

Exploring *Batik Semarang* as a medium to develop intercultural communication awareness and global competence

Menggali *Batik Semarang* sebagai media untuk membentuk pengetahuan komunikasi antar budaya dan kompetensi global

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ABSTRACT

People doing work from home are mostly depending on what the internet has to offer for communication. Because people want to make good use of the Internet for communication, such information is available in English as a global language. One of the advantages of having ready information in English is that local cultural products can now have better chances to compete globally with products from other cultures. One of those products is Indonesia's *Batik Semarang*, which is produced in Semarang, the capital city of Central Java. Through studying the motifs found in *Batik Semarang*, an intercultural communication awareness of rich hybrid culture can be achieved. To ensure awareness, a group of English Department's literature students was trained to do library and field research on *Batik Semarang*. By applying Roland Barthes' semiotics, students were encouraged to explore the hidden reasons for the unique choice of *Batik Semarang* motifs. By doing this activity, not only were the students equipped to be more critical in researching local products but the lecturer has also helped preserve and elevate Batik as a traditional heritage that has global potentiality.

KATA KUNCI

Batik Semarang, hibrida budaya, warisan tradisional, kompetensi global, kesadaran komunikasi antarbudaya

ABSTRAK

Kebanyakan orang yang melakukan pekerjaan mereka dari rumah mengandalkan media komunikasi mereka dengan apa yang ditawarkan oleh internet. Karena orang ingin memanfaatkan internet dengan baik untuk komunikasi, maka banyak informasi tersedia dalam bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa global. Salah satu keuntungan memiliki informasi dalam bahasa Inggris adalah produk budaya lokal sekarang dapat memiliki peluang yang lebih baik untuk bersaing secara global dengan produk dari budaya lain. Salah satunya adalah *Batik Semarang* Indonesia yang diproduksi di Semarang, ibu kota Jawa Tengah. Melalui mempelajari motif yang ditemukan di *Batik Semarang*, kesadaran komunikasi antarbudaya akan budaya hibrida yang kaya dapat dicapai. Untuk memastikan kesadaran tersebut, sekelompok mahasiswa Sastra Inggris dilatih untuk melakukan penelitian kepustakaan dan lapangan tentang *Batik Semarang*. Dengan menerapkan semiotika Roland Barthes, mahasiswa didorong untuk mengeksplorasi alasan-alasan tersembunyi dari pemilihan motif batik Semarang yang unik. Dengan melakukan kegiatan ini, siswa tidak hanya dibekali untuk lebih kritis dalam meneliti produk lokal tetapi dosen juga turut melestarikan dan mengangkat Batik sebagai warisan tradisional yang memiliki potensi global.

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Introduction

With the increasing number of people doing their work from home, communication among others is dependent on what the Internet has to offer. Rahman and Arif (2020) confirmed that telecommuting is a work arrangement that has been embraced by people of different cultures (p.283). Being a global language for communication, the English language becomes the main language used on the Internet by people from all over the world. Having ready information in English as a global language is advantageous because products from non-English speaking countries can have better chances to compete globally with products from other cultures when they are advertised using the English language. It is unfortunate to find, however, that some local products from countries where English is a foreign language miss some cultural aspects of the language which may contribute to the unsuccessful efforts of promoting products on a global scale.

With Internet technology ready to support the globalization of products, promoters should also be made aware of appreciating the breakthrough of “boundaries of space, time, and cultural assumptions” of human society (Chen, 2005, p.4). Global promotion, however, is more successful if society realizes the need for communication competence. Chen (2005, p.5) argues that communication competence consists of the dimensions of having a global mindset that unfolds the self, the mapping of culture, and aligning an interaction of multi societies. First, in a global mindset, it is imperative that a society needs to have a broad perspective, with motivations for diversity to reconcile various conflicts, propel to regulate changes, to orient a globalizing process. Second, in unfolding the self, a society must be open to ceaseless purifying, continuous learning, cultivating sensitivity, developing creativity, and fostering empathy. Third, in mapping the culture, a society should also be open to differences that are analyzed cognitively and thus create an emphatic immersion. Fourth, in aligning the interaction, society is expected to not only manage changes, and identify the maintenance of those changes with appropriate management interaction, and behavioral flexibility but also use effective and appropriate language ability. The English language as the media of communication for global communicative competence, therefore, entails the use of the language for reaching a global civil society that can understand what is being communicated without violating other cultures’ norms and rules. Using the English language effectively and appropriately, thereby, necessitates the knowledge of everyone’s appropriate cultural values.

Intercultural Communication Awareness for Batik Semarang

Responding appropriately to local products works in two ways. On the one hand, a society that wants to successfully promote local products globally may need to use English as the media language. In doing so, the promoter would need to open up to the cultural values attached to the culture of the English people. On the other hand, receivers of the promotion need to also open their mindset to the peculiar local product’s culture, which may use some hybrid mix of Western and Eastern culture, as an effort to have better acceptance by the people from all nations. To achieve this, some intercultural communication awareness is, therefore, needed from both promotion producers and receivers. Because intercultural communication is the “communication

between people of different cultures”, whereby, “cultures are different in their language, behavior patterns, and values”, the promotion of global culture should accommodate “difference-based” cultures (Bennett, 1998, p.2).

