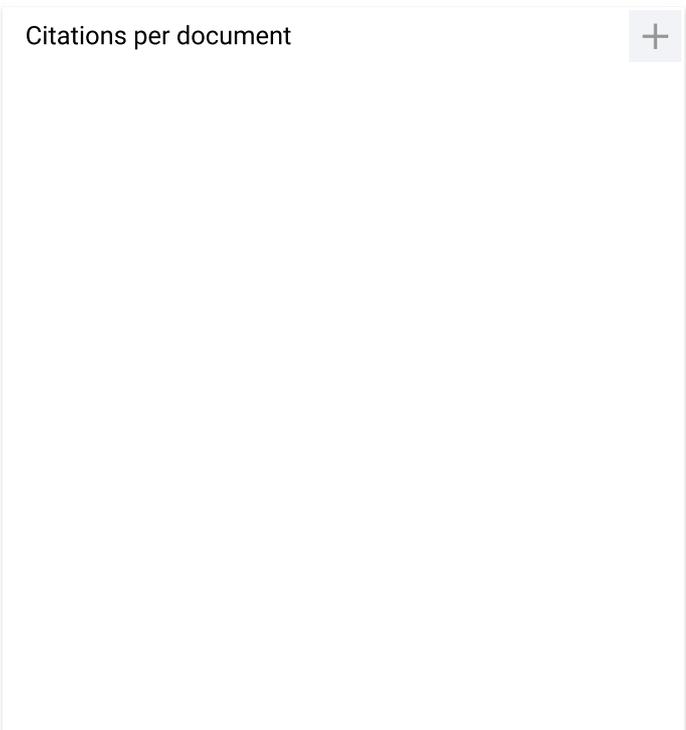
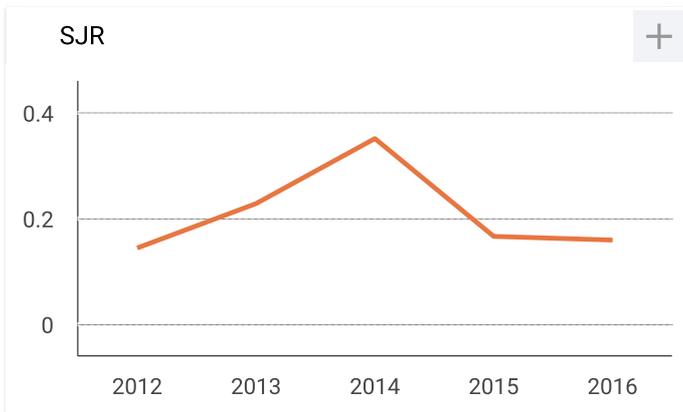
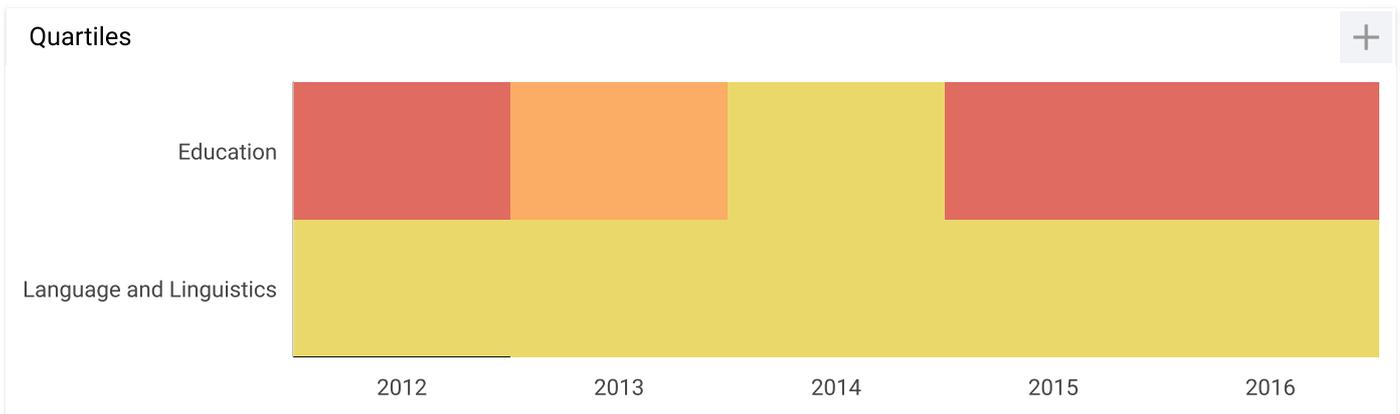


