

AN ANALYSIS OF WAYANG AS PART OF CULTURAL CONTENT IN ENGLISH CLASS

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Abstract: In 2003, UNESCO declared the Indonesian culture of *wayang* as a part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage. Realizing this, it is important to conserve *wayang* by carrying out preservation actions, one of which is including *wayang* in various teaching resources for language-related disciplines. This paper aims at discussing the integration of *wayang* as part of cultural content in English class. A descriptive qualitative design was employed in this study. The methods of data collection consisted of documentation and observation. The subjects of this study were the teaching materials that have already been integrated with *wayang* as part of cultural content in English class. The findings showed that there were some contents and skills in English teaching materials that could be integrated with *wayang*, such as speaking competition through IG reels about *wayang*, writing ideas and opinions about *wayang* on Youtube, and speaking activities implemented in drama *wayang*. The findings also implied that students enjoyed the learning activities integrated with *wayang*. Those who had not known *wayang* before, started knowing *wayang* from the materials and activities given. In short, the integration of *wayang* as part of cultural content in English class was evidenced.

Keywords: cultural content, English class, *wayang*,

INTRODUCTION

Definition and History of *Wayang*

Wayang is widely known as an Indonesian traditional art form. Grahita et al., (2014, p.40) similarly explained that *Wayang* is a traditional Indonesian theater form that originated on the island of Java, Indonesia. Historically, *Wayang* was initially developed in Indonesia during the Hindu era. During that time, Indian-cultural complex from Indian continent such as Sanskrit language, the Pallava writing system, Hinduism and Buddhism teachings and philosophy, monarchical state system, hierarchal society system, arts, architecture, as well as the well-known *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* all made their way to Indonesia (Koesoemadinata et al., 2013). As a result, Indonesian culture was substantially impacted by the spread of the Indian-cultural complex. That moment, people adapted the well-known stories of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and presented them to the public using local cultural techniques like *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppetry). In accordance with Brandon (1970, p. 3), people showed a great enthusiasm to watch *Wayang Kulit* performance. He further added that, those people exposed various feelings and emotions while watching the performance. After Hinduism fell and Islam became Indonesia's new dominating power, *Wayang Kulit* was still produced and used as a media to disseminate Islam. Sunan Gunung Jati, a *Wali* of Cirebon along with Sunan Kalijaga created *Wayang Kulit* and performed it in a nearby mosque. People who were interested watching the performance were required to recite the Islamic confession of faith. The strategy worked well to draw people to Islam. The popularity of *Wayang* among people has grown significantly over time. This results in the so-called *Wayang* innovation. The enormous interest demonstrated by people led to the development of many forms of *Wayang*. *Wayang Kulit* was not the only one developed; *Wayang Suket* and *Wayang Wong* were as well. Later, on

November 7, 2003, UNESCO designated *Wayang* as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (Widiyastuti et al., 2018).

Recognizing this condition, *Wayang* should be preserved, particularly in the present when the interest in *Wayang* is getting low. One of the preserving actions that can be taken is inserting *Wayang* as a cultural content in the language learning materials. In general, enclosing cultural content in language learning is certainly appropriate, as both language and culture are interrelated. Hilliard (2014) affirmed that involving some cultural aspects in language teaching is inevitable. Kaplan (1983) as cited in Thumvichit (2018) additionally stated that every communicative activity always delivers some, if not all, of the aspects of a culture. In Indonesia where English is spoken as a foreign language (EFL), there are a few risks that learners might experience difficulties in their intercultural communication (Nugroho, 2019) as they lack the knowledge of cultural values and norms. Thus, including cultural context can give learners sufficient cultural knowledge of the target language. Besides including the cultural content of the target language, it is also recommended to include local culture in English language learning. Poedjiastuti et al. (2021) explained that the English language employs cultural exchange as one of its missions and purposes. Thus, it is advised that lecturers include local culture in addition to the culture of the targeted language when teaching English. Additionally, Rahim & Daghigh (2019) stated that including cultural content in ELT helps learners understanding their local culture while raising awareness of the global identities. Therefore, including *Wayang* as the cultural content in ELT is beneficial to make learners not only understand *Wayang* but also increase their awareness in preserving it as one of the national heritages.

