

# **Realia as the source of first language acquisition that can make cultures specific**

**(a study of fisherman socio-cultural expressions in Pantura, Indonesia)**

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**Abstract.** Realia is a milieu including self which can help language acquisition occur. It can be a source for constructing meaning of language through transfer knowledge using language. This paper is to figure out how realia can be the source of children learning socio-cultural expressions specific to fishermen in Pantura, Central Java, Indonesia. Interview and elicitation were techniques used for collecting data. The fishermen's children in north coastal regions of Central Java were the samples chosen purposively due to their experiences about fishing. The analysis was conducted using referential and inferential methods. The result shows that acquiring socio-cultural expressions are gained from knowledge transfer given by fathers through fishing instructions. Fishing experience as the realia can be a source of teaching socio-cultural expressions that become mental lexicon stored in the mind.

**Keywords:** *realia, language, acquisition, culture, specific.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Studying realia in second language acquisition or learning has been done by many other writers since very long time ago among other things [1], [2], Comenius very long time ago in 1631 in the *Great Didactics* in [3], and still many others. However, what they studied is realia used for second language teaching or foreign language learning, while this study deals with realia for culture specific. The perspective is different in seeing realia. In the second language teaching realia is used for making real the teaching language, but this study is to make the culture specific that can characterize one culture from the others.

In connection with culture specific, there are many studies relevant to this current one. For example, [4] using culture specific approach studied realia for group treatment to refugees as an approach to cure pschosocial or psychological problems due to political or religious conflict in their country. Realia can help the victims construct meanings such as of their new group memberships, togetherness adaptation of new environment. What happens in the new environment was used to heal group traumatic experience in their home country. Other studies studying culture specific in different perspectives like [5] studying culture specific from multinational analysis to see humor dimensions in advertisement in four different countries namely Korea, Germany, Thailand, and the United States). Another researcher such as [6] studied universal and culture-specific of greetings in order to see common types of greetings from linguistic anthropological point of view. More current research done by [7] related to virtual realia. This study is concerned with the use of computer in teaching assembled skills. Computer seems to portray realia in terms of spatial knowledge of different places brought to

children's mind. In the much more current publication, [8] studied the use of realia representing the culture specific that is national and historical overtones through the expressions maintained in translating the source language to the target language. To maintain the concept representing the realia in mass media, the translator translates literally, since it cannot be transferred perfectly to the target language. Regarding to strategies in translating culture-specific items, [9] studied their translation from Persian into English.

From the studies mentioned, the writer has not found any research studying realia in first language to construct culture-specific. This current study will present how realia can build fishermen's culture-specific items in Pantura, Indonesia and what makes it specific and how it is specific. Using embodiment theory, this study will elaborate the sociocultural expressions as the culture-specific of fishermen. This study is to support the reference related to that cultures have their specific items which can characterize them from others. Besides, it implies that among cultures in the world, beside there is universality there is uniqueness.

To discuss this, cognitive linguistics [10] including embodiment theory proposed by [11] dealing with how body experience can affect human thought and language is used to analyze data. In studying first language acquisition, the writer used [12] proposing that there are two processes in acquiring language namely comprehension and production. They can be the bases of constructing meaning. Like what proposed by [13] meaning is constructed through conceptualization. In this case, meaning is constructed based on human experiences, for example, what human sees or watches, feels, and thinks. Meaning is constructed not only based on human convention but human creativity in human experiences.

Meaning is constructed based on the experiences humans have. It can be constructed due to human creativity, for instance, in using old concept blended with new concept representing new words [14]. Furthermore, [15] proposed that meaning may be constructed due to prominent experiences triggering the concept represented in the words used. Regarding cultural conceptualization, [16] stated that cultural conceptualization happens due to the use of concepts in the social group interaction.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This research is descriptive qualitative. To describe the facts or phenomena, observation was used to give more attention to the realia and lexical items used by fisherman children using note-taking and documentation techniques. Interview was used to deepen information related to toys made or used by the children. From the toys made by the children, the research can investigate how they can reach such creativity. This can be the indicators how realia supports culture specific due to transfer knowledge from the senior citizen to the juniors or children. Questionnaires were used to gather the data in order to get information related to the lexical items the children know. The children were asked to make a list of words related to fishing.

The subjects of the study were fisherman children living in Jepara and Demak. To get them, the researcher used availability random sampling technique. Visiting the fisherman housing areas, the research met the children playing in the sites where they were fishing small fish, playing with their friends using boat toys made of wood created by them. Besides, the mothers were also the subject of the study. They were asked about how the children learn fishing or activities related to making a living as fishermen like catching fish, fixing fishing nets, maintaining fishing boats.

