

The Effects of Implementing Cultural Literacy on Early Childhood in Ternate City, Indonesia

Radjiman Ismail^{1*}, Ramli Yusuf², Sukardi Abbas³, Tamrin Taher⁴, Nursin Sampil⁵, Nurfitri Sahidun⁶ and Suparman⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ternate, Indonesia

⁷Department of Mathematics Education, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia

^{1*}radjimanismail@iain-ternate.ac.id, ²ramliyusuf@iain-ternate.ac.id, ³sukardi@iain-ternate.ac.id, ⁴tamrin@iain-ternate.ac.id, ⁵nursinsampil@iain-ternate.ac.id, ⁶nurfitrisahidun@iain-ternate.ac.id, ⁷suparman@pmat.uad.ac.id

Abstract

Indonesia is a culturally diverse country with different tribes and one of the cultural products observed to have been preserved for generations is the oral tradition as evident in the use of fable stories by communities to train children starting from early childhood. This study was conducted to improve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in early childhood by using a cultural literacy approach in the form of oral traditions. The research method employed was ethnography and the data were collected with the use of questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The results showed it is possible to increase knowledge, attitudes, and skills in early childhood using effective oral traditions media. It is, therefore, recommended that early childhood teachers apply cultural literacy approach to improve children's abilities.

Keywords: cultural literacy, oral traditions, early childhood

1. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelago state with thousands of islands stretching from Sabang to Merauke which are united by the ocean. Nations and states considered to be archipelago usually create maritime-based culture along the coast and agrarian ones on inland or far from the coast as found in Indonesia. These two cultures have different forms but are often directed towards the same goal which is expressing gratitude to the creator. Meanwhile, oral tradition has been discovered to be one of the cultural products characterizing both cultures and has been passed on for generations to instill morals, manners, and attitudes in traditional societies. It has the ability to strengthen the character of students to live and grow in line with the beliefs and ideologies of their immediate environment. Vygotsky's statement quoted by Slavin (2009) showed that cognition is developed based on two main ideas with the first involving the belief that intellectual development can only be understood from historical and cultural exposure of the children. The second is based on the belief that development depends on the sign system existing in each person during the growth stage and this includes symbols created by a culture to think, communicate, and solve problems, for example, language, writing, or counting systems [1].

Steward's statement quoted by Gidden (2010) also stated that cultural evolution is a special type of historical reconstruction and specific methodology or approach [2] occurring anytime and anywhere due to the changing times. This is observed in the use of cultural products such as media, sources, and learning to support communities. Tuntun Sinaga, Gede Eka Putrawan, and Novita Nurdiana studied the "Cultural Values in a High School EFL Textbook in the Indonesian Context" with the focus on discussing gender in

Indonesian culture and gender bias was reported to have been occurring frequently in certain ethnic cultural values. Meanwhile, both women were found to have the same rights and obligations in some cultures and this was associated with the structural changes in traditional societies causing the cultural values associated with gender to shift in order to avoid bias [3].

Ormrod (2009) quoting O. Lee and Rugoff's statement also found culture not to be a static entity as observed with its ability to continually change in line with the absorption of ideas, innovations, and new ways of thinking, especially when dealing with other cultures [4]. This means there is usually interaction between cultures either through inculturation or acculturation. Moreover, Ucu Cahyana, Yuli Rachmawati, Maria Paristiowati, Sasmoko, Ahman, Jujuk Ferdianto, Agus Dudung conducted journal research on "Ethnopedagogy Integration to Mobile Learning for Improving Student Learning Achievement in Remote Areas " using the ethnopedagogy approach while learning media were developed using different devices. The results showed learning material is a product of the cultural values of the students' location and they are developed to ensure they implement them in their daily life [5].

Vygotsky (2009) further emphasized the importance of speech and verbal thinking in forming new psychological structures through the transformation from direct, innate, and natural to mediated, artificial, and mental forms and methods of behavior developed through the cultural developmental process [6]. Schunk (2012) also quoted Vygotsky's statement that all learning is mediated using different tools such as language, symbols, and signs which are acquired by children acquire during their social interactions with others [7]. Moreover, Reed (2011) reported a perceptual symbol system to be a capital approach due to its ability to store sensory experiences such as audition, sight, taste, smell, and touch [8]. Complex information has been discovered to be making the working system of the brain to be maximal, thereby, building a web of networks in a child's brain. Mead (2018) described the social process, involving communication, to be responsible for the emergence of new objects in the realm of individual organism experiences implemented in the process [9]. This is observed in children's ability to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills through the different stories they hear. As'aril Muhajir, Ngainun Naim, Agus Zaenul Fitri, and Asrop Safi'i studied the "Approach to the Development of Multicultural Education Curriculum in Darul Hikmah Modern Islamic Boarding School Tulungagung, Indonesia" using a multicultural education approach in learning. The purpose was to ensure students in modern Islamic educational institutions appreciate the cultural differences existing around them early in their lives and each was expected to be able to appreciate one culture or another in social interactions [10].