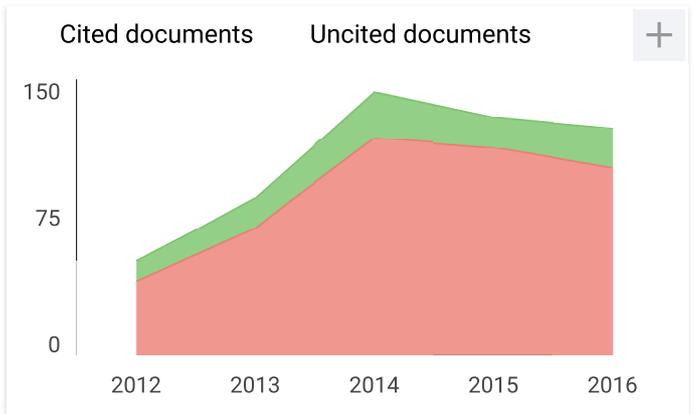
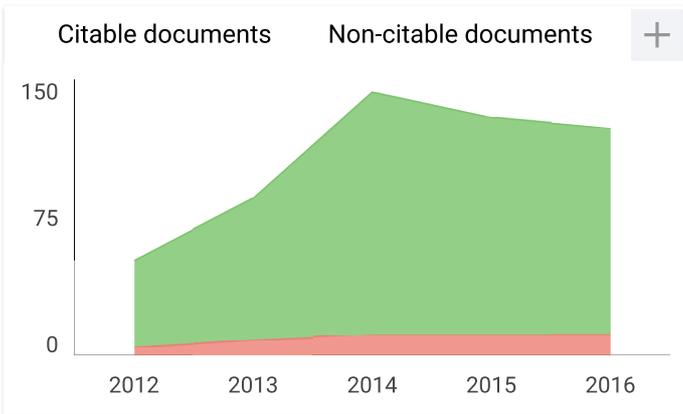
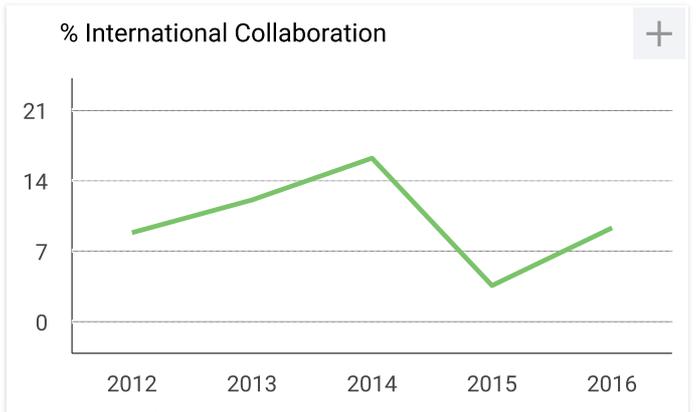
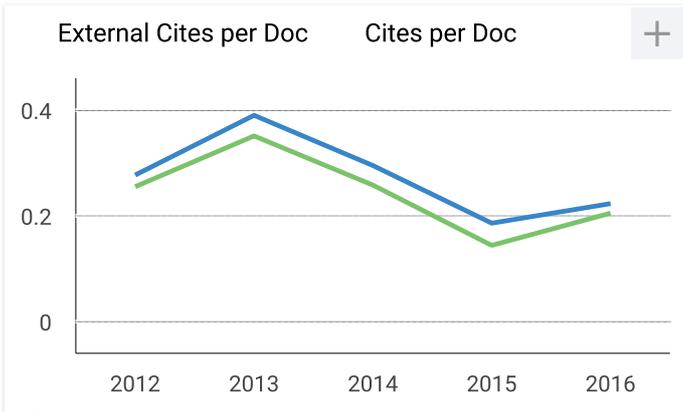
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## **Motivating EFL Learners to Speak by Embracing Local Culture and Tradition**

