

# Integrating Maluku Local Wisdom as English Teaching Material to Build Students' Character in Globalization Era

Natalia Manuhutu\*, Abdurrachman Faridi, Frimadhona Syafri, Zulfa Sakhiyya

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [natalia27manuhutu@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:natalia27manuhutu@students.unnes.ac.id)

**Abstract.** Integrated teaching with cultural content has become an interesting issue. However, academic circles have not received much attention regarding the integration of Maluku's local wisdom in teaching English. Education offers students the best opportunity to get in touch with foreign cultures. However, teaching a foreign language is challenging because teachers not only teach vocabulary and grammar, but teachers also need to teach students how and when to use that language. In other words, learning a language also involves learning about culture. It is important to realize that teaching materials must balance the culture of the target language. It would be useful if it could be used in situations where language is required. One of the things in teaching English that must be considered is material that is relevant to the cultural background of our students because that will make the learning process more meaningful. This paper offers a description of 'papeda' as one of Maluku's local wisdom that can be used as teaching material to build students' character with the principles and moral values from their culture that will prepare them to face the era of globalization. It ends with practical examples and technical guidelines for integrating Maluku's local wisdom into English teaching materials.

**Keywords:** Maluku local wisdom; English teaching material; character building

## INTRODUCTION

Character building has become an important issue in the curriculum at various levels, especially in developing students' competencies to overcome problems in everyday life and carry out their roles in the future (Chang & Munoz, 2006). Character building for students is education on basic values and behavior (Niewolny & Wilson, 2009). Education should produce a generation of professionals and quality citizens, that is, not only a generation that has knowledge but also a willingness to continue learning as well as personal abilities and values (Wilson & Cervero, 2010). Agree with some of these experts, Prayitno (2009) revealed that character education has an essence and meaning that is more or less the same as moral education, and moral education intends to form a child's personality to become a good human being, to become a citizen or a good citizen. Romainum (2016) adds that character education is education that instills and develops noble characters in students, so that they have these noble characters, apply and practice them in their daily lives, so that it can be said that character education is one of the solutions to overcoming moral decline, especially among adolescents (Pantu & Buhari, 2014; Neina et.al, 2015).

The globalization era has contributed to the decline of Indonesia's cultural identity (Mubah,

2011) and the degradation of nationalistic values in the younger generation (Suryono, 2008). In addition, it may result in inappropriate behavior because there are not any learning resources based on local wisdom or tradition (Lonto, 2015). Students need to be taught and given opportunities to improve their character. It can be argued that character-building is crucial for creating professionals (Putri, 2011) because character education in this situation helps students develop their ability to perform well, as a means of improving character, and as a filter for incoming cultures, both local and foreign, that are in contradiction with national or character values (Dwinuryati, 2017).

Therefore, in situations like this, teachers must be creative and develop lesson plans that are relevant to the student's cultural backgrounds and personalities. Teachers must be aware of the strong link between culture and how kids think and learn. Incorporating students' cultural backgrounds aims to increase participants' understanding of their cultural identities and their interaction with the learning context (Rahmawati & Taylor, 2018). It is advantageous in this situation to make local wisdom common and firmly embedded in society since the values of local wisdom will give the community a strong character. Some experts claim that there are various viewpoints and ideas regarding local wisdom. According to Wibowo (2015), local

wisdom is a country's cultural identity or personality that allows it to absorb culture from other countries and even transform it into its own traits and skills. Meanwhile, Istiawati (2016) believes that local wisdom is more about how individuals behave and act in reaction to changes in their physical and cultural surroundings. Local knowledge appears to play a crucial role in forming the current culture due to the fact that it can be continuously reinterpreted and developed by local actors. In line with Istiawati, Marfai (2013) suggested that local wisdom is a collection of values, perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and responses in the sensitive interplay of the living system with nature and its environment. She adds that local wisdom refers to the information, common sense, and wisdom that affect how you approach or choose to handle a situation in your life. According to the experts' opinions, it is clear that local wisdom, which is a by-product of local culture, is also capable of resisting globalization because it provides principles for the development of national character.