Crain (2011) quoted Bruner's opinion that the acquisition of knowledge and understanding has three different aspects, or forms of representation, including enactive, iconic, and symbolic. Enactive is a character based on action or real objects used as learning resources for children, iconic is an action replaced by an image while symbolic is an expression in the form of language. Bruner considered all learning occurs in a cultural context and that the interrelationships between individuals with different social backgrounds greatly influence knowledge and understanding [11]. Sternberg (2008) also quoted the opinions of Meyer, Salovey, and Caruso which explained a way of assimilating emotions with thoughts, understanding, and ratios, as well as the ability to regulate emotions in oneself and others [12]. The meanings and symbols contained in the oral tradition were aimed to form emotional intelligence in the children in other for them to have a sense of sensitivity, tolerance, and respect for others, in addition to the knowledge and skills. Hill (2012) quoted Piaget's explanation of schemata to be a way of perceiving, understanding and thinking about the world and this is referred to as the framework or structure of organizing mental activities [13]. It involves the scheme of building children's

mindsets through cultural literacy such as fairy tales, saga, folk songs, regional dances, decoration, and other means used as media and learning resources to develop their abilities in aspects of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The cultural literacy as a medium and learning source for children was conducted in the form of thematic learning and attitudes using fluent and correct mother tongue, Indonesian.

2. Methodology

The research data were collected, presented, and calculated through observation sheets for each domain including knowledge, attitudes, and skills to make appropriate conclusions. The instrument used was validated through expert judgment using three professionals in the field of evaluation and the indicators for each aspect are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Research Instrument Grid

Knowledge	Attitude	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the characters in the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the characteristics of not having an arrogant attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color the pictures of characters in the story
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the characters in the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the characteristics of a humble attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw the characters in the story
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the name in the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an attitude of respect for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a character collage using soft materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know the events in the story 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make three-dimensional shapes of the characters using soft materials
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retell the story heard

Every indicator on each aspect used a rating scale of C = Enough, B = Good, and K = Less.

3. Results and Discussion

Ternate is one of the regions in eastern Indonesia located on the coast with Gamalama as its plateau and since maritime territories also have agricultural or mountainous areas, most of the residents are fishermen while there are farmers or agrarian societies, especially with a focus on spices. Both cultures are united, creating uniqueness not shared by other regions. Ternate was also originally a sultanate area with the trade relations conducted by the sultanate starting from the 16th century which was marked by the arrival of the VOC. The area became open with the natives recorded to be interacting with migrants to trade spices.

One of the oral traditions developed at the time was the story of "Banjanga and Si Bilolo." They are two different characters with Banjanga presented to be agile and having fast walking movements while Si Bilolo is another name for snail and this means it has slow walking movements. Banjanga arrogantly challenged Si Bilolo to compete in a race with the assumption that he is going to win due to his ability to run faster but, before the competition, Si Bilolo had gathered and told his friends to

help him win in order to reduce the arrogance of Banjanga. Therefore, a line was made by the friends along the road to be traversed in the race and when the race started, Banjanga discovered Si Bilolo's voice was heard far ahead every time he calls him, and this made him increase his spend until he was exhausted and could not reach the finish line. He was defeated and he stopped being haughty and arrogant towards Si Bilolo and other animals from that moment. This oral tradition was used as a medium, source, and learning material to improve early childhood literacy skills.

Cultural literacy learning in early childhood is an alternative to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills in children and an example of these media is the fairy tale or saga which was selected due to some of its several advantages such as the (1) aspects of knowledge which includes knowing the (a) name of the character, (b) characteristics of the characters, (c) name of the animal and (d) events, (2) aspects of attitude including (a) not being arrogant, (b) humble, (c) admitting to the strength of opponents/friends, (3) skills including (a) coloring the characters, (b) drawing a character, (c) making a character collage, (d) making three-dimensional shapes of the characters from soft materials, and (e) retelling the story heard in accordance with the language mastered in the form of mother tongue or Indonesian.

