

Reviewing coastal culture and traditions for English teaching materials

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ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment can be encouraged via English teaching and teaching materials can be utilized to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly for students from coastal areas pursuing higher education at universities. This research aims to determine how English language teaching (ELT) materials in universities can be adapted and incorporated into English instruction from the perspective of female students from coast. The data for this study were acquired using a qualitative technique, which included the distribution of questionnaires and interviews with female students from coastal locations. The information gathered from the questionnaire was mostly demographic. In the meanwhile, interviews were held to collect thoughts from participants on coastal traditions and cultures that might be included into teaching materials. The findings reveal a clear correlation between individuals' perspectives and their experiences shaped by traditions and cultural heritage of coastal regions. Female participants highlight the depth of coastal culture, its interaction with the environment, the crucial role of women in preserving traditions, and the desire for representation in university-level English teaching materials. These insights, derived from the experiences and viewpoints of female students in a coastal setting, extend beyond their locale, offering valuable lessons for English learning approaches in diverse coastal communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of female students' intake in tertiary education in Indonesia impacts positively toward the development of human power and therefore this development should be supported and even promoted in order to coincide with the government's goal of empowering women. However, women continue to encounter a variety of impediments to obtaining high-quality higher education, which is essential for realizing their potential, actively participating in development, and increasing their well-being. In coastal communities, female students frequently face educational and equal opportunity disparities when compared to male pupils. Moreover, women's advancement and autonomy are frequently hampered by society's strong patriarchal culture. As a result, empowering female students in coastal areas through education that provides equal opportunity is essential and English teaching materials at universities are one way to provide useful knowledge and skills for female students in coastal areas.

One of the challenges faced by women in obtaining higher education is the lack of representation of women in teaching materials, especially in English teaching materials used at universities. Diverse and inclusive teaching materials in fact can help women acquire the knowledge and skills they need to overcome the challenges they face in academic and professional life. So that teaching materials can also influence dominant social and cultural norms in society, especially in terms of women's empowerment. This article aims to describe the research results in the form of an analysis of English books in universities and how these books can enhance women's empowerment through culturally relevant content that meets the needs of coastal communities. Thus, this study can determine which coastal traditions can be adapted to become part of English teaching materials. In addition, this research is urgent to provide practical benefits in improving the quality of education and strengthening women's empowerment in coastal areas, as well as contributing to the development of inclusive education policies and strengthening gender equality in Indonesia in line with the development direction designed by the Indonesian government, particularly the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. One of the main problems that exists in coastal communities and could detain the empowerment of local communities is the low level of education [1]. Oktavinanda *et al.* [2] mention that communities depending on marine resources typically display specific characteristics, including economic disadvantage, limited literacy, and a shortage of human resources. In fact, similar issues found in developed countries such as England trigger school reform [3], [4] and many other efforts for empowering communities including women in coastal areas have been taken [5], [6].

Then, coastal communities have the potential for development considering Indonesia as an archipelagic country with a very long coastline. North Sulawesi Province in Indonesia, for example, has a geographical condition where important cities are located on the coastline, such as Manado, Bitung, Amurang, and Likupang. If we explore further, this province has several coastal districts and islands, such as the Sangihe Talaud Islands and other islands around Bunaken National Park, indicating that this province has abundant marine resources. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance the potential of coastal communities to harness marine resources, which will have a positive impact on improving the economy and living standards of the community. However, coastal communities, including women, are often neglected, and critical studies related to the empowerment of women in coastal areas are still lacking.

Several guidelines and recommendations have been produced so far through previous research on gender and the empowerment of coastal communities, but research publications focusing on the discussion of socio-cultural aspects in English teaching materials that can be used for the empowerment of coastal women are very limited. Previous research which discusses women's empowerment and gender equality, contains of three major themes: women's empowerment [7]–[9]; gender equality in education and textbooks and the importance of women's empowerment through the education sector [10]–[13]; and inclusive education through the analysis of teaching materials [14]. Bhukuth *et al.* [7] highlight the potential of entrepreneurship to empower women in East Java, Indonesia, particularly in rural areas where access to resources is limited. Similarly, Frei and Leowinata [8] examine the role of education and educators in women's empowerment, while Gonzi [9] explores how English language teaching (ELT) can empower women and promote gender equality. Informed by these perspectives, this research aims to investigate how instructional materials can enhance English proficiency and contribute to the empowerment of coastal women.

