

Cultural Content Evaluation in Indonesian Interactive English Textbook for Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the cultural content in an English textbook that is customized for learning English based on Indonesian Merdeka curriculum which ideally should include a variety of traditional and regional cultures of Indonesia in its textbook. The chosen book is an authoritative book for senior-high grade entitled *Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas 10B* by Yuniarti Dwi Arini. The objective of this research is to prove and to review the ratio of cultural content that exists within the English interaction textbook of tenth grade. Through analyzing the cultural content, it is hoped that this study is able to improve the cultural quality within other EFL textbooks in Indonesia. The research design for this study is a quantitative method, specifically, a conceptual content analysis. The coding is based upon cultural categories and cultural elements exposure of the content inside the textbook. The finding of this research shows that the percentage of cultural concept in the analyzed object is 76%, the percentage of practice is 17%, and perspective and person's percentages are 5% and 2% respectively. For the cultural categories, there are a ratio of 55% in the target culture of English speaking country, 24% for the source culture which is from Indonesian culture, and 21% for the international target culture which is a culture that neither the target culture nor the source culture and the culture that originated in a nation that does not regard English as a first or second language.

Keywords: content analysis, culture exposure, EFL textbook

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konten budaya dalam buku teks bahasa Inggris yang disesuaikan untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris berdasarkan kurikulum Indonesia Merdeka yang idealnya memasukkan berbagai budaya tradisional dan daerah Indonesia dalam buku teks. Buku yang dipilih adalah buku untuk kelas 10 SMA berjudul *Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas 10B* oleh Yuniarti Dwi Arini. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk membuktikan dan meninjau rasio konten budaya yang ada dalam buku teks interaksi bahasa Inggris kelas sepuluh. Melalui analisis konten budaya, diharapkan penelitian ini mampu meningkatkan kualitas budaya dalam buku teks EFL lain di Indonesia. Rancangan penelitian untuk penelitian ini adalah metode kuantitatif, khususnya analisis isi konseptual. Pengkodean didasarkan pada kategori budaya dan pemaparan elemen budaya dari konten di dalam buku teks. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa persentase konsep budaya pada objek yang

dianalisis adalah 76%, persentase praktik 17%, dan persentase perspektif dan orang masing-masing 5% dan 2%. Untuk kategori budaya, terdapat rasio 55% pada budaya target negara berbahasa Inggris, 24% pada budaya sumber yang berasal dari budaya Indonesia, dan 21% pada budaya target internasional yang merupakan budaya yang bukan merupakan budaya target. maupun budaya sumber dan budaya yang berasal dari suatu bangsa yang tidak menganggap bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pertama atau kedua.

Kata kunci: Analisis konten, eksposur budaya, buku pelajaran Bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

Humans can learn anything, and language is one of many subjects that can be learned. There are many ways on how to learn a language. It can be done through a direct life experience or it could be learned from materials such as books, videos, or even videogames (Deris & Shukor, 2019; Nigar, 2020). However, in the context of formal education where there is a role of student and teacher, there would be a structured education system that runs from an early age students such as primary school to university, or specialized programs for vocational, technical, and professional training. Formal education frequently includes an evaluation of the students' acquired knowledge or skills and is built around a program or curriculum that can be more or less easily customized to fit each student's needs and preferences. Recognition and certification are typically the results of formal education such as in the school system of classroom learning.

In this formal education context, where a student must attend school in order to get a degree, textbooks are mostly used to teach as aids. A textbook is one of the most prevalent tools in the classroom. A teacher usually uses it because of its benefits for the lesson as well as an additional resource in learning material, includes advice on how to complement the textbook with extra exercise, use it as a guide for organizing the teaching frameworks, and more (Huang, 2019; Syafiqah Yacob & Md Yunus, 2019). The value of textbook's resources will be especially great for teachers.

A textbook is a compilation of facts, ideas, and rules related to a particular subject or course (Georgievna, 2020). It's typically prepared by one or more professors, teachers, or education specialists who are experts in their respective fields. The majority of textbooks come with teacher guides that provide more resources, suggestions, and activities to be used all academic year long. Textbooks have widely different effects on students' academic performance, which appear to be cumulative over time (Van Den Ham, & Heinze, 2018). Richards (2019) agrees that textbooks are an important part of language programs that serve as the main source of language information (language input) for language acquisition as well as for English practice in the classroom.

