be seen in the attitude of students who are always polite and obedient to their teacher. However, such obedience habits cause students to be afraid to ask questions or express opinions to teachers in the teaching and learning process. As a result, students tend to be passive. The same idea comes from (Setiono, 2004) in (Masduqi, 2014) argues that it is not easy to expect the students to openly challenge and criticize their teacher's opinions. They might feel uncomfortable to disagree with their teacher or feel uneasy to talk about controversial matters.

The other issue related to the local culture is the use of local languages. When talking about the language it means talking about culture as well. However, when it comes to the English teaching-learning process, the use of local languages can have a negative influence on the student's progress in learning English. Take for example, in learning English, if the students use more the local language in their daily English class then the way the students will pronounce the English words will be affected by the local language accent or dialect. As a result, the student can mispronounce the English words. Besides that, the use of the local language will also require teachers and students to translate the material into *Bahasa* first where the excessive Indonesian language usage will make the students not practice English in the classroom so their ability to speak English will not improve. It is in line with the perspective from (Atkinson 1987:246 as cited in (Agustin, et al, 2015) that overuse of the mother tongue is dangerous. Too much employment of students' native language can cause some problems for both teachers and students. When L1 is used more than needed, it may cause dependence on linguistic transfer, failure in observing L2 equivalence, oversimplification in translation, and reluctance to speak English even when they can.

The previous problem is related to the student's negative attitude which also became one of the problems in the English teaching-learning process. (Telaumbanua, 2023) mentioned that a negative attitude can limit and even prevent learning, growth, and positive transformation. Adverse mindsets can hinder the process of acquiring a language. Student personalities in rural areas that tend to be shy have a very negative influence in the classroom. This can be seen where there is no participation in teaching and learning English between teacher and students or student to student. According to (Exley in Suryanto,2014), Indonesian students are culturally passive, silent, and shy in class. They tend not to participate in the class activities although they are asked

by the teacher to take part. In this respect, a question may be raised whether these behaviors are culturally embedded characteristics or only the impacts of a lack of English language skills.

(Hosain,2016) did a study about problems in English language teaching in the rural area. This study investigated 300 secondary-level students, 30 English subject teachers, and 50 parents as well as other documentary evidence to get to know the actual picture of the rural area of English achievement at secondary level schools. Also, it investigated the factors affecting students' performance in the English language in rural areas. Here, the result mentioned that many factors contribute to the differences in performance in the English language between students in rural and urban areas. Such as family factors, financial factors, logistic support, and less qualified teachers which made the teacher not teach the students in proper teaching method and caused the students not interest to learn English. (Restunintyas, 2019) investigated how passive learners learn from active learners to avoid speaking anxiety. Interviews were conducted with six active and six passive Salatiga vocational high school students who had previously experienced anxiety when speaking English. The results showed that speaking anxiety in foreign language learning was caused by distinct common reasons and strategies for active and passive learners. The results made clear that the effective tactics that active learners possessed such as a positive attitude toward English, avoiding making direct eye contact with others, and engaging in relaxation could benefit passive learners. Some things distinguish this study from the previous studies that can be used as the research novelty. In the first study, the researcher has established the focus of the research scope which is the problem that occurred in rural areas. Here the previous researcher wants to know whether there will be any problems or not that cause English education outcomes to be low in rural areas. In this research, the researcher has listed the rural area as one of the problems that cause the English teaching-learning process not to run well for the students and teachers. For the second study, the previous research wants to see the differences in learning strategies between active students and passive students in learning English In this research the researcher will see how the correlation between the local cultural context affects the students' negative attitude in connection to the rural environment. To sum up, the novelty of the research is to see how the relationship exists between the local cultural background and the students' negative attitudes in the rural environment while learning English.

2. Methods

This research utilized a qualitative approach and a case study design to gather data on English teaching-learning processes in a rural area. The study used an interview guide and field observation checklist to collect data, with structured interviews conducted to understand the inhibition aspects of English teaching-learning processes. Field observations were conducted to observe the behavior and actions of English teachers and students in the classroom.

Data collection procedures involved meeting the headmaster, conducting interviews, and recording the responses. The researcher analyzed the data qualitatively, transcribed the data, and categorized the results based on the participants' opinions. Classroom observations were conducted to observe how teachers taught and students interacted with one another. The data was then analyzed using a content analysis method, which included transcription, rereading, classification, and interpretation. The observation checklist result was listed based on facts in the

field to complete missing data and complement the interview results. The data collected were collected by observing the classroom environment and focusing on the target of the research.

