
THE ANALYSIS OF LOCAL CULTURE IN AN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK USED IN INDONESIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Received: 05 October 2022

Revised: 26 November 2022

Accepted: 29 December 2022

ABSTRACT

One of the kinds of culture that must be included in English teaching and learning is the local culture or the students' own culture. Integrating this kind of culture in the English textbook can make it easier to bring this culture into the classroom. Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the local culture in a junior high school English textbook. Descriptive qualitative design was employed to investigate culture in the textbook without any manipulation. A textbook written by local author used by junior high school students in Indonesia was chosen as the data source. Moran's (2001) five dimensions of culture that include products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons was used to analyze the data. The results of the analysis revealed that the textbook was filled with many references to local culture. 47.17% of the items containing cultural values were found to contain references to the local culture. Those cultural items were mostly presented in pictures and words containing references to the students' own culture.

Key Words: *Culture, English Textbook, Local Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Many have claimed that culture is an important part of English teaching and learning (Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). It is even mentioned that a language learner will not be able to master a language proficiently without learning the cultural contexts in which the language takes place (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Thus, an English textbook must be an effective tool to bring culture in the

classroom for the students (McConachy, 2018) because a textbook is believed to be the second most important component in English classrooms after the teacher (Thumvicit, 2018). It is believed that incorporating culture into textbooks helps students to be linguistically and interculturally competent (Ho, 2009). The textbook must not only present linguistic contents but also cultural contents that could enrich the students with cultures and

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allow them to improve their multicultural competence to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds (Erfani, 2014; Trocoso, 2010).

The interrelation between language and culture is so apparent that learning a language is equal to learning a culture, and consequently, teaching a language means teaching culture (Gao, 2006). It is also argued that if there is no study of culture, teaching second or foreign language, including English, will be inaccurate and incomplete (Genc & Bada, 2005). Therefore, English teaching and learning should also consider incorporating culture to make the teaching and learning process to be more effective. Culture needs to exist where English teaching and learning takes place. This incorporation of culture can be done in many ways, such as by the teachers, the language content, or the teaching materials.

The thought that culture bears a significant role in second or foreign language teaching is actually not recent. It has been around for decades, mainly since the 1980s (Corbett, 2003) and other even says it started taking place in language classroom since 1950s (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). However, how it is perceived and put into practice have undergone some changes over the decades. According to Weninger and Kiss (2013), there are some identifiable

periods of how the trends in cultural research and teaching have evolved throughout the decades. The first period was dating back to the middle of 1950s until 1990s. During that time, culture was conceptualized as a set of facts about the target language that students should learn. It had only started out roughly as an independent discipline (Risager, 2007). In other words, it was not an integral part of language teaching, but a separate object that aimed to engage students into the target language and society. The students were taught about the target language culture separately. During the 1990s, there was a radical shift on how language and culture were treated in second or foreign language teaching. It was believed that language and culture were interrelated for successful language learning (Risager, 2007) and this was the time when researchers (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; McKay, 2000) started to question the dominance of British and American English as standards for target learning in terms of cultural values. This is mostly because the number of non-native English speakers keep increasing exponentially until they outnumber the native English speakers as the consequence of becoming an international language. If we talk about Japanese language, for example, it is much logical that we learn Japanese culture as part of learning Japanese

language because people most likely learn Japanese language to communicate with Japanese people. However, people learn English not only to speak with American, British, Australian, or other English-speaking citizens, but also with other people who learn English as second or foreign language because of its role as an international language. In other words, English has placed itself as a worldwide lingua franca (Alptekin, 2002). English is used when different parties of speakers have different mother tongue. Consequently, it is not wise to include only the English or American culture as target culture. English teaching professionals need to re-examine the culture-related materials to be designed and presented to the students (Nault, 2006).

Previous studies investigating culture in English textbooks (Dehbozorgi, Amalsaleh, & Kafipour, 2017; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014) divide cultural contents into source, target, and international culture. Source or local culture comprises the setting in which the book is being used. It represents language learners' own culture (Faris, 2014). For example, if a book is used in Indonesian school, the source culture is Indonesian. Target culture is the culture where English is spoken as a mother-tongue. In this case, the target culture will be English

speaking countries, such as England and USA. The international culture consists of countries where English is not used in common daily communication. English is used as an international language to communicate with people that speaks different language from other countries. This category of culture is like what Kachru (1992) refers to as expanding circle. Some countries that belong to this category are China, Russia, Japan, Thailand, etc.

Previous studies have found that most textbooks include an abundant of target culture (Faris, 2014; Mahmood, Asghar, & Hussain, 2012; Dehbozorgi, Amalsaleh, & Kafipour, 2017; Pashmforoosh & Babaii, 2015). They favor target culture over source or international culture. These textbooks are usually marketed worldwide. Textbooks are, after all, not only teaching materials for teachers and students, but they are also commodities for the publishing companies (Rubdy, 2014). They are developed not only as teaching materials but also as a source of income. Hence, the contents are adjusted so that they can be used in different countries and in turn gain more revenue because they are sold all over the world. As a result, local or source cultural contents are greatly neglected to a great extent (Bahrami, 2015).

Even though the learners are learning a language that is not spoken in

their own culture, learners' local culture plays an important role in facilitating their language learning. It is argued that learners' familiarity towards the content of the target language in relation to their daily lives could affect their comprehension of the target language (Post & Rathet, 1996). The familiarity of the language content helps the students to make sense of the language being used. It also makes the language to be more meaningful if the students can relate the content to their own lives (Renner, 1994). In summary, local or source culture is believed to influence the success of language learning. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the source or local culture included in a junior high school English textbook. It involves describing the kinds of local cultural contents included in the textbook and how those local cultural contents are presented in the textbook.

