

THE REPRESENTATION OF TARGET CULTURE IN A LOCALLY PUBLISHED ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

Culture is an important part of English language teaching and learning. Students must be exposed to the culture related to the communication skills being taught. Textbook can be a medium for the teachers to present different kinds of culture along with the language content. Therefore, it is essential for an English textbook to properly include cultural contents. This study aims to investigate the target culture included in a junior high school English textbook used by many teachers in Indonesia. qualitative descriptive design was employed in order to describe the target culture in the textbook without any manipulation to the data. Moran's (2001) five dimensions of culture that include products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons was used to analyze the data. The results found 61 items in the textbook that contained references to the target culture. The ways those target culture were presented were not vary. Almost all of those items were presented in words or passages.

Keywords: *Culture, Cultural Contents, English Textbook, Target Culture.*

Background

Culture is believed to be one of the determining factors in English teaching and learning. Many people use English of other second and foreign language for carrying out daily activities and maintaining relationships with people that have different cultural background (McConachy, 2018). Therefore, language learning and culture should not be separated. Culture must always be presented along with the language content. It is so important that Peterson and Coltrane argued that a language learner will not be able to proficiently master a language without learning the cultural contexts in which the language is used (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003).

One of the ways of bringing culture into the classroom is by integrating cultural contents in the textbook. The use of textbook is so prevalent that integrating

culture into the textbook will make many teachers consciously or subconsciously presenting culture to their students. Textbooks should be seen as not only a medium of presenting language content to the language learners but also as a medium for presenting culture and improving learners' intercultural experiences (Bahrami, 2015). Language learners can be more easily exposed to a variety of difference cultures by integrating the culture in the textbook. Additionally, it is believed that the integration of cultural contents in an English textbook is needed in order to help learners increase their interest in learning the language and also to improve their motivation (McKay, 2000).

The importance of integrating culture in the English textbooks motivate many researchers to study the existence of culture in an English textbook. Zarei and Khalessi (2015) conducted a study to investigate the cultural load in the

Interchange series English textbooks. They made use of Williams' (1983) definition of culture as a tool to analyze the cultural load in the textbook. The definition indicates that culture can be broken down into *values, norms, institutions,* and *artifacts*. The analysis of culture in the Interchange series revealed that the textbooks are heavily loaded with cultural values unique to the Western world, or in other words, the textbook contained a lot of cultural contents with reference to the target language culture. The density of Western culture in the textbook suggests that the authors believe that language learners need to get acculturated to the target language culture if they want to learn the language effectively.

Another study conducted to investigate culture contained in the English textbook was conducted by Toledo-Sandoval (2020). He conducted a study to investigate the local culture in locally produced ELT textbooks and the teachers' perception towards the representation of culture in the textbook. The results found that the ELT textbooks analyzed in the study included local culture specifically associated with 'national geography' and 'stereotypes and national identity'. Furthermore, the examination on teachers' perception revealed that the teachers were uncertain whether the inclusion of culture in the textbook can help the students to learn English.

Apparently, many studies concerning cultural contents of an English textbook are related to whose culture is included in the textbook (Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020; Zarei & Khalessi, 2015; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014). Cortazzi and Jin (1999) mentioned that English as second or foreign language should include source, target, and international culture. Source culture is the culture of the students. Target culture is the culture of the native speaker. In the context of English language learning, target culture is the culture of the English native speaker. International culture is other

cultures other than the students' own culture and the English native speakers' culture.

The target culture is especially important to be included in English textbooks and in English teaching and learning in general. Language is, after all, a product of culture. We cannot separate a language from the culture of its speakers. Students can understand the language better if they are familiar with the culture of the language. Therefore, this study focused on investigating target culture included in a junior high school English textbook.

One of the frameworks suitable to be used when analyzing cultural contents of an English textbook is Moran's (2001) five dimensions of culture. It includes products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. The products of culture consist of different artifacts of culture that are unique to a certain culture. Practices include the language used to participate in social practices in a certain culture. Perspectives include perceptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs that influence individuals' way of life. Communities include language used by a certain group. Finally, persons are individuals' variations of language.

Research Methods

The present study employed descriptive qualitative method. A descriptive study has the characteristic to describe something naturally without any manipulation to the variables (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). This kind of research design was chosen because the purpose of this study was to describe the international culture in a locally published English textbook in Indonesia without any manipulation to the data or variable.

The textbook that was analyzed as the source of data was the one used by 9th grade students in Indonesia. This textbook was written and edited completely by local authors. It was published under the title of "Think Globally Act Locally" by the Ministry of Education and Culture as a part of the new 2013 curriculum. In 2018, this

book was revised to improve its effectiveness as an English learning material. This revised version of the textbook was the one used in this study. It consists of 273 pages in the textbook including 14 chapters. Some of the chapters are based on the expressions or linguistic contents that are contained as the main teaching materials. Teachers or students are probably able to tell what they are going to face from reading the title, such as “Congratulations!”, “What should I do that for?”, “What will be will be”, etc. There are also chapters with more thematic title such as “Sangkuriang”, “They are made in Indonesia” and “You can always come back home”. This textbook is accompanied by teacher’s book as a guideline for teachers to use this textbook in the classroom. The teacher’s book will not be analyzed in this study, but it will be put into consideration for analyzing the textbook.

