



## Enhancing English Writing Skills Through Culturally Relevant Texts: An Experimental Study in Banten EFL Learners

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**Abstract:**

Writing is often considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning because it requires a strong understanding of grammar, a broad vocabulary mastery, and high syntactic abilities. This study examines the influence of local culture-based texts on improving students' writing skills in Banten. With a quasi-experimental design involving 35 students in the experimental and control groups, data was collected through pre-test and post-test tests, questionnaires, and observations. The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group (mean -32.571, SD 5.987,  $p < 0.001$ ), with students showing high motivation (mean 4.3) and satisfaction with the material (mean 4.2). Observation recorded increased interactions, such as discussion empathy (3.5 to 4.6). These findings confirm that local culture-based texts improve students' writing skills, motivation, and collaboration. The research implications include the development of cultural-based contextual learning strategies to support the Independent Curriculum, improve linguistic competence, and strengthen students' cultural identity.

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## Introduction

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia presents several challenges, particularly in developing writing skills. Writing is often considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, as it requires a solid grasp of grammar, an extensive vocabulary, and advanced syntactic abilities (Liu & Chen, 2024; Said et al., 2022). Difficulties arise when teaching methods rely solely on standard materials and fail to incorporate students' cultural backgrounds. This approach can lead to apathy, low engagement, and an inability to write effectively. In regions like Banten, known for their rich cultural diversity, EFL instruction should adopt innovative strategies that integrate local culture into the learning process, making it more relevant and meaningful for students (Hoang Hoa, 2020; Liu & Chen, 2024).

Integrating culture-based texts into writing skills is a strategy that helps close the gap between language acquisition and students' cultural literacy (Garim et al., 2023; Milošević, 2022). Such texts elevate the prospects of the learning materials and even enhance students' comprehension of language elements within a more pertinent framework while at the same time promoting their creative and composition abilities. This way of learning enables the students to relate their backgrounds to learning a new language, thus fostering better learning. Also, culture-based materials might be used to sustain culture and traditions that will otherwise disappear owing to the impact of modernization. By raising folktales, local customs, or stories of daily life, the learners not only acquire English but also appreciate their relevance in the world context. This method enhances the development of cultural competency, boosts students' self-esteem, and instills a sense of their local identity in the age of globalization, thereby producing learners who are linguistically competent and culturally active.

Several researches have indicated the close ties between culture-oriented materials and the enhancement of students' learning skills in the EFL context. A study by Nambiar et al. (2020) seems to indicate that students' use of reading modules based on local cultures, such as folklore and traditions, improves their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills and their confidence in using English. Another study indicated that the culture of the target language text could enhance students' levels of intercultural understanding and stimulate the acquisition of critical thinking skills and the student's verbal skills (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021). Also, an approach that includes a local perspective with the help of participatory mapping has been found to enhance student's writing skills by providing relevance of the learning to the ecological and social-legal context of the community (Jayantini et al., 2024). More studies shed light on the acquisition of English language writing skills in a range of digital forms of communication.

The study on South African language learners explored biliteracy among ten multilingual learners and sought to demonstrate how the students' writing integrated language and culture as well as embodied their knowledge and identity—two dimensions that are rarely addressed. The results of this study highlight the importance of teachers utilizing students' cultural perspectives in their teaching of writing (Kim., 2020). This is in unity with other studies that back culture-based methods of enhancing writing performance and cultural consciousness of EFL students. This intensifies linguistic skills and simultaneously makes room for the articulation of the students' true selves. These findings provide consistent evidence to

bolster the proposition that using culturally relevant materials increases students' language abilities and cultural knowledge, which is important in the era of globalization.

Although various studies have shown the importance of cultural integration in EFL learning to improve writing skills, most studies have focused on aspects of cultural awareness or intercultural abilities in general. Previous research, such as the use of culture-based texts to improve students' critical thinking skills and intercultural awareness, has placed more emphasis on language learning as a tool for developing cultural competencies without examining in depth how culture-based materials affect the specific qualities of students' writing skills (Nambiar et al., 2020; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021).

In addition, studies highlighting multiliteracy and biliteracy, such as those conducted on multilingual students in South Africa (Kim, 2020), reveal the importance of the relationship between culture, identity, and writing, but still lack support for how this process can be adapted in the context of EFL students in Indonesia who have diverse cultural backgrounds. In this context, this study aims to identify the influence of culture-based texts on improving the writing quality of EFL students, especially in the Banten area, to answer the need for culturally and contextually relevant learning.