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1 Finding

In the part of findings from students' and teachers' perspective, there is a relation between local cultural context and students' negative attitude as a barrier for students and teachers in learning English. It is questioned in purpose that students and teachers can provide answers so that they can discover whether the five things are related or give a cause and effect or not in the English teaching-learning process. The question is "*In your opinion how does the correlation between rural environment, local cultural context, and students' negative attitude influence the English teaching and learning process?*"

From the interview results, most of the students and teachers answered that the rural environment, local cultural context, and students' negative attitudes do correlate to influencing their English teaching-learning process. One of the students' responses can be seen in the section below.

(1) In my opinion, there is a correlation between those things. I can see the correlation of the rural environment which has had effects on the lack of supporting facilities which caused us less knowledge about English from the beginning of our education and made us not understand anything about English. The rural environment is also related to the local cultural context where people in the village tend to use local languages in daily communication. This habit is carried to schools where we stay to speak the local language even though we are learning English. So it causes our speaking quality to still be very low. This made it very difficult to learn English in class because when the teacher explained to us in English I did not understand at all, except she translated again into Indonesian or the local language. This is the problem that makes me not very fond of learning English. I rarely speak English in class because I am not confident. Maybe this negative attitude makes the teacher difficulty in teaching about preparing the proper material for us. Maybe that's what makes us just always taught to read text no other thing. And she always encourages us to keep trying and studying at home. (Student 1)

The same opinion was also proposed by the teachers which was quite the same as the students' reaction that they all agree that those inhibit aspects are related to one another in influencing the English teaching-learning process. One of the teacher's answers is presented below.

(2) In my opinion the relationship between those aspects here is the rural environment greatly affects the students and our teachings in the learning process, because the students in rural environments are very low in their English ability and are also affected by the local cultural context, where the students are more hold on their local culture from home where they must behave to be polite, always feel embarrassed to talk to others and it makes the students have passive attitude. (Teacher 2)

From the results obtained above, it can be concluded that the local culture and students' negative attitudes are related to one another in obstructing the students from learning English. As seen in the sample answers above, most of the students mentioned that the rural environment harms the students' English background. They said so because the school site in the rural

environment makes the students almost left out of English education. The reason is from their early education, they rarely get English lessons in class. This happened because of a lack of teachers who did not want to teach in the village. Besides that, the minimum support facilities to study English are also still a major problem for students such as books, dictionaries, language lab, and school distance that is far from home often makes students lazy to go to school. The rural environment also impacts the students' language use which is related to the local cultural context. Because the students are staying in the village, they are accustomed to speak in the local language. These habits cause problems for them to continue to use the local language even though they learn English in class. Therefore their English skills are hard to improve because the local language influences them in their speaking ability. The other thing that is influenced by the rural environment is the student's attitude toward learning English. Since they have less English background, the students tend to show a negative attitude in learning English. Such as being unmotivated, passive in class discussions, feeling afraid and shy to speak English, speak more local languages in class discussions. All of these problems ultimately affect teachers' professional competence and pedagogical competence. This happened because according to the teachers' results, the teachers have difficulty in preparing materials and teaching them because of the students' limitations in English. This is due because of the things mentioned by the students such as the influence of the rural environment which caused the students to have low English ability. The local cultural context where the students tend to speak with local language and not English, and the influence of students' negative attitudes that always look unmotivated in learning English and it gives an impact on the teachers' professional competence and pedagogical competence. Not only that but also it affects the teachers' ability to teach because of the student's constrained negative attitudes in class and also their teaching skills where they rarely develop their teaching skills.

3.2 Discussion

Since language is one part of the culture, therefore it is never detached from any language learning as well as learning English. A local language is a part of the culture in its region, but its presence in a foreign language learning environment will badly affect the development of the learner itself. Such as the results obtained in the problems caused by local culture, both students and teachers mentioned that local language as a local culture greatly provides significant problems in their English learning. Students said that the local language prevented them from understanding English well. Students found it difficult if in learning the teachers use English continuously and do not translate into *Bahasa* or the local language. Not only that, but the use of the local language also had negative effects on their English pronunciation and made them misinterpret the English words from the local language. The same problem also found by Manrique (2013) mentioned that the most common problems that are caused by students in using the local language are mispronunciation and grammatical errors between the mother tongue and the target language. The teachers also said that the students would look confused if they explained the materials without explaining and giving examples in the local language or *Bahasa*. This happens because the students are accustomed to using the local language and do not practice speaking English.