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### **Abstract**

Whilst many teaching techniques have been researched and implemented in English foreign language classroom to encourage learners to speak, those that embrace learners' local culture and tradition in excelling EFL learners' motivation to speak have hardly been examined. This paper in particular explores EFL learners' and teachers' beliefs and motivation on a teaching model offered in its attempts to encourage students' motivation to speak English. As a part of larger Research and Development (R & D) study, the data were obtained from students' surveys, small scale classroom implementation of the model, focus group interview (FGI) with sixty three EFL learners (derived from two different Junior high schools; a regular school and a high prestigious school), and FGI with several EFL teachers and two ELT experts in Gorontalo Province Indonesia. The study indicates that the integration of EFL learners' local culture tradition in their speaking classroom has significantly influenced EFL learners' motivation to speak English. It also reveals that autonomy learning of the learners persists despite challenges and difficulties experienced by learners and teachers in their learning and teaching context where English has been hardly used both outside and inside their classrooms. It is hoped that this paper discussion will offer a new perspective in teaching English in a foreign language context.

**Keywords:** *teaching speaking, motivation and local culture tradition*

## **Introduction**

This study aims to motivate English foreign language (EFL) learners to speak through the integration of learners' local traditions. There has been a conflict of opinions in related literatures regarding the issue of cultural integration in English foreign language classrooms. While some scholars (e.g. Abdulrahaman, Usu, and Tanipu, 2016; Choudhoury, 2014; Dai, 2011; Hesar, Konca and Zarfsaz, 2012 ) believe that EFL teaching should integrate the teaching of the target language culture because language and culture cannot be separated, others (e.g Barfield and Uzarski, 2009; Đorđević, 2009; Kristiawan, 2012; Kanoksilapatham, 2015) argue the importance of incorporating students' local culture in EFL teaching because the sense of closeness and familiarity can become motivational factors influencing EFL learners to be engaged in the language. Whilst realizing its importance in teaching target culture in EFL teaching, I proposed that embracing local culture in the EFL classroom learning can be a pivotal factor in stimulating EFL learners' motivation to be engaged in their learning, which then impacts their motivation to speak. While many English motivational studies have offered in-depth discussion on various concepts, strategies, and teaching methods that can be used to boost students' speaking motivation (for example Dincer and Yeliyurt, 2017; Kim, 2014 and Xu 2010) those that embrace learners' local culture and tradition in enhancing EFL learners' motivation to speak, as this study attempts, are still under-researched.

## **Literature Review**

Several concepts and theories in second language acquisition that are considered vital in helping the researcher to better understand the study are briefly reviewed in the following. This includes the perspective of motivation suggested by Dornyei (2005), and the notions of the importance of local culture in EFL learning by scholars such as Barfield and Uzarski (2009) and Kristiawan (2012).

Motivation is a significant consideration in English foreign language (EFL) learning as it is a critical factor influencing students to speak. Dornyei (2005) suggests three key specific components in understanding motivation in learning and teaching are the course, the teacher and the group. The course specific is closely related to syllabi, teaching methods and materials, while the teacher specific component refers to the teacher's teaching style, personality, feedback and teacher-student relationship. The group-specific is linked to the dynamics learning mode of the group. Dornyei's conception (2005) was useful in bettering understanding

of the present study, for example in its relation with the specific course components that integrate local culture teaching embodied in the design model and the relationship of teacher and student.