Based on the afore-mentioned description, the researchers formulate the following research questions; What are the ELT materials that can be integrated with *Wayang* as a cultural content?

Wayang Activities as Part of Cultural Content in English Class

As part of Indonesian culture, *wayang* has been included in some teaching materials in schools and universities, one of which is English. Some contents can be included in English teaching and learning activities, compromising all four skills, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Wahyuningtyas & Savitri (2022) drama *wayang* in ESP Speaking class. It can be proven that students like the use of drama *wayang* to improve their speaking abilities and as fun activities to do. Some classroom activities can be integrated with cultural contents. Wahyuningtyas and Savitri (2022) conducted research on the implementation of drama *wayang* in speaking class that becomes a part of English Specific Purposes Class (ESP) subjects. The findings revealed that the implementation of drama *wayang* ESP class has positive impacts on the students. The students could deliver good performances, even though their grammatical skills, fluency, expressions, gestures, and content or story should be improved. These findings showed that the students enjoyed this activity. The study also revealed that students could express their creativity and thoughts through costumes and even make-up during their drama performance. Another study conducted by Mahfud (2016) about using *wayang* as a medium to improve students' motivation in telling narrative texts. He asserted that students have improved in some respects, such as activeness, seriousness, willingness, and enthusiasm in involving themselves in the activity. He agreed that *wayang* can make students' learning activities better. Ramadani, Rufinus, and Rosnija (2018) also strengthen the role of *wayang* in productive English skill. Their study discussed combining *wayang* story telling using narrative texts. They were sure that inserting *wayang* stories in narrative text could also reduce students' stress and frustration during learning and increase their motivation. *Wayang* as cultural content will also introduce students with their local culture.

The above studies proved that *wayang* can be integrated into English classroom activities and that it could improve students' English skill significantly. Therefore, in this study, the researchers will analyse the implementation of *wayang* as part of cultural content in English class. The subject of this study is second semester Law Faculty students who are taking English class. The curriculum requires the students to learn English with some Indonesian cultural contents, one of which is *wayang* that usually takes stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. The students were immersed with some activities and assignments that put in *wayang* stories.

Recently, the interest of studying *wayang* as a cultural content in ELT has gained significantly among researchers. Wahyuningtyas & Savitri (2022) explored the use of drama *wayang* for ESP speaking activities. With the aim of exploring the use of drama *wayang* for ESP speaking activities, the study employed a descriptive qualitative study. The findings of the study revealed that the students showed a great enthusiasm when they performed drama *wayang*. It was also found that integrating *wayang* in ESP speaking activities to add a variety of activities in ELT as well as attract students' interest in learning speaking. In addition, Halimah et al. (2020) investigated storytelling through *wayang golek* puppet shows as practical ways in incorporating character education in early childhood. This is classroom action research in which two kindergarten teachers and 12 kindergarten students were involved in this study. The results of the study showed that using *wayang golek* as mediated storytelling activities provides both teachers and students with important moral values that they can learn from such as friendliness, democracy, environmental sensitivity, charity, patriotism, humanism, etc. In addition, the employment of *wayang golek* was able to attract the students' attention and to engage them actively in the storytelling process.

Hermayawati (2019) conducted another study about *wayang* and ELT. This study aimed at exploring integrated language in use for undergraduate English learners through *wayang* stories. A mixed method was used to explore the procedure for delivering integrated four English skills through *wayang* stories as the learning materials. The results of this study discovered that teaching English should be integrated. In this case, watching, understanding, paraphrasing, performing or presenting, and assessing (WUPPA) can be the best alternative procedure to teach language in an integrated way. In addition, the learning materials can be taken from various resources to meet the learners' target linguistic features. *Wayang* specifically can be used as one of the resources to help learners achieve their learning goals. The implementation of *wayang* in ELT according to Hermayawati (2019) is not only able to teach the linguistic features but also teach character education to learners. Moreover, Ramadani et al. (2018) studied the effectiveness of retelling story-using *wayang* in teaching speaking. Using quasi-experimental, this research involved 66 learners who were divided into experimental and control groups. The findings of the study showed that retelling story using *Wayang* in was effective in teaching speaking skills especially teaching fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. As the prior studies proved that inserting *Wayang* in ELT offered numerous benefits, therefore, further studies, examining the implementation of *wayang* as cultural content is still significant.