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) found that a textbook has a significant and advantageous role to play in the daily task of teaching and learning English, and its significance increases during times of transition. Viewing textbook development and teacher education as complementary and mutually helpful is essential as a part of language education analysis. Therefore there is always an adjustment in a textbook either from its contents, lesson, or

learning materials. Nowadays, there are many varieties of textbooks for one very specific learning lesson such as English textbooks for specific grades in formal education.

Considering many varieties of English textbooks, in formal education, there is a collection of lessons and assessments that will be taught in an educational institution by a teacher as well as the totality of experiences a student will have when taught in an institution by a teacher which refers as curriculum (Toombs & Tierney, 1993). A curriculum is crucial because it imposes some structure on the material that is taught in a school. The ability to transfer between institutions and advance to earn further qualifications is made possible by the existence of a curriculum, such as when students want to upgrade their education between the primary and secondary levels. It implies that educational institutions are standardized and that students will not suffer or miss out on instruction just because they transfer between institutions. In other words, educational textbooks should be equally standardized according to each nation's goal (Matters, 2014).

In this current situation, The Merdeka Curriculum is the latest Indonesian curriculum which is still optional in the formal education school system. Nadiem, Indonesia Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, admitted that the Merdeka curriculum would be implemented in the new 2022/2023 school year (Qomariyah & Maghfiroh, 2022). One of the foundations of this curriculum is the implementation of spaces allocated for regional authorities to include local content based on local characteristics and wisdom in the region. This curriculum education must be rooted in the nation's culture. Local wisdom depicted here is related to one of the characteristics in the profile of Pancasila, namely global diversity. The goal is to elevate Indonesian locality into an international-scale competitiveness. This means that all cultural conditions and regional characteristics have quite a large scoop in the curriculum. Therefore the textbook based on this curriculum should be accompanied by Indonesia's local culture.

That being said, teaching culture goes hand in hand with teaching language. According to several academics, language and culture cannot be separated (Colson, 2008; Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2006; Williams, 2010). The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement are generally referred to as culture. Additionally, it refers to the traditions, creative endeavors, social structures, and accomplishments of a specific country, people, or other social groups (Hall, 2016). As stated by Kramsch (1997), culture exists wherever a language is being learned. Students, who perceive EFL as the framework for acquiring local cultural information, negotiate between their own culture and the cultural knowledge of the target language. The learners are essentially helped to recognize their own identity through the instructional materials and classroom activities that introduce them to the target culture. This phenomenon satisfies Hall's definition of the identity concept as a sociological subject (1996).

However, according to Sharif and Mohammadi (2013), many EFL textbooks in Indonesia omit overtly cultural information. Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012) conducted an analysis of several primary school textbooks in Indonesia and discovered that, despite being written for use in the Indonesian context, they contained a significant amount of implicit assumptions about English language users and very little local cultural information. Therefore considering this information, this research aims to analyze the cultural content in English

textbooks that are customized for learning English based on the Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia.

Previously, recent studies on the same topic (Wakhidah, & Adityarini, 2021; Permatasari, 2022; Nurjanah, & Umaemah, 2019; Qodriani, & Kardiansyah, 2018; Ririn, 2012; & Taki, 2008) have shown and analyzed the context of English textbooks' used in Indonesia that contained representations of different cultures and society from all over the world. Furthermore, specific research conducted in 2021 examined how Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture presented culturally relevant material in their published tenth-grade senior high school English textbook. It has been made clear that this checklist reveals the scope of the cultural content and how it satisfies the requirements of cultural education in the English language learning process at school. The results demonstrated that the EFL textbook reflects not only the target cultures but also the source cultures and other cultures. The materials show that the source cultures are those that are most commonly portrayed, while the international cultures are those that are least frequently portrayed (Riadini, & Cahyono, 2021). Another study examined the cultural content portrayed in English textbooks used by ten graders published by the government. It may be concluded that the content of culture in most of the textbooks was different in terms of cultural elements and cultural sources (Ayu, 2020).

That being the case, this research is intended to analyze different English textbooks from the previous research with an almost similar framework based on the previous research. However, note that this research uses a different book specifically used for the current recent Merdeka curriculum, which ideally should include a variety of traditional and regional culture of Indonesia in its textbook. Therefore, this research aims to prove the ratio of culture that exists within an authoritative English interaction textbook of tenth-grade senior high school by Yuniarti Dwi Arini (2022). This book would be one example of many variety EFL textbooks dedicated to Merdeka curriculum learning. This study aims to determine the frequency of the use of the cultural concepts covered in English textbooks, which are cultural categories and cultural elements based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999).

