

**CULTURAL CONTENTS IN AN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)
TEXTBOOK FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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Abstract

This research investigates the cultural contents in an English textbook for senior high school which has been published by *Ministry of Education*. To reveal what cultures are represented in the textbook, the cultural contents in this study are categorized into the source culture, the target culture, or the international culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). This study is a qualitative research which employs a cultural analysis toward an English textbook for senior high school students of grade XI. The data for the study are in the form of written texts and illustrations that may accompany the reading contents. The research finds that source culture is more dominant in the textbook, and it is presented in form of historical facts and names chosen for characters, public figures and locations in the textbook. Based on the findings it is recommended that more target culture and international culture be included in the textbook.

Keywords: *Cultural Contents, English Textbook*

INTRODUCTION

English has been used by many people who come from various societies with different cultural backgrounds, areas, and linguistics (Cyrstal, 2003; Bolton, 2012). The use of English might be one's first language or second language. English is also used in teaching and learning process. Since the users of English come from different cultural backgrounds, areas, and linguistics, that is why the teachers should consider choosing learning materials in term of cultural contents. This happens because the goal of English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy is to train English speakers in communicating with other people who are linguistically and culturally different, thus cultural contents need to be presented in teaching and learning process at school.

Culture is widely defined from various perspectives. One of the definitions

has been stated by Rogers and Steinfatt (1999:31) who point out that culture refers to "the total way of life of people composed of their learned and shared behavior patterns, values, norms, and material objects". Therefore, cultures influence the way how the community lives, behaves, thinks, and speaks, for example, meeting and greeting, family life, daily activities, dress style, men-women differences in seat position and giving advice. This is also supported by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) who define culture as a framework of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's actions, words, and pattern of thinking. Thus, it can be concluded that culture is a dominant part of human beings that influence every aspect of their life, including language learning.

According to McGrath (2002) language learning materials can carry cultural contents. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) claim that English language teaching (ELT)

materials contain three categories of culture, namely source culture, target culture, and international target culture. EFL materials that contain source culture mean that they present language learner's own culture. Target culture addresses to the culture in which the target language is spoken as first language or mother tongue. International target culture refers to various cultures in English or non-English speaking countries which use English as an international language. In other words, English has been spread to all over the world.

Moreover, Bao (2006) states that including the incorporation of culture in textbooks can help learners to communicate effectively and assist them to become tolerant and receptive towards the values of other cultures. This is also supported by Widdowson (1998) who states that instructional material activities should have suitable discourse in relating with native and nonnative speaker interactions, as well as nonnative and nonnative speaker interaction. Thus, it can be assumed that representation of culture in English language teaching material (ELT) encourages creating intercultural competence of the learners.

Meanwhile, there are some previous studies on cultural context in textbooks. Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012) investigate the local cultural elements in textbooks for primary school in Indonesia. They find that the presence of local or source culture is disseminated in the form of, among others, names chosen for the characters, places and locations discussed in reading passage, and rituals. In addition, they suggested that the textbooks should help students to understand other cultures and appreciate their own so that students have deep elaborations both local culture and non local culture.

Furthermore, the second study is Juan's study (2010) about analyzing the

cultural content in EFL textbooks for college students in China. In some countries where English is learned as foreign language such as China, learning materials play an important role in teaching and learning process. Based on his study, it can be drawn that the cultural content in English as foreign language textbooks is one of the best resources for introducing cultural knowledge to learners and the cultural content in EFL textbooks will be critical element even the determining element for culture learning (Juan, 2010). Therefore, the result of this study revealed that the target culture was predominant in the textbooks. Then, he suggested that the presence of local culture should be increased, the international culture should be added and the comparison and contrasts between different cultures should be added; and the cultural knowledge in the part of exercise in EFL textbooks should be addressed. This is same with Faris (2014) who investigates cultural content of an English textbooks by using Cortazzi and Jin's framework of cultural content in textbooks. The textbook is for senior high school grade three entitled "Look Ahead" which is published by Airlangga publisher. It is found that 77,05% cultural contents refer to the target culture, 13,11% cultural contents refer to the source culture, and 09,84% cultural contents refer to the international culture.

Dealing with English textbooks, Indonesian Board of National Education Standard (BNSP) has designed and produced the English textbooks based on the curriculum 2013. The English textbooks are arranged for students who come from elementary school until senior high school. Textbooks can motivate students to develop their understanding about diversity, give an appreciation of cultural diversity and know pluralistic society, which includes a variety of cultural and local knowledge, national, and global (*National Evaluation Committee/Badan Nasional Satuan Pendidikan/BNSP, 2013*).

