



## **Culture Representations Incorporated within the English Textbook Used for Teaching Seventh-Grade Students in Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the cultural representation incorporated within the English textbook that the teachers utilized for instructing seventh-grade students in Indonesia. The Study employed qualitative content analysis techniques. The study utilized documentation and a checklist table containing criteria to assess the presence of cultural aspects in the textbook recommended by experts in teaching English as a foreign language. The results indicated that the textbook has successfully fulfilled specific criteria for including cultural information. A distinct and well-defined learning objective accompanies every chapter within this English textbook. The textbook organizes its content into individual chapters, each exploring diverse topics about various cultural aspects. The introduction of vocabulary on the topic of each unit occurs exclusively within the respective unit, without subsequent repetition in subsequent chapters. The content covered in Chapters 1 to 5 of the textbook has encompassed a wide range of cultural elements, exhibiting significant diversity. The material has been tailored to suit the student's age group. Every chapter within this English textbook also presents four distinct categories of language skills. However, the learning materials primarily emphasize Indonesian culture through the inclusion of cultural materials. The chapters within the textbook need to cultivate students' awareness of intercultural understanding. There need to be more activities that facilitate students' engagement in intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication.

**Keywords:** Culture representation, EFL Textbook, Intercultural understanding

**Introduction,**

The principal objective for individuals learning a language is to attain proficiency in the target language. According to Dincer & Dariyemiz (2020), Notwithstanding fluency, effective communication between language learners and native speakers cannot be guaranteed. The variable of culture influences the impact of communication effectiveness. The relationship between language and culture is highly interconnected, and a comprehensive understanding of culture is imperative for students to attain mastery of language skills. The process of meaning formation and interpretation is culturally situated, as language acquires significance within its cultural milieu. It is imperative to comprehend the appropriate usage of acceptable lexicon and its contextual correctness to facilitate effective communication with individuals who are proficient in the language. The existence of diverse cultural factors impedes the possibility of a direct and literal translation from one language to another. There is a possibility for linguistically appropriate statements utilized in various cultural contexts to lead to misinterpretation or perplexity. The subject matter pertains to cultural knowledge.

Recent research on the teaching and acquisition of foreign languages emphasizes that learning the grammar of a foreign language and utilizing it in the proper cultural and social context are essential components of mastering that language. One must be conscious of their counterparts' cultural backgrounds to impart knowledge effectively. Yu (2020) contends that cultural learning and language acquisition are inseparable to the point where one would assume the other to be the other. Thus, teaching languages means teaching culture. According to Rohmani (2022), a foreign language teacher is also a foreign culture instructor, and teaching a foreign language is similar to teaching a foreign culture.

In the context of English language education, it is essential for students of English as a Foreign Language to understand intercultural communication. Understanding intercultural communication entails a comprehensive awareness of both the local culture and the native culture, as noted by Gunantar (2016). The acquisition of intercultural communication skills in language learning is characterized as enhancing a learner's capacity to navigate the complexities of language and culture in the context of a diverse global community (Chi & Suthers, 2015). This endeavor aims to facilitate students' comprehension of the various manifestations, applications, and constraints of culture in intercultural communication. Baker (2012)

emphasizes the significance of instructing students to effectively apply their comprehension of English language communication in diverse cultural contexts with adaptability and intentionality. Furthermore, the region's local culture should also be considered. Hence, the indigenous or local culture plays a significant role in enhancing the understanding of traditional practices and social conventions, as well as facilitating cross-cultural communication in language instruction.

The Indonesian education system aims to impart its unique cultural identity to all strata of society, including domestic and international audiences, utilizing pedagogical materials. According to Pourkalthor and Esfandiari's (2017), instructional materials act as a variety of channels for communication that help ideas become concrete during instruction in the classroom. It is consistent with the freedom-to-learn curriculum currently being used in Indonesia. The curriculum offers students the chance to gain new perspectives on their identities, social interactions, cultural practices, and employment prospects worldwide. Their understanding of this socio-cultural and intercultural knowledge can enhance their critical thinking skills.