The knowledge aspect consisted of four indicators which are (a) knowing the name of the character and the results showed a 5% of the children do not understand or know the characters in the story, 10% know the names of the characters well, and 85% know the characters well. Another indicator was (b) knowing the characteristics of the characters and 10% of children were reported not to understand the characteristics of the characters in the story, 5% know the names of the characters well, and 85% understand the characteristics of the characters in the story well. The third indicator was (c) knowing the name of the place and all the children were reported to know the name of the place in the story while the fourth indicator was (d) knowing the events and 10% were found not to understand the events in the story, 20% know, and 70% understand the events in the story as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Aspects of student knowledge

Knowledge Aspects	Rating in %		
	B	C	K
Get to know the name of the character in the story	85	10	5
Get to know the characteristics of the characters in the story	85	5	10
Get to know the name of the place in the story	90	5	5
Get to know the events in the story	70	20	10

Note: B = Good, C = Enough, K = Less

The attitude aspect had three indicators and the first was “not being arrogant” with 20% of the children observed not to understand the characteristics of arrogant people, 30% understand enough, and 50% had a better understanding. The second was “humble” and 20% were recorded not to understand the characteristics of humble people, 20% had enough while 60% had a better understanding. The third indicator was “admitting the strengths of opponents/friends” with 30% found not to understand the characteristics of people that want to admit the strengths of their friends, 30% had enough while 40% had a good understanding. All these results are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Aspects of student attitudes

Attitude Aspects	Rating in %		
	B	C	K
Get to know the characteristics of not arrogant attitude	50	30	20
Get to know the characteristics of humble attitude	60	20	20
Have an attitude of respect for others	40	30	30

Note: B = Good, C = Enough, K = Less

The skills aspect consisted of five indicators, including the “coloring the characters” with 10% of the children found to be less neat in coloring, 20% were pretty neat while 70% were able to color images neatly and cleanly. The second aspect was “drawing a character” and 20% was observed to have the ability to draw the characters according to their shapes, 25% was good enough while 55% drew effectively. The third was “making a character collage” and 40% were not been able to make collages according to the shape of the characters while 20% was good enough and 40% made the collages exactly according to the shape of the characters. Moreover, the fourth was “making three-dimensional shapes of characters from soft materials” and 20% were not been able to form characters in the story using plasticine or soft materials, 30% was good enough while 50% made the shapes effectively. The last aspect was “retelling the story” and 20% were not able to retell the story according to the plot, 30% tried enough while 50% retold the story according to the plot. These results are shown in the following table.

Table 4. Aspects of student skills

Skills Aspects	Rating in %		
	B	C	K
Coloring pictures of characters in the story	70	20	10
Drawing the characters in the story	55	25	20
Making a collage of characters in the story with materials from nature	40	20	40
Making three-dimensional shapes of characters from soft materials	50	30	20
Retelling the story heard	50	30	20

Note: B = Good, C = Enough, K = Less

The results on the knowledge aspect for each assessment indicator are further represented in the following figure.

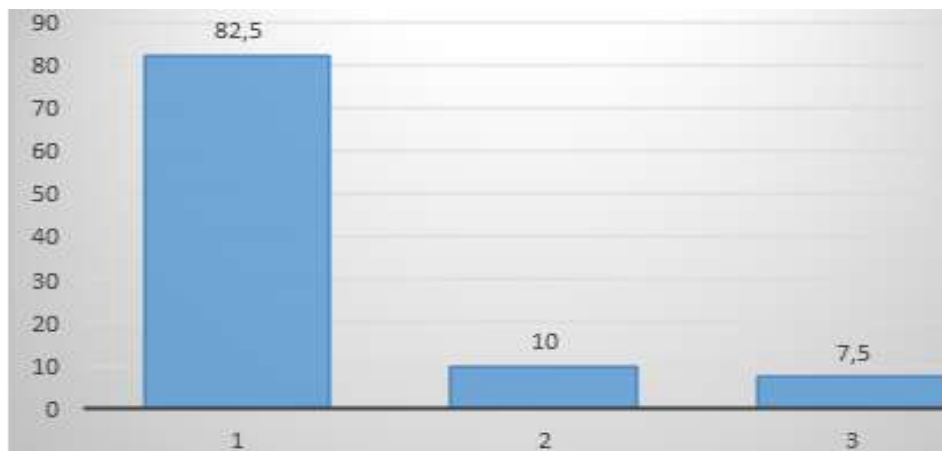


Figure 1. The assessment percentage graph of early childhood cultural literacy in Indonesia for the knowledge aspects

Figure 1 shows the scores for the Good, Enough, and Less categories in the knowledge aspect were 82.5%, 10%, and 7.5%, respectively. The record of more than 90% in the Good and Enough categories indicate an effective increase in the knowledge aspects due to the implementation of cultural literacy.