METHOD

The research design for this study is a quantitative method, specifically, a conceptual content analysis. In this study, a concept was chosen for examination and the analysis involved quantifying and counting its presence. It was used in order to determine the existence and frequency of cultural concepts in the chosen object. It analyzed the content such as texts and images inside the textbook. The content was selected, coded, and broken down into manageable code categories for analysis.

Here cultural categories are coded as source culture (SC), target culture (TC), and international target culture (ITC). Source culture is defined as cultural information from the learner's own culture that is included in the textbook. Indonesian culture is the source culture in this scenario. Other cultures make up the third culture in the textbook. Target culture is defined as cultural information from the target language's or English-speaking nations' textbooks; in this example, the target language's cultures are the cultures of the United Kingdom and the United States. This society is well known for its "Western" culture. International target culture was characterized by Cortazzi & Jin (1999) as a culture that is

neither the target culture nor the source culture. Additionally, it is the culture that originated in a nation that does not regard English as a first or second language.

In analyzing the portrayal of cultural elements, the author looked into the cultural material using a framework from Yuen (2011). Some visible aspects of culture included things such as products, persons, practices, and perspectives. (1) Products: tangible components of culture, such as architectural landmarks, musical compositions, folktales, written works of fiction, comic books, inventions, meals, etc.; (2) Persons: well-known individuals who represent a certain culture, such as poets, authors, national figures, athletes, painters, and singers; (3) Practices: cultural practices include rituals, activities, and practices that are specific to a culture, such as ceremonies, celebrations of holidays, passed-down customs, and so on. Consider that it is improper to give teachers gifts; (4) Perspectives: How a certain group of individuals sees something that sets them apart from those from other cultures, such as native speakers. Therefore the code for cultural elements is based on those four aspects.

The object of this study is *Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas 10B* by Yuniarti Dwi Arini. It is an interactive English book dedicated to Merdeka curriculum learning. This book was published by Intan Pariwara Publishing. The book has a total of 90 pages and is used for the English learning activity in the second semester of tenth-grade senior high school.

Based on Yuen's method, a checklist was employed to collect the data (2011). Data collection methods are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Yuen's checklist

Items	Products			Persons			Practices			Perspectives		
	SC	TC	ITC	SC	TC	ITC	SC	TC	ITC	SC	TC	ITC
Chapter 1												
Chapter 2												

The table is arranged as such in order to organize data into two groups of coding categories which are cultural elements: products, persons, practices, and perspective, and cultural categories: source culture (SC), target culture (TC), and international target culture (ITC).

The first step of research procedure was to read the book before analyzing its content. All the content was analyzed thoughtfully from the first page until the end of the page in order to select the correct content. If it contained cultural contents, then the contents will be organized into coding groups. After deciding the cultural element of the content, the researcher grouped the cultural categories of the said cultural element. Then, after everything was organized, all the content was counted in order to see the ratio of culture that existed inside the English interaction textbook based on its coding group. After knowing the total number, the researcher put the result into a pie chart at the end of the data organization in consequence to find the comparability of each coding group of cultural elements and cultural categories in the textbook.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result can be shown in the table checklist below (table 2). The data is transformed into charts in order to determine the percentage of each part of the coding based on its group. Below are Chart 1 and Chart 2. It illustrates how cultures are spread in the interactive English textbook of tenth-grade students in Indonesia. There are some phenomena of cultures that are clearly depicted, however, there is also a culture that is simply just mentioned and not explained as a learning material.

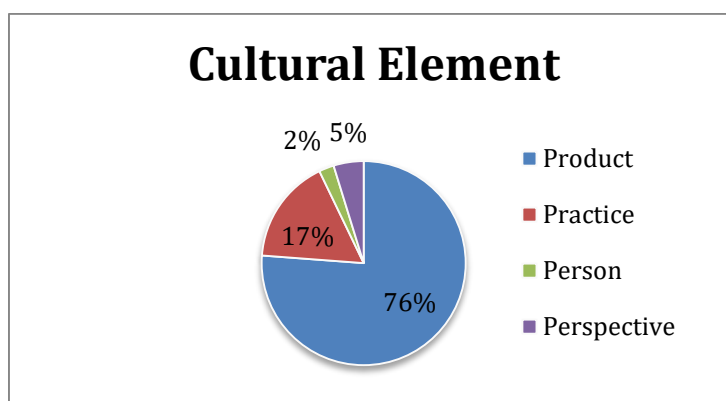


Figure 1. Cultural elements

From the chart above we can see the percentage of how cultural elements are distributed in the textbook. From what the researcher has found, there are forty-two mentions of a culture that had been organized into four groups of cultural elements. These forty-two different cultures are in a form of a picture, passage text, or just simply a sentence or a phrase.

