

Integrating Local Knowledge into Language Learning: A Study on the Your Language My Culture (YLMC) Project

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Abstract

Language and culture share a nebulous relationship with multiple considerations like which culture and how it should be represented, taking into account the diverse contexts in which English is taught. This paper investigates the integration of local knowledge into English language learning by examining the cultural content of the Your Language My Culture supplementary reading module and teachers and students' acceptance of the module. Using a conceptual framework that incorporated types of culture, cultural senses and representation of cultural information, data were collected using a questionnaire, reflective blogs and evaluation checklists from 57 teachers from various schools in the state of Terengganu in Malaysia. Content and thematic analysis were carried out and the findings show that while local, target and international culture were represented, the emphasis was towards local culture. Most of the cultural information was represented in the form of visual illustrations and less in dialogue and video recordings with the aesthetic sense dominating in terms of cultural sense. It is recommended that types of representations like dialogues, recordings, written tasks, visuals, texts and realia be included to help students attain pragmatic skills to use the language. A richer inclusion of the cultural senses in a balanced way can help students reach a holistic understanding of culture and recognize different perspectives embedded in the language.

Keywords: cultural representations, cultural senses, language learning, local knowledge, types of culture

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