Other relevant writings related to the research topic are related to the foundational perspective that views language teaching as closely related to culture. Zu and Kong [15] views culture as a part of human life, and within culture, there are systems of knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, abilities, and habits possessed by individuals. Characteristics of culture include being learnable, transmitted, transferred, or integrated into ways of life, values, and social norms. Thus, as part of society, culture is dynamic and easily changes. The view that supports the statement that the connection between culture and language is very close underlies the concept of culture-based language teaching. Kramsch [16] develops further this concept by advocating for a comprehensive understanding of culture and cross-cultural understanding before it can be applied in language teaching.

Speaking of culture, the cultural content reflected in textbooks can be classified into 'target culture', which is the culture of English-speaking countries; 'source culture', which is the culture of the learners themselves; and 'international culture', which is the culture that can be understood by both native and non-native speakers [17], [18]. Recent research from Riadini and Cahyono [19] examined the cultural contents in English textbooks and they found that the inclusion of cultural elements in ELT materials can benefit students in a variety of ways. One of the advantages is that students can be more appreciative of cultural diversity. This statement is supported by Juluru [20] who mentions that cultural integration in English learning materials is critical and beneficial.

As a result, teaching materials selection is very essential and therefore, textbooks must be chosen with an eye toward their role in promoting or imparting to pupils either cultural values and conventions of English-speaking countries or non-native culture. Yuen [21] states that if English is used as a lingua franca

for cross-cultural communication, the cultural content selected to be included in the textbooks should not only come from English-speaking countries. Consequently, English teachers must act as mediators between the teaching materials and what is being taught [22], as curriculum developers who apply a set of strategies in teaching practices [23], and as part of the classroom ecosystem interacting with other elements of the class [24]. It is obvious that educators play a significant role in selecting appropriate cultural contents for their teaching materials. They must analyze their teaching books and determine whether the contents need to be modified to match the needs of their students. Indeed, educators can gain a better understanding of what their students need by listening to their voices and opinions. By actively engaging with students and considering their feedback, educators can gather valuable insights into their needs and preferences. This information can then be used to make informed decisions and modifications to the instructional materials, ensuring that they effectively meet the students' needs.

Furthermore, in terms of the content of textbooks containing local culture, this study focuses on coastal culture, which is deemed necessary for inclusion in teaching materials. Several countries, including the Philippines [25], [26], Taiwan [27], [28], and Australia [29], value learning from nature, particularly maritime culture. Taiwan, for example, has a maritime-based curriculum, specifically "slow fish education", with research examining the success of this program when applied in various schools and its impact on pupils [27], [28]. Likewise, research in the Philippines investigates the experiences of instructors instructing in coastal communities [25], as well as the incorporation of maritime culture into English language materials [26]. In Indonesia, coastal based education research has been conducted in several Indonesian regions, including Gorontalo [30], [31], Bone [32], Bintan Island [33], Aceh [2], Bengkulu [34], Medan [35], Indramayu [36], Luwu [37], and Southeast Sulawesi [38]. As an archipelagic country, maritime research is extremely important in Indonesia. Numerous study aspects, employing distinct strategies and approaches, can be carried out in various areas across Indonesia. Nonetheless, results may differ due to the uniqueness of each region's culture, customs, and practices. This study is also being carried out in North Sulawesi, where the results are undoubtedly affected by local culture.