From the figure, it can be seen there are big gaps in the product in cultural elements dominating the ratio of the textbook content. The percentage of the product here is 76% with a count number of thirty-two cultural contexts. The most dominant product of culture used in this textbook is famous western fairytale stories such as *Cinderella*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The King Midas and Golden Touch*, and many more. This happens because in the second semester of the tenth grade there is a part of a course that explains and introduces a narrative text. In the textbook, there is a chapter that focuses on fractured fairy tales as the topic of study. This chapter is placed as the second chapter in the book. Thus, most of the learning material used in this learning process is a story tale. The second mention of the product of culture is a domestic and daily life-related product from either culture, which mostly can be found in the first chapter of the textbook. The reason behind this is that the first chapter's learning objectives are to teach the student expository texts and express opinions on something. Therefore, the material used in this chapter is things that students feel familiar with and interested in, such as henna tattoo, gamelan, AR and VR games, NFT, etc.

For practice, this English Textbook has a percentage of 17%, the second biggest ratio after product of culture. The number of existing products mentioned are seven products of culture. These cultural practices are mostly popular culture or at least practices that once had been a trend and had been known in the circle of senior high school students.

The third cultural element is perspective. It only has 5% of the ratio of the cultural element. Only two cultural perspectives are found in this English textbook. Both of them are the perspective of how to think in referring to the Pancasila ideology of Indonesia. Thus, there is no perspective from the target culture in this textbook, such as the "Western" ideology or belief.

The last cultural element in this English textbook is the person, which only has 2% of the whole percentage of culture. This percentage is only filled by one person, which comes from the target culture figure. The person here is just mentioned as the author of a reading passage in the reading exercise, and not explained nor given as learning material in this textbook.

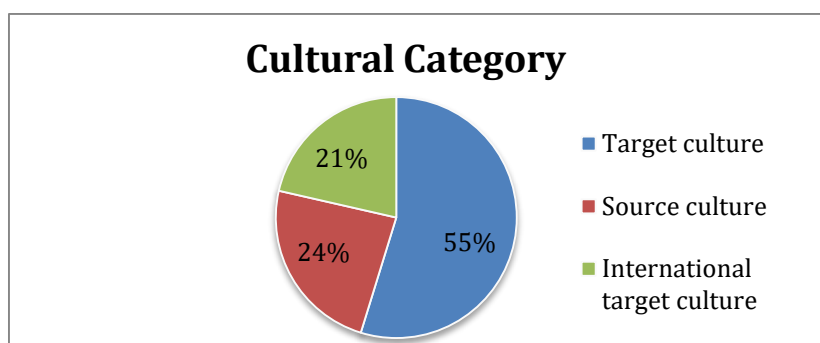


Figure 2. Cultural categories

Figure 2 contains the percentage ratio of cultural categories in the Interactive English textbook. As we can see the target culture (TC) contained in this textbook are the one that has the biggest percentage compared to the two others. It has a 55% ratio from the whole cultural category. It has twenty-three cultural contents. Target culture here refers to the culture of English-speaking countries such as America, English, Australia, and many more. This ratio is dominated by cultural material in a form of cultural elements that are mostly a product. For example, from the previous chart, the most frequent material that has a cultural element is a reading text in a form of a story tale. It can be said that the target culture here is classical work of a well-known stories that the students are familiar with. The product of popular culture can also be seen in this target culture. The mention of *Harry Potter*, *Cinderella*, and a picture of Disney's *Snow White* are some of them.

Moreover, from the textbook, the cultural category of the target cultures is a picture of a crystal lamp which is a product of a culture that is familiar in the interior design of western culture. There is also a page where it depicts a room design of a classic Victorian era. A modern culture such as NFT, AR, and VR games are also included. Those cultural products are included as a high culture of TC. A phenomenon of popular culture from the target culture is also included in this textbook. Phenomena such as flash-mob and dance challenge which are popular amongst high-school students are also included as cultural examples in the textbook.