To analyze the data, the researcher used referential identity method and inferential method. Referential identity method was used to show the meaning and the referent of the socio-cultural expressions the fisherman children learn, while the inferential method was used to

show how meaning is embodied in the socio-cultural expressions acquired by the fisherman children. The analysis was based on the embodiment theory that explains how meaning is constructed in the mind based on the embodied experiences. In addition, the method can be used to show how the socio-cultural expressions of the fishermen in Pantura, Indonesia can be the culture-specific. Culture-specific here means the expressions that are used only by the society, in this case, the fishermen of Pantura, Indonesia. The culture-specific expressions of fishermen are those used by people whose profession is fisherman.

### **3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the analysis, it can be presented that realia of the fishermen in Jepara and Demak, Indonesia can be the source of acquiring socio-cultural expressions that are culture-specific only used by among fishermen in the housing area. In this section, I will present several subtopics namely realia as the source of the acquisition of socio-cultural expressions of the fishermen, the socio-cultural expressions of the fishermen as culture-specific, the process of constructing culture specific.

#### **3.1 Realia as the source of the acquisition of fisherman socio-cultural expressions**

Realia is defined as the objects or entities found in the surrounding. In other words, realia is the universe or the world. The realia which is considered as the source of acquisition is the surrounding where fisherman children live including all activities done by fishermen in making a living. In this case, the surrounding is the sea, the beach, the boats in different sizes, the kinds of fish or catch, the activities in catching fish, the instrument used, the logistics for going fishing, the nature dealing with the climate or time when fishermen can go fishing or not. When the climate is not good for fishing, for example, it is stormy, fishermen with traditional boats called *sopek* cannot go fishing. Besides, they can go fishing only certain hours in a day, not all day long. The realia discussed here is the universe of the traditional fishermen.

Traditional fishermen are different from modern fishermen in terms of the way to catch fish, the means for transportation, the quantity of the catch. The traditional ones can catch fish manually using their own hands to throw the net or *tawur*, while the modern ones use machine for throwing and dragging the net to catch fish. The modern ones do not experience how to take out fish from the net, but the traditional ones do. If traditional fishermen use *sopek* or small boats, while the modern ones use very big ship with purse seine called *porsen*. The traditional ones manage their catch by themselves while the modern ones work for *juragan*, the owner of the ship. They certainly have different quantity and quality of the catch. The traditional ones get fish in a small quantity, while the modern ones get very much big quantity, even thousands of tons.

The realia as the source of language acquisition in this study refers to the entities and activities the traditional fishermen have. They experience themselves how catching fish using their own boat. They leave home in a proper time for catching fish, bring their necessities during on the sea, like food or raw food for cooking, fuel, and other necessities. What they learn from their fathers is transferred directly to their children using their own experience for example, rowing boats, throwing nets or hooks or other means of catching fish. As traditional fishermen, they manage all the activities by themselves to make a living. They usually have the boats for getting fish. They can decide whether they go fishing or not. If they work for *juragan*, they must follow the instructions. They work on big ship depending on their role. If they work as mechanic, they do not catch fish.

The knowledge and experiences as fishermen are exposed to their children from early stage of life. They are learnt by their children day by day and gradually they are transferred directly when their children are teenagers. They are learnt through direct experiences, witnessing and executing the instructions given by the fathers about what to do and how to do. The experiences are embodied. They are represented in their expressions which are socio-culturally specific. The socio-cultural expressions become specific due to their specific experiences embodied by them and their young generations.

### 3.2 the socio-cultural expressions of the fishermen as culture-specific

Fisherman or fisher as profession has different socio-cultural expressions from other professions like teacher, doctor, engineer. They have different registers from which people can identify what professions they belong to. Like the word *miyang* [miyan] meaning 'go' is used among fishermen when asking others where they are going. This word is not used by people from different profession. *Miyang* may imply going fishing, catching fish in order to get income for their family. It is done to catch fish. Some other specific expressions of fishermen are *along* (getting much catch), *angkul-angkul = bolongan* (a hole for holding), *diseluk = ditaleni* (tightened), *mbaris = gawe jarring* (fish net making), *mosong = golek urang* (shrimp searching), *ngeteki = njupuki iwak saka jarring* (an activity of taking out the fish from the net), *nyampoh = nguras banyu ning prau* (taking out of the water from the boat), *nylangap = ngunggahke prau setengah ning darat* (partial anchor), *payang = jaring* (fishing net. In conversation, the word *along* can indicate two meanings name indicating big quantity and asking whether someone gets much catch.