The results on the attitude aspect for each assessment indicator are further represented in the following figure.

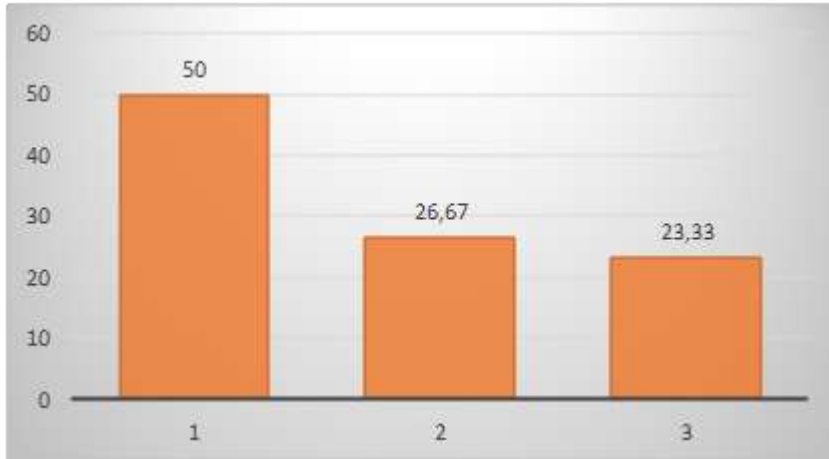


Figure 2. The assessment percentage graph of early childhood cultural literacy in Indonesia for the attitude aspects

Figure 2 shows the Good, Enough, and Less categories in the attitude aspect were 50%, 26.67%, and 23.33%, respectively. The values of more than 76% found with the Good and Enough categories indicated the improvement and strengthening of attitudes through cultural literacy were effective.

The results on the skill aspects for each assessment indicator are presented in the following figure.

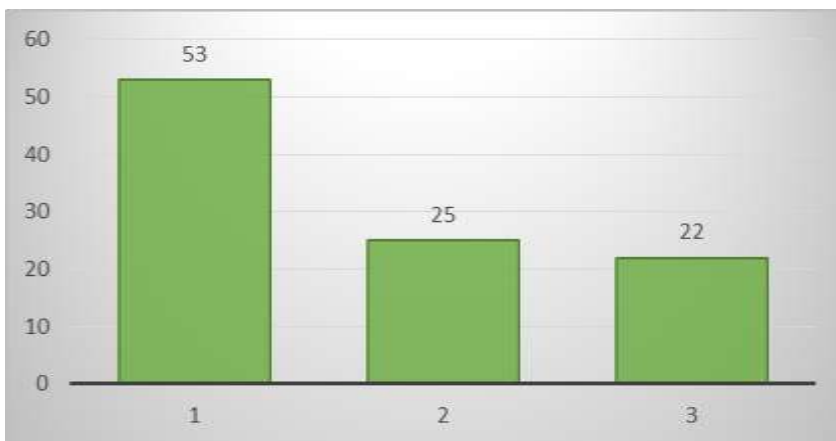


Figure 3. The assessment percentage graph of early childhood cultural literacy in Indonesia for the skill aspects

The figure shows the Good, Enough, and Less categories were 53%, 25%, and 22%, respectively and these values reinforced the opinion that it is possible to

improve children's skills through cultural literacy. As previously stated, oral tradition is one of the cultural products being used as a medium, source, and material of learning for early childhood and, according to the findings of this research, it is possible to improve children's literacy by letting them retell a story heard from the teacher. This activity requires the ability to listen effectively, recognize events, characters, and characteristics of the story, and, most importantly, have the confidence to present in front of the class.

The ability to retell the story effectively is directly proportional to having good confidence. Moreover, self-confidence is also supported by excellent language skills and even though children have clear intonation and articulation, these aspects are lacking in their early childhood. The teacher, therefore, needs to aid the development of their language skills structurally by ensuring they master more and better vocabulary to influence their ability to speak fluently.