Indonesia is known for its Batik, which is produced on almost every island. Not only is Batik produced by the Javanese, but people from Manado, Bali, and even Papua have their very own kind of batik. In Java, the most popular batik is produced by designers from Yogyakarta and Surakarta. One kind of batik from Java that not many people know of is *Batik Semarangan* which is produced in Semarang, the capital city of Central Java. *Batik Semarangan* is different from the usual traditional Javanese batik from Surakarta or Yogyakarta, which makes use of some linear, circular, or boxed motifs on a brown, white, or black background cotton cloth. *Batik Semarangan* uses brighter colored cloth that depicts iconic buildings, flora, and/or fauna motifs to represent Semarang city.

Not many people have been aware of *Batik Semarangan's* existence. If they are, it can be assumed that most buy the batik because they admire the unique motifs without wanting to understand the meaning behind the motifs. This article aims to answer the research question of how an intercultural communication awareness can be used to understand the meaning behind the cultural hybrid motifs chosen for *Batik Semarangan*.

The closest target of people to teach about intercultural communication awareness through finding out the historical, sociocultural and religious values behind the choice of motifs in *Batik Semarangan* products is the researcher's students. The students from the English Department are an appropriate target because they are young generations who will teach other youngsters to appreciate more on local products, such as Batik Semarangan which is produced in an area called *Kampung Batik*. By teaching students how to make a thorough analysis of the motifs, the students can understand the historical and social phenomena the motifs carry. Not only will the activity help preserve and elevate batik as a valuable heritage, but the young generations' habit of promoting cultural products viral through various social media will make *Batik Semarangan* well-known to people from all over the world.

Importance of Nature in Ecocriticism

As informed above, *Batik Semarangan* is characterized by the unique motifs it carries. In addition to iconic buildings, it also displays unique flora and fauna. Due to this, the Literature students from the English Department are first taught how to use ecocriticism as a method of analysis. Students are informed that ecocriticism is the study of literature and how it relates itself to the human experience and the world of nature. It considers and investigates humans and the environment as being interdependent and inseparable because they can influence each other, and have a strong reciprocal relationship. Mishra (2016, p.169) noted ecocriticism to be inspired by three great American romanticism writers who celebrated nature as a life force in their literary works..

The great romantic writers, who paved the way for ecocriticism were Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) with his essay *Nature*, Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) with her travelog *Summer on the Lake*, and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) with his infa-

mous *Walden Pond*. Through Emerson, it is learned that understanding nature means making sense of God's creation and the world that is around people. Emerson considers that most people take nature for granted, so he tried to make people aware that all sorts of nature have a beautiful influence (cited in Roenne, 2016). Next, Fuller's story about the American landscape of the wilderness taught people that the transformation from an agricultural to an industrial society exemplified how materialism undermined the heaven that people could have enjoyed on earth (cited in Newman, 2006). Fuller reminded us of conserving nature for the betterment of mankind. Then, Thoreau's story told his life experience of escaping his contemporary life and seeking renewal by exploring nature. As understood by Sharma (2017), the *Walden Pond* was a place for Thoreau to do his religious cleansing exercise in the morning to appreciate how men can be "healthy, wealthy, and wise", and not feel alone when "he is aware of his non-human relationships" (p.26).

The writers above taught that works of art deserved an ecocritical reading when it displayed things of nature. This understanding is supported by Mohammad (2017) who believed that ecocritical products do not only enclose themselves on the strong relationship between humans and non-humans who would support each other and the long life of nature but there is also an attempt for a green conservationist to seek ways to protect nature from degradation (p.4). This gives the reason why students are also challenged by the researcher to see batik motifs through an ecocritical lens.

Cultural Hybridity in the Popular Culture of Batik Semarang

Batik has been acknowledged by UNESCO in 2009 as an Indonesian cultural heritage (Angkawijaya et al., 2020, p.1). As a skill that needs high patience in using a tube filled with hot wax to draw batik motifs on cotton fabrics, batik motif painting has been passed down to many other Javanese generations since the 7th century. It has since been preserved as a "Javanese visual culture" that has "symbolic values" with "particular meanings" (Angkawijaya et al., 2020, p.2). The authors continue to explain that since the 20th century, the Indonesian batik is currently considered a popular culture product. This is due to its shift from the drawing of sacred and symbolic cultural motifs of the batik into a more popular one. The mass production of the batik that played a vital role in increasing the national income solidified its existence as a product of popular culture.

Historically, Indonesia has been colonized by the Dutch and the Japanese. Indonesia has also been influenced by the Chinese and Arab communities. These cultures that have particular religions have influenced the choice of motifs batik makers did to *Batik Semarang*. In other words, the batik motifs shows a display of cultural hybridity. Marotta (2020) exclaimed, "the idea of hybridity within popular culture has been increasingly used to describe fashion tastes, music, and cuisine styles or artistic practices" (p.1). Using a cultural hybrid perspective in analyzing a work of art basically recognizes the mixture of cultural identities (Kraidy, 2005). In Marotta's research, he discussed how the host (English, American, Australian, Canadian) is mixing ethnic cultures from the Chinese, Italian, Indian, and Lebanese to form a fixed, unified hybrid subject. In support of this, Smith (2008, p.4) argues that the occupation of "hybrid spaces benefits from the understanding of both local knowledge and global cosmopolitanism". As a consequence, products of works of art that can cross cultural bar-

riers have the advantage of being welcomed by many cultures. In addition to historical perspectives, the aforementioned studies support the researcher's effort to teach her students using cultural hybridity perspectives when analyzing *Batik Semarang* motifs.

