

# The role of local wisdom in developing friendly city

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**Abstract.** This present paper discusses the local wisdom which can be applied to build the character of people living in a friendly city. It aims at (1) finding the main local wisdom which can be used to construct the integrity of human beings dwelling in it and (2) describing the concept of developing the friendly city based on local wisdom. Anthropolinguistics is applied to study this topic by focusing on the performance, indexicality, and participation. The analytic parameters are interconnection, evaluability, and sustainability.

**Keywords:** character, local wisdom, friendly city, anthropolinguistics

## 1. Introduction

About developing the friendly city, local wisdom plays two important roles, which can be used to build the character of its people and to formulate the development of cultural concept. The ways local wisdom are used to erect the character of citizens and to make a city development model are described in this paper.

## 2. Local Wisdom

Cultural values which can be used wisely to overcome the social problems and to increase the people's welfare and peacefulness may refer to "local wisdom". The term "local wisdom" is not the opposite of national, international or global wisdom, but it refers to the wisdom discovered from the cultural traditions in one's own ethnic or place. The local wisdom is the value of local culture having been applied to wisely manage the social order and social life of community. As mentioned above, the cultural values include the cultural norms. By this definition, we need to discover the cultural values of cultural traditions which can be applied to overcome the existing social problems. In other definition, the local wisdom can denote to the local knowledge which has the essence from the fundamental value of cultural tradition and gives orientation to people's conduct or existence (Sibarani, 2012:114).

The local knowledge is related to the people's indigenous scholarship that the local people use to overcome their social problems. It comes from the values of cultural traditions. The term "local wisdom" may interchangeably be used with the term "indigenous knowledge" or with the local "genius, skill, resource, norms and ethics or aesthetics". It also consists of two types of core local wisdoms, namely, local wisdom for people's welfare or prosperity and local wisdom for human beings' peacefulness or goodness. The local wisdom which can be used to increase the welfare includes hard work, discipline, education, health, mutual aid or cooperation, gender management, culture creativity and preservation, and environment care. The local wisdom having purpose to create peacefulness comprises the politeness, honesty or integrity, social loyalty, harmony, commitment, positive thinking, and compliments.



Moreover, the local wisdom is significant to direct people to have wise relationship within their social interaction, with their natural environment, and with their Creator. Anthropologists (or linguistic anthropologists) are not only interested in the discovery of values and local wisdom but also in seeking the meaning and function of oral traditions. In the study of oral traditions, the discovery of meaning and function as the outer layer, of values and norms as the middle layer, and of local wisdoms as the core layer will give a contribution to the whole interpretation of the oral tradition content.

### 3. Characters of Medan City Residents Based on Local Wisdom

The local wisdom can become the source for developing children's character building and preparing the future generation who love welfare and peacefulness. It is the nature of character building which depends on the local wisdom, or shortly said "sensible character". Indonesia needs it to improve its human resources in this country. Human resources who possess such character will be able to increase their welfare and peacefulness.

Thomas Lickona said, "Character is the sum of all the qualities that make someone who he/she is. It is his/her values, his/her thoughts, his/her words, his/her actions." Children are hoped to think what is right or wrong. The ability to separate between the right values and the wrongdoings among them becomes the capital to expand Indonesia. This country requires its children and adults to pay attention seriously on their local hereditary richness (local wisdom). Character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values" (Abourjilie, 2002:9). The definition implies that character is very urgent for children and the character education or character building must possess systematic with significant effort.

As the considerate effort, character building should bring children into a condition where they should become the wise youths who have strong character. The people possessing the wistful character love to have "work and good ethics". The people possessing work ethics work hard and study seriously, and are diligent, disciplined, educative, creative and innovative, self-reliant and saving, healthy-living, cooperative and mutual aiding, caring for the environment, loving culture, and pro-gender. The people as such will become welfare. The people possessing good ethics are trustworthy, polite and respectful, honest and fair, responsible and committed, self-controlled, the social loyal and tolerant, harmonious and peaceful, caring and compassionate, friendly and friendship, positive thinking, and complimenting. The people as such will be able to create peace in the society.

The wistful character combining the work ethics and the good ethics will carry out people to success. The successful people are those who know, apply, and keep both ethics in their lives. Consequently, they will increase welfare as well as create peacefulness for themselves and for other people. The character deriving from cultural values can support the people to live friendly for the sake of the welfare and peacefulness of a city.

All characters of the two ethics which pay attention on the local wisdom, especially on the mutual aid or cooperation, politeness, honesty or integrity, friendly and friendliness, social loyalty, and harmony, give moral contribution to the city residents such as the residents of Medan. By these characters, this city will not only be friendly but also peaceful and prosperous.

