

**CULTURAL CONTENT IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS**

THESIS

**Submitted to Fulfill Requirement for Thesis Writing of
the Master of Education Degree in English**

By

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Abstrak

Rohani Rahayu. Cultural Content in Junior High School English Textbooks. Tesis. Jakarta: Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Sekolah Pascasarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof.DR. HAMKA. Januari 2017.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konten budaya buku teks bahasa Inggris yang digunakan di Sekolah Menengah Pertama dan implikasinya pada kesadaran guru tentang pentingnya mengajar budaya sebaik pengetahuan budaya mereka.

Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif, khususnya analisis konten budaya buku teks. Tiga seri buku teks bahasa Inggris “When English Rings a Bell” yang digunakan pada kelas 7, 8, dan 9 dari sekolah menengah pertama dipilih sebagai subyek penelitian. Analisis isi dipekerjakan dengan menggunakan beberapa daftar periksa. Teori-teori budaya oleh Adaskou, dkk (1990); Cortazzi & Jin (1990); dan Yunan (2011) digunakan untuk mengembangkan daftar periksa. Selain itu, kuesioner guru dipilih sebagai instrument dalam pengumpulan data karena guru adalah pihak yang terlibat dalam menggunakan buku teks. Lima guru bahasa Inggris yang saat ini mengajar Bahasa Inggris untuk siswa kelas 7, 8 dan 9 di SMPN 2 Babelan menjadi peserta penelitian ini.

Analisis konten budaya dalam buku teks bahasa Inggris pada kelas 7, 8, dan 9 mengungkapkan bahwa komponen budaya tidak ditangani secara memadai, dengan kata lain ada kurangnya budaya target dalam banyak bab, dan juga kurangnya keaslian mengenai bagian buku teks dan kegiatan yang member siswa gambaran buatan tentang bagaimana bahasa Inggris digunakan dalam konteks yang berbeda oleh penutur asli. Berdasarkan pemeriksaan data yang dikumpulkan dari kuesioner guru di SMPN 2 Babelan, samapai pada kesimpulan bahwa semua guru menyadari pentingnya pengajaran aspek budaya, yaitu mereka menganggapnya sebagai komponen penting. Untuk mengajar bahasa Inggris. Namun, mayoritas dari mereka jarang berurusan dengan budaya di kelas mereka dan bahkan sebagian besar dari mereka menghadapi kesulitan ketika menjelaskan masalah yang terkait dengan budaya target. Alasannya adalah karena mereka tidak memiliki pengetahuan yang mendalam tentang budaya Inggris untuk mengajarkannya. Hal ini dibuktikan melalui tes sederhana kecil tentang budaya Inggris yang sebagian besar guru gagal menyelesaikannya.

Kata kunci: cultural content, English textbooks.

Abstract

ROHANI RAHAYU. Cultural Content in Junior High School English Textbooks. Thesis. Jakarta: Departement of English Education Graduate School. University of Muhammadiyah Prof.Dr. Hamka. 2017

This study was aimed at analyzing the cultural content of English textbooks used at Junior High School and it's implication in teachers' awareness of the importance of teaching culture as well as their cultural knowledge.

This research was conducted by using qualitative design, particularly cultural content analysis is textbooks. Three series of English textbooks used 7th, 8th and 9th grad of junior high schools namely "When English Rings a Bell" were chosen as the subjects of research. Content analysis was employed by using some checklist. Theories of culture by Adaskou, et al (1990); Cortazzi & Jin (1990); and Yuan (2011) were used to develop the checklist. Additionally, teachers' questionnaires were chosen as instruments in the collection of data since teachers are the parties involved in using the textbooks. Five English teachers who are currently teaching English for 7th, 8th and 9th grade students at SMPN 1 Babelan became the participants of this study.

The analysis of cultural content in English textbook used 7th, 8th and 9th reveals that the cultural component is not addressed adequately; in other words, there is a lack of the target culture in many chapters, and also lack of authenticity concerning the textbook passages and activities which give the students an artificial picture about how the English language is used in different contexts by native speaker. On the basis of the examination of the data collected from the teachers' questionnaire in SMPN 2 Babelan, it comes to the conclusion that all teachers are aware of the importance of teaching the cultural aspect, that is, they consider it as an important component for teaching English. Yet, majority of them rarely deal with culture in their classes and even most of them face difficulties when explaining issues related to the target culture. The reason is that they do not have in-depth knowledge about the English culture to teach it. This was proved through a small simple test about the English culture which most of the teachers failed to complete.

Keywords: cultural content, English textbooks.