The predominant view in language education is that textbooks serve as the primary instructional resources in language courses. Furthermore, it has been suggested by Deswila, et al (2021) that instructional materials such as textbooks should incorporate non-native characters and cultural issues on the source culture to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The concepts mentioned above suggest that English learning materials should encompass both local and global cultures, particularly in the context of English being utilized as an international or foreign language. According to Aoumeur and Ziani, (2022), a prevalent view among linguists is including cultural elements in EFL/ESL teaching resources, such as textbooks. However, according to Setyono & Widodo (2019) critique, standard EFL textbooks must be revised to engage students and offer cultural knowledge. Consequently, the language classroom must serve as a platform for students to develop intercultural competence while acquiring the language.

Numerous research studies have underscored the significance of culture in acquiring language. Initially, the study centered on the examination of the origins of culture, including the target culture, international culture, and students' culture, as presented in the reading materials contained within the textbook (Arshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2020). Subsequent studies have sought to examine the cultural dimension present in English textbooks (Ariawan, 2020; Mayangsari et al., 2018; Sulistyio et al.,

2021). Moreover, Marhamah et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers towards incorporating English culture into their classrooms and to determine whether these teachers believed that such integration would facilitate the development of cross-cultural understanding among their students. Then, there have been some research studies that focused on analyzing cultural content in English textbook used for teaching junior high school students (Mandarani et al, 2021; Santosa, 2015); Finally, Razafi et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of instructing cultural material on the reading comprehension of intermediate Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

Prior research studies have indicated that previous investigations have solely examined the cultural content within textbooks with respect to cultural elements, specifically cultural products featured in textbooks that are categorized as either "C" culture or "c" culture, as well as cultural categorization based on cultural origins. Despite the existing studies, a comprehensive analysis of the presentation of cultural elements in English textbooks remains unexplored. Specifically, the learning objectives, cultural topics, learning activities, and materials used for the introduction of cultural elements have not been thoroughly investigated. Finally, there is no research regarding cultural content analysis found in junior high school English textbook which have implemented the freedom-to-learn curriculum as the current curriculum implemented in Indonesia. Thus, in this research, the writers were interested to conduct the study which aims at analyzing the presentation of cultural information integrated in English textbooks used for teaching junior high school students. The research question of the research was : How is the representation of cultural information integrated in English textbooks used for teaching junior high school students?

### **Research Methodology,**

This research utilized a qualitative methodology, which is advantageous for assessing the value of circumstances, taking place within a specific location and for gaining a more profound comprehension of the subject matter. Moreover, qualitative research places greater emphasis on visual representations such as images or textual data as opposed to numerical data (Creswell, 2015). Thus, this study investigated texts (written and spoken) that seek to serve as a reliable textual

resource, while also exploring the potential of audiovisual materials, such as images, pictures, or sounds, to enhance the comprehension and expansion of the gathered data.

An English textbook used by teachers of English to teach students of Grade 7 of junior high school was used as the object of the study (Damayanti Dkk, 2022). The textbook is published by The Ministry of Education and Culture. The textbook is based on the freedom-to-learn curriculum, which is the current curriculum applied at schools in Indonesia.

A checklist table, containing criteria is employed to determine the presentation of cultural information integrated with the English textbook used for teaching (Chen, 2012; Liu, 2016). Notes accompany the table. The criteria utilized are as delineated below.