The examples are Javanese expressions that are merely used by fishermen. The register can be seen from the equivalences in general Javanese. In Javanese, the word *bolongan* meaning 'hole' can be applied to any situation. All holes are *bolongan* in Javanese. However, a hole for holding is only applied by fishermen. Another example, *diseluk* mean being tightened. In general Javanese, it is *ditaleni*.

The socio-cultural expressions of fisherman are only those expressions used among them when they are interacting each other. For example, the word *along* used in rising intonation indicating questioning may imply that two people are confirming each other whether they get much fish. When the one who is asked gets much fish, then the one who asks goes fishing after him. The question implies encouragement for getting much income. Another expression used in TPI (*Tempat Pelelangan Ikan = Fish Bidding Place*) is numbering. When a fish bidder mentions numbers, the bidder indicates the price of the fish offered. When the buyers agree with the price, they win the bidding and get the fish. There is a special transaction in getting fish. In the ordinary market, selling goods is done between buyers and sellers. However, in fish bidding place, the transaction is done by a bidder and fish buyer that sells the fish out of the bidding place for selling it to the public. The socio-cultural expressions of fisherman are limited to fishing, managing the catch, selling the catch. Out of the fisherman context, the expressions are general expressions which can be used in any situation.

Another fisherman socio-cultural expression is the expression used among fathers and sons during fishing process, when the fathers lead or instruct their sons in fishing, for example, when asking to spread the fishing net by saying "*Tawur!*" or spread the fishing net. The expression is used during the process of catching fish when they are on the sea sailing a boat called *sopek*. The expression used for fixing the net is called *mbaris*. This is used when a fisherman asks other people to fix the net. The expression is only used among them or the

one who belongs to fisherman society. They have got knowledge about entities and activities or experiences done by fishermen in their life.

### **3.3 the process of constructing culture specific**

The process of constructing culture specific can be identified from the embodied experiences obtained from family transgenerational process that is from fathers to sons. Based on embodiment theory proposed by [11], the categories we make are based on our experiences embodied in the mind. Regarding the data that the writer is concerned, the categories the children of the fishermen have are formed from their experiences they have in the surrounding they live.

The processes comprise some steps. The preliminary step involves children who are invited by the fathers to accompany them fishing. The children just follow the fathers' instructions. The preliminary step is like the first step in language acquisition namely comprehension process [12] that children are just accompanying and watching fathers doing some errands dealing with preparation, ongoing fishing, and after fishing. In preparation, preparing needs and logistics for catching fish is the basic tasks to do. This is done when they catch fish. The experiences are repeated and then stored in the mind, then they become mental lexicon. This is in accordance with the theory proposed by [17] stating that the experiences in the mind are stored to become mental lexicon. They are produced when they interact each other. They use socio-cultural expression to those who know fishing background knowledge, otherwise they cannot understand their utterances.

To figure out the process of constructing culture to be specific can be done by constructing mental lexicon which is based on the experiences obtained before, during, and after fishing. The experiences are very specific that are applied in the fisherman housing area and used among fishermen since they have the same background knowledge. This can be proven, even we are Javanese, when we visit fisherman housing area listening to their conversations, if we do not belong to fisherman society we cannot understand them well since there are some vocabulary items which cannot be understood well due to lack background knowledge.

Background knowledge can be the context of the conversation. When we communicate with other people, if we do not have the background knowledge, we cannot easily understand what the persons are talking. This can support the idea that background knowledge can help how culture specific can be obtained through interaction with other members of society.

The interaction can build agreement among them to have the same code of language, dialect, or other language variations. The code can identify groups of society that may be different from the other societies. Therefore, language can identify from which group you belong to. In this case, the identification can be from sociocultural expressions you find. From the example, it can be seen that only those who belong to a certain group can understand. These make the sociocultural expressions used in fisherman society are learnt by children, then they are used among the fisherman families. Studying realia that may affect comprehension process in the first language acquisition can be enriched by several ways.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, realia in fisherman socio-cultural life can be gained from the experiences directly are obtained before, during, and after fishing. Realia is the source of constructing meaning by the children who are invited by their parents to get along with them to catch fish. Through direct experiences, people can categorize them based on their embodiment. The categories are based on what they see, feel, think, and do in their life in this case as fisherman children. They can categorize the catch, the means of transportation, the activity of catching, the instrument used, the best time for catching, the danger faced, the strategy of catching fish, and the logistics they need when going fishing. They get experiences intensively during their life. Those can make their expressions representing their experiences unique. This study can enrich the research projects which can support the studies dealing with realia and specific cultural items that can make culture unique.

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