In relation to the issue of local culture integration in EFL teaching, current studies into learners' tradition and their connection to EFL learning have gained attention in recent decades (for example; Barfield and Uzarski, 2009; Kristiawan 2012 ; Kanoksilapatham, 2015; Đorđević 2009). Barfield and Uzarski (2009) proposed 'indigenous artifacts' and other cultural aspects that can be used in EFL classroom such as food, dress, authentic artifacts, music and dance. They claim that there are two benefits that EFL learners can gain through cultural based teaching. First, it can broaden learners' knowledge about their own culture. Second, this teaching approach is 'more relevant' to the learners, as it can be linked with the materials closely related to the learners' cultural artifacts. Some scholars such as Kristiawan (2012), Kanoksilapatham (2015) and Đorđević (2009) have done research in their own countries that show that learning English through the incorporation of learners' local culture not only helps students become more aware of their own culture and language, but also makes the study of English more successful.

While many literatures discussed many meaningful forms and activities that promote learners' speaking in EFL classrooms, including role play, storytelling and narration this present study chose group work and individual presentation on learners' authentic local cuisine to stimulate learners' motivation to speak.

## **Methodology**

As part of a larger Research and Development (R & D) study, this cultural integration model attempts to encourage EFL learners' motivation to speak. It was carried out in two classes of junior high-schools; a regular school and a prestigious school in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. The data were obtained from students' surveys, small-scale classroom implementation of the model, focus group interviews (FGI). There were a total of sixty-three EFL learners in the two classes, and FGI with two EFL teachers from each class, and two ELT experts in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. Class selection was done purposively due to EFL teachers' willingness to participate in the project.

The R & D study had three phases; pre-implementation, implementation and evaluation. The pre-implementation phase contained the needs analysis. It was carried out in two schools through classroom observation, students' survey, document analysis, and interviews with teachers. Two ELT experts discussed the teaching model comprehensively; integrating

Dornyei's concept of 'course specific' (2005). The discussions took into account the EFL teaching curriculum and its content in junior high school to ensure this learning design suits the needs and curriculum expectations for speaking skill enhancement. This process was followed by the implementation phase (small-scale classroom implementations of the model were conducted with the two classes separately). During the implementation, classroom observation and teachers' feedback were provided for the learners. The last phase was the evaluation phase, which consisted of students' surveys collected through questionnaires. The surveys investigated the students' perceptions of the model before and after the implementation process. Focus group interviews with the learners in each class, and a separated- FGI with the two teachers were also delivered in this phase.

The model used was called; 'expressing your speaking through your own cultural tradition,' which aims to encourage EFL learners to speak through oral presentation by integrating learner's local culture in its content. The students' cultural tradition here specifically limits to 'local traditional sweets of Gorontalo and others'. "Others" referred to other traditional sweets from regions outside Gorontalo, for example Java, Makassar, Bolamongondow, Ternate and Luwuk in order to accommodate learners with different food cultural backgrounds across the two schools. Examples of the food chosen by students were Popolulu, onde-onde and nogosari. In this study, these traditional delights were proposed as 'authentic learning materials' because the learners were able to choose which sweet they would present. By integrating a 'Show and Tell' technique, the teachers guided their students in the learning model and its procedures. The students were directed to search for related vocabulary, phrases, expressions and sentences needed in their presentations. The presentation consisted of an introduction, body and closing where the food's name, cooking procedure, and story were related. The presentations ranged from 3 to 5 minutes. To avoid learners simply memorizing, some related learning tasks were also incorporated during the process. Consultation hours and corrective feedback were provided to ensure the learners would benefit significantly throughout the learning process.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Applying local culture and tradition in speaking: Teachers' and learners' perception**

The following table portrays results of several themes that are considered crucial in understanding the learners' beliefs and motivation in learning. Data from focus group interviews which were integrated in the discussion were quoted verbatim and translated

literally in English (It is noted that the language in the survey and in FGI were delivered in Indonesian as requested by the participants).