The development of character traits involves more than only national and multicultural activities; it also involves language instruction, which can help students' character. Learning a language for example English involves more than just studying its grammar; it also allows students to get familiar with its culture. Even so, learning English does not imply abandoning one's own tongue and culture. It can be additionally integrated with aspects of local wisdom in teaching English. According to Abbas (2013), studying English using materials and methods that reflect local wisdom is one way to help students develop strong moral character and nationality for their country. It does not imply that once we acquire other languages, we lose sight of our native language. Additionally, he said that creating the most engaging learning methods possible can help to promote character education in English teaching.

This paper, therefore, can be seen as one of a few scholarly attempts to introduce Maluku's local wisdom to the broader academic audiences. For this study, the following section presents Maluku local wisdom 'Papeda' can be referred to as teaching resources in building students' characters by developing their English competence. Next, the discussion about the life and moral value of Maluku's local wisdom 'papeda' can be used as materials in English teaching. The last section provides teaching activities in listening, speaking, reading, and

writing that she has designed for teaching EFL students as an example of the use of Maluku local wisdom as teaching material in the teaching process.

## **METHODS**

This library research involves several kinds of literature limited to thesis and research-based journal articles. A literature review is a process of placing, obtaining, reading, and evaluating research literature related to the interest of the researcher (Manzilati, 2017). When we searched the sources, we consistently used some specific terms such as foreign language teaching, local wisdom in teaching, and values integration. This was to drive us to not go beyond the discussed topics. The journal articles collected were from diverse perspectives to gain a deep understanding of the importance of local wisdom and how to practically integrate it into the teaching English language.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Character Building in English Language Teaching**

To create national competitive competency and national character, which are both essential components of human resource development, Indonesia's educational system has placed a high priority on these goals. The development of communication competence while incorporating ideal characters as decent Indonesians apply equally to English language instruction. This made the case that teaching English as a foreign language should not just allow students to mimic other cultures in their communication learning, but also reflect an understanding of norms and values, incorporate a sense of national integrity, and characterize them as Indonesians in the larger community through their English proficiency.

Character building has a wide range of implications. Character develops students into lifelong and critical learners, diligent and capable performers, people with social and emotional intelligence, ethical thinkers, respectful and responsible, disciplined individuals who pursue healthy lifestyles, contributing members of the community and democratic citizens, and spiritual individuals engaged in creating a life of noble purpose (Nucci & Narvez, 2008). These implications offer a definite response to a recent issue questioning the value of character education in the age of globalization. Therefore, it is

reasonable to determine that character education should be incorporated into the educational system. Education is considerably more than only knowledge acquisition and academic skill development. However, students can develop their character values unconsciously by including character education in the teaching and learning process or another activity at school. This will help them become better individuals.

Character education is not taught in schools as a core subject. However, students build up character education through their behavior in school, which is governed by school policies, and their interactions with peers, instructors, and even their parents. Character education is not taught by teachers in the same way that they teach math or other disciplines; rather, it is more like practice (Pala, 2011). However, character education can be incorporated into the teaching and learning process in every subject, claims Haryati (2017). She goes on to say that each subject's learning materials for norms or values need to be established, explained, and connected to the context of daily life. To this statement, English, which is a required subject in the Indonesian educational system, can be used as a setting to introduce character education to EFL students. It is undeniable that some schools still struggle to implement character education for the teachers and students, particularly when it comes to choosing the resources that are suitable for the student's requirements and incorporating both character education and local wisdom. Today's English teachers are asked to provide material that incorporates character development and local wisdom.

### **Local Wisdom as English Teaching Material**

Local wisdom is understood to be a perspective on life and knowledge as well as different living tactics used by local communities to solve various issues relating to their daily requirements. According to Putra (2011), it is important to comprehend local wisdom. He defines local wisdom as a body of information and methods for dealing with issues or challenges in an ethical and moral manner. Strongly rooted local knowledge resists being corrupted and altered by outside cultures.

In English teaching need to include culture in classroom activities. This is in line with Buttjes' (1990) claim that educating a culture also entails teaching a language. The students' cultural background is another aspect that the teacher must consider. Cultural background is one of the

variables that potentially affect language, according to Brown (1990). In this case, it may be able to use the local expertise that is already existing in some regions of Indonesia to enhance language training. Therefore, when it comes to the significance of integrating local wisdom in daily life, particularly in language teaching activities, teachers in diverse areas must seriously consider incorporating the local knowledge available in the region where they are teaching.

