

## Evaluation of Cultural Content on English Textbook Used by EFL Students in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Choosing an acceptable textbook is not a simple task since it may be a key component in most language program. It serves as language input and language practice for learners. It also provides the premise for content lesson, the variety of language practice for learner, and serves as a supplement for teacher's instruction. Teaching and learning a language without knowing its culture are useless. Culture should be taught to the students so as to dig deeper their language potential in learning English. Therefore, a textbook which is often utilized by teachers as a medium to show and help them within the process of teaching and learning should have a significant part in disseminating cultures. Culture is split into three categories: source culture, target culture, and international target culture. Some problems arise whether to keep up the source culture because the dominant part or to clarify more about the target culture. Also, the ignorance of cultural teaching commonly happens in language classroom. Thus, this paper will evaluate and explore how important cultural literacy in EFL teaching is and discuss which culture should be taught in EFL.

**Keywords:** *cultural literacy, EFL textbook, textbook evaluation*

### INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are important media in the learning process both in general, and specifically, for example in language learning. Textbooks are the main learning resources that provide English learning materials for students and teachers. The importance of textbooks is also emphasized by Tomlinson (1998) that textbooks help providing a learning guideline for teachers and students, which allows teachers and students to be able to see what can be done in subsequent learning and what that has been done in previous learning. In addition, textbooks not only provide a framework that can be followed by teachers to adjust to the applicable curriculum but also provide guidance to teachers when giving lessons by providing various examples and models of practice that are relevant to the subject matter being taught.

In the field of English learning, textbooks are also still considered important to be used in the classroom, although at this time, English learning materials can be found on the Internet and used in learning English in the classroom. This is also emphasized by Cunningsworth (1995) which states that English textbooks have a variety of roles which

include as a tool for introducing written and spoken material, encouraging interaction, providing references to grammar and vocabulary, acting as a source for classroom activities and offers work that can be accessed by students independently and provides self-directed learning. Furthermore Cunningsworth also stated that textbooks are seen as the main instrument for shaping the knowledge, behavior, and discipline of students, although sometimes some books may be less successful in attracting interest from students. This could happen if the textbook used is less able to accommodate the needs of students and teachers. Textbooks are learning materials that are designed for learning processes that aim to increase students' knowledge and experience. "The textbook is viewed as a source in achieving aims and objectives that have been set in terms of learners needs" (Cunningsworth, 1995).

Furthermore, in the field of English learning, Richards (2019) confirms that textbooks are a key component in language programs that function as the source of most language information (language input) both for language learning and for practicing English in the classroom. Therefore text books generally provide a basis for: learning content, the balance of abilities taught and various kinds of English language practice activities carried out by students in the classroom. Functioning as an English language information provider for English language learners, textbooks are instruments that enable English learners to familiarize themselves not only with linguistic aspects but also the social and cultural aspects that are included or accompany in learning the language. As a result, the significance of the textbook in English classroom has attracted educators and researchers to analyse it from several aspects (Ayu and Indrawati, 2018)

Learning English in Indonesia basically began to be given at the elementary school level, but since the entry into force of the 2013 Curriculum, English has been given as a local content subject where English lessons are not a compulsory subject for elementary school students. So that each school has the freedom to determine the learning model of its English subjects and has the freedom to use appropriate textbooks. A wide selection of English textbooks in circulation provides many alternatives for teachers to be able to use them as needed. With so many English textbooks available it is necessary for teachers to find out which textbooks are suitable for students. Therefore, it is important and there needs to be an evaluation in English textbooks to be able to determine the suitability of the book with the needs of students.

Evaluation of textbooks or English textbooks is based on thinking about the role of textbooks in learning, especially learning English where the textbooks in this study will be seen as a medium that helps learning English. The fact that textbooks are used as primary learning aids and can shape the way students look at language, in this case English, then the analysis of Stairway textbooks as textbooks needs to be done to determine their suitability with the guidelines for selection of appropriate textbooks. In addition, the evaluation of English textbooks according to Jusuf (2018), that the evaluation of textbooks is a requirement to see that a textbook meets the requirements in terms of conditions and integrates it with the needs of the teaching and learning process in the settings of English Learning. as a foreign language (EFL setting).