## Research Method

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design with a pre and post-test on two groups: an experimental group and a control group. Out of 70 EFL students in Banten who were purposefully selected, 35 students were placed in each group. Students in the experimental group were taught using cultural text-based learning, while the control group was taught using traditional methods. The main instrument was a written test on the student's skills in both pre and post-testing, with the help of observer rating scales and interviews. Data collection involved pre-testing, treatment for 6 weeks, and post-testing. The data analysis uses the Paired Sample t-test to determine the significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. This test calculates the mean difference ( $\bar{d}$ ) of each value pair and then compares them with the standard deviation ( $s_d$ ) normalized by the root of the sample number ( $n$ ). The formula used is:

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d \sqrt{n}}$$

where the result is compared to the critical value of the t distribution at degrees of freedom ( $df = n - 1$ ). If the  $p$  -value is less than the significance level ( $\alpha$ ), then the results show a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test values, confirming the effectiveness of the treatment given. The questionnaire and observation used the following criteria.

**Table 1. Questionnaire Categories**

No	Categories
1	Cultural Relevance
2	Motivation for Writing
3	The Influence of Cultural Texts on Writing
4	Satisfaction with the Materials Provided

Table 2. Observation Categories

No	Categories
1	Ability to discuss in groups
2	Engagement in conversations
3	Ability to share ideas with friends
4	Increasing empathy through discussion

## Results and Discussion

Before engaging in a more in-depth discussion, the following summarizes the results of the classical assumption tests, including assessments of normality, homogeneity, and the independent samples t-test. These tests were performed to confirm that the data satisfied the essential assumptions for subsequent statistical analysis and to substantiate the conclusions drawn from the study.

Table 3. Tests of Normality

Class		Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Score	Pre Test Experiment	.951	32	.154
	Post Test Experiment	.962	35	.262
	Pre Test Control	.963	32	.324
	Post Test Control	.922	35	.217

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

According to the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test, all the data in this study demonstrate a normal distribution. The significance values for each dataset were as follows: 0.154 for the Pre-Test Experiment, 0.262 for the Post-Test Experiment, 0.324 for the Pre-Test Control, and 0.217 for the Post-Test Control, all exceeding the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the data distribution in each group satisfies the assumption of normality, making it suitable for further analysis using parametric statistical tests.

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Score	Based on Mean	2.530	1	68	.116
	Based on Median	2.862	1	68	.095
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.862	1	59.134	.096
	Based on trimmed mean	2.233	1	68	.140

The results of the variance homogeneity test using Levene's Test indicated that the significance values for all calculation methods—mean (0.116), median (0.095), median with adjusted degrees of freedom (0.096), and trimmed mean (0.140)—were all greater than 0.05. This suggests that the variance among the groups in this study is considered homogeneous. Consequently, the assumption of variance homogeneity is satisfied, allowing for the valid execution of parametric statistical analysis.

Table 5. Paired Sample Test

Table 1. Paired Sample t Test									
		Paired Differences						Significance	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
				Lower	Upper				
Pre Test - Post Test	-32.571	5.987	1.012	-34.628	-30.515	-32.187	34	<.001	<.001

The findings from the Paired Samples Test revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the evaluated pairs. The mean value was -32.571, accompanied by a standard deviation of 5.987. The 95% confidence interval ranged from -34.628 to -30.515. With a t-value of -32.187 and degrees of freedom (df) equal to 34, both one-sided and two-sided significance values were found to be less than 0.001. This strongly suggests that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is substantial, indicating a notable improvement in results following the implementation of the treatment.

Table 6. Questionnaire Results

Categories	Mean	SD	Score
Cultural Relevance	4.1	0.6	3-5
Motivation for Writing	4.3	0.5	3-5
The Influence of Cultural Texts on Writing	4.0	0.7	2.5-5
Satisfaction with the Materials Provided	4.2	0.4	3.5-5

The questionnaire results indicate that participants generally responded positively to using culturally relevant texts to enhance their English writing skills. The category of Cultural Relevance received a mean score of 4.1 (SD = 0.6), with responses ranging from 3 to 5, suggesting that most students found the texts culturally appropriate and engaging. Motivation for Writing showed a slightly higher mean score of 4.3 (SD = 0.5), indicating that students were highly motivated to write when exposed to culturally relevant materials. In terms of The Influence of Cultural Texts on Writing, the mean score was 4.0 (SD = 0.7), with scores ranging from 2.5 to 5, which indicates that while the texts had a generally positive effect, there was some variation in how strongly students felt the texts impacted their writing skills. Finally, Satisfaction with the Materials Provided had a mean score of 4.2 (SD = 0.4), with scores ranging from 3.5 to 5, showing that students were generally satisfied with the materials used in the study. These findings suggest that using culturally relevant texts positively impacted student motivation and writing skills, with some variation in individual responses.