THESIS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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The Thesis Committee and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Thesis as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Education Degree in English

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background to the Research

Like other languages, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been introduced inseparably from its culture, either source culture (cultures from origin countries the learners coming from), target culture (culture from origin countries where English is coming from, like US and UK), or international target culture (culture from English speaking countries other than US and UK). These cultures are naturally embedded in English, either in the form of habits, food, norms, values, general beliefs, or lifestyles. Often found when learners learn English through some media, such as television, newspaper, novels, books, or textbooks, at the same time they got new culture knowledge of English speaking countries.

In EFL setting, English has been the „carrier“ of culture. Consequently, TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) materials load the cultural content. Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990), classifies culture can be *big C* and *little c*, that culture in foreign language teaching as „big C“ referring to the media, cinema, music, or literature that commonly become the initial interest of the learners in learning English; and „little c“ which relates to the organization of the family, home life, interpersonal relations, work and leisure, customs and institutions that needs a closer look compared to big C (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990, p.3-10). EFL learners at the first time of their period of

learning English might be attracted to the trending or popular cultures such as songs, TV shows, English movies, and so on. As they learn a lot more and deeper, they learn closer to the „small c“ such as the relationship between teenagers/adolescents in western countries, school life, customs in western, or the system of education there. EFL learning materials ideally facilitate this grading cultural knowledge of their learners, so that foreign language learning can be a medium of intercultural learning as well. This intercultural competence as a component of communicative competence is essential in this era as the learners are „connected“ each other in the almost borderless world.

Language learners need more exposure to intercultural situations to improve their language skills. Ihm (1996) states that EFL students often have little chance to experience genuine cultural contact and the EFL classroom is, therefore, the prime source of cultural information. Mackey also remarks that the cultural content of materials used in the EFL context should not be ascribed solely to native speaker cultures but should cover world cultures. In this respect, EFL textbooks become a significant source in presenting cultural information to FL learners systematically, especially when it is not possible to provide them with real-life environments (Mackey, 2003, p.139-148).

Cultural understanding is the core of language acquisition. Culture carriers in EFL teaching and learning are greatly the instructional materials. These materials are represented by textbooks or course books, video and audio materials, computer software, and visual aids. Among these materials, textbooks appoint the favored use among the teachers Indonesia.

Cunningsworth apart from the notion that textbook is “a resource for presentation material, a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction,... a resource for self-directed learning or self-access work, and a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.7), they are still the most accessible and practical learning materials. It is also supported by the fact that textbooks do not require tools, electricity, or other equipment to make it usable. This favored use of English textbooks suggests that there should be a careful and through a process in the process of textbook selection. English textbook should be not only attractive in terms of its visual presentation, but must of all, it should consider some other factors such as its appropriateness to learners” socio-economic background, cultural background, and also their goals of EFL learning. Otherwise, English textbooks will not be the good cultural agents which support intercultural and communicative competence. When learners are not exposed to enough cross-cultural knowledge, they are prone to be misinterpreting other cultures or stereotyping. Thus, EFL textbooks are expected to provide rich cultural exposure mentioning not only source culture but also target culture and the international target culture. Nevertheless, Aliakbari in spite EFL textbooks are generally expected to contain aspects of target culture where the English are introduced, the number of studies suggests that target language is not always presented (Aliakbari, 2004, p.1-14).

Textbooks play a dominant role in English teaching in Indonesia. Pasassung claimed that Indonesian English teaching is dependent on the roles

of textbooks since they are considered to provide clear instructions and procedural guidance. Many English teachers in Indonesia teach English by taking the instructions and materials from the textbook then asked learners to follow the instructions and do the exercises (Pasassung 2003). The finding is in line with McGrath stating that many teachers regard textbook as a „holy book,, which cannot be modified and skipped (McGrath, 2002, p.34). Since the role of textbooks is crucial in English teaching in Indonesia, the contents of the textbook should be suitable for learners and in line with national educational objectives.

Drawing from above situation, cultural consideration is urgent to investigate. The urgency of considering the culture representation on the English textbooks in Indonesia is based on some arguments. To begin with Ekawati, the representation of source culture, international culture, and target culture all at once in a textbook may lead to a cultural mismatch (Ekawati, 2001, p.53-59). Some celebrations like *Halloween or Valentine Day*, for instance, could be culturally mismatched to Indonesia students. Later, the locally published English textbooks are preferable compared to internationally published textbooks. Indonesian teachers in well-funded schools prefer to use internationally published books from their students, like Cambridge University Press, Pearson Longman, and such which surely contain less source culture (Indonesian culture). According to Zacharias, these internationally published textbooks are more favored as they provide „perfect“ English to teach the four language skills and contain richer materials than do by the

locally published books (Zacharias, 2005, p.23-27). This case indicates that locally published textbooks need improvement in order to compete with internationally published ones, especially in the visual representation, phonological accuracy, rich cross-culture material, and various challenging activities for the students.