Table 1. Checklist Table Format

No	Criteria	Chapter		Notes
		Yes	No	
1	Rationale and Objective			
	A. Each unit within the textbook possesses a clearly articulated objective.			
	B. Each section of the textbook aligns with the overarching objectives.			
	C. Cultural items contribute to the enhancement of comprehension regarding customary conduct within various typical scenarios prevalent in the specific cultural context.			
2	Cultural Topics			
	A. The topic is replete with diverse cultural facets.			
	B. The cultural elements align with the developmental stage of the students.			
3	Culture Materials			
	A. Textbook serves to enhance students' comprehension of intercultural understanding.			
	B. Thematic materials serve to enhance students' recognition and admiration of both their own cultural background and the culture being studied.			
4	Language Features and Language Skills			
	A. The inclusion of newly introduced vocabulary in subsequent units serves the			

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purpose of reinforcing the understanding and significance of the cultural content.

- B. Enhance students' proficiency in the four language skills through the integration of cultural content.
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#### 5 Classroom and Cultural Activities

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- A. Engage in the practice of intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication, which involves comprehending the meaning of words through their alignment with established frameworks of classroom activities.
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- B. The book offers opportunities for students to engage in oral communication exercises, enabling them to effectively convey the intended meaning of various linguistic structures and it aims to foster the development of students' productive language skills, specifically their speaking and writing abilities.
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Qualitative research is research that is small in scope and cannot be generalized, so it is necessary to ascertain whether the data obtained can be trusted or not. According to Creswell (2015), what must be considered in a qualitative approach is how to get the credibility of the data that has been obtained which is an element of constructive research. Certain aspects were taken into consideration and several techniques were implemented to ensure the credibility of this research. First, the principle of 'using a community of practitioners', where the author together with his colleagues will discuss and share with each other so as to generate ideas. Then data triangulation, where data were obtained from more than 2 forms of instruments. Furthermore, the data analysis process was carried out by two coders to obtain reliable analysis results.

The content analysis method was used to analyze qualitative data from the analysis of cultural representations in English textbooks. The stages carried out are as follows: analyzing all forms of text, both written text and spoken text, then determining data codes according to the categories used and determining themes from all data codes obtained (Krippendorff, 2013; Creswell, 2015).

## Findings

The results of the data analysis based on how cultural information is presented in English textbooks used to teach junior high school students can be explained as follows:

### **A. Rationale and Objectives**

The textbook used by English teachers published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology is divided into five chapters, each consisting of three units. Of the five chapters, each chapter in this English textbook has a clear learning objective. Each chapter has three units, and each unit contains one or two learning objectives in each chapter

For example, the topics and language skills presented in each unit in chapter 2 are also in line with the learning objectives. Unit one of chapter two begins with introducing new vocabulary related to types of food for main courses and snacks. Next are cultural note inserts related to the types of traditional food in Indonesia. In unit two, students are introduced to new vocabulary related to the texture of typical Indonesian food. Finally, in unit three, students are introduced to new vocabulary related to the types of cooking utensils

Furthermore, for the introduction of reading skills in unit one, chapter 2, a comic strip is presented, which contains a conversation between two characters, Galang and Monita, who discuss their favorite food. In unit two, there is a reading text on the topic of Galang's favorite food, a shopping list containing food ingredients, and a text of a recipe on social media about how to make a cake. Then, in Unit 2, students are presented with a cultural note with the topic "tea time," which explains the culture of drinking tea which is a common culture in almost all countries. In Unit 3, there is a reading text about fried rice recipes as one of the traditional foods in Indonesia.

Listening skill is presented in Unit One, where students are asked to listen to conversations about the lunch menu that Monita's family enjoys. There is speaking skills material given in Unit Two, where there are expressions related to asking and providing information about someone's favorite food. Finally, students are introduced to the structure of how to write procedural text and asked to write how to make one of the food recipes.

The cultural materials reflected in the learning materials focus on Indonesian culture, where the learning context presented is also a cultural context in Indonesia. There is not a single material that introduces cultural elements that reflect the culture

of native English speakers, such as American culture or British society. For example, the material content in chapter 3 of the textbook shows the cultural aspects of "rooms in a house" and "house chores." The context of the house in question is a house that shows the characteristics of a house in Indonesia. As in unit one of chapter three of this textbook, students are presented with an illustration of a stilt house with a wood-building structure. The house is a traditional house typical of the people in Indonesia.