Hence, the novelty offered in this research relies around insights into the critical requirement for English proficiency in a specific coastal setting, adding basic knowledge to an area that has thus far received little exploration. The expected outcome of the study's findings is the improvement of sociocultural content related to coastal situations in ELT materials. This enhancement intends to improve female students' educational experiences by encouraging them to develop their English language abilities and contributing to their empowerment. This kind of empowerment is thought to be critical for improving the socioeconomic position of coastal communities. The key research question posed for this research is: "How can ELT materials at the university level be adapted and integrated into English instruction, specifically catering to the perspectives of female students from coastal regions?"

2. METHOD

The qualitative case study approach was applied in this investigation. A case study, according to Yin [39], can be utilized as a research approach that incorporates the complete context of a case, including social and cultural variables connected to the incorporation of educational materials and cultural products as supporting facilities. Then, in order to gain a better knowledge of the viewpoints and experiences of female students from coastal areas in the context of English learning at university, a qualitative approach was adopted. This is consistent with Creswell's assertion [40] that the qualitative technique has advantages when used to delve into a topic and collect more thorough data.

2.1. Data collection

The data collection tools used were questionnaire distribution and interviews. The questionnaires were distributed through Google Form in order to gain the participants' demographic profiles and their preference of particular topics that were listed on the questionnaire. The topics were chosen and adapted from the English teaching books used by the lecturers. Whilst, the interviews were employed to gather the viewpoints of the university female students from coastal areas and in-depth information on socio-cultural topics that resonated with the participants' experiences or daily lives as integral members of coastal communities.

The purposive sampling method was utilized to find potential participants that met the criteria, such as being female students pursuing higher education and attending English courses at university. These female students live in coastal cities in Indonesia, such as Manado, Amurang, Bitung as well as villages on islands such as Sangihe Talaud and Halmahera. Manado is the capital city of North Sulawesi Province, and Sindulang is one of the coastal villages on the outskirts of Manado. Amurang serves as the capital of South Minahasa Regency, while Bitung is a well-known seaport city.

Then, the data were collected through the following steps: first, the questionnaires were distributed to the university students at English department who meet the criteria. Second, the potential participants were informed about their participation is voluntary but has a week time limit for the completion and submission. Third, the responses collected within the specified timeframe were checked and the participants were subsequently engaged in further inquiries through interviews.

There were eight female students participated and gave their thoughts on the cultural elements and traditions of the coastal area that can be included in English teaching materials for higher education. These students have rich personal experiences in their daily lives in the coastal area, and they give their own perspectives and views on how coastal culture and traditions influence their lives, as well as how knowledge of these cultures and traditions might be integrated into textbooks. These pupils were given a list of things that coastal students must learn. The themes on offer were all about socio-cultural elements. The eight participants were then asked to discuss their experiences and provide further perspectives on the concept of coastal culture and customs that should be included in textbooks. They also shared their visions on how important these coastal traditions are introduced and learned by the English learners at university level.

2.2. Data analysis

The data underwent assessment through the identification and categorization of interconnected themes during the coding process, followed by their elucidation. This methodology, derived from the interactive model proposed by Miles *et al.* [41] was applied for data analysis, involving the following steps: i) data reduction, wherein the researcher condensed the acquired data, selected pivotal aspects, focused on crucial information, and discerned themes and patterns; ii) data display, where, after data reduction, the researcher presented the information through concise descriptions, charts, tables, and interrelationships between categories to enhance comprehension; and iii) data verification, marking the final phase where researchers drew conclusions and affirmed the emergence of novel findings that encapsulated the research outcomes. The limitation of this method is that though data from the eight participants is deemed sufficiently representative for analysis, if the research time frame allows for an extension, the number of participants could be increased to obtain a more extensive range of students' perspectives on coastal culture.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This article presents both the research findings and the personal experiences of female students hailing from diverse coastal regions. Among these students, seven out of eight reside within a mere 5-kilometre radius of the coast. Coming from varied social backgrounds, each with unique cultures and traditions, they underscore the significance of coastal community activities in shaping their cultural identity. Furthermore, they shed light on which cultural values and traditions could enrich English language education materials. While North Sulawesi Province boasts a diverse indigenous population including the Minahasa, Mongondow, and Sangihe Talaud ethnic groups, the dominance of the Minahasa ethnicity in the region naturally mirrors their traditions and culture. Conversely, the coastal areas predominantly host individuals of Sangihe Talaud descent, thereby accentuating the cultural tapestry of this ethnic group.