Based on the result of research in the cultural content of English textbooks, it is found that one of the previous studies namely Juan's study (2010) shows that cultural contents on EFL textbooks tend to target culture. Besides, source culture and international culture on the English textbooks has not been investigated comprehensively. Therefore, this research is conducted to fill the gap by examining cultural contents in form of source culture, target culture, and international culture in English textbooks.

METHOD

This study employs a systematic technique to analyze and to describe how the cultural contents are represented in the English textbooks. Therefore, a qualitative approach is considered as the most suitable approach for this study. In addition, this study is a part of qualitative descriptive research which is mainly content analysis that provides a valuable source of information in the form of written or recorded, in other words, something that is not specifically prepared upon researchers' demanding (Alwasilah, 2001).

The sources of the data for this study are two English textbooks that have been developed by Pusat Perbukuan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional. It is entitled Bahasa Inggris semester 1 and Bahasa Inggris semester 2, at the senior high school level (XI). The analysis is focused on the reading passages, exercises, and pictures which are data in each chapter. The pictures accompanying the data are analyzed only when they represent the contents of data. Totally, the data analyzed in the textbooks were 166 data sets. The possibility that cultural values were included in the textbooks was high since cultural awareness was stated as one of the benefits of using these textbooks.

In analyzing data, there are two main stages. First, to see the presence of cultural content, the texts are examined by

implementing the concept of culture in four considerations. The cultural information is classified according to the three different types of cultural materials proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), namely source culture, target culture, and international culture content. As elaborated earlier in the previous chapter, the source culture refers to Indonesian culture. The target culture refers to British, American, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand cultures or the culture belongs to The Inner Circle countries (Kachru, 1992), and the international culture refers to culture which does not belong to the source culture and the target culture. Culture neutral contents are included in the textbooks which do not refer to any cultures, such as scientific explanation. The recorded data are converted to percentages for comparison purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Cultural Contents in the Textbooks

The investigation finds that the cultural contents exist in the textbooks analyzed. One hundred and sixty six from eleven chapters in the textbooks were analyzed in terms of content. The items in each chapter of the textbooks are found to be various in number and form. In terms of number, the items found in each chapter are not always the same or even in quantity. According to data presented in the table above, every chapter comprises of more than six items containing cultural contents.

In terms of form, the items include reading passages, exercises, and pictures in the textbooks. From the analysis of reading passages in the textbooks, it shows that cultural contents can be seen by the number of reading passages that expose cultural information of the source, target, and international references. The reading passages as cultural items aimed at raising cultural awareness based on the content page of the textbooks in chapter 1 was *The Enchanted Fish* (a German Fairy Tale),

chapter 3 was *President Soekarno of Indonesia* (Indonesian’s History), chapter 4 was *Vanity and Pride* (a France story), chapter 5 was *Letter to God* (an Argentina story), chapter 9 was *Life and Times of Ki Hajar Dewantara* (Indonesian’s History).

The investigation reveals that from 166 items, there are 76 items which contains of cultural contents, while 90 items do not contain any cultural content. The finding of cultural contents in the English textbooks is in line with McGrath (2002) stating that cultural contents are represented in the English textbooks. Thus, it can state that the reading passages in this textbooks do offer culture experience to the students.

After knowing that cultural contents existed in the textbooks, the cultural contents were categorized based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999) dividing cultural

content in textbooks into the source culture, the target culture, and the international culture to investigate what cultures are represented in the textbooks. Based on investigation, the textbooks represented the source culture, the target culture, and the international culture. The analysis of reading passages in the textbooks also shows a stronger emphasis on common knowledge reading passages that does not incorporate cultural exposure within the textbooks. In other words, the investigation also found that some items did not contain any cultural content, for example items entitled *Bullying: A Cancer that Must be Eradicted* explaining unsafely environment, *How to Write Procedure Text (Technical Writing)*, *Earthquakes* explaining disaster that happened in the world, and *Global Warming* tells what is going on in the world. The detailed results of the investigation of cultural representation in textbooks are as follows:

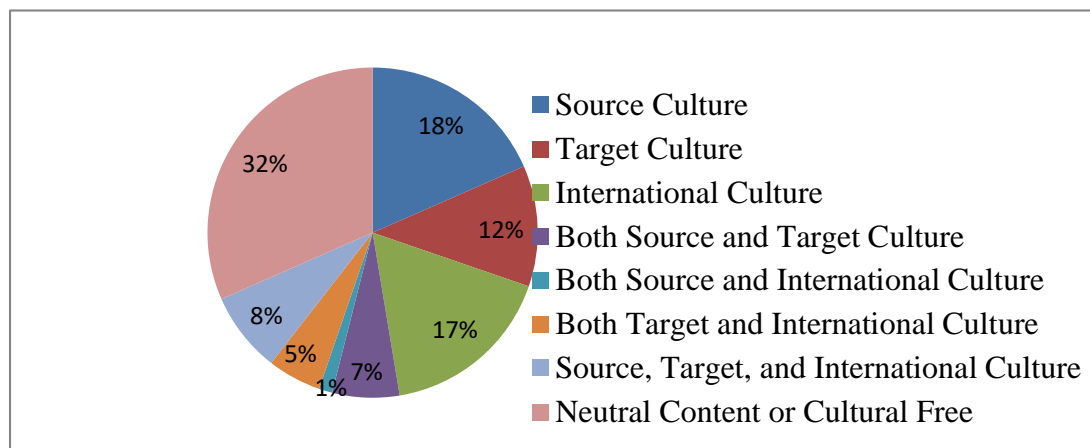


Figure 1. *The Distribution of Cultural Content in the Textbook*

The result of identification of cultural content in the textbooks reveals that the treatment of target, source, and international culture is significantly different in the textbooks. As the table shows, the source culture contents have the highest representation in the textbooks. The items focused only on the representation of the source alone were 14 items or 18.42 %

of the total items analyzed. Adding the items representing both the source culture and the target culture, and the items representing both the international culture and source culture, the number of items representing the source culture increased to 20 items or 26.3% of the items in the textbooks. Meanwhile, the number of items representing the target culture, including

the items representing both the source culture and target culture, and the items representing both the international culture and target culture, was 18 items or 23.67% of the total items. The items representing target culture alone was 9 items or 11.84%. The international culture content was represented in the same number with the target culture, namely 18 items or 23.67% of the total items in the textbooks. The items representing the international cultural content alone were 13 items or 17.10%. Twenty four items or 31.57% or the items (reading passages, exercises, and pictures) did not refer to any culture.

Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989 as cited in McGrath, 2002) argue that English teaching and learning materials, textbooks in this sense, cover a hidden curriculum that comprises certain values and ideology built into materials by design. This may also cover attitudes toward knowledge, attitudes towards teaching and learning attitudes toward the role and relationship of teacher and students, and values and attitudes related to gender, society, etc.

Moreover, Phillipson (1992) warned that the spread of English can be a form of linguistic imperialism if the spread is not managed well. The content of the textbooks may not be in line with the setting of the learners (Crawford, 1990). Thus, the textbooks users should be critical

in responding to the issues represented in the textbooks. The cultural contents represented in the textbooks should be in line with the objective of national education.

Based on the findings that have been explained, it can be seen that in the textbooks, the type of culture that is prominently presented is the source culture. It is in line with the study conducted by Munandar and Ulwiyah (2012) in which the findings show that there was an extensive use of local reference in the textbooks being analyzed. In this case, the textbooks tried to focus on the source culture. However, although the source culture is prominently presented, the textbooks does not make judgment between the value of Indonesian culture and other cultures. This is in line with Peterson and Coltrane (2003) who stated that the cultural content in a textbooks should be portrayed in a way that does not judge whether one culture is better than other. Additionally, it gives the advantages in terms of knowledge development as well as awareness of other cultures (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999).

Additionally, in term of the foreign country integrated in the text, the textbooks deal with variety of the foreign countries. The detailed information can be seen in the Table 1 below:

Table 1. *The Top 5 Foreign Countries Mentioned in the Items of the Textbook*

No	Country/People	Number of Mentions
1	The United States of America/American	30
2	The United Kingdom/British/Englishman	17
3	France	13
4	Greece	6
5	German	4

As it can be seen in Table 1, various references to the target countries and other foreign countries are provided. Not only England or America, but also France, Greece, and German are stated in the textbooks. Reference to France and German

are talking about their original short story. However, the reference to Greece is merely mentioning the country as the partner in doing a business. The focus of the text is not on Greece itself, and the cultural aspect of this country is not discussed.

Reference to America, the textbooks mentions several names of American such as Noam Chomsky (American linguist), Andrea Patrick (American Columnist), Mitch Albom (American author), Marthin Luther King (American activist), George Francis Abbott (American screenwriter), Arthur Miller (American playwright), Tennessee William (American playwright), Ernest Hemingway (American novelist), John Steinbeck (American author), Georgia O'Keefe (American artist), Ralph Waldo Emerson (an American Poet), Edgar Allan Poe (American writer), and Isaac Asimov (American author). These popular American are only mentioned in Genre Connection which is sub section of Reading Activities (RA) section. Moreover, there is no more explanation towards these popular American. Besides that, there are some American books, poetry, movies and cities which have been mentioned in the textbooks such as *The Hunger Games* (book/movie), *Twilight* (book/movie), *Bambi* (movie), and Brooklyn (city).