It is also important to develop their self-confidence by ensuring they participate in every activity in front of the class. For example, one of the children should be asked to read a prayer at the beginning and end of learning to provide each of them the opportunity to perform in front of their friends. This activity is expected to build the children's confidence in their abilities. This is in line with the explanation of Bandura's research in Schultz and Schultz (2015) that confidence and self-efficacy influence several aspects of life as observed with the tendency of people with high self-efficacy to have better grades, consider more career possibilities, have greater job success, set higher personal goals, and have better physical and mental health than people with low self-efficacy [14].

The teacher's creativity determines children's abilities in the realm of knowledge, attitudes, and skills and those with good cultural literacy have been observed to have the capability to teach children effectively. It is possible for the teachers to personally develop this capability through optimal utilization of reference materials relating to local cultural products after which they need to be structurally guided and directed to implement them as media and sources in teaching. Moreover, children with strong personalities were also discovered to have a strong self-concept on their culture, for example, those that understand the signs of their local culture effectively have good means to form their character due to their knowledge of the customs, manners, ethics, and values in their environment.

Children usually recognize the sign system associated with their culture first before learning the written language as observed in the placement of forefinger on the lips to depict silence. This means using a sign system as a medium or source of learning broadens children's understanding and can also be used for value planting. Meanwhile, cultural products have been discovered to be an innate part of children learning process as observed in the oral traditions which are in the form of stories containing symbols with local wisdom values derived as a reflection of the community construction.

This is further reflected in symbols contained in the activities conducted daily and those exhibited to commemorate certain days. Knowledge, attitudes, and skills are acquired every day by the children through the symbols they interpret using their five senses and language they have mastered which later becomes their spoken language. This shows the mother tongue as several signs and symbols which are used by children to determine and identify the surrounding object. Therefore, it is important to make the mother tongue a second language after Indonesian in conducting learning activities for children in some communities.

Language is an important part of oral tradition through the use of stories with the content observed to be containing symbol systems from the communities the children inhabit. They are to be introduced to the system early depending on their psychological development ability to serve as the source of knowledge through the use of an ethnopedagogy approach. This helps to build the continuity of past and present in certain local and ethnic groups in order to achieve the general national welfare. It has been discovered that oral tradition has both express and implied values which are the signs and symbols, as in other cultural products, agreed by the cultural system of a particular community. This system serves as the foundation to aid the process of thinking, communicating, and solving problems.

Signs are things seen both verbally and nonverbally and there are four ways to use them - recognition, ostension, replication, and invention. Recognition involves using them as an expression of something real while ostension involves reading and using examples to reinforce the verbal and nonverbal signs. Replication is a way to read a sign by using it in another form as observed in the placement of forefinger on the lips as a form of the nonverbal sign indicating silence while the invention is a new way to express signs as a form of language and mostly predominant among adolescents.

Contextual thematic learning is in line with cultural literacy development based on the definition of culture as a way of life of people in a particular community. This means it is impossible to separate humans from the cultural context either from their environment, other regions, or countries. Culture has formed social and emotional systems and this makes it important to apply it as a form of learning in early childhood. Some of the advantages of this approach include (1) children knowing their environment properly and correctly, (2) creation of an attachment between daily life and knowledge acquired, and (3) provision of mental strength and identity according to culture. Moreover, it is also possible for the culture of a particular community to evolve, especially in the aspect of function. For example, ceremonial activities are the underlying function of some cultures and due to the influence and changes in times, they are evolved into performance or entertainment. This cultural evolution can occur anytime and anywhere as long as the time is changing and the use of cultural products as media, sources, and materials of learning is observed to be another example. This further intensifies the ability of culture to interact with one another either through inculturation or acculturation. It also allows children to use folklore, traditional games, folk songs, folk music, and folk dances as media and sources to understand their own culture and those of others.

It is possible to use the cultural interactions in society as a medium to develop the ways of thinking which have been observed to be changing with the needs and demands of time. Gardner (2006) in "Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Mind" explained the importance of changing the way of thinking in the coming era directly through science, discovery, educational background, and artistic creations [15]. The most interesting aspect is the artistic creations which are projected to be an exciting phenomenon in the coming years due to its ability to be used as a medium to express creativity and also to provide economic benefits. It is an added value to cultural products which can be used in oral traditions such as stories, fairy tales, saga, and legends to change the thinking of children. The process would involve the children making visualizations through pictures in the form of simple comics and other images starting from an early age to prepare them for the future.