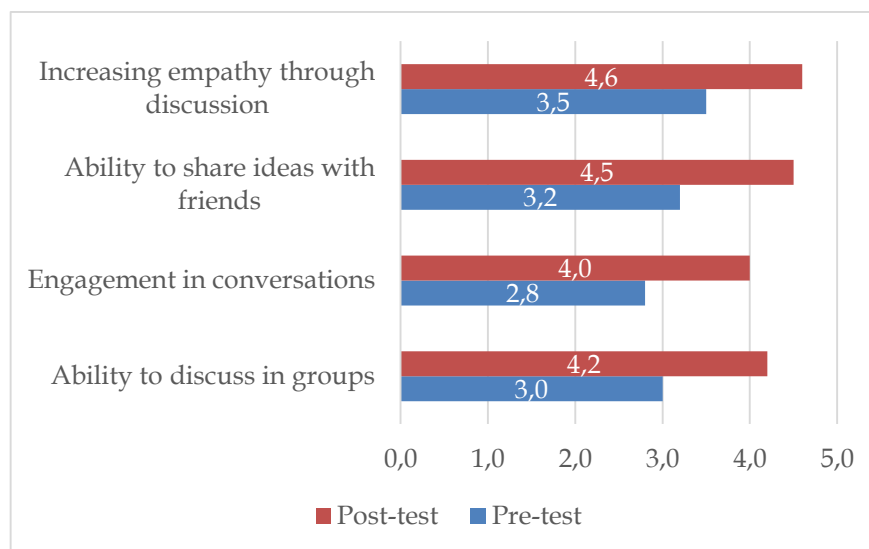


Figure 1. Observation Results

Figure 1 compares the pre-test and post-test results across four categories: increasing empathy through discussion, sharing ideas with friends, engaging in conversations, and discussing in groups. All categories' post-test scores show significant improvement compared to the pre-test scores. The highest improvement is observed in increasing empathy through discussion, where the score increased from 3.5 to 4.6. Similarly, the ability to share ideas with friends increased from 3.2 to 4.5, highlighting a notable enhancement in students' ability to express themselves. The score for conversation engagement rose from 2.8 to 4.0, indicating better discussion participation. Lastly, the ability to discuss in groups improved from 3.0 to 4.2. These results suggest that the intervention, likely involving culturally relevant texts, positively impacted students' communication skills, collaborative abilities, and overall engagement in group discussions.

Having analyzed the data, the current study indicated an increase in English writing skills among the students following the use of texts relevant to culture. As shown through the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test, Table 3 shows the data distribution was normal for both experiment and control groups at the pre-test and post-test, with a significance of more than 0.05. As such, parametric statistical tests were appropriate for use. Moreover, the results of Levene's test, Table 4, indicated the homogeneity of within-group variance, with a significance value higher than 0.05, which gave a green signal to apply the Paired Sample Test. The results of the Paired Sample Test, Table 5, show very big differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group: the average difference is -32.571, with a t-score of -32.187 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This is an indication of the fact that accommodation of culturally based text within English learning largely increases writing skills among the students, which is reflected in the scores of the post-test. The implication is that local culture integrated with lesson content, as material for that, enriches the whole learning and builds the students' capacity to write in English.

Based on observations, it was found that there was a significant increase in several aspects, such as empathy in discussions increased from 3.5 to 4.6, the ability to share ideas from 3.2 to 4.5, engagement in conversations from 2.8 to 4.0, and group discussions from 3.0 to 4.2. These findings confirm that local culture-based learning



not only improves writing skills but also supports the development of student empathy, communication, and collaboration. In addition, the questionnaire also noted several interesting findings, such as cultural relevance, which obtained an average score of 4.1 (SD 0.6), indicating that the material was considered relevant and interesting. Motivation for writing recorded the highest score, with an average of 4.3 (SD 0.5), indicating high motivation for writing. The influence of cultural texts on writing has an average of 4.0 (SD 0.7), indicating a positive influence despite variations in responses. Meanwhile, satisfaction with the materials recorded an average of 4.2 (SD 0.4), indicating student satisfaction with the materials used. These findings confirm the effectiveness of culture-based approaches in increasing student motivation and engagement.