Method

Research design

The research design on *Batik Semarang* motifs was qualitative that made use of descriptive analysis. In its analysis, the qualitative research classified the data based on human understandings and perceptions, which were then interpreted by following a theoretical grounding as suggested by Flick (2013, p.15).

Participants

As many as 26 students who participated in a Graphics Novel class became research assistants. They were given the task of writing a novel that inserts graphics about the choice of batik motifs in *Batik Semarang*. In analyzing the motifs, students were challenged to find out about the philosophy or myth that was revealed through an historical, religious, ecocriticism, socio-cultural hybridity analysis.

Research instrument and analysis procedure

The research instrument used in the research was an interview. Through an interview with the batik makers, students could dig into the myth of the batik motifs. The students were also trained to find suitable journal articles as a grounding to the questions they were using to interview the batik artisans. As many as 20 *Batik Semarang* artisans who were located in the cluster areas of *Krapyak*, *Seroja*, *Gunungpati*, *Blekok*, *Ngaliyan*, *Mangkang*, and *Kalialang* were available for them to interview. The interview process was important for the students to do so could discover batik history and knowledge about the motifs directly from the artisans. The interview opportunity also enabled the students to practice their knowledge on the variety of information they have previously learned from reading academic articles on batik. This is supported by Takagi and Moeller (2022, p.251) who believed that when students can view, observe, discuss, share, and exercise in making a hypothesis they are trained to view things more objectively and can understand a culture better through various forms of cultural perspectives.

Analysis of the kinds of motifs the makers made were revealed through retrieving and categorizing the transcription results of the interview via Barthes' semiotics reading. Data from selected interview sessions done by the students were either done through a social media facility such as a WhatsApp video call, or G-Meet, or by going directly to the location of the artisans who also opened up a store to sell and/ or display their products.

In providing questions for the interview, the students were taught to make use of their intercultural communication awareness and global competence skills. In practicing the awareness, the students had to be careful in seeking the possibilities of the makers' attempts of conserving nature by displaying their flora and fauna motifs in the batik. Whereas, the awareness of global competence was also made open by seeing

whether the makers have made some mixture of cultural hybrid elements in the drawing of the batik motifs. These cultural hybrid elements were important to have because they were believed to be the factors that help increase *Batik Semarangan's* popularity in the world.

Results and Discussions

This research article aims to show the application of intercultural communication awareness to students. In using *Batik Semarangan* as the main data, students were trained as researchers who dwell in the history and culture of the product. In its application students were taught to do internet library research about the batik to later make interview questions that would have the batik makers confirm or negate the students' findings. It was important to do to acknowledge how *Batik Semarangan* became a popular culture product from Indonesia that relied on the hybridity of other cultures.

In Java, most people are already familiar with batik products from Yogyakarta, Pekalongan, Surakarta, Cirebon, and Lasem. However, *Batik Semarangan* is not often heard of, even though it originates from the city of Semarang, which is the capital city of Central Java. Due to this reason, the popularity of *Batik Semarangan* needs to be elevated by promoting its unique motifs.

As informed, the training commenced with having students do library research on the history of *Batik Semarangan*. One of the documents found was by Yuliati (2010), which informed that *Batik Semarangan* is produced in a village called *Kampung Batik*. Historically, it has been recorded in the 1476 manuscript of *Serat Kandhaning Ringit Purwo*, where Ki Pandan Arang I had opened a new settlement in Central Java's coastal area that was given the name *Bubakan*. This name came from the word *bubak*, which meant to open a plot of land for a place of settlement. In this place, Ki Pandan Arang I, who served as a royal officer for Demak Kingdom, and specializes in the arrangement of the kingdom's settlements named the villages according to the professions of the residents. Some of the names of the villages were *Kampung Batik* (a place for batik artisans), *Pedanaran* (a place for trading resin/batik dye materials), *Sayangan* (a place for craftsmen of metal/ copper household appliances), *Pedurungan* (a place for *caping* craftsmen), *Kulitan* (a place for leather craftsmen), *Petolongan* (a place for gutters), *Gandekan* (a place for gold craftsmen), *Gendingan* (a place for gamelan makers), and so on.

Kampung Batik, which produces *Batik Semarangan* cloths up to this moment, is named this way because it is recorded as a center for batik artisans. However, during the Japanese colonial period (1942-1945), the Dutch government instructed some people to destroy this batik industrial center. On October 15-19, 1945, the Japanese army saw the necessity of burning the people's houses, so not only batik garments but also batik equipment were destroyed. As a result, all kinds of batik related activities in the village eventually stopped. There was, however, a Chinese businessman descendant living in *Bugangan* village that managed to keep his *Tan Kong Tien Batikkerij* alive.