Dealing with the English textbook standard, Indonesian Board of National Education Standard (BSNP) has constructed some criteria for approved English textbooks to be used at schools in Indonesia. The decree No.22 year 2006 concerning the content standard is trying to set the standard for standardized EFL materials. Further, BSNP also developed some instrument of English textbook evaluation for every level of schools from primary schools (SD/MI) to high schools (SMA/MA). However, this instrument only touches some physical aspects of the English textbooks without analyzing the culture appropriateness one of the criteria of evaluation. Three components that are assessed comprise: 1) the language appropriateness (appropriateness with the level of students' cognitive development and socio-economic factor, communicativeness, cohesiveness, and coherence); 2) presentation of the book (the technique of presentation and presentation of learning activities); 3) the completeness of presentation (all the chapters are complete with the introduction to closing).

To compare with, some other Asian countries through their Ministry of Education are concerning this cultural content in EFL textbooks in order to raise the students' cultural awareness of their own culture as well as to raise

the intercultural competence so that they can reflect their own culture by learning other cultures from English speaking countries. According to Yamanaka Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), for instance, maintains that “the understanding of cultures” should be regarded as one of the main objectives in teaching English at the secondary school level (Yamanaka, 2006, p.57-76). Even, Adamson and Morris, Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China took a big step by asking an internationally standardized publisher (Longman) to work together with the academics of China to develop EFL materials which portrait the daily life of Chinese and Western children living in Beijing as they interact in school or engage in more culturally-specific activities at home (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p.104-117). Additionally, English culture is limited to some descriptions of food, festivals, and places of interest, sport, and language. These two examples suggest that cultural preservation needs to be considered in selecting and evaluation EFL materials (textbooks).

Drawing from this fact, the researcher concludes that a textbook evaluation, particularly on cultural content is essential to conduct in Indonesian setting in order to better select an EFL material which is suitable to the students’ need. More specifically, cultural content analysis on English textbooks used in Junior High Schools needs to be carried out. The students of Junior High School are ideally being proportionally exposed to the different cultures outside their own. This aimed at raising their cultural awareness of their own identity as well as enriching it good values taken from the other

cultures. At the same time, the proportional portion of cultural representation on the English textbooks is hoped to aid the students to be culturally wise and smart, by adopting the suitable values from other cultures and eliminating the bad ones. Particularly for Junior High School students, they are expected to be culturally aware in comparing and contrasting as well as filtering the presented cultures in their English textbooks with their cultures.

B. Identification of the Problems

Referring to the background of the problem, the researcher identifies the problems as follows:

1. The tendency that the textbooks chosen are not appropriate in term of cultural contents exists since the reason of choosing the textbook used may not consider the contents of the textbook.
2. The teacher might not be aware of the foreign culture.
3. The studies regarding on how Indonesian teachers build more substantive intercultural competence are still lacking.

C. Limitation of the Research

Based on the identification of the problems above, this study mainly focuses on investigating whether English textbooks used at 7th, 8th and 9th grade students include cultural contents. The investigated textbooks are those published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. Another focus of the study is to investigate five English teachers who are currently teaching at SMPN 1

Babelan build more substantive intercultural competence in their teaching practice.

D. Formulation of the Research Question

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How is cultural content represented in English Textbooks used 7th, 8th and 9th grad of junior high schools?
2. What are the techniques that EFL teachers use in order to teach culture?

E. Objective of the research

To make the research is more legible, the research objective should be well-stated as it explains the research activities the researcher employed. The objectives of this research was related to the build more substantive intercultural competence in the language classroom. Here are the objectives of this research:

1. To investigate how cultural content is represented in English Textbooks.
2. To investigate the teachers' awareness of the importance of teaching culture as well as their cultural knowledge.

F. Significance of the Research

The significance of the study is intended to give some contributions theoretically and practically. This research gives several benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance:

The result of the study would support the theories on whether English publisher or authors embedded the cultural content in composing their textbook. Also, the result of study might also contribute to the comprehensions on whether teachers build more substantive intercultural competence in their teaching practice.

2. Practical Use:

- a. The result of this study might give beneficial insights to textbooks publishers and authors about the importance of embedding the cultural competence in the books they compose.
- b. The result of the study also might benefit teacher to choose textbooks that build intercultural competence. Also, it may contribute them to be more aware of intercultural competence when they want to design the materials for learners. Lastly, it is hoped that the result of study might help the teachers to build more substantive intercultural competence.
- c. This study might also be expected to assist students to choose books that can help them with their intercultural competence.

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