The findings are in agreement with several studies that emphasize the importance of the integration of local culture in the teaching of the English language for students' language proficiencies. For example, the studies conducted by [Nambiar et al., \(2020\)](#), [Hoa \(2020\)](#), and [Oktarina et al., \(2022\)](#) reveal that the use of locally based reading materials contributes substantially to students' reading and writing skills as well as raising their level of proficiency in English. Similar findings were also discovered by the research of [Banaruee et al. \(2023\)](#), [Peng & Patterson \(2022\)](#), and [Rashid et al. \(2021\)](#), who examined the importance of integrating culture in English language teaching to improve students' motivation, identity, and language skills, as well as enrich their understanding of language as a global communication tool. The research further strengthens the argument that the local elements as part of the instructional materials can promote more meaningful and relevant learning experiences, enhancing language complexity. In addition, [Jayantini et al. \(2024\)](#) highlighted that the local flavor approach effectively enabled the students to incorporate socio-legal and eco-cultural values in their English writing tasks. Even though this study confirms the effectiveness of the localized cultural-based approach, the findings also indicate the challenges, particularly concerning the lack of knowledge of grammar by students ([Luthfiyati et al., 2023](#)), which need to be further explored in future research to maximize the application of this approach in teaching English.

The outcomes of this study have significant implications for English language teaching theory, especially in the areas of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), cultural learning, and critical pedagogy. Considering the definition of ICC advanced by [Byram \(1997\)](#), teaching English involves more than just exposure to the language; it also entails teaching the local culture, which improves the learners' ability to communicate across cultures ([O'Dowd, 2012](#)). Students are taught how to appreciate and adapt to cultural differences, making it easier for them to interact in a multicultural society. Furthermore, culturally based learning recognizes the close relationship of language to culture and argues that instruction informed by local culture makes sense to the learners ([Garim et al., 2023](#); [Milošević, 2022](#)). This increases the students' awareness of their local culture and helps them better understand other cultures and languages. On the other hand, [Byram \(1970\)](#) argues for a form of critical pedagogy that endorses the advantages of such an approach and advocates language education as a means of changing the perception of students about language as not just a subject but a tool that permeates culture and politics ([Polakow, 1987](#); [Prahani et al., 2020](#)). One such potential positive change is the utilization of culturally relevant

texts, which may trigger students to analyze their social and cultural contexts. It is essential to understand language as a means of communication and a powerful means of effecting change. Overall, these theoretical frameworks stress the potential positive contribution of cultural aspects in teaching English as a language and its practical application, which helps equip students with the skills needed for communication in a multicultural world.

Practically, these findings open up opportunities to develop more contextual and culturally based English teaching methods and curricula, especially in countries with diverse local cultural richness. At the high school level, for example, the English curriculum can integrate local culture-based texts that are relevant to students' lives so they can more easily connect language learning with their daily experiences (Miqawati et al., 2024; Ratri et al., 2024). Additionally, local culture-based texts can encourage students to be more active in writing activities by writing about topics close to their lives, improving their writing skills and critical thinking abilities. At the tertiary level, particularly in learning English for academic purposes, this approach can enrich learning materials with topics that develop linguistic skills and broaden students' cultural and social horizons, preparing them to communicate effectively in an increasingly multicultural global world (Kováčiková, 2020). The results of various studies reveal that (1) several local cultures have been used to produce EFL materials, and (2) the development of these materials has a high level of validity, practicality, and effectiveness (Oktarina et al., 2022). The process of developing teaching materials that integrate local culture has been proven to be able to improve the quality of reading materials. Integrating local cultures provides a more familiar context for students and encourages stronger emotional and intellectual involvement in the learning process. Therefore, the development of EFL materials should pay attention to the richness of local culture so that teaching materials become more relevant, meaningful, and effective in helping students achieve learning goals (Tantri & Santosa, 2024).

In recent developments, many teaching materials that were previously print-based have been adapted into digital or online versions. The conversion of teaching materials from offline to online format brings various advantages, such as wider accessibility and flexibility in their use. EFL materials, including writing based on local culture that is converted into digital form, can reach more students, both inside and outside the classroom, and encourage independent learning (Karademir et al., 2021). Additionally, digital platforms allow for integrating multimedia elements, such as audio, video, and interactive visuals, which can enrich students' learning experiences (Alam & Mohanty, 2023). This approach is also aligned with the demands of 21st-century digital literacy, which requires students to not only be able to read and understand texts but also develop more complex multimodal literacy skills (Kholis & Azmi, 2023). Thus, converting EFL materials based on local culture into digital formats can significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of learning.