Married to Raden Ayu Dinartiningsih, who was a descendant of Hamengku Buwana III from the Sultanate of Yogyakarta, the Chinese businessman, Tan Kong Tien then continued their batik business. The business was then passed on to their son Raden Nganten Sri Murdijanti, thus, making them famous until the 1970s. Unfortunately, this batik hybrid product of Chinese and Javanese motifs in batik experienced a recess due to the unavailability of a successor to continue with their batik skills. In the 2000s, however, there was a Batik company that grew in *Bukit Kencana* in the Tembalang area under the name of *Umizie*, which promised to continue the crafting of *Batik Semarangan*. In 2006, it changed its name to *Sanggar Batik Semarang 16* to make the unique batik cloths better known..

The studio was popular for the start of the batik motifs production of Semarang City icons. On the batik cloth, images of city icons such as the *Tugu Muda Kiniteran Sulur motif*, *Asem Arang*, *Lawang Sewu*, and *Kawung Semawis* made the batik cloth even more unique. To increase its popularity, the studio saw the importance of producing more batik. To realize it, this company used a stamping facility to reproduce the motifs quickly, so that more people could buy their products.

In 2007, *Batik Semarang Indah* was born in *Kampung Batik*. The batik production here received training assistance from the Regional National Crafts Council of Semarang City. From the training, *Batik Semarangan* was then known as having the characteristics of having the freedom to take a variety of flora and fauna as motifs that used striking bright colors, such as using a reddish-orange base color.

The reddish-orange color is different from other Central Java area batiks, such as the light brown color from Demak and the blue base color usually found in Kudus batik. The presence of fauna in *Batik Semarangan* is found to have been influenced by the Chinese culture which mostly featured peacocks, butterflies, birds of paradise, phoenixes, and the like. Flora motifs were usually in the form of bouquets, *lung-lungan*, and *cempaka* flowers that usually appeared more in Pekalongan batik. *Batik Semarangan* is, therefore, characterized by its naturalistic and realistic motifs rather than the symbolic ones such as those found in Yogyakarta or Solo batik. In its development, in addition to the flora and fauna motifs, as informed above, *Batik Semarangan* also displayed buildings that have become the icons of the city of Semarang.

The types of *Batik Semarangan* and their meanings are interesting to study. An interview with one of the makers, Ms. Afifah, the owner of Figa Batik Shop in *Kampung Batik* confirmed that *Batik Semarangan* used a cultural hybrid strategy in making its motifs as a means to increase the popularity of batik products (personal communication, May 5, 2022). The history of the formation of the city of Semarang, which is located in a coastal area, has conditioned people to not only appreciate Javanese culture but also Arab, Chinese, and Dutch cultures. As a result, the *Batik Semarangan* mixes these various cultures to produce their batik motifs.

Discussing the occurrence of mixed or hybrid culture with other cultures, Figure 1 shows examples of a Chinese peacock with a Javanese *bekisar* motif, which has the meaning that a batik wearer with the motifs would become beautiful and elegant, as believed by one of the makers, Ms. Yanti (personal communication, May 5, 2022). She said, "The bird motif brings luck or beauty to those who wear it" Focusing on the color, it is interesting to find that rather than the usual traditional Javanese batik of

brown, black, or white colors, there is a dominantly bright yellow, orange-pink, and blue colors, which depicted a western favorite, or Dutch culture, in addition to a coastal area influence.



Figure1: peacock and *bekisar* motifs

Cultural hybrid motifs are also proven in the creation of an imaginary animal called the *Warak Endog* (see Figure 2). The Semarang community who originated from mixed descendants of China, Arab, and Java (Kraidy, 2005) may want to be shown through the creation of this particular figure.



Figure 2: *blekok*, *warak endog*, *tugu muda*

Inspecting it closely, the head of the *Warak Endog* is in the form of a Chinese dragon head, a Javanese goat body, and an Arabic camel neck. Mr. Tri, the owner of the *Ngesti Pandowo* batik shop, explained further that the *Warak Endog* is a show of the Semarang Chinese, Arab, and Javanese ethnicity (personal communication, May 5, 2022). As informed by Aryani et al. (2020, p.516), the dragon head is a vital element in the *Warak Endog* figure to show leadership signs, thus, giving the reason why it is usually drawn very distinctively. The Javanese goat body is equally peculiar to discuss because of the myth that it is the source of livelihood, which is why this animal is an important meal for *Aqiqah* and *Nyewu* (1000th day of someone's death) ceremonies. The Arabic camel is nonetheless important to draw into the image because of its strength in living in the harsh desert. In other words, the *Warak Endog* is a symbol of how strong a community is if it has this beast as its imaginary leader. This imaginary beast is believed to be the protector of Semarang city from all evil things.

It is interesting to find that with or without the direct knowledge of the artisans, the choice of fauna motifs in Batik Semarang is supporting the preservation of certain extinct and/ or almost extinct animals. According to the result of an interview with Mr. Tri, batik artisans who joined the *Batik Semarang* cluster had been trained to draw fauna that they believed were seen around Semarang. An example is the image of the *blekok Sronдол* bird, which is combined with the imaginary fauna of *Warak Endog* (see Figure 2).