The importance of evaluating textbooks or English textbooks was also expressed by (Demir & Ertas, 2014). Sheldon said there are two main reasons for evaluating a textbook or textbook: first, evaluation will help the teacher to make decisions in selecting the appropriate book. Second, evaluating the appropriateness or impropriety of a textbook will make the teacher more accustomed to the possible strengths and weaknesses of the textbook or textbook. Whereas Tomlinson (1998), considers that material evaluation or

evaluation of textbooks or lessons is a form of action research that develops our understanding of how a teaching material, in this case, is what textbooks or textbooks work. However, evaluation of teaching material seems to be able to contribute to the development of professional teachers by giving critical views to teachers and allowing teachers to examine carefully teaching materials in an academic perspective.

Since the implementation of curriculum 2013 in Indonesia, one of requirements of a good textbook is the comprehensiveness of the content based on the standard competency as indicated by the basic competences covered in the book criteria based on BSNP (2007), which also explicitly mentions the requirements for the content appropriateness is the development of the “unity in diversity” perspective. Therefore, it is recommended that EFL textbooks should reflect appreciation and respect upon multi-cultures and community plurality, which include various cultural values and local, national, and global wisdoms.

Teaching language includes the teaching of culture as well. A number of researchers have suggested that language and culture can not be separated (Colson 2008; Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2006; Williams, 2010). As Kramsch (1997) said that culture occurs wherever the language is being learnt. Functioning EFL as the context for local cultural knowledge acquisition makes the students experience a negotiation between their own culture and the cultural knowledge of the target language. Being introduced to the target culture through teaching materials and class activities essentially helps the students to recognize their own identity. This phenomenon fulfils the idea of sociological subject in the umbrella of identity concept as defined by Hall (1996). The process of learning local culture through EFL in class has made the students interact, negotiate and define their own identity. Learning the target language has made the students are not only acquiring sufficient EFL basic skills but also using it to express their own local cultural knowledge as well as to receive information about a foreign culture.

On the other hand, many EFL textbooks lack explicit cultural content (Sharif and Mohammadi, 2013). In Indonesia specifically, Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012) analyses a number of primary school textbooks which they found containing very limited local cultural information, despite having been written for use in the Indonesian context, and a considerable amount of implied assumptions about English language users.

As this research, was intended to analyze some aspects of cultures in English textbook like cultural categories and cultural element. As proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) in *Eli Hinkel Culture in second language teaching*, culture in the textbook could be derived into 3 different categories. They are source culture, target culture and international target culture. Source culture defines as cultural content in the textbook that contain language learner own culture. In this context, source culture is Indonesian culture. The third culture in the text book is others culture. Target culture defines as cultural content in the textbook that contain target language’s culture, in this case target language’s culture are United Kingdom and United States culture. This culture is famous as western culture. Cortazzi & Jin (1999) defined international target culture as a culture that is not the target culture nor source culture. In addition, it is the culture which is come from the country that doesn’t consider English as a first language or second language.

To know the representation of cultural element, the writer used a framework from Yuen (2011) in investigating the cultural content. Some cultural elements that can be seen, that is, *products, person, practice, perspective*. *Products*: cultural elements that are physical, including man-made products which refer to particular culture (e.g., historical sites, songs, folklores, books/ novel, comics, inventions, foods, etc. *Persons*: figures or

famous people (singers, poets, writers, national figures, athletes, artists, heroes) which refers to particular culture. *Practices*: cultural elements in the forms of rituals, activities, and cultural practices which refer to certain culture (e.g., holiday celebrations, ceremonies, passed traditions and so on) *Perspectives*: the way certain group of people see something which differs them from other cultures (e.g., native speakers consider that giving gift to teachers is unprofessional).

The previous study (Phillipson, 1992; Prodromou, 1992; Kramch, 1993; Modiano, 2001; & Taki, 2008) has shown that ELT textbooks contain representations of different cultures and society from all over the world (e.g. source culture, target culture, and international target). In contrast, this study is aimed to use qualitative content analysis study to better understanding and explaining Indonesia cultural content as the source culture, western cultural content as the target culture, and other cultural content as international target culture in the new curriculum textbook. Therefore, the writer's aim of this research is to find out the representation of cultural content on textbooks used by tenth grade students in Indonesia created by Ministry of Education and Culture.