The implementation of the results of this research in various contexts, both in secondary schools and universities, shows great potential in developing more relevant and holistic language teaching. Integrating local cultural elements in English learning can increase students' understanding and confidence in communicating, as well as make language learning more engaging and connected to their lives. For example, a culture-based approach can be applied in learning materials that incorporate local



literary texts, cultural videos, or interviews with local communities, enriching language skills and strengthening students' cultural awareness. These findings, therefore, are not only relevant for the educational context in Indonesia but also for language education in other countries that want to integrate local culture in their English learning curriculum.

The relevance of the findings is also in line with education policies in Indonesia, which emphasize the importance of culturally context-based teaching to create more meaningful and relevant learning for students. The Independent Curriculum, introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, provides space for integrating local cultural values into the learning process (Suprpto et al., 2021). This approach aims to improve language skills and strengthen students' identity and pride in their local culture. By incorporating cultural texts in learning materials, such as those found in this study, students can learn English through a closer perspective to their world, enriching the learning process and helping them develop language skills holistically (Alakrash et al., 2021; Azizah et al., 2021). In the context of Banten, connecting English teaching with local culture can also improve students' understanding of how cultural values affect how they communicate and think, making learning more effective and enjoyable.

Integrating local culture into English learning can provide significant benefits. The use of culture-based texts allows students to understand the concept of language within the framework of their own cultural values, such as oral traditions, folklore, and distinctive cultural symbols (Kim, 2020). This can help students relate their personal experiences to learning, creating deeper engagement. Additionally, culture-based teaching can increase students' intercultural awareness, helping them understand how cultural values affect the way they think and communicate. In this context, cultural teaching can be done in two ways, first, using the mother tongue as a tool to compare between the culture owned and the culture of the target language. Second, through foreign language subjects, either through materials in textbooks or cultural demonstrations of foreign language speakers. The combination of these two activities will indirectly encourage students to (i) learn their first language accompanied by the process of understanding language as a social and cultural phenomenon (language awareness), (ii) language learning is always accompanied by cultural learning, and both can be done, including through comparative techniques using students' first language (cultural awareness). Third; cultural demonstrations of foreign language speakers are an effective medium for the language learning process (Byram, 2020). In this way, learning English is not only a means of mastering a foreign language but also a medium to strengthen students' identity and expand their cultural horizons in a global context.

Using texts based on local culture like EFL textbooks, for instance, can also create more fun and effective learning. Students become more motivated when teaching materials directly relate to their daily lives. Materials related to the local cultural environment can help students feel valued, increasing their confidence in learning. Thus, EFL textbooks no longer only focus on linguistic aspects and the development of language pedagogy in a narrow sense, but now have a broader role in transmitting culture to learners. In the education system, textbooks not only teach grammar, vocabulary, and communication skill, but also introduce cultural values,

social norms, as well as perspectives inherent in the language being studied (Risager, 2021). This allows students to understand the language in a more holistic context, so they can interact more effectively with native speakers and understand the cultural meanings behind the use of the language. In addition, in the wider community, foreign language textbooks contribute to increasing intercultural awareness by helping individuals recognize and appreciate cultural diversity. Thus, the role of textbooks in teaching foreign languages is not only limited to linguistic aspects, but also as an important medium in building a broader cultural understanding in the educational and social environment. Teachers have the opportunity to adopt more creative learning strategies, such as local folklore-based discussions or cultural project assignments, which can enrich the student learning experience.

The study had several limitations; a small sample size of only 70 students, a limited research location in Banten, and a short study duration of 6 weeks, which may not be enough to measure the long-term impact. Further research is suggested to involve a larger and more diverse sample, covering different locations, and extend the duration to explore the long-term influence of local culture-based texts in English language learning.

## Conclusion

The study shows that integrating local culture-based texts in English learning significantly improves the writing skills of EFL students in Banten. This approach not only helps students master the language in a more relevant and meaningful way by connecting the learning material to their daily lives but also strengthens their appreciation of the local culture. The study's results support the importance of contextual, culturally oriented, and holistic English teaching to improve students' linguistic skills, cultural awareness, and written communication competencies in a multicultural society. This approach is relevant to be applied more widely in Indonesian education.

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