As seen in Figure 2, the motif is inspired by the *blekok* or swallow bird that often perches on the tamarind tree planted on the outskirts of the battalion dormitory on *Sronдол* Street (see Figure 3). *Blekok* attracts the attention of passersby because there was a time when this bird species would often litter the streets with their droppings. Unfortunately, nowadays, the bird is no longer seen in *Sronдол* Street tamarind trees. It may be caused by the fact that the tamarind trees do not often give as many fruits as they usually did. Perhaps this was the reason that artisans drew *blekok* motifs with leaves and tamarind fruits around them.

Using an ecocritical perspective, *Batik Semarang* is considered to support the sustainability of nature. According to Mr. Tri, the tamarind fruit, which often appears in *Batik Semarang*, may have originated from the word *asem* (tamarind) and *arang* (charcoal). Not many tamarind trees are now found in Semarang city, that some batik makers may have felt they needed the batik media to conserve them. Yet, it is also possible that other batik makers may have been seeing this tamarind motif, as a possible substitute for the traditional dots that usually characterized batik cloths in general.



Figure 3: tamarind tree in *Sronдол*

Due to its coastal philosophy where people are free to express their emotions, *Batik Semarang* is not confined to any particular regulation. Batik makers are free to draw anything they see and feel must be preserved in this world. A clear example of fauna that needs to be preserved is seen in Figure 5, where a tiger is seen coming out of a bush. The freedom of expression in creativity is shown in the images in figures 4 and 6. Here, figure 4 showed drawings of Semarang's popular cuisine: the milkfish and

lumpia of Semarang. Then, there is also Figure 6, which shows the icon of the coronavirus, which is mixed in with tamarind seeds and leaves around it, thus making it a new and interesting batik product to have. From the examples of motifs discussed, it can be seen that *Batik Semarang* makers tend to make batik with naturalistic and realistic motifs rather than symbolic ones such as those from Yogyakarta or Solo.

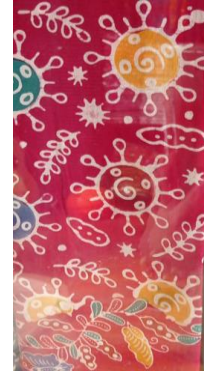
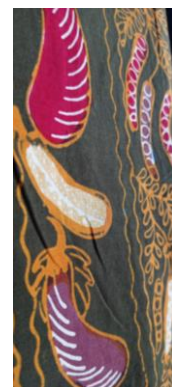
Figure 4: milkfish and *lumpia*

Figure 5: tiger and bush

Figure 6: coronavirus

In terms of flora motifs, *Batik Semarang* also uses motifs such as bouquets, *lung-lungan*, and *cempaka* flowers (see Figure 7) which usually appear more in Pekalongan Batik. However, the freedom of batik artisans in Semarang also made Pak Tri, the owner of the *Ngesti Pandawa* Shop, create a batik motif that depicts the *Peterongan* area, namely by choosing to depict eggplant vegetables combined with *pete* fruit (see Figure 8).

Figure 7: *cempaka* flowerFigure 8: *pete* and *terong* (eggplant)

In its development, apart from the flora and fauna motifs, *Batik Semarang* displays various kinds of buildings such as *Tugu Muda* (see Figure 9), *Tawang* Station (Figure 10), *Sam Poo Kong* (see Figure 11), and culinary delights such as spring rolls (see Figure 6) which become the hallmark of the city of Semarang, apart from Javanese gamelan instruments (see Figure 9). As stated above, the *Batik Semarang* motif is interesting, however, it is less popular than the batik from Yogyakarta and Solo. For this reason, to be better known by the public, one of the artisans, Ms. Afifah offers batik courses for school children at a rate of Rp50,000 per student.



Figure 9: *gamelan, tugu, tamarind* Figure 10: *Tawang station* Figure 11: *Sam Poo Kong*

For example, a student from SMA Sedes once came to draw and was then helped to transform it into a batik pattern using wax and *canting* to carry out a simple coloring process. Examples of pictures made by students are usually displayed in front of Ms. Afifah's house, so other passersby may want to take a course there, too.



Figure 12: Ms. Afifah's display of students' works

The selling price of the batik products in Ms. Afifah's collection is not expensive. Ms. Melinda, whose shop is located in Ngaliyan, confirmed also that *Batik Semarang* products are not expensive, starting from Rp100.000 to Rp350.000, depending on the size of the fabric or the model of the clothes (personal communication, May 5, 2022).



Figure 13: *Canting* facilities

Figure 14: *Bekisar* and tamarind leaves stamp

In her shop, Ms. Afifah not only prepares a *canting* tool, which is a small frying pan that is placed on an oil stove to melt the wax so that it can be inserted into the

canting tool to paint on *mori* cloth (see Figure 13), but also a tool for stamping batik. (see Figure 14). As can be seen, every motif used by the artisans puts forward the kinds of fauna and flora that are likely to be extinct. Data gathered above on the motifs of *Batik Semarangan*, is thus, not only beneficial in helping students support green conservationists to prolong nature's existence, but also in promoting local Indonesian products to the global market. The promotion to the global market is highly possible since students' field research on *Batik Semarangan's* motifs was originally set up to realize a Graphics Novel course project. This Graphics Novel course has the aim of getting students to make a novel with graphics not just by using imagination, but by doing real-life field research by use of interviews and when possible questionnaires as the instrument for data gathering.