## METHOD

The design of this research is a descriptive qualitative study. It is used to describe categories of information such as gender or patterns of interaction when using technology in a group situation. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). In this study, the writer described how the cultural contents are spread in English textbook used by tenth graders in terms of cultural categories and cultural element.

## Object

The object of research is an English textbook made by ministry of education and culture of Indonesia for tenth graders.

## Instruments

In collecting the data, checklist is used as the instrument based on Yuen (2011). Table 1 below shows how data was gathered.

Items	Products			Persons			Practices			Perspectives		
	SC	TC	ITC	SC	TC	ITC	SC	TC	ITC	SC	TC	ITC
Chapter 1												
Chapter 2												
Chapter 3												
Chapter 4												
Chapter 5												
Chapter 6												
Chapter 7												
Chapter 8												
Chapter 9												

## Procedures

In analysing the data, it is started by observing the textbook at first, then it is continued by analysing each page which contains cultural element (products, persons, practices, and

perspectives). In doing the analysis, the writer also decided whether it is included into source culture, target culture, or international target culture. The pages number are put in the checklist in order to know the place. After that, the numbers is counted of how many products, persons, practices and perspectives are existed in this textbook, and also the portions of source culture, target culture, and international target culture. At the end, the percentages of every part in cultural element and cultural categories have been got and findings is described.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This findings will explain answer the research question about how the cultures are represented in English textbook used by tenth grades students in Indonesia. The result can be shown in table checklist below (table 2). Then, the data is altered into charts in order to know the percentage of each part. Below is chart 1 and chart 2. They represent how the cultures are spread in English textbook used by tenth graders created by ministry of education and culture in Indonesia.

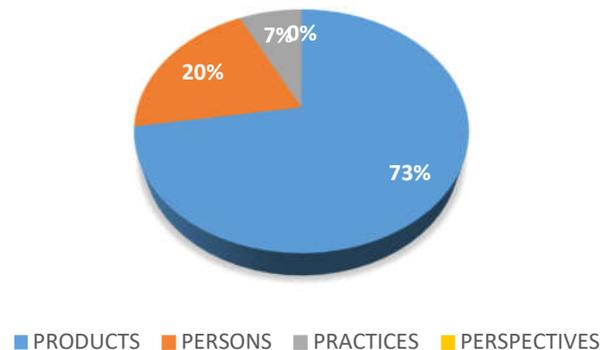


Chart 1 – Cultural element

From chart 1, it can be shown how the distribution of cultural element in this textbook is. Products which has the highest percentage 73% is the most element that is used by the author in selecting the content material such as providing pictures of tourism places such as *Bali, Raja Ampat, Tanjung Puting National Park, Mount Bromo, Niagara Falls, and so on*; name of cities/ countries such as *Bali, Sulawesi, Papua, Borneo, Padang, Minneapolis, Johor Baru KL, Minnesota USA, and Indonesia*; cuisines such as *rendang, rawon*; name of planes such as *Garuda*; historical sites such as *Stonehenge, Borobudur temple, and Monas*. Then, persons which get 20% is put on the second element that is mostly used by the author such as mentioning some well-known actor such as *Tom Cruise*; singers such as *Maher Zain, Siti Nurhaliza, Yusuf Islam*; famous writers such as *JK Rowling, Andrea Hirata, Ahmad Fuadi* and western name such as *Caroline, Alia*. Practice is only 7% that has been in the third position that is used in this textbook where the author provides situation how people eat in a celebration, how people greet such as saying *Assalammualaikum*, how to appreciation other people religion such as *Moeslims and Christs*. In contrast, perspectives has not been chosen by the author in selecting the material in this textbook. It can be seen from the percentage that it is 0%.

