

## Improving Students' Vocabulary Retention by Local Culture-Based Material

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to find out how the local culture-based material is being implemented in the class as well as the effect of implementing local culture-based material in improving the rural coastal area of Riau students' vocabulary retention. This study was conducted using Classroom Action Research (CAR) method which utilized four phases according to Kemmis and McTaggart model which included planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subject of the study was 27 students from a second-grade classroom in Sains Tahfizh Islamic Center Siak Elementary School. For the data analysis, the researcher used interview guidelines, observation checklists, field notes, and tests to gain the data. The findings discovered that the implementation of local culture-based material successfully improved students' vocabulary retention based on all of the subject's scores that reached the minimum criteria standard of 80 in the last post-test compared to the pre-test where a lot of students did not reach the minimum standard of criteria. The study also found that the implementation of local culture-based material brought positive impacts on students' behavior in the classroom. It developed students' enthusiasm in learning, increased students' motivation in vocabulary learning, and improved students' engagement during the learning activity. This study contributed on finding the impact of local culture-based material which benefited the teachers especially in the rural coastal area of Riau, students, and also future researchers.

**Keywords:** *Classroom Action Research; Local Culture-Based Material; Rural Area; Vocabulary; Vocabulary Retention*

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelago country located in Southeast Asia which is a home for over a thousand ethnic groups. According to Hariyanto (Hariyanto, 2016), Indonesia is a country with multi-cultural diversity which spread all over 34 provinces in Indonesia. Hence, each region in Indonesia has their own local culture. According to Sudartini (Sudartini, 2012), local culture is the identity of community and society in specific range of area and can be described as the attitudes or traditions which contain the norms and customs of local people who live in certain area range. Therefore, in multicultural country like Indonesia, local culture highly influences the society in each region. One of the examples of this cultural influence can be found in the coastal areas

of Sumatra, precisely in the Riau province, where Malayan culture is still rooted in society and has a major influence on people's lives (Ardianto, 2018)

Nevertheless, even though the coastal areas of Riau in Sumatera Island is rich in culture, in term of educational development, the coastal areas of Riau Province in Sumatera Island is still left behind compared to urban areas in Indonesia. This is because the areas are still quite rural and remote with difficult access get there. Some of the challenges that arise during teaching and learning process are students' insecurity in learning English, students' unfamiliarity with the English learning materials and learning contents, and students' difficulties in spelling the English words due to their low competences and insufficient amount of learning materials, especially in learning English vocabulary (Febriana et al., 2018; Kaspul et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2019). Particularly, Kaspul et al. (Kaspul et al., 2020) also added that in learning English vocabulary as the essential base in learning English, students in the rural area experience difficulties in memorizing the vocabulary which make them unable to remember a lot of English vocabularies to practice English properly. Thus, the implementation of local culture-based material in English learning, especially in learning vocabulary, can be used as one of the solutions to solve the problem in students' vocabulary retention.

Regarding the vocabulary learning, according to Alizadeh (Alizadeh, 2016), vocabulary is the central component in learning a language which can be defined as the knowledge of words and meanings arranged in alphabetical order along with the words definition. Alqahtani (Alqahtani, 2015) also added that vocabulary is a necessary equipment for language learners because language comprehension and communication might be ruined if someone only has few vocabularies. Without sufficient understanding of vocabulary, language learners cannot understand the meaning of what others are trying to convey as well as expressing their own ideas and thoughts in conducting a meaningful communication (Lessard-Clouston, 2013).

Furthermore, Octaberlina & Anggarini (Octaberlina & Anggarini, 2020) also stated that vocabulary is needed to be fluent in four central skills of English which are speaking, reading, writing, and listening. The more vocabulary we get, the more proficient we will be in understanding and mastering English language. This statement is also supported by Asyiah (Asyiah, 2017) which also stated that enriching vocabulary in learning a language will help students mastering four crucial skills of English mastery including speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Vocabulary connects the four language skills altogether in order helping someone to become proficient in English language.

Meanwhile, regarding local culture, based on Sudartini (Sudartini, 2012), local culture can be defined as a term that refers to the local people's attitudes or traditions that contain their approach of thinking and act based on norms and customs. Every place has its own unique culture that differentiates them from each other. Hence, local culture can also be defined as a certain culture in a specific place owned by a certain community and society (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018). The local culture of each area

reflects the personality of the society, their way of life, their belief, and their value of living.