In this project on *Batik Semarangan*, students were required to create an e-novel where some of the characters were batik makers, who gave the background or reasons as to why the batik motifs were following the *Batik Semarangan* motifs. According to Maziyah and Alamsyah (2020, p.3) there were several ways of creating motifs:

...first, stylization is drawing motifs by giving style to the object's form. The second is a distortion that is drawing the motif by exaggerating the object's form. Third, a transformation that is drawing a motif by moving other elements of the object to the object that is being drawn. Fourth, is a deformation that is drawing motifs by only taking certain elements from an object that is considered to represent the character.

As discussed above, it was found that makers of *Batik Semarangan* motifs have made a combination of cultures to create the batik. This project on *Batik Semarangan* resulted in as many as 9 Graphics Novels. For each novel, a group of two to four students were assigned to work together in devising interview questions. The questions were to seek confirmation about the information they found from reading journal articles on *Batik Semarangan* and the fauna and flora they saw on the motifs when doing their field research (see Appendix 1). Answers to the interview questions were used to check how accurate the library research data the students have accessed from academic journals found on the internet. Additionally, the answers were used to write up the graphics novel project the students were working on.

A sample of the yellow highlighted narratives found in the novel entitled "The Search of the Peacock Family's Batik" shows how the writers have tried to insert the information they received from the interview session:

hopeless and does not know what to do next. She feels like she makes her parents and grandfather disappointed.

Nirwasita tries to comfort and cheer Amanjiva. She tells her that everything is going to be okay. Since Amanjiva loves to paint, Nirwasita asks her to pour out her thoughts into painting a Batik motif for the factory. She can make a breakthrough by renewing the design. It should be simple, beautiful, and meaningful. There will always be a rainbow after the storm. After going through bad days, Amanjiva finally manages to stand up and produce a new Batik motif at the factory. The new motif consists of a peacock (a way to pay respect to her family), bamboo (a symbol of prayer request), and brown color (a symbol of positive ambition, high tenacity, and ability to innovate). Everything goes back to normal. People in the village start to trust the Gouw Batik Factory and believe that Amanjiva is a reliable person. Everyone also begins to understand that even though Amanjiva is half Chinese, that does not mean she cannot produce Batik. She can still preserve Batik by combining them with meaningful Chinese symbols. People at the Bhanuresmi village make a rule that everyone is free to design

batik motifs, as long as they have a meaningful design.

Truth be told, Banyu is a good person. It is just that he lacks love since his parents died when he was still young. He only lives with her grandfather, so he feels like he has to obey everything he says. Banyu's grandfather tells him what to do and shapes his personality. He is forced to have a bold and rude personality so that everyone in the village will respect him as a part of the Tigerfish Family. It turns out that Banyu's grandfather hates Sadajiva Gouw (Amanjiva's grandfather) due to the success of Gouw Batik Factory. He wants to bankrupt the factory and make everyone hate the Peacock Family. Banyu realizes that his grandfather is a bad influence when he sees everyone in the village hating and mocking Amanjiva's factory. He feels terrible about it. Banyu apologizes to Amanjiva and her parents. They are finally okay and have a good relationship as a neighbor. Banyu leaves the Tigerfish Family and starts a new life as proof of sincerity.

Figure 15: Results of an interview are inserted in the story

As seen in the highlighted text, it said: “Amanjiva finally manages to stand up and produce a new Batik motif at the factory. The new motif consists of a peacock (a way to pay respect to her family), bamboo (a symbol of prayer request), and brown color (a symbol of positive ambition, high tenacity, and ability to innovate),” have shown how the student writers of the novel have done some library research on how the peacock animal is related to the Chinese culture. Thus, explains why there would be a bamboo motif alongside the peacock. The choice of brown color has also been researched to symbolize among others the positive ambition the batik makers want to transfer to viewers who saw the batik cloth.



Figure 16: Brown peacock motif batik

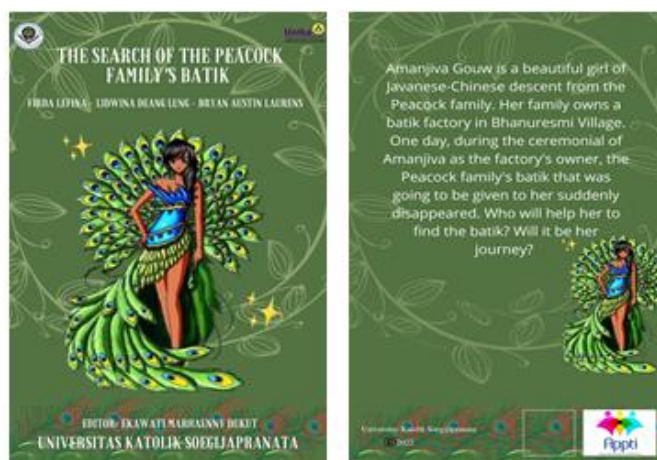


Figure 17: Front and back cover of the peacock girl

The written text was actually referring to a closer inspection of Figure 16 which displayed a brownnecked peacock looking towards the left to her fanned feathered tail that is positioned upwards. The golden brown traditional motif that looks like an S letter on a slanted right and left side of the frame seems to suggest the bamboo plant that may be around a peacock. The reddish-brown flowers may be representing hibiscus flowers that are often found on Java island. Meanwhile within the white area seems like reddish-brown fiery flames that the Chinese often used to symbolize how powerful an animal can be when given special attention. Then, the brown circular motifs that become the frame may symbolize the earth the peacock is standing on, but at the same time, it is depicting *asem* (tamarind) fruit, which is typically found in most