While the previous studies focused on investigating the use of *wayang* in speaking (Wahyuningtyas & Savitri, 2022), storytelling (Halimah et al., 2020; Ramadani et al., 2018), and language learning in general (Hermayawati, 2019), this study however focuses on analysing the use of *wayang* in ELT materials. Specifically, this study aimed at seeking the materials that can be integrated with *wayang* as a part of cultural content. Materials according to Tomlinson (in Tomlinson, 2016, p. 2) are "everything which can be used to support the study of a language, including course book, films, graded readers, flash cards, games, websites, and mobile phone interactions." Materials in general play vital roles in ELT. McKay in Matsuda (2012) stated that materials (1) offer a roadmap for teachers and students, (2) offer structure and predictability that promote a sense of safety in classroom interaction, (3) allow teachers to attend to other

aspects of classroom interaction, (4) give teachers a sense of security and self-confidence. Materials in ELT can be integrated with other resources to achieve the learning goals. If teachers want to introduce the local culture in ELT, the available materials can be integrated with any kinds of local culture, specifically *wayang*. In ELT, there are several materials in both content and skills that can be integrated with *Wayang*. In speaking, for example, learners can perform drama by adopting *wayang* stories or they can create video and present *wayang*. In writing, learners can write an essay about *wayang*. Since there are several ELT materials that can be integrated with *wayang* as a cultural content, the researchers are motivated to further analyse *wayang* as a part of cultural content in English class.

METHODS

Data Collection

The study uses qualitative descriptive research design. As asserted by Poedjiastutie (2020) descriptive qualitative research is a type of research that talks about the data, words, or objects. It is different from quantitative research that focuses on numerical data in addition; she also mentioned that qualitative study is related to “thorough information about cognitive and representational actions and in-depth meaning related to evident activities” (p. 8). This principle is in line with the type of data collection used in this study. The researcher will collect the data from students’ assignments and classroom activities. The data collection is in the form of documentation and observation. The researcher would select only the lesson materials and assignments that are related closely to *wayang* or have *wayang* theme. The classroom activities and assignments had been collected for one semester during English class.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study includes selecting the lesson materials and assignments that contain *wayang* as part of its cultural contents during one semester. This study also uses inductive data analysis. As stated by Creswell (2014), inductive data analysis starts from data collection, and then continues with interpretations or theories. This schema was conducted in this study where students’ materials and assignments that have relations with *wayang* were collected and analysed whether it really contains *wayang* or not. Then the theory that the materials and assignments that the students have contain *wayang* is then established. In this study, the researcher focused on studying and interpreting the documents, students’ assessment and activities that contain *wayang* stories as part of its cultural content.

The subjects of this study were the first semester of university students of UPN “Veteran” Jawa Timur. The students come from different majors and faculties, and they were focusing on general English. The teacher then decided to include Indonesian cultural contents in the syllabus as part of their English contents. One of the cultural contents that the teacher put into the syllabus is *wayang* which emerged both on students’ assignments and classroom activities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that the activities and assignments in class. Some activities and assignments that put *wayang* as a cultural content are IG reels and students’ comments on YouTube, as explained below.

IG Reels

This activity is part of students’ assignments. This IG reels require students to tell a *wayang* story and upload it on their IG account. There were some aspects to be assessed, pronunciation,

fluency, expressions, vocabulary and contents. The students could create the reels as creative as they want to be. They also had to tag their teacher’s IG account and share it to get the likes and comments from other friends as it also influences the scoring. The students are encouraged to create the reels as creative as possible. Therefore, besides doing the assignment and getting the scores, the students learn *wayang* as part of their culture and got a new experience of creating an IG reel. Although the students must use English, they can still put Indonesian subtitles in their reels. The assessment focused on speaking assessment. From this activity, the students are expected to improve their speaking abilities and love *wayang* as part of Indonesian traditional culture.