Moreover, it also happened to United Kingdom references namely Pantomime (a type of musical comedy from England), William Shakespeare (an English poet), *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (England Short Story), and *The Country of The Blind* by H.G. Wells (England Short Story). In other words, reference to United Kingdom spreads in form of poetry, short story, and a type of musical comedy. The focus of United Kingdom is limited by merely mentioning in the textbooks, and the cultural aspect of this country is not discussed.

Besides the top 5 foreign countries mentioned in the items of the textbooks, there are several countries which is stated in the textbooks namely *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (a collection of German fairy tales), *The Arabian Nights* (a collection of South Asian Stories), *Aesop's Fables* and *Atlantis*

(a collection of fables from Greek), *The Sushi of Restaurant* (Japanese traditional food), *The Enchanted Fish* (a German fairy tale), Rafique Zakaria (a columnist for Times of India newspaper), Aristotle, Socrates, and Pluto (famous Greek orators), Mahatma Gandhi (an India activist), Nelson Mandela (an activist of South Africa), Sakura (Japan), Franc (the name of currency unit), *Vanity and Pride* (a short story from France), *Les Miserable* (a French Novel), Victor Hugo (a French poet), Pizza (Italian Food), *The Painting of Monalisa and Leonardo da Vinci* (France), Cornelius Nepos (a Roman biographer), Michel de Montaigne (French Philosopher), Andre Gide (a French author), and Jean Cocteau (French writer). In other words, the aspect has been stated in form of short story, famous people, food, art and currency in the textbooks. Overall, there is no further cultural information so that the students should search more information towards those aspects.

In fact, the numbers of speakers of English, who are not from English – speaking country background, have been arising with their various treatments of English (Jenkins: 2006) and the cultural content integrated in the textbooks should not limited to native English speaking cultures (McKay, 2003). Students need to consider that nowadays English is spoken not only by the Anglo-Saxon country such as the U.K. or U.S, but also by Asian, European, and African countries. This awareness can be supported by introducing students to the cultures of various English speakers of non-Anglo Saxon background.

The findings indicate that the cultural contents become important thing in the textbooks. These findings are in line with McGrath (2002) stating that cultural contents are represented in the English textbooks. The analysis of the textbooks reveals four points: (1) the source culture or local content has highest content (18,42%) in the textbooks, (2) the international

culture contains 17.10 % in the textbooks, (3) It is followed by target culture (11.84%) in the textbooks, and (4) the cultural contents are presented in each section of textbooks such as reading activity (RA), building block (BB), let's practice (LP), active conversation (AC), writing connection (WC), let's create and contribute (LCC), and parent connection (PC).

As the highest content, the source culture is presented in form of reading passages, pictures and exercises. The dominant topic of source culture is historical facts. It can be seen that there are two reading passages which relate to source culture content such as President Soekarno of Indonesia on chapter 3 and Life and Times of Ki Hajar Dewantara on chapter 9. This is supported by Dat (2008) who states that the representation of source culture content in the local textbooks is one of strength of local textbooks due to the practicality and familiarity for the learners. He also explains that the cultural context written and narrated by authors who are not from that culture may lead to misinterpretation.

The textbooks are published by government of Indonesia (Pusat Perbukuan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional). This is in line with Cortazzi & Jin (1999), the source culture usually are predominant in textbooks produce locally.

In addition, McKay (2003) emphasizes the importance of topics focusing on the local culture. From the view of ELF, she argues that each country has to take ownership of the language and select appropriate pedagogy that meets its learners' needs, including textbooks topics. She further argues that textbooks should provide topics on local culture in order for learners to communicate to others about their own culture in English. This is also consistent with Sardjiyo and Pannen (2005) who reveals the idea of Culture Based

Teaching with discuss about integrating the students' cultural background into various learning material. It will make them active based on the culture they have been familiar with therefore it will get the optimal learning achievement.

In general, the textbooks may assist learners in extending knowledge of source culture and linking cultural materials to their cultural context. Besides that, Byram and Morgan (1994) emphasize that no matter how good and proficient learners are in learning the target language, the cultural values of their native language will remain and affect the learning of the target language. Denying their native language culture means denying their own identity.