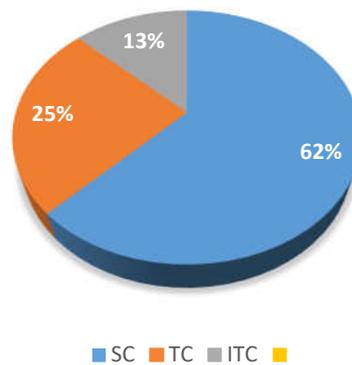


Chart 2 – Cultural categories

In chart 2, the author of this textbook mostly chose source culture, which is Indonesian culture with the percentage 62% for this category. For example the picture of students who wear white and grey uniform at senior high school and brown scouts in Indonesia; stating Indonesian red cross (PMI), mentioning food such as *rendang and rawon*, tourism places such *Ancol, Pantai Kuta Bali, Gunung Semeru, Tanjung Puting National Park, Mount Bromo, Batu City in East Java, Borobudur temple, Monas*; novelist such as *Andrea Hirata, Ahmad Fuadi*, traditional transportation such as *becak*; traditional art such as *ukir Jepara*, name of planes such as *Garuda*; mountain such as Gunung Semeru, and use Indonesian names such as *Ami, Rudi, Nina, sita, Edo, Slamet, Sinta, Rahmi, Imran, Rido, Bima, Rina, Ria, Indah, Bayu, Santi, Riri, Dina, Yuni, Abdel, Tuti, Ihsan, Ali*. The second one with 25% is target culture such as the name of western people such as *Caroline, John, Hannah, Bob, Parker Pearson*; places/ countries/ cities such as *Minnesota USA, England, London, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Cave of the Winds, Stonehenge* cuisines such as *fast food, burger, and salad*, and so forth, and the last one, they also consider a little space with 13% for international target culture like mentioning name of countries such as *Johor Baru KL, Singapore, Beijing and Vietnam*; singers such as *Siti Nurhaliza, Maher Zain*; football player such as *Christiano Ronaldo*; and traditional game such as *playing scissors, rock and paper from Japan*.

Based on the findings, it's shown that the result percentage of the target culture has the highest proportion in the textbooks designed by government especially in naming people in the text, dialogue, and exercises like George, Michelle, John, Bill Jones, Gillian Jones, Johnson, Mackenzi, Nick, Caroline, Dominic, Mike, Geraldine, Ryan, and so forth, and a few products of culture like tourism places, food, songs, and stories. Meanwhile, source culture only shows in a limited portion with a half target culture percentage, followed by international target culture. On the other hand, the textbook written by the government primarily explored on Indonesian culture like Indonesian artists, Indonesian foods, and Indonesian folktales which are discussed in English. It implies that these three textbooks have imbalance proportion regarding cultural types.

In the current curriculum '2013 Curriculum' employed by Indonesian education, it is stated that the materials in the textbook should be designed interactively based on the students' background knowledge, the place where they live, the food they eat, the buildings and tourisms around them, customs and moral values in existence so as to make their national character because interactive activity can motivate and engage students with learning activities and create their interest in learning English (Ayu, Diem, and Viyanti, 2017). Therefore, home culture should also be considered by the writer of the textbook if

they want to write it. It is also supported by Campbell and Campbell (2008, p. 9) who explains that educators need to tap into students' background knowledge because what students can learn depends, to a bigger extent than previously assumed, on what they already know. There is also a critic from the scholars within the questionnaire dealing with learning materials in the textbooks. They said that most of the words are unfamiliar which then make them hard to grasp the texts. in line with Alqahtani (2015, p. 22), vocabulary plays a fundamental role in any student's knowledge domain. In line with Campbell, he also states that teaching vocabulary to the students is synonymous with building their information. As a result, it is easy to determine how students can fall behind if they do not learn vocabulary, for example: one in every of the cultural products mentioned within the textbook is about Italian food, pizza. for a few Indonesian people who do not board an enormous city, they will not know what kind of food it is, how it tastes, what it's like.

Then, once they find that word within the textbook, they're going to haven't any idea to relinquish their opinion by using English. Consequently, they will keep silent in the class and it'll not make them think critically in language classroom. Moreover, there is a need for teachers to realize the example above. If they face this quite problem, it might be better for them to match the food like pizza to other foods they need in Indonesia like bakwan, or pempek. So, they'll change it so as to form their students being familiar with the material that they're visiting talk. this manner can increase the teachers' competence in introducing various cultures around the world to their students by comparing with their own. So that, their students will be easy to catch the materials. However, the importance of target culture cannot also be denied. Most of the teachers thought it's better to introduce target culture just like the comparison between Western people and Indonesian people such as life-styles, habits, customs, etiquettes, what should do and what should not do, and body gestures. Those things are also required to foster students' intercultural communicative competence.