Local culture is the most basic culture as the identity of community and society in a certain area, including their ideas, beliefs, and rules in living. Thus, it can be integrated as teaching and learning material for students who live along with the local culture around them. According to Ni Made Ratminingsih et al. (Ratminingsih et al., 2020), local culture-based material is the learning material and resources that cover local cultural values. Hence, learning through local culture-based material can be made contextual due to the content of the material that is relevant to students who grow up and live with the local culture around them. Besides that, due to the students' familiarity with the topic, students can also be more confident because the local cultural values that they have known decrease the cognitive pressure that they face.

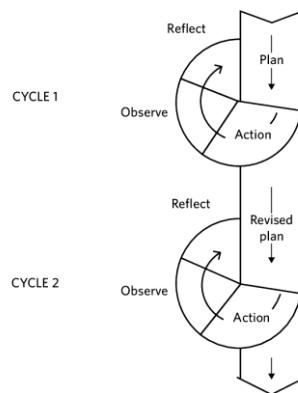
There have been several studies that stated the benefits of using local culture-based material in English learning. According to Yassi (Yassi, 2017), local culture-based material can be used as the tool to strengthen student's identity, character, and mindset through the cultural values and norms integrated in the learning material. Besides that, by inserting the local culture in education, the values in local cultural context can assist and help students in understanding every concept in the subject matter and applying the knowledge through practice outside the school (Utari & Degeng, 2017). Furthermore, Butarbutar et al. (Butarbutar et al., 2019) and Ratminingsih & Budasi (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018), also added that using local culture-based material in English teaching and learning process can decrease students' cognitive pressures and increase their interests in learning English due to their familiarity with the local cultural values in the material. In term of vocabulary learning, using local culture-based material in English teaching and learning process can enrich students' vocabularies, enable students to memorize vocabulary in a long term, and promote the vocabulary learning for students (Alakrash et al., 2021; Butarbutar et al., 2019). Thus, it has been proven that using local culture-based material can bring many benefits to the students especially for their vocabulary retention.

Based on the preliminary research conducted in At-Thabranī class of Sains Tahfizh Islamic Center Siak Elementary School in Siak Regency, Riau, it is found that students' vocabulary knowledge were really low. Through preliminary interview with the English teacher of the school, it can be found that the causes of the low vocabulary skill and knowledge were poor vocabulary retention that made students easily forget the new words being taught, students' lacking in words spelling, and the limited time to learn vocabulary in the classroom. Therefore, CAR is conducted to solve this problem. Previous studies have stated that using local culture-based material through CAR could improve students' vocabulary development and students' vocabulary learning motivation (Ismail, 2019; Kristiawan et al., 2022; Namaziandost et al., 2021). However, previous studies did not specify the area which the study was conducted. Hence, through this research, the researcher attempted to find out the implementation of local culture-based material in teaching English vocabularies specifically for students

in the coastal area of Riau and the effect of implementing local culture-based material in enhancing students' vocabulary retention. The local culture-based material will be integrated through the storytelling activity using local folktale story in Siak, Riau to find out its effect in improving students' vocabulary retention.

## METHOD

The method employed in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Clark et al. (Clark et al., 2020) mentioned that CAR is the type of action research that represents an extension of the reflection and critical self-reflection that an educator employs on a daily basis in their classroom. The researcher will collaborate with the English teacher at the target school. The English teacher as the collaborator will help the researcher to obtain and interpret the data. The classroom action research will be carried using Kemmis and Mc Taggart model as cited in Burns (Burns, 2019). The model refers to four phases in each cycle which are planning, action, observation, and reflection. The figure of those phases is depicted as follows.



**Figure 1. The Spiral Model by Kemmis and McTaggart**

The subjects of this research were the 27 students of II At-Thabirani class at Sains Tahfizh Islamic Center Siak Elementary School in the academic year of 2021/2022. The research was conducted from May 2022 to June 2022. The techniques used for data collecting were through interview, observation, and test. The interview was done directly before and after conducting the cycles by using interview guidelines as the instrument and voice recorder as the supporting tool. The questions were asked to the English teacher and the students. For the observation, observation checklists and field notes were used to observe students' overall behavior. As for the vocabulary test, test given to the research subjects was consisted of three types of tests which are pre-test, post-test cycle 1, and post-test cycle 2. There was only one researcher involved in this study. The researcher furthermore used documentation tools such as camera to take photographs during the treatment and sound recorder to record the interview to help the researcher in recording and documenting the activities.