Table 1. Summary of students' perceptions on several themes before and after implementation of the model

Perception of learners from regular school				Perception of learners from prestigious school			
Before the implementation of the model		After the implementation of the model		Before the implementation of the model		After the implementation of the model	
Themes	In percentage	Themes	In percentage	Themes	In percentage	Themes	In percentage
Perceived lack of vocabulary	40	Perceived on vocabulary enrichment	64.86	Perceived lack of vocabulary	29	Perceived vocabulary enrichment	42
Perceived lack of confidence	77.14	Believing the sense of confidence has raised	70.27	Perceived lack of confidence	46	Believing the sense of confidence has raised	68
Feel unconfident in English interaction with teacher	91	Believing the confidence raised in English interaction with teacher	89	Feel unconfident in English interaction with teacher	61	Believing the confidence raised in English interaction with teacher	92
Believing the teacher's use of English in classroom is minimal	11.43	Believing the teacher's use of English in classroom has significantly improved	51.35	Believing the teacher's use of English in classroom is minimal	29	Believing the teacher's use of English in classroom has been significantly improved	61
Feel lack of creativity in their English learning	57.14	Feel their creativity level has raised	78.38	Feel lack of creativity in their English learning	53	Feel their creativity level has raised	75

Overall the majority of the learners from the two types of schools, regular and prestigious, showed positive beliefs and motivation towards the model implemented although they were different in terms of the percentage in each theme drawn on Table 1. This study shows that their perceptions of low confidence have significantly changed after being involved in the implementation phase. For thirty-five learners from the regular school, before the implementation of the model, the issue of lack of confidence in speaking English was notable dominant at 77.14 % of the total participants, and 91% of the total expressed lacking confidence in their English interaction with their teacher. In contrast, this mode of perception significantly

changed after the implementation because 70.27% of the total indicated that their level of confidence in speaking increased. This impacted their English interaction with their teacher as shown by 89% of participants reporting increased confidence in teacher interaction. Compared to the learners from the prestigious school background, it appears the number of learners who lacked confidence both in speaking and in their English interaction with their teacher were lower than the other group of learners. Of the twenty-eight learners, 46% demonstrated their lack of confidence in speaking English, and 61% of them admitted lacking confidence to speak English with their teacher. This can be interpreted that more than 50% of the twenty-eight students felt confident to speak. Interestingly, after the implementation, 68% of the twenty-eight learners believed that their sense of confidence to speak English had risen, and the level of their English interaction with their teacher also increased to 92% of the total number of students. There is an inconsistency between students' perceptions of their English confidence and their perceptions of their English interaction with their teacher. While their level of confidence in speaking English appeared high from the beginning, this is not the case with their English interaction with their teacher, which significantly increased from 61% of low confidence to 92% saying that their confidence level had risen after involvement in the implementation process. Given this evidence, it can be concluded that the learning process experienced by the students in the implementation phase positively influenced the learners' confidence in speaking, despite being different in percentage across the two groups of learners. The differences in their level of confidence in English between these two groups could be an indication that the learners from the prestigious school have more exposure to English because the academic rank of the school is considered higher than the other groups thorough the province. It might also be possible to assume that as a favorite school, the students from the prestigious group have higher status in terms of their socio-economical background compared to the other group. This may consequently impact their higher connection to English learning because many of them can afford English private courses, and thus these two reasons can influence the students' level of English competence, including the amount of their speaking exposure.

The perception of the students' confidence that positively influences the learners' motivation in English is more apparent in both the students' and teachers' qualitative recollections. Through the focus group interviews, learners from the two schools indicated their motivation and the rise of their confidence level to speak English after going through the learning process which integrates students' local tradition.