Since cultural values are contained in the textbooks, the teaching of English mediated by the textbooks should be carefully handled. Particular ideologies might be hid and spread through the cultural contents in the textbooks (Littlejohn and Windeatt, 1989 cf. McGrath, 2002). Textbooks containing particular cultural values and ideologies can influence how textbooks users view cultural reality (Aliakbari, 2004; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999),

Furthermore, the international culture becomes the second grade that refers to cultural contents in the English textbooks. According to the data shown, the culture represented in the textbooks are the source culture, the target culture and the international culture. In term of frequency, the international culture has one percentage different from the source culture namely international culture (17.10%) and the source culture (18.42%). However, the attempts to introduce students to international cultures appear obviously. The topics of international culture are about public figure, famous place and city, folklore, and food which are stated in form of reading passages, pictures, and exercises.

In addition, the target culture is about 11.84 % in the English textbooks. The textbooks investigation finds that the target culture concerns of variety topics, ranging from short story, public figure, art work, to famous places. There is only one reading passages that gives target culture information such as “The Last Leaf” passage on chapter 8. Additionally, there is no further explanation about public figure, art work, and famous places. Therefore, we can assume that there is no a growing concern over the inclusion of Western cultures in textbooks, especially cultures of an English speaking country.

However, this is not in line with Faris (2014) who finds that the number of contents containing target culture than the source culture and international culture. He also claims that considering the fact that Indonesia uses English as foreign language, the exposure of target culture are important.

McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008, 184-185) observed that “*Western Inner Circle cultures are portrayed as having modern and desirable behavior while those from other cultures, who exhibit other ways of doing things, are seen as backward and lacking*”. Such cultural polarization can be found in textbookss dealing with a variety of topics from gender issues to family relationships. McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008) advised against promoting Western cultures and values in English teaching materials. This is because a number of studies have found that the inclusion of Western cultures may contribute to students’ discontent with their own culture. Moreover, the inclusion of target culture leads students to a sense of dissatisfaction with their own culture as they judge their local culture against that of the target culture. They then suggested that students will be more motivated when learning English through the context of their own country and culture.

At the same time, researchers have suggested that inclusions of cultural aspects in teaching materials greatly help students to gain communicative competence in the foreign language (Dunnett, 1998). Intercultural communication competence helps students to communicate properly in intercultural contexts and also enables students to understand the communication patterns, expectations, and interpretations of others (Cortazzi, 1998). This is a way to claim that in teaching a foreign language, the knowledge about target language culture is a pivotal contextual factor facilitating success in learning English in contextual and meaningful way (Brown,2007).

Moreover, the last point is the cultural contents in each section of the textbooks. The findings show that there are ten of eleven sections which consist of cultural contents in the English textbooks. The ten sections are reading activity (RA), building block (BB), let’s practice (LP), active conversation (AC), writing connection (WC), let’s create and contribute (LCC), and parent connection (PC). Section which does not contain cultural content is formative assessment (FA). It happens because the aim of the section is to review what students have learned.

Woodward (1997: 1) writes that “identity gives us a location in the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live” and “gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others and to the world in which we live”. As a consequence, whether it is a material taught by a teacher or a book published by an author, the cultural contents presented in any curriculum will contain either explicit or implicit values by which the learners can establish their identity in relation to the curriculum content.

The teaching of English in Indonesia always brings new paradigm due

to many considered aspects, such as; government policy, the content of curriculum, teaching methods or techniques, teaching strategies, materials or textbooks, and evaluation or assessment. It is important to make the students be able in facing how the globalization works in future.

CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning culture is a basis for learning foreign language. The teaching of a culture should become part of foreign language classes. Teaching culture will lead the students to increase their knowledge of the target culture that later on will help them to be able to use the language not only to communicate in the country where it is spoken, but also to express their thoughts and avoid misunderstanding of cultural conventions. Meaningful communication is not too difficult to achieve. Therefore, inserting culture in English subject of Indonesia's 2013

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Curriculum is a brilliant idea of increasing students' ability in global communication. English will not only be the study of language but also the study of implementing it for borderless universal communication.

This research has presented the result of cultural contents analysis of English textbooks for senior high school. The finding of research describes that the textbooks has contained the cultural representation that is divided into three main parts; source culture, target culture, and international culture. In addition, there is surface information that are presented in form of food, historical facts, literature and arts, famous figures, tourist places, and geographical facts. The cultural information presented in the textbooks is not an in depth exploration of cultural promotion which present visible aspect of culture. Consequently, this might hamper students to understand other cultures and appreciate their own.

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