Likewise, skills learning in the textbook uses topics related to cultural elements typical of Indonesian society. As in chapter 3, the textbook shows that all reading text topics are related to the cultural elements which highlight the traditional culture of Indonesian society. Likewise, for speaking activities, students are asked to describe their house, the rooms in their house, and the house chores. Furthermore, for writing, students are asked to write a procedural text about the procedure for doing house chores. Finally, the characters' names in each stage of the learning process, either in the pictures or in the text, also describe specific names that usually indicate nationalities or tribes in Indonesia.

## **B. Cultural Topics**

Each chapter of the 7th grade English textbook at the junior high school level presents the material with various topics related to different cultural aspects. For example, in Chapter 1, the material presented is related to the cultural aspects of "Introduction," "hobbies," and daily activities. In Chapter 2, the materials presented are related to the cultural aspects of "food" and "recipe." Meanwhile, the material presented in Chapter 3 is related to cultural aspects, "rooms in a house" and "house chores." Furthermore, in Chapter 4, the material presented is related to the cultural aspects of "class activity" and "study habit." Finally, the material presented in Chapter 5 is related to the cultural aspects of "School building and the environment around the school," "extracurricular activities," and "School festival." Finally, the material from Chapter 1 to Chapter 5 in the textbook has presented a variety of diverse cultural aspects and has been following the age of students.

## **C. Cultural Material**

All the chapters in the 7th grade English textbook do not promote students' awareness of intercultural understanding. The materials presented do not increase



students' awareness and appreciation of their own culture and the culture of the target language.

For example, the material presented in chapter three of this seventh-grade English textbook does not promote students' awareness of intercultural understanding. The learning materials in all units in chapter 3 of this English textbook only focus on the students' culture, the culture of Indonesian society. All the materials and illustrations provided in the textbook only focus on discussing the characteristics of the rooms in a typical Indonesian house, the types of items in each room that also highlight the habits of Indonesian people, and the types of house chores that Indonesian teenagers usually do. None of the learning materials illustrate how the characteristics of the house and the types of homework reflect the native culture of native English speakers. There is not even a single cultural note insert that describes the culture of native English speakers.

Because no material discusses the culture of native English speakers and no learning activities that require students to know comparisons between cultures, the thematic material presented in Chapter 3 does not increase students' awareness and appreciation of their own culture and the culture of native English speakers.

#### **D. Language Features and Language Skills**

Each chapter in the English textbook for grade 7 junior high school has three units discussing different cultural aspects. In each unit, vocabulary related to each unit's topic is introduced but not repeated in the subsequent units or in the following chapters. Each chapter in this English textbook has also introduced four types of language skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, with cultural content themes.

For example, each unit in Chapter 5 begins with the introduction of vocabulary before skills materials. As in unit 1, learning begins with introducing vocabulary related to the characteristics of the school building, the facilities around the school building, and vocabulary related to how to give directions. In unit 2, learning begins with introducing vocabulary related to the various extracurricular activities that junior high school students in Indonesia must participate in. Finally, in unit 3 of chapter 5, the lesson introduces vocabulary related to various school festivals that junior high school students in Indonesia usually hold.

Of the three units in the textbook, in chapter 5, for unit 1, the book focuses on listening and speaking skills related to giving directions. The characteristics of the school building and the environment around the school show the characteristics of schools in Indonesia. Unit 2 in chapter 5 of this textbook only focuses on reading skills with the theme of cultural content related to extracurricular activities carried out by junior high school students. Unit 3 in Chapter 5 has focused on reading and writing skills with the theme of school festivals. The school festival described in the book is typical of junior high school students in Indonesia.