Various distinctive and exciting parts of coastal culture and traditions were identified in this research through in-depth interviews, which might be included into English teaching materials. Culture and customs are themes that are very relevant to the lives of students who live in coastal regions, making the learning process more engaging and accomplishing the learning objectives. All of the female students who took part in the study agreed that English is an important ability for coastal areas. One of the goals is to empower coastal communities to use English to advertise their region's potential to tourists and the global community.

When addressing the benefits of learning English, one participant (Nadya) noted that it is essential for knowing how to introduce oneself. Another participant (Febyani) emphasized that because talks normally begin with self-introductions and vocations, coastal locals must learn these abilities in order to chat with tourists. Furthermore, English language proficiency is highly tied to coastal communities' potential as tourist attractions. English can be used to describe tourist destinations, for example Temboko Beach, a popular tourism destination in her area in Siau, the island that is situated in the Sangihe Archipelago, famed for its hot springs. Febyani mentioned that:

“One of the well-known tourist attractions in my area is Temboko Beach. This beach, known for its hot springs, is a unique characteristic that draws a lot of foreign visitors. The local community must talk in English with the tourists, and I used English to introduce other interesting destinations in the area.”

It is obvious from her description that the local community should be prepared to interact in English with these visitors. In addition, English can be used to inform not only about the tourism objects but also local customs, proper clothes for specific events, local food and its ingredients, weather and so on. So, a coastal socio-cultural based content for English materials is equally beneficial for local people who live in coastal areas as well as for the university students. This content may enrich the female students' English learning experience.

Then, as depicted in Figure 1, the participants chose topics for the socio-cultural content such as dances, music and instruments, clothing, food, people, and folktales. These socio-cultural themes were chosen and considered relevant to be taken and developed into English learning materials. The figure shows that the theme of food was the most favorable chosen by all of the eight participants. Meanwhile, the clothing topic was favored by six participants, and the music and instruments topics were chosen by five participants. Other cultural components such as dances, people and folktales were chosen by half of the participants. The following diagram summarizes the choices of the female students.

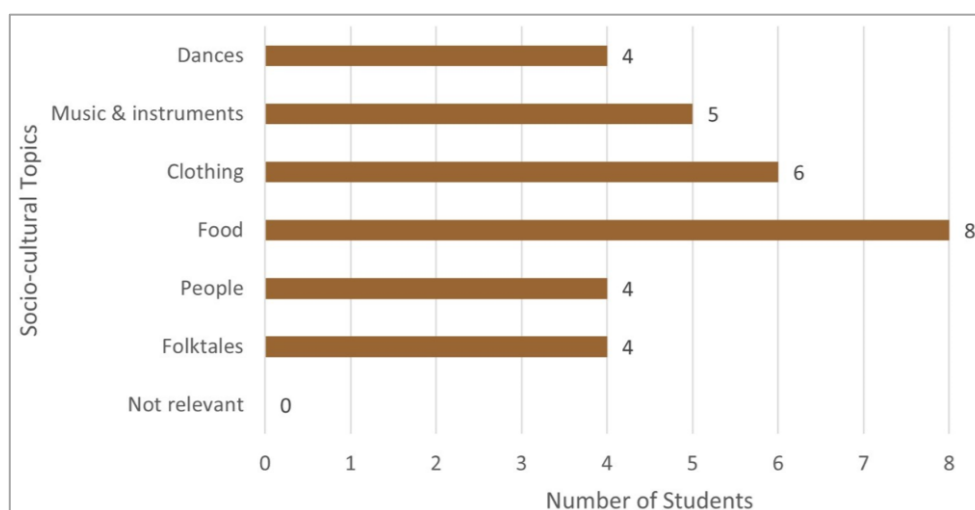


Figure 1. Sociocultural topics chosen by students

Surprisingly, cuisine is frequently connected to tourism and initiatives to earn revenue for coastal communities. As a result, the theme of culinary can be introduced into English teaching materials. Felycia, for example, mentioned that:

“Sindulang is well-known for its particular culinary tourism in Manado city. This place is also known for its particular cuisines, such as tinutuan, a variety of dabu-dabu, and ikang bakar. The fish is caught by the fishermen and local people buy the fish from them.”