To analyze data from the interview and observation, the researcher followed the procedures from Burns (Burns, 2019) which consisted of five steps including

assembling the data, coding the data into specific patterns or categories, comparing the data, building interpretations from the data, and reporting the outcomes from the data. Meanwhile, the data from the test are analyzed by following five procedures from Burns (Burns, 2019) that consist of obtaining all of the students' scores, classifying the data into three sections which are the result of pre-test, post-test cycle 1, and post-test cycle 2, comparing the students' average scores from three sections of data, building interpretations of the data by seeing whether there was any improvement in students' vocabulary retention, and reporting the outcomes of the test results analysis.

The indicator of success in implementing the local culture-based material will be seen from whether the students' overall post-test scores will be above the minimum standard of completeness criteria determined by the school which is 80. If the students did not reach the criteria, a further cycle was needed. Meanwhile, if the students had reached the criteria, the cycle would be stopped and would be no longer needed.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Findings**

#### **1. Preliminary Activities Analysis**

The preliminary activities in this study were divided into preliminary observation, preliminary interview toward teacher and students, and the giving of pre-test to the students. From the preliminary observation, the researcher observed the class and found that students' vocabulary retention were still low. When the teacher gave them vocabularies and asked them to memorize it, there were a lot of students who struggled and asked for more time in the class to memorize it. Besides that, regarding their vocabulary spelling, they still made frequent errors in spelling the vocabularies.

These problems were confirmed by the teacher and students when the researcher did the preliminary interview. The teacher stated that students' vocabulary retention in the class was rather low, thus even though students' could quickly memorize vocabulary, they would forget it easily either. Through the interview, the students also stated that they considered learning vocabulary difficult because they did not know the meaning of the vocabulary quite well.

These problems regarding students' vocabulary retention and knowledge were also verified from the result of students' pre-test scores. From their results, it could be seen that out of 27 students there were 18 students who got the score below the minimum standard of 80. The mean score of 61.23 from students' results was also below the minimum standard of criteria. The students' pre-test score can be seen as follows.

Therefore, it can be concluded that students' vocabulary skill and knowledge were really poor. The causes of the low vocabulary skill and knowledge were poor vocabulary retention that made students easily forget the new words being taught, students' lacking in words spelling, and the limited time to learn vocabulary in the classroom.

## 2. Cycle 1 Analysis

### a. Planning

After identifying the problems, the researcher and the teacher as the collaborator of the study set a series of plans in order to try to resolve the problems. The plan was to implement culture-based material into the teaching and learning activity in the class to improve students' vocabulary retention and vocabulary knowledge. For the first action in the cycle 1, the researcher planned to deliver the storytelling of "The Story of Putri Mambang Linau" along with its storybook.

Therefore, before doing the storytelling in front of the class, the researcher prepared the materials used such as the picture storybook, and practiced the storytelling. Besides that, the researcher also prepared the exercise and quiz that would be given to the students at the end of the lesson.

### b. Action

There were two meetings that being conducted in this cycle. The first meeting of cycle 1 was held on Monday, 23 May 2022 at 8.35 a.m. to 9.35 a.m. The researcher acted as the teacher under the supervision of the English teacher. Meanwhile, the English teacher of II At-Thabranī class was the collaborator. The researcher implemented the local culture-based material through the storytelling activity using picture storybook that contained the local folktale story. While delivering the story, the students got enthusiastic with the material. They paid attention to the story well. However, there were several students who got too enthusiastic and started to become noisy. Therefore, to control it, the researcher did the same solution as the English teacher did when the researcher observed the class before which is by clapping to gain students' attention again. For

In the meeting, when students encountered difficulties in memorizing the given vocabularies, the researcher tried to strengthen their vocabulary retention by linking the vocabularies with the prior local folktale story. Through this, students slowly could recalled the given vocabularies because they remembered what the characters from the folktale story did in the story.

For the second meeting of cycle 1, the meeting was held on Friday, 27 May 2022 at 10.30 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. The researcher still acted as the teacher along with the English teacher who supervised the teaching and learning activity in the class. The preliminary activity was still the same as meeting 1, but the main activities were different. The storytelling activity was replaced by reviewing the story with the students. After that, the researcher checked students' vocabulary retention by asking them questions verbally regarding the given vocabularies from the local folktale story. Most students could utter the answers after the researcher linked the vocabulary with the folktale story. Besides that, students were really excited with the storytelling activity and they actively participated in the activity. At the end of the cycle, the cycle 1 post-test were assigned to the students.