Batik Semarang. This *asem* is what makes the batik uniquely a Semarang product because the word Semarang originates from the Javanese words *asem* + *arang* (tamarind and charcoal). It is interesting that this particular group devised the novel's front cover to have a Chinese girl wearing a peacock costume, and for the back cover, it mentioned that the novel is about the girl's adventure of searching for the lost family's favorite batik (Figure 17).

Another interesting sample of the Graphics Novel project is the story "Connected with Batik". It is based on data gathered from interviewing some batik makers, too. The front and back cover is seen in Figure 18 below.

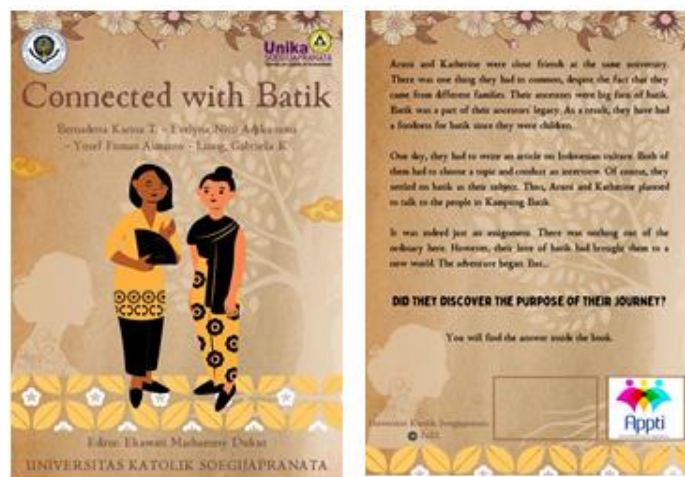


Figure 18: A Graphics Novel project on batik *kawung*

This group decided to have two ladies on the cover. On the left is showing a short-haired lady with a modern yellow blouse with a black batik motif at the bottom and a black long skirt. Whereas, the lady on the right is a bunned-up-haired lady with a black shawl over her neck and wearing a full-body yellow cloth with also a black flowered batik motif on it. Upon closer inspection, especially focusing on the white silhouette tree in the background and also at the bottom part of the cover that showed four yellow leaves circling a white flower, the writers were known to focus on a traditional Javanese batik motif called, *kawung*. Samples of the interview questions are listed in Appendix 2.

As written on the back cover, the novel tells of two girls who are close friends and fans of batik. It so happens that they were given the assignment to practice conducting an interview. For that reason, the girls then decided to go to Kampung Batik to learn more about their fondness for batik cloth, which included the traditional motif of the *Kawung*, *Parang*, and *Truntum*. From learning how to process batik in general and the myth, the girls understood better what became the background of the *Batik Semarang* motifs. The following is an excerpt from the novel that is written on page 64 of the novel:

“Yes, Pak. According to you, how far do you know about batik, especially about their motifs, Pak?” Pak Bebby then answered Robert’s question in a very long answer.

“The motifs were many. Like classic motifs for example. So, the classic motif is now slowly being abandoned. Only old people who had a high love for batik were still preserving it. The past and present batik was different. The batik

that they used to make came from a happy heart. So, although cheaply paid, they still finished the batik-making because that person had been sitting all day doing batik. In the past, batik works were done in 3-4 months because they used natural dyes. For now, they used synthetic dyes, so they are made more quickly. There are many classic motifs such as *Truntum*, *Kawung*, *Parang Tritis*, and *Parang Barong*. Well, the last one, *Parang Barong* was made by Mangkunegaran. He used it by himself...”

This is continued on page 65 of the novel as follows:

“Wow! A new enlightenment for me,” said Robert to Pak Beby. Then, Robert asked again, “So, Pak Beby. Batik has a philosophy, right?”

“Yes, batik is full of philosophy.”

“Could you please explain?”

“Well, here in Semarang, the batik craftsmen made it by giving Semarang icons, with some not using classic motifs to the batik. That's what made the classic batik damaged, however. For me, Beby, I like making modern or contemporary batik. I usually have classical motifs combined with contemporary motifs. I made contemporary batik motifs because young people today are not comfortable with just having classical motifs to wear batik. They felt old if only using classical motifs. So, because I want young people to like wearing batik, I draw contemporary motifs (*batik tulis kontemporer*). Even though I draw contemporary motifs, I still combine them with classical motifs in my batik works.”

The excerpt above explained how contemporary motifs like those used by *Batik Semarangan* are most likely due to the need for attracting younger generations to also still enjoy consuming and using batik. The explanation about *Kawung* motif, was, however, laid out on pages 118-119 of the novel as follows:

Bahuwirya, who was happy that he had returned to his human form, rushed into the palace and met Sultan Agung. Sultan Agung who saw his son had returned to tears of joy and hugged him.