Felycia's statement is closely related to the daily life of coastal communities, encompassing livelihoods and distinctive culinary practices in the city of Manado. Her place of living, Sindulang is one of Manado's seaside locations where people from the area earn a living through culinary tourism. This region is regularly visited by both domestic and international tourists. *Tinutuan* is a sort of porridge made with rice, corn, water spinach, pumpkin, and *gedi*. *Gedi* is a distinctive native vegetable found in Manado that has leaf veins that resemble papaya leaves and adds a particular flavor to the *tinutuan*. This porridge is usually served together with *dabu-dabu*, fried tofu, corn fritters, and *nike* fritters. Pangemanan *et al.* [42] identify *nike* as a species of fish found in Lake Tondano, North Sulawesi, and this fish is blended with spices and flour to make *nike* fritters. *Dabu-dabu*, on the other hand, is made from such ingredients as onions, chilies, and tomatoes.

According to the interview findings, there are a variety of other culinary delights linked with the daily lives of coastal communities whose livelihoods center upon fishing. The catch of the day is frequently sold or prepared as *ikang bakar*, a local word for grilled fish. Anggi notes that the group prepares the fish using simple methods and natural resources such as wood or coconut shells as a substitute for charcoal.

“People here prefer eating freshly cooked fish and rather than utilizing utensils that are difficult to find, they use wood or coconut shells for making a fire and grilling the fish.”

Furthermore, another participant, Frischa, adds that the sale of dried fish known as “*ikang Roa*” is one of the sources of income for fishermen in her area of Siau. This *Roa* fish is widely utilized as an ingredient in the famed *dabu-dabu*, giving it a distinct flavor found exclusively in the North Sulawesi region. Whilst in Amurang, Sevilia mentioned about special kind of fish namely *Tandipang*.

“Ikgang Tandipang is a local fish of Amurang. Typically caught by fishermen, the fish is then sun-dried. It is commonly enjoyed with dabu-dabu.”

Other culinary delicacies highlighted by participants and extensively loved in Bunga’s hometown, in addition to fish, are “*nasi kembar*”. According to Bunga, *nasi kembar* is prepared with particular seasonings and then grilled. Another participant, Febyani, talks about a local dish from her village, Alo Utara, in North Sulawesi’s Talaud Islands Regency. She mentions the dish “*dabu sasi*”, which is made with marine fish. Grilling the fish with onions and other seasonings is part of the procedure. The grilled fish is then simmered in a pre-made broth. *Dabu sasi* is similar to a fish soup in that grilled fish is added to seasoned water before cooking and served. It has a tasty, tangy flavor.

Even when the components are comparable, each location has its own specific culinary characteristics. North Sulawesi province, for example, has its own way of preparing delicacies like grilled fish (*ikang bakar*). *Dabu-dabu* is prepared in a variety of ways, including *dabu-dabu terasi*, *dabu-dabu lilang*, *dabu-dabu Roa*, *dabu-dabu bakasang*, and so on. According to Nelfin, in some areas in Sangihe islands, sago serves as a staple food alongside rice. The diversity of culture and traditions can be introduced through ELT by adding culinary themes in teaching materials. Still on the subject of food, Bunga believes that beachside restaurants are more preferable. Due to the beautiful beach view and fresh wind, this location has become a famous culinary destination and is usually crowded with people. As a result, restaurant owners and personnel in that location must have basic English abilities in order to serve clients and provide food. Although gastronomy is a popular topic in English teaching materials, there are other interesting aspects of coastal customs that are regularly practiced by coastal communities. Bunga, one of the participants, noted that the “Jailolo Bay Festival” takes place in her area. Jailolo is a location on the island of Halmahera. There is a custom of wearing traditional dress on this occasion. She notes that in her location, there are numerous forms of traditional dress, such as traditional outfits for dances, meetings, marriages, and royalty. Ordinary people are not permitted to dress in traditional nobility attire. Traditional attire is mainly reserved for exceptional occasions such as the Jailolo Bay Festival.