In order to collect the data from the textbook, the researcher firstly selected the textbook to be analyzed based on the consideration above. The data from the textbook includes the excerpts regarded as cultural contents taken from the textbook. In order to collect this data, I carefully read the textbook several times. All elements of the textbook including reading passages, dialogues, tasks and pictures were inspected in order to determine whether they bear cultural values or not. All those excerpts were then put into a table to allow further analysis.

After the data had been put into a table, the data was labelled based on the cultural contents category from Moran (2001) that includes products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. See the following table for more detailed information:

No.	Dimension	Example
1	Products	clothes, food, tools, places, famous buildings, etc.

2	Practices	Language used in sending invitation, making conversation, giving speech, etc.
3	Perspectives	Perceptions, values, attitudes and beliefs embedded in language.
4	Communities	Communities include groups of people and their variations of language use such as group of farmers, teachers, doctors, etc.
5	Persons	different tone, accent, a certain way of pronouncing, famous people, imaginary characters, etc.

Table 1 above shows the five dimensions of culture proposed by Moran (2001). The dimensions of culture were used to examine the cultural contents of the textbook. After the cultural contents had been categorized based on the category above, the researcher was then labelled the cultural contents based on Cortazzi and Jin’s (1991) theory that mentioned English language learning should include source, target and international culture.

Finding & Discussion

The results of the analysis based on the Moran’s (2001) five dimensions of culture found that the textbook contained all of the five dimensions. The cultural contents were found across all chapters of the textbook in a variety of forms, such as pictures, dialogue, passages, etc. The following diagram shows the overall cultural contents found in the textbook:

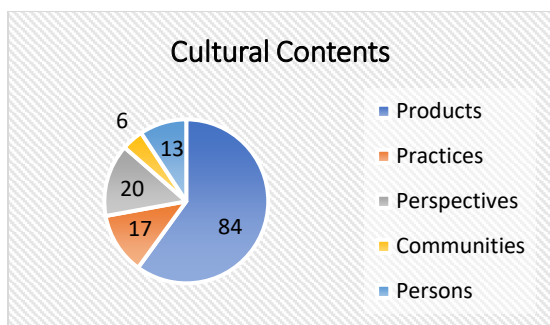


Table 2 Cultural Contents

As can be seen in the chart above, every dimension of culture was found in the textbook. In total, there were 140 cultural contents found in the textbook. Among the whole cultural contents found in the textbook, products were found to be the most prevalent in the textbook. It was 84 products of culture or 60% of the overall cultural contents found in the textbook.

Concerning to whom those cultural contents refer to, the analysis revealed that 66 items of cultural contents refer to the students' own culture. Those cultural contents contain Indonesian culture as the students' own culture. The cultural contents that refer to the target or English-speaking countries culture were found in 61 items. The number that is close to the source or students' own culture. Meanwhile, there were only a small number of items referring to the international culture.

The occurrence of items referring to the target culture is quite prevalent. There were 61 items found or 43.57% of the total cultural contents found in the textbook. It is almost half of the whole cultural contents found. The following picture shows an example of a cultural content referring to the target culture:

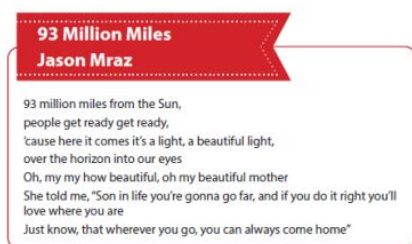


Table 3 Target Culture

The picture above shows an example of a target culture found in the textbook. There are some reasons why the content in Figure 4.9 is categorized as the target culture. First, the song itself is written in English by an English-speaking author. Then, the singer "Jason Miraz" is a famous singer from the United States. Furthermore, the use of "miles" is also not so commonly used in the students' culture. The students are more accustomed in using kilometers instead of miles. It is more commonly used in English speaking countries.

This finding is in line with many previous studies conducting to investigate the cultural contents of English textbooks (Chao, 2011; Faris, 2014; Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012; Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011). Those studies found that the textbooks contained mostly target culture. However, the textbooks analyzed by those studies were written by English-speaking authors and published worldwide. On the other hand, the textbook analyzed in this study is written by a local author and published locally.

Even though there were quite a lot of target culture found in the textbook, the ways in which those cultural contents are presented is less diverse. Almost all of those cultural contents are presented in the form of texts or passages. There are only a few pictures referring to the target culture. Most of the pictures contained in the textbook are referring to the source culture or the students' own culture. This may be due to the fact that the textbook was written by Indonesia authors for the Indonesian English learners. However, it does not mean that target culture should not be presented attractively. The target culture should also be presented attractively in order to increase students' interest and motivation to learn more about the language and the culture in which the language is spoken in everyday conversation.

Conclusion

The analysis found that the textbook was filled with cultural contents in every chapter. All of the 5 dimensions of culture were found in almost every chapter. The items referring to the target culture are abundant. It can be found in every chapter of the textbook. However, it is lacking diversity in the ways those cultural contents are presented. Almost all of those cultural contents are presented in words, dialogues, or passages.

The inclusion of target culture in the English textbook can potentially increase students' interest in English, which in turn can increase their learning motivation. Therefore, English textbook authors should consider including target language attractively, such as putting attractive pictures, or integrating the target cultural contents in the games contained in the textbook to make it even more interesting.

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