### c. Observation

Through the observation checklist and field notes, the researcher discovered that students also paid attention well to the explanation of the topic using local culture-based material, showed their enthusiasm toward the implementation of local culture-based material in vocabulary learning, and delivered comments and their thoughts about the implementation of local culture-based material by saying that the material used was fun and refreshing compared when they obligated to memorize vocabularies by copying notes into their books.

However, during cycle 1, the students could become really noisy when the researcher did not pay enough attention to them. They would constantly asking permission to go to the toilet or moved from their seats and started running in the class. Hence, the learning activity was disturbed because the class was crowded.

### d. Reflection

The researcher reflected the students' progress and the problems encountered during the cycle after finished the treatment in cycle 1. For the progress, students became more active in the learning process with the implementation of local-culture based material compared to the learning process they usually did with their teacher. They engaged in the storytelling activity happily and were able to understand the vocabularies given. Students also feel motivated to study because they said they like listening to story and because some of them were familiar with the local material used in the teaching and learning process.

However, the post-test results still showed that there were 15 students out of 27 students who did not passed the minimum standard of criteria. The average score of cycle 1 post-test was also below 80, which is 79.25. This due to the students' frequent errors in answering the questions about spelling in the post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that although students' vocabulary retention improved in cycle 1, their vocabulary spelling still became a problem. Besides that, another problem was students became really noisy when the researcher did not pay enough attention to them. Students would constantly asking permission to go to the toilet or moved from their seats and started running in the class while doing the exercises and quiz. Some students also began to talk to each other when they had finished the assigned tasks which made the situation in the class became really crowded. Hence, the problems were to be fixed in the cycle 2 of the research.

## 3. Cycle 2 Analysis

### a. Planning

Due to the several problems encountered during the Cycle 1, the researcher planned to do some strategies to handle the problems. First of all, the researcher planned to deliver the second part of "The Story of Putri Mambang Linau" and give the students ten more vocabularies from the story. After that, the researcher planned to give students exercises on each meeting. The exercises focused on the spelling aspect.

The model of the exercises including fill in the missing letters, fill in the crosswords, and word scramble.

However, due to the class being crowded during the teaching and learning activity in the prior cycle, the researcher decided that the activity of doing exercises would be done in groups through competition, not individually. The group who win the competition then would get a reward from the researcher. Hence, all of the students would participate fully in every activities together and could be less crowded.

**b. Action**

There were two meetings that being conducted in this cycle. The first meeting of cycle 2 was held on Monday, 30 May 2022 at 8.35 a.m. to 9.35 a.m. Students' responses toward the treatment were the same as in the cycle 1. They got pretty enthusiastic with the local culture-based material used in the classroom activity. The difference between the action in cycle 1 and cycle 2 was that the researcher paid attention to students' spelling as well. Hence, in the cycle 2, after the researcher finished the story and gave students the vocabularies, the students were asked to write the spelling of the vocabularies one by one on the whiteboard in front of class. Besides that, students also needed to remember the vocabulary spelling during the exercises activity. The exercises were done in study groups. Therefore, students were focused on working in groups and became less crowded compared to the cycle 1.

For the second meeting of cycle 2, the meeting was held on Friday, 31 May 2022 at 8.35 a.m. until 9.35 a.m. The researcher reviewed the local folktale story to the students. Then, the researcher tested the students' vocabulary retention based on the vocabularies that had been given in the prior day by asking the students verbal questions of the vocabularies and the meanings. When being asked, most students still could answer the questions, especially when the researcher linked the vocabularies with the folktale story. The researcher also played the charades game with the students during this meeting. During the game, students were having fun to play it. They were enthusiastic with the game but this time they were not moved here and there during the class because they needed to work as a team to win the game. Hence, the class became less noisy compared to the meetings in cycle 1.

**c. Observation**

After analyzing the field notes and observation checklist, the researcher discovered that students paid attention well while the researcher delivered the lesson using local culture-based material. They also engaged well with the activities. They were really enthusiastic and excited with the lesson. Students were seen to actively participate in all of the activities. Besides that, students also were seen to actively interact with the researcher and peers.

According to the field notes, compared to the meetings in cycle 1, students were less crowded in the class due to the group activities assigned to them. Although there were some students who still tried to be noisy, their peers would remind them to not be noisy due to the group activities. Besides that, in term of vocabulary retention and

spelling, they were already able to memorize all the vocabularies and write the vocabularies down with correct spelling.

#### d. Reflection

Similar with cycle 1, the researcher noted students' progress during the cycle in the reflection stage. For students' progress in cycle 2, students had been able to memorize most of the given vocabularies. In term of spelling, although there are still several students who did not score perfect in the post-test, their results were better than in cycle 1.