Why does the local wisdom need to be involved in English language teaching? Referring to this question, according to Madya (2011), local wisdom values can serve as a foundation for character education and assist character development throughout the cycle of character education implementation. They can be extrapolated from, researched, and developed within regional cultures. They are about how people's views about right and wrong, good and terrible, and what matters in life affect their behavior. The finest of our traditions, cultures, and ways of being and doing must be fully tapped into by lecturers/teachers who are teaching English as a foreign language in addition to making the most of their inner resources (Drake, 2011). In addition, Kirkpatrick (2002) stressed that Indonesians do not need a curriculum that demands them to understand the culture of the native speakers, but more to the comprehension of their own culture so that later they can promote Indonesian culture globally. Local wisdom can have a greater effect. Students can use their knowledge and experience to tackle issues or challenges in an ethical and moral manner. Practice describes behavior and actions carried out in accordance with their knowledge. Without experience, their knowledge and actions will have specific effects or repercussions in real life and the issues they face. The issues at hand can be entirely handled in this way (Putra, 2011). Additionally, each region's local wisdom has a distinct personality. In essence, local wisdom serves to pass down a wise character that embodies noble values from every region through the stories that our ancestors received. Understanding the function of local knowledge can help the populace develop virtue, tolerance, and an open mind. They will also resolve the issues in a peaceful manner.

Teachers have a major influence on what and how learning resources are used in managing the teaching of English as a foreign language. This implies that educators must carefully choose teaching materials with culturally relevant

content for their English lesson plans. Despite this, more research will be required to determine what culturally oriented content of the English teaching materials is considered appropriate in increasing students' English competence and developing their characteristics. This study then makes the suggestion that incorporating local wisdom as culturally relevant resources when creating English teaching materials would provide a paradigm for improving English language instruction in Indonesia in the future.

### Description of The Characters Education In “Papeda” Maluku Local Wisdom Content as English Teaching Material

Papeda is known as one of the traditional staple foods from Eastern Indonesia. Apart from Maluku, North Maluku, Papua and several areas in Sulawesi are also areas that often serve this dish. Papeda is made from sago and served with various side dishes. The uniqueness of papeda lies in its texture which resembles porridge but is so sticky. So, when eating papeda there is a unique sensation in itself. Papeda is often served in traditional ceremonies in the local community. But now papeda is served in all Maluku family homes, traditional restaurants, and even fancy restaurants. The Nuaulu tribe of Seram Island, Maluku, often consumes papeda and refers to it as ‘Sonar Monne’, which has been revered in the rite of celebrating a girl's adolescence (Kuswara, 2022). The Nuaulu and Huaulu tribes have the view that it is improper for menstrual women to prepare papeda because it is taboo. Besides having a delicious taste, papeda also has life value on it. 'Papeda' teaches us the following philosophy and principles of some aspects.

#### **The Ingredient and Equipment Aspect in Making Papeda**

Papeda is made from sago starch and it is a highly nutritious food that is high in fiber, low in cholesterol, and beneficial to our health (Sidiq *et.al*, 2021). In making papeda, needs some traditional pieces of equipment such as, ‘sempe’ (a bowl made of clay), ‘aru-aru’ (a spatula made of wood), and ‘gata-gata’ (long forks made of bamboo). These equipments are used to make and serve papeda. The meaning of papeda is enhanced by the usage of these three items.



**Figure 1.** Sago starch

Source: Private Documentation (Manuhutu, 2014)

Papeda is interpreted as food which is a media for bonding between families and fellow human beings regardless of race, religion and ethnicity. Papeda is also a symbol of welcoming guests or family relatives who come from overseas. The belief of the Maluku people in welcoming guests with Papeda can strengthen brotherly relations.