#### **E. Classroom and Cultural Activities**

From the three units in the textbook in Chapter 1, all the materials have directed students to recognize cultural aspects such as introducing themselves, describing hobbies, and describing personal characteristics and daily activities. Of the three units in the textbook in chapter 2, all materials have directed students to recognize cultural aspects such as describing favorite foods and snacks and explaining how to make dishes. Of the three units in the textbook in chapter 3, all the materials have directed students to recognize cultural aspects such as describing the house, the rooms in the house, and the tasks of the house. From the three units in the textbook in chapter 4, all the materials lead students to recognize cultural aspects such as describing subjects and learning activities in the classroom, discussing online learning activities, and discussing study habits. Finally, from the three units in the textbook in chapter 5, all the materials lead students to recognize cultural aspects, such as describing school buildings, extracurricular activities, and school festivals

Although the themes in the textbook are related to cultural aspects, they only illustrate the students' Indonesian culture. Thus, there are no activities can make students do intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication. Similarly, all chapters in this 7th-grade English textbook also provide practices for students' productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing). However, the practices only focused on the students' culture.

#### **Discussion**

From the analysis of English textbooks used by teachers to teach English in grade 7 of Junior High School, all the materials presented in the textbooks already

contain cultural elements, namely introduction, hobbies, daily activities, food, recipes, rooms in a house, house chores, class activity, study habit, school building, extracurricular activities, school festival. The cultural aspects presented in the textbook fall into the minor "c" cultural aspects category. According to Matic (2015), the cultural elements included in the small "c" category are 1) daily life, such as matters related to food and drink, holidays, work activities, and activities carried out in leisure time; 2) living conditions such as rules of life, home conditions, conditions for fulfilling life needs; 3) interpersonal relationships such as relationships between genders, relationships between family members, relationships between coworkers and relationships between community members; 4) belief values and attitudes; 5) body language and 6) social conventions such as how to dress, taboo things to do in dialogue with others, punctuality and taking leave. Furthermore, Matic (2015) adds that students exposed to cultural content that falls into the 'small c' category can improve their intercultural competence. They can genuinely appreciate the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of the language used by native speakers of the language and can show appropriate reactions.

Based on the findings derived from the textbook analysis, it is evident that each chapter effectively articulated the learning objectives, and the entirety of the textbook content was aligned with the learning objectives. According to Haulle and Kabelege (2021), this English textbook meets the requirements of a high-quality textbook. Specifically, it adheres to the criterion that learning objectives should be clear and brief. These objectives serve as concise and comprehensible statements that articulate the expected outcomes for students upon completion of the learning process. Textbooks are crucial in facilitating the learning and teaching process within the classroom. Textbooks are essential learning resources that aid teachers and students in attaining their educational goals. (Nordlund, 2016)

The learning objectives for each chapter of the textbook have been explicitly articulated. Nevertheless, the focus remains on students' linguistic proficiency, specifically their adeptness in mastering all aspects of language in a precise and accurate manner, adhering to the established conventions of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation. When communicating with individuals from diverse cultural and social contexts, interlocutors need to possess linguistic skills encompassing grammar and pronunciation and a deep understanding of culture. This cultural knowledge constitutes a fundamental aspect of intercultural

communicative competence (Labtic & Teo, 2019). They must know that appropriate behaviors and intonation patterns in their speech community may be perceived differently by speech community members of the target language.

The learning materials in this 7th-grade English textbook align with the stated learning objectives in each chapter. However, it is worth noting that the content primarily centers around Indonesian culture, with the learning context predominantly situated within Indonesia's cultural context. While it is true that specific textbooks have started to include elements of international culture, it is imperative also to integrate local culture into the textbooks in order to enhance students' understanding of their cultural heritage (Liu & Laohawiryanon, 2013). Further, Integrating language instruction and knowledge of culture is a cohesive entity (Ghafor, 2020). Currently, teachers can enhance students' understanding of the culture they come from by inquiring about similar circumstances within their cultural context. One additional benefit of incorporating diverse cultures is facilitating intercultural learning and comprehension, enabling individuals to adapt their behavior following the socio-cultural context (Onosu, 2021).