If Halmahera Island has a rich local cultural event, Febyani described a tradition named “*Tulude*” for the coastline region of North Sulawesi. This custom was passed down from the Sangihe Talaud ethnic group, who live on the northern tip of the islands in the province of North Sulawesi. The *Tulude* ceremony, according to Febyani, is a “thanksgiving ceremony for the blessings of the Almighty God” and is traditionally celebrated on January 31st. Both men and women dress in traditional costumes known as “*laku tepu*” for this ceremony. Local dances such as *Gunde*, *Upase*, and *Salo* are performed to the accompaniment of *Tagonggong* music, and the ritual finishes with the cutting of *tamo*, a unique cake produced for the *Tulude* celebration. Moreover, Nelfin discussed the traditional art form from her region, namely “*masamper*”, wherein songs are typically performed collectively in a group setting, accompanied by dance-like body movements.

The coastal village in Talaud Regency, on the other hand, has a fishing culture known as “*mane’e*”. This fishing tradition is unique in that it is done collectively and makes use of coconut leaves. In her book, Maria [43] explained that this occasion is distinguished by a multitude of customs and prayers. Tourists flock to the *Mane’e* celebration in the same way that they go to the Jailolo and *Tulude* festivals. This habit arose naturally from the local history, way of life, and collective wisdom in observing nature as part of the coastal community’s culture. Because this custom is still rarely mentioned in English teaching materials, female students from coastal areas believe it should be included. Consequently, students can learn about local traditions and culture while being encouraged to spread coastal traditions to a large number of people using the English they learned at university. As a result, the coastal students expect that their traditions will be incorporated into educational materials.

It is apparent that there is a link between an individual’s perspective and their experiences influenced by the conventions, habits, traditions, and culture of the coastal region. The dances, traditional attire, and local language of the Sangihe ethnic group are notably different from those of the Minahasan ethnic group. However, there are also similar types of food consumed by both the Minahasa and Sangihe Talaud, such as grilled fish, banana and *nike* fritters as well as *dabu-dabu*. This viewpoint is expressed by female research

participants, and it reveals the richness of coastal culture, the connection between culture and the natural environment, the role of women in preserving traditions, and the hope of being included in English teaching materials at the university level. These female students' life experiences and perspectives as a part of the coastal community in the northern part of Sulawesi are comparable and can be shared to other contexts of English learning practices at other coastal communities.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper reveals the perspective of female students living in coastal locations which capture their experiences and thoughts on coastal culture and traditions. It may be stated that the socio-cultural themes highlighted in the interviews are related to culinary subjects in relation to livelihoods and tourism. Furthermore, festivals, traditional rites, traditional costumes, as well as music's and dances, are highlighted by the participants in their link to English teaching materials. These issues, as perceived by the students, can be incorporated into English teaching materials and are thought advantageous for persons who live in coastal locations.

Readers are supposed to have a better knowledge of coastal life and be inspired to protect and preserve these unique cultural heritages as a result of this essay. We can create a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable society by boosting the voices of female students and paying attention to coastal cultural heritage. By amplifying the perspectives of female students and fostering a climate of inclusivity and sustainability, we pave the way for the cultivation of a multifaceted society that thrives on diversity. Moreover, by acknowledging and prioritizing the preservation of coastal cultural heritage, we unlock new avenues for empowerment within coastal communities, especially for women, thus unleashing their untapped potential and fostering their active participation in shaping a brighter future for these regions.

This study had a limited sample size of eight female students. A future study should include more participants and a larger geographic scope with different context. Then, the research involving teachers' perspectives would provide opportunities for comprehensive data and a thorough understanding of the topic.

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