It is also possible to change their thinking by deviating from formal ways and conforming to situations and conditions to achieve breakthroughs through creative and divergent means. Another method is by discovering the problems in the environment starting with self while future changes in thinking are also required due to external factors such as technological advances which have replaced several professional sectors. Meanwhile, digital progress is another major factor since learning is not only focused on memorizing materials but also to provide a strong foundation for children to be able to learn how to learn. Moreover, the improvement and development of cultural literacy are one of the means to change the children's way of thinking and not through lectures but stories. This method allows them to interpret the contents of the story themselves, know the characters, the scene, and the setting of events and acquire knowledge in the process.

Gadner (2008) in "5 Minds for the Future" explained five ways of thinking in the future and they include disciplined, synthesis, creative, responsive, and ethical thinking [16]. It is important to note that the most required include an orderly, coherent, systematic, and systemic way of thinking due to its perceived ability to solve and adapt to the conditions of the changing times. Individuals with the ability to adapt are believed to possess a synthesis way of thinking and the process is observed to be collaborative involving creativity in order to solve future problems in line with needs and goals and to have a major impact on novelty in the surrounding environment. Moreover, responsive thinking is also needed to resolve the symptoms, phenomena, and problems effectively. It is important to note that it is not the same as reactive thinking because it involves calculating facts and data while reactive thinking often ignores them. Another important approach is ethical thinking which makes it easy for individuals to respect one another in social interactions. It is, therefore, possible to teach the children these five ways of thinking through cultural literacy by analyzing the context and text of a story.

4. Conclusion

The results showed cultural literacy has the ability to develop children's knowledge, attitudes, and skills through the use of fairy tales or saga as a medium and source of learning. The cultural literacy approach was also found to be important to thematic learning. It is, therefore, recommended that Early Childhood Education schools should apply other cultural literacy approaches such as regional music, folk songs, regional dances, regional agricultural equipment, and other cultural products as media and sources of learning for early childhood.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the chancellor of the State Islamic Institute of Ternate for allowing them to conduct this research in the school. They also appreciate the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia for providing research funding, diligent colleagues for helping in the collection of data and writing the results, and everyone that made the research a success. It is important to note that they realize the results have weaknesses, therefore, criticism and suggestions are needed for further research improvement.

References

- [1] Slavin, "Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice", Pearson Education, Inc., Boston, (2006).
- [2] Giddens, Anthony, "The Constitutional of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration", University of California Press, USA, (1984).

- [3] Tuntun Sinaga, Gede Eka Putrawan, and Novita Nurdiana, "Cultural Values in a High School EFL Textbook in the Indonesian Context", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 8, no. 5, (2020), pp. 1944-1952.
- [4] Ormrod, Jeanne Ellis, "Educational Psychology: Developing Learners", Pearson, Boston, (2008).
- [5] Ucu Cahyana, Yuli Rachmawati, Maria Paristiowati, Sasmoko, Ahman, Jujuk Ferdianto, and Agus Dudung, "Ethnopedagogy Integration to Mobile Learning for Improving Student Learning Achievement in Remote Areas", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 8, no. 5, (2020), pp. 1687-1697.
- [6] Kozulin, Alex, Boris Gindis, Vladimir S. Ageyev, and Suzanne M. Miller, "Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context", Cambridge University Press, (2009).
- [7] Schunk, Dale H., "Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective", Pearson Education, Singapore, (2012).
- [8] Reed, Stephen K., "Cognition: Theory and Application", Thomson, Singapore, (2006).
- [9] Mead, George Herbet, "Mind, Self, and Society", University of Chicago, Chicago, (2015).
- [10] As'aril Muhajir, Ngainun Naim, Agus Zaenul Fitri, and Asrop Safi'I, "Approach to the Development of Multicultural Education Curriculum in Darul Hikmah Modern Islamic Boarding School Tulungagung, Indonesia", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 8, no. 5, (2020), pp. 1842-1847.
- [11] Crain, William, "Theories of Development: Concept and Applications", Boston, Pearson Education, Inc., Boston, (2011).
- [12] Sternberg, Robert J., "Cognitive Psychology", Singapore, Thomson Wadsworth, Singapore, (2006).
- [13] Hill, Winfred F., "Learning, A Survey of Psychological Interpretations", Singapore, Harper Collins Publisher, Singapore, (1990).
- [14] Schultz, Duane P. and Sydney Ellen Schultz, "A History of Modern Psychology", Thomson Wadsworth, Singapore, (2015).
- [15] Gardner, Howard, "5 Minds for the Future", Boston, Howard Business Press, (2008).
- [16] Gardner, Howard, "Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Mind", Boston, Howard Business School Press, (2006).