METHODS

Research Design

The current study employed descriptive qualitative design. A descriptive study can describe something naturally without any manipulation in the variables (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). This kind of research design is chosen because the purpose of this study is to describe the local culture contents in an English

textbook in Indonesia without any manipulation to the data or variable.

Data Source

The current study investigated an English textbook used by 9th grade students entitled "Think Globally Act Locally". This textbook is written by Indonesian authors and used exclusively by Indonesia junior high school students. This textbook received a revision in 2018.

Data Collection and Analysis

To collect the data, the researcher read the textbook to inspect the content of the textbook. All items contained in the textbook that included passages, dialogues, tasks, and pictures were inspected to determine if they contained cultural values. All those items were then arranged in a table to be further analyzed.

After the data had been arranged in a table, the data was labelled according to culture category from Moran (2001) that includes products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings show that culture is a part of the textbook. All the five dimensions of culture are found in the Think Locally Act Globally English textbook. There is a total of 140 items

considered as bearing cultural value found in the textbook. They are scattered in every chapter of the textbook. Some chapters are filled with many cultural contents, but some only have a few cultural contents. The distribution of cultural contents is not spread evenly throughout the entire chapters of the textbook. The proportion for each cultural dimension is also quite imbalanced. Cultural products dominate the distribution of cultural contents in the textbook, while the other four cultural dimension only appear in small number, especially person and community dimension. There were 84 items of cultural products or 60% of the whole cultural contents found in the textbook.

Concerning whose culture the textbook represents, the findings also show that the textbook includes source, target, and international culture in the contents. There are also some cultural contents that are universal in nature which are categorized as neutral culture. In terms of frequency, the textbook gives more emphasis on source or local culture. Source culture presents more frequently compared to target and international culture. It was found 66 items or 47.14% of the whole cultural items that contain references to the local or source culture.

Most of the local culture items found in the textbook belong to the

products of culture dimension. They contain words and images with reference to the local culture, such as in the passage below:

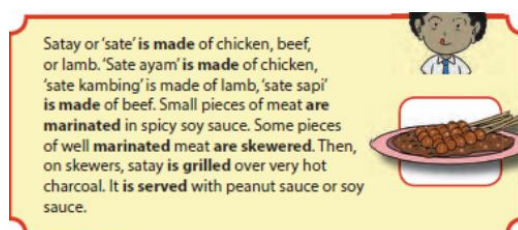


Figure 1 Local Culture

Figure 1 shows an example of local culture included in the text and picture of the textbook. Most of the local culture contents in the textbook are presented in this kind of cultural products. Many of them show pictures illustrating artefacts of Indonesian culture. Many of the local cultural contents are also only simple words such as *posyandu*, *gorengan*, *rupiahs*, and mentioning of places in Indonesia.

Discussion

The textbook focuses so much on local culture that almost all communication presented in the textbook revolves around local culture. Target culture appears quite often only because it is an English textbook, but there are not many artefacts of target culture. Not every study in textbook cultural contents found source or local culture dominating the contents of the textbooks. In fact, the majority of studies

found that the textbooks to favour target culture instead of source or local culture (Chao, 2011; Faris, 2014; Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012; Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011). Some studies even found the textbook being analysed to neglect local culture to a great extent (Bahrami, 2015; Alsaif, 2016). More surprisingly, there is even a study that found a textbook developed and published locally did not include a single source culture and focused on the native speakers' culture (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014). However, this is not the case with the textbook analysed in this study. On the contrary of most findings in previous studies, the textbook analysed in this study gives more proportion to source culture instead of target culture.

This prevalent occurrence of source culture can make the textbook be better accepted by students and teachers throughout Indonesia. It can also help students to learn using English to talk about their own culture. Moreover, including source culture is also beneficial to foster students' reflection on their own culture and increase their cultural awareness while learning target language (Mayangsari, Nurkamto, & Supriyadi, 2018). It is also argued that beginner English learners should be mostly exposed to their first language culture instead of other cultures that they are not familiar with as it makes

them confident and able to communicate with other people about their own culture (Benahnia, 2012). In addition, it is feared that favouring target culture would make the learners despise their own culture or feel inferior to English speaking country (Chao, 2011). There is also a possibility that some topics in textbooks that rely on target culture can be irrelevant or not interesting for some students or teachers (McKay, 2004). Fortunately, this is not the case in the English textbook analysed in this study. Even though there are many contents referring to target culture, local or source culture still dominates the overall contents of the textbook. Even all the main characters in the textbook are made so that they look like Indonesian people from different places and groups.

Even though the local culture dominates the whole contents of the textbook, there is not much variety in the forms of those cultural contents. Those contents are only included in pictures and words referring to the local culture. The pictures presented are also not various and lack attractiveness.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, the local culture is part of the textbook. It was found included in the content of the textbook in a variety of different forms, including dialogue, picture, passages, and simple words. Compared to other kinds of

culture, this kind of culture has the biggest proportion in the textbook. However, the way it is presented in the textbook is lacking variety and attractivity. The pictures included look very similar one another. Furthermore, there are not many things that the students could do with those cultural contents. They are just part of the textbook that students read and see.

For future studies, it is suggested to further study culture by considering the way culture is being presented in the classroom. Further studies can also investigate the author's perceptions towards the place of culture in English teaching and learning.

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