“It was they who have helped me find an antidote to your curse.” Sultan Agung said.

Hearing that, Bahuwirya thanked Katherine and Aruni. Nevertheless, after Bahuwirya learned how to help people and become a better king, he gave the sugar palm fairy tree seed to everyone in that kingdom. He also planted the seeds in front of the palace. Bahuwirya also put the batik his father had given him in a big glass frame, so everyone could see it. He wanted other people to be able to wear the batik, too. So that it would be easier for people to make that pattern, he gave the batik motif a name. It was called *Kawung*. He named it *Kawung* because people used to call the tree “sugar palm fairy.” In Javanese, sugar palm means *Kawung*. *Kawung* can also mean “empty”, which is what *suwung* means. So, Bahuwirya hoped that people could be like Kawung, who could give up ones worldly desires and become pure people. Another reason why Bahuwirya gave the name Kawung was so that people could be humble even if they were in a high position. Some people also say that the *kawung* pattern looks like a lotus flower. So, it is also called by the Javanese community the *keblat papat lima pancer*, which means “the four natural energy sources.”

Because *kawung* looks into the importance of having the four leafy patterns of the lotus flower, it becomes understandable for why this group of students made use of the pattern for their novel's cover.

Conclusion

As shown in the above results and discussion, an intercultural awareness can be taught to students by assigning them to do field research on batik. As exemplified in the Graphics Novel course, students were asked to apply their communication skills to dig into what a local product from Semarang has to offer. Using an interview as the research instrument and using semiotics to read the data collected by the students, it was found that *Batik Semarangan* is important to be globalized. The motifs that it carries, ie. the iconic buildings, in addition to the flora and fauna should be popularized in the form of a novel as an attempt to preserve the beauty of nature through a local popular culture product. Not only can students appreciate batik more, but the efforts that *Batik Semarangan* makers have indirectly done in drawing flora and fauna around Semarang iconic buildings, the batik have made people more aware of the importance of maintaining the world's ecosystem. As proven by the two Graphics Novel samples, the research exercise has made students have a global competence, in addition to having intercultural communication awareness.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. Menurut Anda, apa itu Batik Semarang? (In your opinion, what is Batik Semarang?)
2. Apa yang menjadi ciri khas Batik Semarang dibandingkan dengan batik dari daerah lain? (What becomes the characteristics of Batik Semarang when compared to batik from other regions?)
3. Bagaimana peran Batik Semarang dalam industri batik di Semarang? (What role does Batik Semarang play in the batik industry in Semarang?)
4. Apa saja motif-motif khas Batik Semarang? (What are Batik Semarang motifs?)
5. Motif-motif hewan dan tumbuhan apa saja yang dimiliki Batik Semarang? (What flora and fauna motifs can we find in Batik Semarang?)
6. Apa makna dibalik motif hewan dan tumbuhan tersebut? (What do the flora and fauna symbolize?)
7. Bagaimana cara pembuatan batik dengan motif flora dan fauna? Apakah berbeda dengan cara pembuatan batik motif lain? (How are the flora and fauna motifs made? Is it different from making other batik motifs?)
8. Ada informasi bahwa ada yang dinamakan Batik Merak Semawis. Motif dominan apa saja yang ada dalam batik tersebut? (There is some information on Batik Merak Semawis motif. What kinds of motifs are found dominant?)

9. *Apakah ada perpaduan budaya selain Jawa dalam batik tersebut? (Is there any cultural hybrid mix besides Java culture in the batik motif?)*
10. *Apa makna dibalik motif-motif tersebut? (What do those motifs mean?)*

Appendix 2.

1. *Bagaimana asal-usul batik ini sehingga diberi nama Kawung? Apakah betul karena motifnya yang mirip dengan buah Aren? (What is the background for the creation of batik Kawung? Is it true that the motif is like the fruit of a sugar plum?)*
2. *Kawung juga diambil dari kata Suwung yang berarti simbol kekosongan nafsu dan keinginan duniawi. Dengan demikian, motif Kawung dalam pengertian yang lebih luas, apakah mengandung makna kesempurnaan dan kemurnian? (Kawung is also taken from the word Sawung, which means the symbol of the emptiness of a desire and want of worldly things. With that in mind, does the Kawung motif also include the symbol for wholeness and purity?)*
3. *Apakah ada syarat dan ketentuan tertentu dalam pemilihan motif dan warna pada saat pembuatan batik ini? Berdasarkan yang sumber bacaan, motif itu biasanya monumental tergantung dengan imajinasi dari pembuat batik itu sendiri. Apakah ada makna tertentu dari batik Kawung? (Is there a requirement and certain criteria in the choice of motif and color in making this batik? From what was read, this motif is usually monumental and related to the imagination of the makers themselves. Is there, then, a certain meaning to the creation of the Kawung motif?)*
4. *Ada sumber bacaan yang menyatakan bahwa ada larangan untuk corak batik tertentu yang hanya boleh dipakai oleh kaum bangsawan. Apakah batik Kawung adalah salah satu yang menjadi larangan untuk dipakai oleh masyarakat umum? Mengapa? (There is a source of reading that states the prohibition of certain batik motifs to be worn only by members of a noblemen. Is batik Kawung one of those prohibited for the general public? Why?)*