Not only that but the students' character that is still strongly bound to the local culture causes them to become shy person and passive students. This caused them to tend to be passive

in class and afraid to interact with teachers and students too. Therefore the teachers always need to encourage the students to dare to speak English without relying on the local language and shame culture.

The data found that there are still many students' negative attitudes that have a bad impact on both students and teachers in the English learning process. The common students' negative attitude that is often shown is students' low interest in learning English. Even though the students mentioned that their interest feeling toward English is important they still did not show it while they were learning English. This resulted in them being unmotivated to learn English and the teachers had to go the extra to encourage them to learn. Ahmad, Abdullah and Ghani (2014) stated that students' negative and low motivation to learn English can cause students weak in English, which will make the student education quality low. The teachers mentioned that in the learning classes, students always tend to be quiet and do not want to participate. Here, the students' self-confidence is the one main reason why they felt afraid to speak. They fear that their friends will laugh at them if they make a mistake. Mistakes here are when they may pronounce a vocabulary incorrectly to make correct sentences in English.

Lastly, this final part of the discussion talked about whether there is any relationship between the local cultural context and students' negative in influencing the English teaching and learning process in rural areas. From the results of both students and teachers, there are common opinions that those aspects have a related relationship in influencing in the English teaching and learning process. They said that the school environment in the rural environment has a huge impact on students and teachers. The rural environment makes the students retarded in terms of education so their English skills become very low. This makes teachers difficult to teach students. Not only that, the use of the local language as one of the local cultures greatly harms students and teachers in learning English. Students who are used to speaking the local language always find it difficult to speak or understand English. Besides that while the teachers have to explain the materials, they have to translate it so that the students understand, otherwise, they will not understand anything. This is very detrimental because by doing that, the teacher lets the students get used to the local language or *Bahasa* and it will improve their English skills.

Besides making the students accustomed to using the local language, the rural environment life also affects the students' nature of learning English. It makes the students have a shy personality and fearful attitude to interact in class. This is what makes the student's negative attitude rise in learning English. Students seem to be silent in the discussion and always feel hesitant when the teacher asks them to answer questions. Therefore teachers always encourage them to participate even if they make mistakes to build their confidence. The observation result shows that the teachers' motivation managed to make students participate in class while trying to answer questions. However, when the teachers give the motivation to students, they still do it the hard way such as scolding or by warning them.

4. Conclusion

From the results of this study, it is concluded that the local cultural context and students' negative attitudes do correlate with the English teaching-learning process in rural classroom environments. The students' English competence is still below standard for Senior High School students becomes an obstacle for both teachers and students too. The reason is that the students

do not get enough English lessons since in the beginning of their education. As a result, the teachers have difficulty adapting the materials that match their English ability. Not only the English language skills but also the use of the local language, lack of supporting facilities, and far school distance also caused the English teaching-learning process not to work properly. The local language use habits make the students only understand the materials if the teacher translates them into *Bahasa* or the local language. The presence of local language as part of local culture makes the students accustomed to using local language in their daily conversations even in class. As happens in factors that discourage students and teachers in rural settings, the local language prevents them from understanding English well. Students find it difficult to understand the teacher's explanation in English and always assisted the teacher in translating the material into *Bahasa* or local language. Teachers also get used to always translating the material for the students so that students are accustomed and not trying to train themselves to speak English.

The conclusion that can be drawn from how students' negative attitudes inhibit the English teaching-learning process is there are still some negative attitudes that harm their English-learning process. Some of the students' negative attitudes which are often shown in learning English are students' low motivation, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes in the learning process. Therefore, teachers have to go the extra to encourage them such as providing the right support so that students can improve their English skills.

The last conclusion is about whether there is a relationship between the rural environment, the local cultural context, and students' negative attitudes. Based on all the findings this can be concluded that all of these aspects do have a casual relationship in the English teaching-learning process. The relationship can be seen in the rural environment that makes students left behind in terms of English education and also makes them accustomed to using the local language as one of the local cultures. Not only that, but the rural environment life also affects the students' attitude in learning English. It makes students have a shame culture and fear feeling to interacting in the classroom. This is what makes the students' negative attitudes increase in learning English.

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