In cultural dimension, person appears most dominantly and followed by products, practices, perspectives, and communities. Name of people such as singers, writers, heroes, presidents, sport player, or even com-mon names are used in this textbook to support the texts, dialogues and exercises. In the language content category, it has five criteria, namely the completeness of the main frame, material for vocabulary, part of the exercise for its pronunciation and intonation, arrangement in accordance with language conventions, and style of language in accordance with social situations. The book evaluation results state that of the five criteria, the book fits two criteria, one of the reasons is because one of the criteria is for the advanced class, namely the middle and upper classes. The evaluation results also show that the book used does not have a complete and clear section describing the main grammar. This is because the focus of this book is the ability of functional communication so that the explanation or reference of grammar merges in the expressions of conversation and models of activity for conducting functional communication.

In the vocabulary section it is sufficient in terms of quantity and range of vocabulary according to the topic given but there is no section given to practice pronunciation clearly either in the form of word emphasis or intonation. This language content category also links the contents of the book with the language convention, but because this book is a book for elementary school students so that an agreement on the use of language for example to take part in conversation or compose an expanded piece

of writing has not been given because it is more relevant at the secondary and advanced levels

Based on the criteria in the topic category, it can be stated that the book used even though it has quite a variety of topics but not all materials or materials are in accordance with students' interests. However, the quite diverse topics seem to be able to attract student awareness and enrich their discussion experience because the topics contained in this book are adapted to situations and conditions that are likely to be experienced by students or will be experienced by students. The topics in the book are also quite capable of representing socio-cultural conditions in Indonesia and are suitable for the level of understanding of elementary school students. In addition, the representation between men and women in the book is quite balanced so that there is no inequality of gender representation. On the other hand, ethnic representation and origins and occupations are less clear. With various kinds of ethnic groups in Indonesia, it does not appear to be represented in this book either in terms of illustrations or topics

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the cultural content portrayed in English textbooks used by ten graders published by government. It may be concluded that the load of culture in most of the textbooks were different in terms of cultural element and cultural source. Also, teachers' expectation to the textbooks they were using now was unsatisfactory. It absolutely was the identical as what students expected. The textbooks did not expose much on the cultural content of source culture and small cultural element of target culture. Also, they hoped the textbooks could contain their own culture, Indonesia. Target culture was only used because the comparison to be told English. It's because Indonesia consists of varied cultures and that they still didn't recognize their own culture yet. Therefore, there's a necessity to revise the textbook in relation to cultural content since those three textbooks contain few inappropriate materials associated with cultural knowledge and imbalance or quite less explanation about cultural content, specifically to those aspects which might increase students' intercultural communicative competence.

Since the guidance that is used to write this textbook is based on curriculum 13, it provides more local context in terms of learning materials. Thus, source culture is most dominantly chosen in this textbook. The textbook designer is likely to present the cultural contents such as tourism places, clothes, singers, novelist, cuisines, and traditional transportation. It is very good for teachers and students to make a better understanding in internalizing their own culture through learning a foreign language. It also indicates that the government had successfully delivered and rendered basic philosophy of curriculum 2013 which stated that every development of curriculum should consider national culture, present and future of the nation.

On the other, it also brings an effect to students because they have lack information of target culture that can lead cultural gap. The students also need the information about the target language culture in order to enrich their knowledge about target language culture. It is very essential for them to get to know target culture and international target culture of their target language in order to avoid culture-shocked if one day they have a chance to go abroad or if they are not, at least they can know the target culture that they learn and they will be able to counterfeit and anticipate cross cultural communication.

Therefore, this study concludes with the following recommendation, that in order to understand the culture better, each aspect of cultural element and cultural categories

should be integrated in teaching and learning materials more. Moreover, there are two major implications that could be the issues to be considered. The first is the cultures encourage the students to think critically. The second is the cultures are able to increase student awareness towards culture differentiated between the contexts

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