**Figure 2.** Papeda

Source: Private Documentation (Manuhutu, 2014)

#### **Sempe**

Sempe is a special container for traditional Maluku food, namely papeda. This pottery or craft art has become a culture for the Negeri Ouw (negeri is the term used by the people of Central Maluku and Ambon Island to mention their village) because Ouw is the only ‘sempe’ producing village in Maluku. At the same time, Ouw is known as ‘*the land of sempe*’. Sempe has a special value and covered more deeply the life of the people of Negeri Ouw. In the sense that sempe has become a philosophy of life, a cultural identity that is inherent and even becomes the lifeblood of the people of Negeri Ouw. Besides that, ‘sempe’ is a symbol of brotherhood, a view of life, and structure in society (Seilatu, 2016).

Sempe is a sturdy container that looks like a huge bowl that can hold sago and when hot (boiling) water is poured over it and mixed with sago starch. Sempe has a value of life that

although being constructed of clay. The usage of 'sempe' indicates that our forefathers formerly lived in a culture with a high degree of knowledge and used primitive technology. Because the process of pouring hot (boiling) water into 'sempe' having sago starch, a container that is sturdy, heat resistant, and not easily broken is necessary so papeda can be served.



**Figure 3.** Sempe  
Source: Private Documentation (Manuhutu, 2014)

**Aru-aruru**



**Figure 4.** Aru-aruru  
Source: Private Documentation (Manuhutu, 2014)

'Aru-aruru' is a spatula that, even though it is made of wood, is able to form and unite the sago starch to become papeda. In this stirring process it must be done in the direction of a circular motion (should not be stirred in any direction). The philosophical meaning of using 'aru-aruru' is to teach that in this life we must have a direction and purpose and be clear. And most importantly we stick to who or what we believe guides us in our lives.

**Gata-gata**



**Figure 5.** Gata-gata  
Source: Private Documentation (Manuhutu, 2014)

While 'gata-gata' are forks that, even though these are made of bamboo, are able to take and roll papeda into the plate. It seems to show us that our forefathers used to have a fairly high level of knowledge with simple technology. Because the process of preparing papeda, which makes papeda by stirring starch and dousing it with hot (boiling) water, requires equipment that can be easily picked up by using two 'gata-gata' made of bamboo and shaped like a fork so that when taking papeda, it rolls up perfectly. The philosophy of the usage of two 'gata-gata' in this instance shows how humans are social beings who depend on one another and cannot be able to stand alone. Overall, the usage of 'sempe', 'aru-aruru', and 'gata-gata' teaches us that life should be more meaningful so we can become human beings who are useful to others and we should help and support one another.

***The Process Aspect of Making and How to Eat Papeda***

Sago which is the main ingredient for making papeda is easy to find and how to process it is also very easy. 'Sempe', 'aru-aruru', and 'gata-gata' are traditional pieces of equipment for the making of sago starch into papeda. The sago starch thickens and turns transparent grayish-white when the boiling water is gradually added while stirring. Until the texture is entirely disseminated into the glue mush, stirring in this process must be done in the same direction. Then, to eat it, hold two 'gata-gata' in each of the left and right hands, submerge the two in the papeda, lift the papeda to the horizontal position, then roll the papeda in the left and right 'gata-gata' to form rather large lumps, which are then simply transferred to a plate and prepared for consumption with yellow fish soup. Besides that, papeda is usually served with some side dishes such as *colo-colo*, grilled fish, and various

vegetables. Also, it can be consumed without being chewed, but slurped and swallowed immediately. This is because the texture of papeda is very sticky. But as time goes by, there are some people who use a spoon as an alternative way to enjoy papeda.



**Figure 6.** The way to use 'gata-gata' in rolling up papeda

Source: <https://pariwisataindonesia.id/kuliner/pemburu-kuliner-wajib-coba/>

The way of rolling up papeda has a deep philosophy. It is believed that we should roll up papeda and hold 'gata-gata' in the horizontal position and roll it up in the same direction. And it should be a forward-rolling motion. It means that we as humans should help each other because we as social beings cannot live alone. Apart from that, this teaches us that any work or thing will be easier to do together.

The values that are full of meaning in the process of making papeda are that every human being grows, develops, and processes in his life. Sometimes the process of life that humans have to face is either fun or unpleasant and full of challenges. But from the various processes of life, we can learn to be a better person. At the same time, we can be an example for many, and able to instill good values in those around us.