### 4. Cultural Traditions of the Friendly City Based on Local Wisdom

The English word "tradition" derives from the Latin noun *traditio* which is taken from the verb *traderere* or *tradere* 'to transmit, to hand over, and to give for safekeeping'. As the category of noun, the *traditio* means the habit handed over from one generation to another for a long time so that it will be the part of community's social life. Tradition implies three meanings: (1) the lore and the process which correlate with a sense of continuity and with shared materials, customs, and verbal expressions that groups of people practiced, (2) the identity creation and confirmation which are relevant to the selection of traditions to reinforce the values and beliefs of the current group's decision and there is a process of "tradition selection" that will give a positive confirmation with regard to sense of identity, and (3) tradition identification to those who still seek their identity. The flip side of creating or confirming identity through participation means that identification requires people to carry out efforts. Along with

that comes the idea that folk groups claim as traditions and participate in those traditions that allow them to share values and beliefs that are important to them (Martha and Martine, 2005).

The term "oral and cultural tradition" is interchangeably used referring to all traditions which are inherited orally from one generation to another or transmitted from "mouth to ears" using the oral medium. It is necessary to keep in mind that oral traditions do not only refer to folktale, myth, legend, fairytale, but also to other community's lives such as local wisdom, value system, local knowledge, history, law, medicine, belief system and religion, astrology, and other artistic products (Roger Tol and Pudentia, 1995; DIKTI, 2014).

Cultural tradition corresponds to the behaviorist paradigm of culture and it appears in the process and activities in a community's lives. What I mean is that an oral tradition is a performance and comprises of the whole elements in performance. Lord (1964:13) argued the moment of the composition is the performance itself and the concept of performance (Duranti, 1997:14-16) draws from some sources and receives different interpretation. About the development of a friendly city, Bauman (1992), Bauman and Briggs (1992), and Palmer and Jankowiak (1996) gave the notion of performance within the studies of folklore, poetics, and arts. Such term in this sense refers to a domain of human action where ethnolinguists give their devotion to the ways in which communicative acts happen. The attention to the form of message is what Roman Jakobson (1960) called the "poetic function" of speech. Duranti proposed six constitutive factors of a speech event and such factors become the realization of communicative performance (1997:284).

Hymes (1981:81) said "performance is something creative, realized, and achieved". Performance is a dimension of human life that most typically emerges in music, theater, and other public displays of artistic abilities and creativity. It can appear, for instance, in verbal debates, story telling, singing, and other speech activities or oral traditions. What speakers say in the performance will take evaluation from the perspective of aesthetic canons which aim to beautify of their phrasing or delivery. All these bring effects on the audience with the purpose to "move" the audience (Briggs 1988). When discussing the performance Duranti and Berenreis (1986) argued that there is aesthetic dimension about what a speaker says. This dimension become the fact that speaking itself always implies an exposure to the aspects of judgment, reaction, and collaboration of an audience. The three aspects requires interpretation, assessment, approval, and sanctions which will expand or minimize the contents.

Bauman (1977), in this other meaning of performance, stressed about the importance of the dimension of accountability as well as the risk or the challenge. Even the most competent speaker can say the wrong word at the wrong time just like the best of actors can miscalculate a pause, or an opera singer can fail to control the pitch of his voice. Performance in this sense is an ever-present dimension of language use and language evaluation and there is no use without evaluation. Speakers and listeners constantly evaluate each other.

There are close relationship between performance and creativity (Palmer and Jankowiak 1996) and improvisation (Sawyer 1996). The performance may involve all kinds of speech activities and speech events, from the most ritualized and formal to the most ordinary and casual. We may see them in oral traditions, such as, the speakers utter in the customary speech events. The study of oral traditions focuses on the integrity of the form, content, and heritage of traditions in the living performance with full of creativity and improvisation.

Linguistic anthropologists show their interests in what speakers do with language. In this sense, their works might correspond to Chomsky's "use of linguistic system", Austin's "doing of things with words", Bauman and Palmer and Jankowiak's "folklore, poetics, and arts" or to Hymes' "creative, realized, and achieved performance." All such aspects correlates to the artistic abilities and creativity.

The study of oral traditions are more interested in Bauman's, Palmer and Jankowiak's, and Hymes' notions of performance as it studies oral traditions within a whole performance as the traditional activities which are creative, realized, and innovative, and transmitted. Oral traditions are the community's traditional activities inherited orally from one generation to another generation, either they are verbal or non-verbal. The term "traditional activities" implies that an oral tradition is a performance. Anthropologists focus their study on the interconnection of all elements which compose the

performance of oral traditions. They are not only interested in text, but also in context and co-text of the performance. Performers and audience are interesting to be discussed within the framework of context while material and mediums within the co-text. The discussion on the language and lingual message may fall on the text.

The concepts of developing friendly city founded on local wisdom should have basis from the cultural traditions, which become the roots of the local wisdoms, might consist of some aspects, for example, the traditions of local language and manuscripts, oral literature, local performance and folk games, customs and rituals, traditional technology, symbols and ornaments, local arts and music, folk agriculture, handicrafts, culinary food and traditional medication, and local panorama. All these aspects can support the friendly city.

## 5. Conclusions

The role of local wisdom in developing friendly city indicates that local wisdom can be used to build the character of friendly residents living in the city and to develop the city culturally. The friendly city means that it is friendly because of its cultural and traditional performances and of its residents living in the city look friendly. Consequently, the friendliness of the city will attract tourists and convince the local people.

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