As some students say:

*“I am so motivated because before I was so afraid to speak English but now I become brave to speak”.*

*“In the beginning, I feel shy to speak English, now I feel more confident, I know more words I also know how to pronounce the words. Besides, we now are more active to talk in English than before which was more writing! “*

Similarly, the two teachers also indicated the positive impact of the model on their students’ motivation and confidence. Consequently, these have strengthened several speaking aspects such as pronunciation and vocabulary; highlighted in the example below (obtained from the EFL teacher of the regular school).

*“The effect of this model is so high towards students’ motivation. The students were following the process. Before the students feel less confident but they were so motivated to keep learning and enrich their vocabularies, improve their pronunciation in every meeting thorough the process of implementation...”*

The other key finding in understanding learners’ and teachers’ motivational view is the perception of the nature of the model and the benefits they gained through participating in the process. Both students and teachers seem to perceive the model as interesting, fascinating and fun, and pointed out several benefits from their learning topic and material which resulted in their encouragement to speak English. Highlighted are some examples drawn from the students’ recollections:

*“It is interesting and we feel so happy, because we learn to speak English by talking about our traditional cakes like this. We also learned more about the cake we chose, how to make it. The point is we were really so excited ( student from school type 1).*

*“So motivated to introduce the cake that we love because other friends would know what ingredients and what tools we can use to make the cake. So I can be creative in my speaking about the cake I like in the classroom...I love English now which before I did not” (student from school type 2).*

*“I like to be in this project because we will do the presentation about the cakes in front of our friends. But we have to practice first; choosing what cake we would bring, what vocabularies we would use , so happy to be able to speak English...” (student from school type 1).*

Similarly, the two teachers perceived the same views by emphasizing the nature and the benefits obtained by their students. Both teachers perceived this model of speaking which contains learners' local culture cuisine as interesting and thus motivational in speaking English, besides pointing out some benefits to their learners, such as the process impacts students' knowledge both in English and in a specific traditional sweet. These consequently result in establishing and enhancing students' awareness of their own culture, as well as improving student and teacher interaction, as viewed in the following example:

*"It is great. It is interesting and motivating the students to learn. I think to integrate our local culture in the learning process can enhance students' knowledge, and it also can facilitate learners to be aware about their own cultures. Besides, students and teacher can interact each other, communicating the food, the students' choice. Through these all, it can enrich students' vocabularies. They were so active and joyful because they can express what they like (teacher from regular school type)".*

From the teachers' perspectives, the model process they completed positively impacted the amount of English they used in class. While these two teachers admitted that previously they had downplayed their students' communicative competence which pushed them to revert back to Indonesian in their teaching, this perception was more apparent to the teacher from the regular school. According to the teacher, it was hard to expect students to speak as they lack English communicative competence. She pointed out students' low proficiency in almost every aspect of speaking and emphasized the lack of vocabulary, which she believes is the main obstacle to student engagement in daily English communicative interaction. However, by learning this cultural-based teaching, she positively explains that this is one way to motivate students to be more engaged in their English speaking interaction.

The sense of competitiveness, independence and creativity are also revealed in this study as benefits gained by the learners from the two schools when they were involved in the process of model implementation. Overall, both teachers believe that the process facilitated their students to be more competitive, creative and independent in their learning though a fluidity occurs across these two teachers' perceptions regarding these. Whilst the teacher from the prestigious school indicated that her learners' sense of competitiveness, independence and creativity are more pronounced through learners' involvement in the model, the teacher from the regular school appears to hold the belief that this model has become extremely pivotal in establishing and building the learners' sense on competitiveness, independence and creativity. These advantages also have been pointed out by the learners from both schools. As some students explain:

*“I am so motivated because every student got the same opportunity to perform. Beside, through the process of practice we have gone through things which have made us to be motivated to speak. When we see our friends have performed well we were so passionate to do better than them.*

*“So motivated to introduce the cake that we love because other friends would know what ingredients and what tools we can use to make the cake. So I can be creative in my speaking about the cake I like in the classroom...I love English now which before I did not.*