Figure 1. Students’ IG reels about drama *wayang*

Comments on YouTube

Students were also asked to put some comments on YouTube about drama *wayang* performance. Drama *wayang* is a combination between drama performance and *wayang* story. In this classroom activity, students were asked to watch a drama *wayang* performance by Swargaloka entitled “Sang Penjaga Hati”. Although the drama *wayang* was performed in bahasa Indonesia, the comments had to be written in English. The students had to analyse the content and stories of the drama *wayang* and write some comments on the drama *wayang* video on YouTube. Students had to write at least 100 words. From this activity, the students could learn how to understand and analyse a story of *wayang*, which was combined with drama. In addition to that, the students learned that *wayang* stories could be integrated with drama to make *wayang* performance and story more attractive and modern. From the comments, it is also apparent that the students liked and enjoyed the activity. In addition to that, it is a new thing for them. This activity focused on writing skill. The teacher did not put grammar as the main assessment criteria, although still considered it.

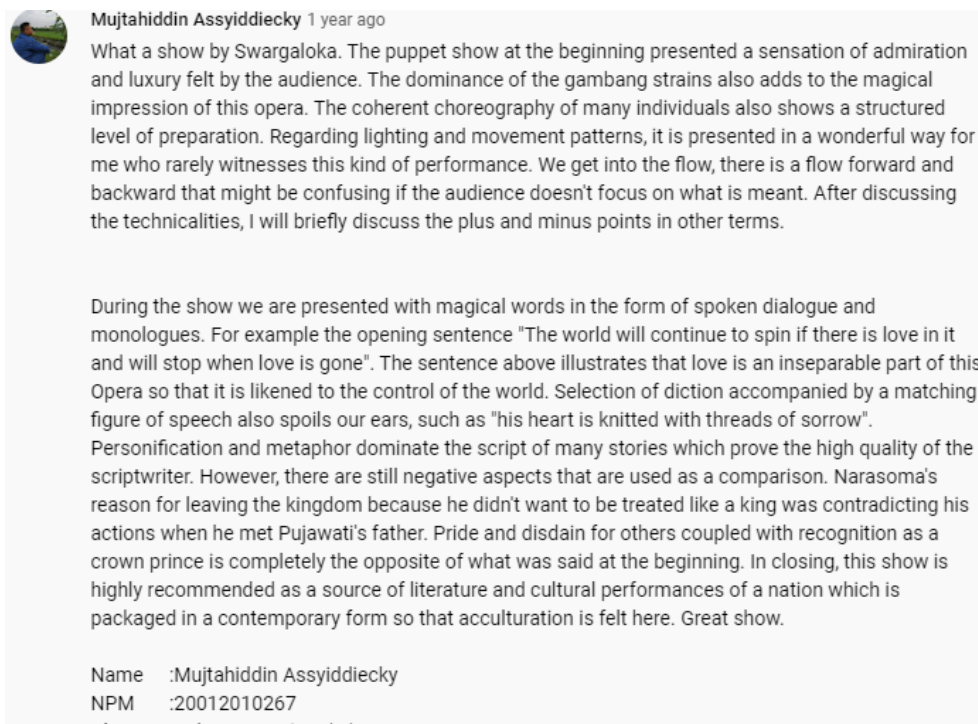


Figure 2. Students' Comments on Swargaloka's Drama *Wayang*, "*Sang Penjaga Hati*"

From the findings, it can be concluded that *wayang* as part of Indonesian cultural content was put in English subject for first semester students in the form IG reels and students' comments on YouTube. The findings revealed that *wayang* as part of cultural value can be put in students' assignments and activities that bring some positive impacts for students; practice students' speaking and writing skills.

CONCLUSION

As part of Indonesian cultural content, *wayang* can be integrated into some subjects one of which is English. In English, *wayang* can be integrated into writing (students' comments on Swargaloka's drama *wayang*, "*Sang Penjaga Hati*") and speaking (IG reels). Besides practicing their writing and speaking skill, this activity enables the students to know Indonesian culture more, especially about *wayang*. Students were also excited and enjoyed doing the activities. They were so creative in writing the comments on drama *wayang* and telling *wayang* stories on their IG reels. It is expected that more Indonesian cultural contents can be integrated with English. Therefore, students not only learn the language but also know the Indonesian cultural content well. From the activity, it can also be concluded that the activities also integrate the use of social media and technology in integrating *wayang* into English skill activities (IG reels and comments on YouTube).

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