After analyzing and comparing the scores between the cycle 2 post-test and the cycle 1 post-test, it can be seen that there was improvement in students' scores. The mean score of the cycle 1 post-test was 79.25 with 15 students failed to reach the minimum standard of completeness criteria, while the mean score for the cycle 2 post-test score was 92.34 with all of the students passed the minimum standard of completeness criteria. This indicated the improvement in students' vocabulary retention and knowledge. Therefore, all of the problems regarding students vocabulary were resolved and there was no need to conduct another cycle.

### B. Discussion

After analyzing all the data including students' pre-test result, the results of students post-test from cycle 1 and cycle 2, the interview transcripts, the observation checklist, and the field notes during the treatment, it can be seen that students' vocabulary retention improved and their vocabulary spelling developed constantly. The output of the pre-test, cycle 1 post-test, and cycle 2 post-test indicated that there were students' improvement in their vocabulary.

The implementation of local culture-based material in teaching vocabulary for the second grade students of SD Sains Tahfizh Islamic Center Siak in the rural coastal area of Riau had positive impact in improving students' vocabulary retention and knowledge. The students' progress can be noticed after analyzing their score improvement and their behavior throughout the research. In the preliminary activity, most students encountered difficulties in answering questions regarding the vocabulary in the pre-test. They did not know the meaning of the vocabulary quite well and hesitated in writing the vocabulary spelling. Thus, the average score of their pre-test was 61.23 which did not meet the minimum standard of completeness criteria.

Then, the researcher tried to implement the local culture-based material into the class through the use of local folktale story from a picture storybook. The average score of their vocabulary test after the implementation increased to 79.25. However, this score still did not reach the minimum standard of criteria. This due to the students' problem with the vocabulary spelling. To deal with the problems, the researcher asked each students to write the correct spelling of certain vocabulary in the whiteboard. Then, if the students made mistakes, the researcher would point it out and corrected them. The exercises in the cycle 2 were also made to improve students' vocabulary spelling. These strategies could be considered successful because in the cycle 2,

students' average score in the post-test increased to 92.34 with all students passed the minimum standard score. Students' improvement throughout the pre-test, cycle 1 post-test, and cycle 2 post-test can be seen from the table below.

**Table 1.1 The Average Score of Students' Vocabulary Improvement**

Name of the Test	Pre-Test	Cycle 1 Post-Test	Cycle 2 Post-Test
Total Score	1653.33	2386.66	2493.33
Average Score	61.23	79.25	92.34
The Increase in Students' Average Score	-	18.02	13.09

The most prominent improvement obtained after implementing the local culture-based material in the classroom was students' vocabulary retention. While the students seemed to struggle in memorizing the vocabularies before because in the preliminary interview they stated the learning method from their teacher was quite monotonous, after the implementation of local culture-based material they could easily remember and maintain the vocabulary longer in their brain. This is in accordance with the theory from previous researchers which stated that implementing local culture-based material through CAR could improve students' vocabulary development and motivation in learning because students no longer thought that the learning material was monotonous (Ismail, 2019; Kristiawan et al., 2022; Namaziandost et al., 2021). Furthermore, after the treatment, the students could also easily relate the vocabulary to the local folktale story used whenever they felt like they forgot the vocabulary. Besides that, they also enjoyed the learning activity and motivated in learning because they liked the material that being used in the class. Therefore, the implementation of local culture-based material in improving students' vocabulary retention was considered successful.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of local culture-based material in vocabulary learning is useful to improve students' vocabulary retention. The results from the observation and test indicated that students' vocabulary achievement increased constantly after the implementation of local culture-based material in the classroom. The number of mean scores throughout the pre-test, cycle 1 post-test, and cycle 2 post-test increased gradually. In the pre-test, the mean score was 61.23 while in the cycle 1 post-test the mean score was 79.25. This showed that there was an increase in the value of 18.02 in student scores. Furthermore, in the cycle 2 post-test, the students' mean score increased to 92.34, indicating that there was an increase in the value of 13.09 in student scores. Therefore, it is clear that the implementation of local culture-based material could improve students' vocabulary retention. Besides that, throughout the research, it can be found that students' attitude toward the implementation of local culture-based material

was good. They considered learning with local culture-based material was fun thus they were motivated in learning the vocabulary. Therefore, they paid well attention to the lesson and they managed to engage with the lesson well. Hence, the implementation of local culture-based material in vocabulary learning was successful in improving students' vocabulary retention as well as motivating the students in learning the vocabulary.

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