*“We choose our own topic, what food we would like to present and then we arrange our own sentences. If we confuse we can consult with our teacher. We arrange our sentences based on some steps. They are Introduction, body and closing. We become know how we to do the process. I practice my English in front of the mirror...*

*“In the beginning, I feel shy to speak English, now I feel more confident, I know more words I also know how to pronounce the words. Besides, we now are more active to talk in English than before which was more writing!*

While these senses of competitiveness, independence and creativity seemed to influence the participants’ positive belief and motivation in the model, it is noteworthy that the learners perceived that the positive role played by the teacher in facilitating learners through their learning process had a significant influence on the teacher-student relationship (Dornyei 2005), and thus learners’ motivation to be engaged in the learning process, and hence excelling their motivation to exercise their English communication.

Moreover, the two teachers positively pointed out that of the three factors above, the sense of independence is a fundamental point for the learners and the teachers in dealing with future challenges that arise from limitations and difficulties from the learners themselves and their learning environment. Several limitations and difficulties perceived by the two teachers are: students’ low English proficiency, lack of support of English from the school environment and society, limitations in the availability of authentic teaching materials, teachers work overload and large class size. All of these have influenced less use of English by the learners both in their classroom interaction and outside the classroom.

All the recollections of teachers and students above have shown that the students’ motivation in learning English, are influenced by the implementation of the model in their English classroom. There are several possible reasons to explain this. First, it is related to the nature of the learning model, which incorporates students’ local tradition alongside all supported activities being perceived by both learners and teachers as interesting. For the learners, there is a feeling of familiarity to this authentic presentation material; their local

traditional sweets are usually seen in their daily environment and can influence their perception and their motivation for being more involved and engaged in the language. This is also supported by the previous studies by (Barfield and Uzarski, 2009; Kurniawan, 2012 ; Kanoksilapatham, 2015; Đorđević 2009) that implied the exposure of learners to the topic and materials that are closely attached to their daily life and interest will positively impact their English learning. The result of this present study showed that by incorporating EFL learners' local culture, learners can go through meaningful experiences and thus build up their confidence to be engaged in their learning. This study also implies that learning English does not necessarily put aside learners' own culture but can go alongside the learning. This means that EFL learners in their English learning experience should be provided with opportunities to speak and use English in relation to topics and materials in which they are interested and thus motivate them to be engaged. While measuring the exact improvement of the learners' enhancement in their ability to speak is beyond this paper discussion, however, this study proved that learning English can be done by embracing learners' local culture and tradition. As Cem and Alptekin (2014, p.18)) suggested, EFL learners should be exposed to activities that are both "cross culturally and culturally relevant to them". Consequently, this will positively impact the learners' motivation to speak. Besides, it is also better to serve the learners with topics and activities that are connected to them, rather than imposing things that are alien and thus demotivating the learners to learn. Particularly, this model can have a significant influence on the learners' confidence and their motivation to learn and speak English.

## **Conclusion**

Through the findings and discussion, conclusions can be drawn in relation to students' cultural integration in teaching speaking in an EFL context. First, the incorporation of student's local culture in EFL classrooms can be a great influence in enhancing learners' confidence which subsequently influences their motivation in engaging in communicative English. Second, values such as 'competitiveness', independence and creativity also emerge as important factors revealed as benefits obtained by the EFL learners through the process. This way of teaching may also enhance learners' and teachers' knowledge and awareness about their own cultural traditions, and hence contribute to local language and cultural preservation. It also reveals that autonomous learning persists despite challenges and difficulties experienced by learners and teachers in their educational context where English has been hardly used both outside and inside their classrooms. Lastly, it is hoped that this study offers some implication for both classroom practical practice and curriculum policies in EFL context. The findings are

useful in instigating further analysis of issues concerning various school types and EFL learners' diversity both in urban and rural areas in an EFL context.

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