The second biggest exposure of cultural categories is from the source culture. Based on the chart above, the ratio of the source culture content in this interaction EFL textbook is 24%. Specifically, there are 10 cultural exposures from Indonesia's culture. The source culture here is in a form of pictures and reading material. For pictures, there is an illustration of a girl playing gamelan, a traditional musical instrument from Java. There is also an illustration of a group of

girls dancing traditional dance from Aceh. While for reading material, there is a folklore story of *Dayang Sumbi* and *Batu Betangkup*. These cultures are included as Folk culture. The utilization of folk culture as a symbol of locality is in line to general manifestation of cultural content in a textbook (Thompson & Fevre, 2001). However, there are also source cultures that can be considered as a national culture, which are the picture of students wearing a senior high school uniform and the application of the Pancasila ideology in this book. Both concrete forms of cultural products, as well as ideological ones, can be found in the textbook

The last cultural category is international target culture (ITC). With a percentage of 21%, it is the least cultural exposure content in this EFL textbook. There are 9 exposures here. International target culture in this textbook is a culture that is neither the target culture nor the source culture and the culture that originated in a nation that does not regard English as a first or second language. It is in a form of reading texts for exercise activity. These ITCs are products of cultural elements such as a story tale from Japan which can be included as a folktale and a folk culture. A discussion about anime which refers to the film animation from Japan can be found here. It is a popular product of a culture that the student has a well-known knowledge about since anime is highly popular in Indonesia (Hidayat & Hidayat, 2020). Other international target cultures are the story of *Rapunzel* from German, *Aladdin* from the Middle East, and a circus that has a genealogical root in ancient Rome.

In the current curriculum which Merdeka curriculum is applied in the formal education system, its textbook also needs to be adjusted. Merdeka curriculum has its policy to implement or introduce local culture to strengthen the Pancasilaist student profile (P5) in the education unit. Although English is a foreign language and it is to be expected to omit overtly cultural information about the source culture of Indonesia, this book contains almost a quarter of source culture in its cultural exposure ratio. This book has ninety pages, and fifty-seven pages of them contain cultural exposure in the form of product, practice, person, and perspective from various categories of cultures. Thus, it can be concluded, from this *Bahasa Inggris Untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas 10B* EFL textbook that it has enough cultural exposure in a way it fits the guideline of the Merdeka Curriculum. The learning of foreign language and local culture thus indeed goes hand in hand.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude from this content book analysis, it is found that both cultural categories and elements are mostly in a form of popular cultures such as AR and VR games. The others type of culture are classic culture such as the classic fairy tale used in this textbook reading materials *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, etc, and folk culture which is the story of *Dayang Sumbi* and the picture of a group of girls dancing a traditional Tari Saman, national culture such as a picture of students wearing a senior high school uniform and the application of the Pancasila ideology, and high cultures such as an illustration of a classic chandelier and a picture of European victorian classic interior design in the textbook. It is all a form of cultural products that are familiar for the student.

In cultural elements, the most frequent culture used is a product. The percentage of the product here is 76% with a count of thirty-two cultural contexts. This happens because in the second semester of the tenth grade, a part of a course explains and introduces a narrative text.

In the textbook, there is a chapter that focuses on fractured fairy tales as the topic of study. In second place is practice, with a percentage of 17% of the ratio in this textbook. The third and last place is perspective and person. Both of them have a percentage of 5% and 2% in the whole book.

As for the cultural categories in this EFL interactive textbook, target culture (TC) in this textbook is the most frequent culture exposure that the textbook has. Its percentage is 55%. The second ratio is the source culture (SC) content which has 24% cultural exposure in this interaction EFL textbook. In the last place, there is the international target language (ITC) which has 21% cultural content.

Therefore, using conceptual analysis content textbook, those are the result of this research of cultural content evaluation in English textbook customized for learning English based on the Merdeka curriculum, as well as the ratio of culture that exists in inside English interaction textbook of tenth grade. Contradicting Sharif and Mohammadi's (2013) finding that many EFL textbooks in Indonesia omit overtly cultural information from different EFL textbooks, this textbook has forty-two cultural content in its content from its whole ninety pages. Due to that reason, this textbook is an improvement of the previous textbook from the different curriculum. Although, it should be noted that this textbook has a bigger frequent ratio of target language exposure rather than the source culture, which is, Indonesia.

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