Moreover, based on the textbook analysis, it can be inferred that its content aligns with the student's developmental stage. The cultural elements presented in the textbook are suitable for the student's age group. The visual representations follow the attributes commonly observed among junior high school students. According to the research conducted by Herlina, Djajanegara, and Suendarti (2020), it is imperative to evaluate the adequacy of the textbook in addressing the four language skills following the learners' proficiency levels. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of ensuring that the assigned readings and accompanying activities align with the language proficiency level of the students.

Based on the findings, each chapter of the 7th-grade English textbook incorporates new vocabulary about the cultural dimension of "small c." These terms are consistent throughout the instructional segments of reading, writing, speaking, and listening proficiency. Nevertheless, the subsequent chapter does not reiterate the vocabulary about each cultural aspect, as it introduces new vocabulary associated with distinct cultural elements of "small c." It adheres to vocabulary acquisition, a fundamental aspect of second language (L2) instruction, characterized by its gradual and cumulative nature. Repetition is crucial in facilitating L2 learners' comprehensive acquisition of form, meaning, and usage in

both receptive and productive knowledge domains throughout this process (Zang, 2022).

The study also revealed that the cultural aspects in the "small c" category only focus on local Indonesian culture. This is reflected in all skill materials, be it reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The result contradicts what Dekson (2020) stated: effective intercultural communication occurs when students learning a language can interact effectively with native speakers of that language who have different cultural backgrounds. In the context of language acquisition, students must possess a comprehensive understanding of both their cultural background as well as the cultures of others. Additionally, they must possess the requisite linguistic and pragmatic competencies that enable them to navigate and interact within diverse cultural contexts effectively. In addition, Wu and Miller (2021) state that new language learners must have "native cultural awareness," which is the ability to appreciate their native cultural heritage by expressing their local identity in L1 and L2 and critically evaluate their native culture and target culture when engaging in intra- or intercultural communicative events.

Additionally, seventh-grade students' instructional materials in the English textbook prioritize topics other than intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication. This assertion opposes the findings of Al-Rifa'i et al. (2021), who highlighted that culture instruction is the fifth regulatory skill in language instruction and acquisition. Furthermore, the author underscores the importance of possessing grammatical proficiency and a nuanced understanding of cultural aspects to comprehend a language effectively. Before engaging in learning and instruction with students, an English teacher must possess a comprehensive understanding of these concepts. It is imperative to ensure that students possess the essential components of cultural, linguistic, interpersonal, and cross-cultural proficiencies that will enable them to effectively articulate and contemplate their cultural background and comprehend and elucidate the culture of different societies. Furthermore, students should be able to effectively convey and explain the target language and culture they are acquiring.

Finally, from the results of the data analysis, it was found that all chapters in this book have provided skill training for students' productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing skills). However, productive skills training only focuses on student culture, namely Indonesian culture. This finding aligns with the research conducted by

Rohmani and Andriyanti (2022), wherein they assert that when incorporating cultural instruction, emphasis is placed on developing listening skills as the primary focus, followed by the development of speaking abilities.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the textbook has successfully fulfilled specific criteria for including cultural information. A distinct and well-defined learning objective accompanies every chapter within this English textbook. The textbook organizes its content into individual chapters, each exploring diverse topics about various cultural aspects. The introduction of vocabulary on the topic of each unit occurs exclusively within the respective unit, without subsequent repetition in subsequent chapters. The content covered in Chapters 1 to 5 of the textbook has encompassed a wide range of cultural elements, exhibiting significant diversity. The material has been tailored to suit the student's age group. Every chapter within this English textbook also presents four distinct categories of language skills. However, the learning materials primarily emphasize Indonesian culture through the inclusion of cultural materials. The chapters within the textbook need to cultivate students' awareness of intercultural understanding. There need to be more activities that facilitate students' engagement in intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication. Finally, it is suggested that there is future research about the development of the textbook that can manage intercultural understanding.

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