**Figure 7.** The way how to eat papeda  
Source: Private Documentation (Manuhutu, 2014)

Furthermore, in terms of how to eat papeda, it is like teaching us that we must be able to maximize our potential and not limit ourselves to doing something. We are given abilities and talents, and we must be able to make the best of them. Papeda can be eaten hot or cold. This teaches us that we must be able to adapt anywhere and in various situations. In addition, it teaches us that wherever we are and in every situation we face, we must still be ourselves with the characteristics we have. On the other hand, it teaches us how to respect food as one of God's blessings in our life.

### **The Example of Using Maluku Local Wisdom as English Teaching Material**

Regarding the description above and the instructions proposed by some experts, we design some teaching activities as an example of the implementation of Maluku local wisdom as part of English teaching material for grade ninth of Junior High School to support character building as follows:

#### ***Listening Activity***

A range of listening comprehension exercises that relate to the topic that the teacher plans to teach might be set up. As an example, to incorporate "papeda" into the teaching and learning process, the teacher could compose a brief monolog (comprising of one or two paragraphs) for the student to read. She also poses a number of inquiries concerning it. These questions could come in the form of multiple-choice or true/false statements. Students should pay close attention to the teacher in order to comprehend all of the information (whether general or specialized) before replying to those questions.

#### ***Speaking Activity***

We offer speaking activity in using Maluku local wisdom that teachers can practice in their classes. This activity first divides students into several groups consisting of 2-3 people. The next step is the teacher playing a video containing an introduction to 'papeda' as Maluku local staple food and how to make it. Next, the teacher gives several questions related to the video about the 'papeda'. The teacher also discusses difficult vocabulary for students along with the correct pronunciation. In the next step, students are given the opportunity for each group to do role-playing in front of the class together with their partners. After that, as homework, students are asked to make a short video related to 'papeda'. Following that, they can post it to and

share it on their social media accounts, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This particular activity or exercise intends to promote students' self-assurance, independence, and inventiveness.

### **Reading Activity**

Teachers can arrange reading comprehension activities that are connected to the lesson they want to teach. For example, the teacher distributes a descriptive text about "papeda". To arouse students' interest in reading, he instructed them to read the text first. They can then discuss together about the content of the text they have read. In addition, in this activity, the teacher does not ignore the grammar of the text. Language features and general organization of descriptive texts should be explained by the teacher. The teacher then asks the class to determine the genetic structure of the text in relation to the text about 'papeda'. The teacher can use the word "papeda" in group discussions for different activities. Then, students can compare traditional staple food from various regions in Indonesia. One of the benefits of this practice is students learn how much locally produced food in Indonesia has nutritional value.

### **Writing Activity**

Writing a text is one activity that can be done in writing class. The first step is that the teacher divides students into several small groups consisting of 3-4 people. Each group has one member who acts as an informant. This informant's job is to provide information about 'papeda'. These informants stood at their respective posts randomly in the class. The second step is that the teacher randomly distributes pictures to each informant in the group containing information about 'papeda'. For other group members act as interviewers. The third step is that each student in the group other than the informant is tasked with asking the informant for a series of required information related to 'papeda'. Each informant could only convey one piece of information, and each informant has different information regarding 'papeda'. In the fourth step, members of each group can go around to ask informants regarding the information needed by their respective groups to write texts related to 'papeda'. Each group was given 5-10 minutes to seek information from the informants. In the fifth step, after the group members have finished looking for the information needed, then each group discusses with its members the information obtained. In the last step, students write the results of the information and discussion

obtained into a text. From this kind of activity, students are not too dependent on the teacher but make students become independent looking for information from various sources and learning from other students. Also, this activity familiarizes students in terms of attitude and respect for the learning outcomes of their friends. In addition, students are taught how to develop a culture of collaboration when it comes to learning-related issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the description above, building good character in children is everyone's responsibility. As English teachers, we must be responsible for characterizing our students because good character can be started in the classroom. One of the ways in building students' character is by integrating Maluku's local wisdom into English teaching materials. It can increase students' interest and familiarity with their own hometown while at the same time promoting Maluku's culture. Each design of teaching and learning activities combined with local wisdom has useful properties that can be developed, practiced, and applied in the classroom. In addition, students become independent, honest, and responsible in individual work. Meanwhile, group activities can develop cooperation, leadership, responsibility, caring, understanding, and tolerance.

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