

## **Culture Diversity in Indonesia ELT Textbook**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes cultural diversity representation in the newest mandated English textbook of the Merdeka curriculum for seventh grade. The researcher uses Cortazzi and Jin's theory of cultural representation, dividing the representation into three cultures: source, target, and international. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method, and the whole book is analyzed without exception. From this research, the researcher found that a set of pilot characters has an important role in delivering the materials. The pilot characters come from various backgrounds from various places in Indonesia. Moreover, they also have different hobbies that will be the main highlight of this research. First, it is found that there is a complex representation of source culture, or Indonesian culture, where there are people, lifestyles, culinary, and traditional representations of culture. Then, the target culture, or the English native language country, is represented once, and finally, the international culture presents lifestyle and culinary aspects. Secondly, this textbook presents an imbalanced cultural diversity in delivering its material. Therefore, the researcher hopes this research could raise the awareness of cultural diversity as it is important for the students to be exposed to many different cultural aspects.

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**Keywords:** Cultural diversity, International culture, Merdeka curriculum, Source culture, Target culture

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The English language has become the most dominant and significant language all over the world, and many people have started to learn English for different purposes. It has reached the point where the number of non-native speakers who speak English as their second language exceeds the number of native speakers. This reason sparks the rising attention to English teaching as English is the most spoken universal language. English also knows that it has been a crucial material that shapes students the process of thought (Bujupaj & Gashi-Berisha, 2020; Nishanthi, 2018; Sapir, 1929). It is important to note that English is a language course that delivers real-world information. The material used in the textbooks

also intentionally or unintentionally presents information about countries, people, lifestyles, beliefs, values, and culture (Garton & Graves, 2014). Following these reasons, English textbooks raise two important main issues they are authenticity and representation.

Among things that could be represented culture is one of the objects that could automatically be present while learning a language, specifically English. It is important to analyze the way culture is conceived and represented in textbooks. As mentioned before, language and material delivered in the classroom could affect student perception and, moreover, could shape student's thoughts. It is impossible to teach the language without referring to the target culture or simply to how the target country does the language. The culture referred to in the textbook is the integrated pattern of the target language's knowledge, beliefs, and behavior. These include language ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies (Kovács, 2017). Cultural representation is important to analyze since it will help the students to understand more about the language. Teachers should be aware that culture is not a simple custom, holiday, song, or literature; culture is an implicit concept that presents the appropriate use of different linguistic forms as well (Kovács, 2017). Hence, analyzing cultural representation in textbooks is important, not only about the target language country but also about the learner's culture country and enrichment of how the global countries' culture presents.

In Indonesia, which has lots of cultures, Indonesia just released a new curriculum called *the Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia has formulated several curriculums throughout the years following the development of global education and technology. *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is the most recent curriculum that the Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia created; the curriculum is meant to give freedom to the students of Indonesia in learning. The curriculum of *Merdeka Belajar* was formulated to bring back the essence of education that was stated in the Indonesian 1945 decree, where the freedom of thinking should be owned by the teacher first (Dharma et al., n.d.). Students are free to learn anywhere, and however they want. The implementation of this curriculum should be done by the institution providing the needs of their students in learning.

In the beginning, *Merdeka Belajar* was implemented in the scope of the university, followed by high school and primary school. In the scale of school, the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is meant to give students freedom in learning, cutting the academic limitations that put

students under pressure. The previous education system was teacher-centered, where the teacher was the main core of the learning, the teacher as provider and evaluator who monitored students throughout the learning process, while students joined in the class passively (Emaliana, 2017). On the contrary, *Merdeka Belajar's* curriculum is based on a student-centered approach. Students are active participants. They experience self-directed learning and experiential learning, while teachers are mere facilitators and instructors (Emaliana, 2017).

The English language is no exception; every subject that is taught in school should follow the nation's decree. Fortunately, student-centered is a good method to be applied in the English language classroom since engagement is the main core of learning that could improve student's proficiency greatly. This curriculum has spread around the nation, and many schools are already adjusting their school teaching methodologies and curriculum to the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. Although it can be challenging for schools to adjust from teacher-centered to student-centered methods, schools are slowly applying this curriculum to their learning activity. This research will focus on the first-grade of junior high school ELT textbook, as it is the most crucial part of introducing English to the student. Based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999), there are three cultures that could be analyzed in the school English textbooks, they are source culture, target culture, and international culture (Riadini & Cahyono, 2021). Source culture is a culture that represents the L1 culture, which means Indonesian culture, while target culture is the culture of the target language, which is American and British, and then there is international culture, which is a culture outside the source and target language, it could be from Asian or European. This research will analyze three of the cultures that have already been mentioned, as they are important for the student to understand that there are various cultures in this world; as mentioned before, learning a language means learning the culture, too.

Culture and language are two things that are tied to each other, they affect each other and could change each other. When a certain language is expanded being learned by many countries, the culture could change, and vice versa. When a culture is learned, the language is being learned as well and could change due to the new speakers. Moreover, learning a language and learning their culture are tied to one another, this means that learners are ultimately responsible for making sense of the cultural diversity that they encounter, therefore need to be able to monitor and question their own sense-making processes in an ongoing process of learning (McConachy, 2018). Another reason is that if an English

textbook lacks multicultural education, it could form a majority and minority group problem, such as students having low tolerance for diverse cultures and religions because they didn't get enough exposure (Pratama et al., 2021a). From these reasons, it could be seen how important it is to present cultural elements in the textbooks. Hence, this research will analyze the cultural aspects in the textbook of the *Merdeka* curriculum for grade VII, as it is important since it is the introduction for junior high school students.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative method since this research opted to find out how cultural diversity is portrayed in the mandated English textbook for the seventh grade of *Merdeka* curriculum, where it is required to study things in their natural setting so that the researcher could make sense of and interpret the phenomena or cases in terms of giving meaning especially the cultural meaning that could be implied from the textbook. Also, qualitative study also allows the researcher to involve related study of various empirical materials-case study, introspective, personal experiences, interviews, related life stories, observation, historical, and many more, to help the researcher reach its objectives (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This research also goes hand in hand with the descriptive method so that the researcher could put meaning to the culturally related portrayal in the textbook.

The primary source of this research is the newest mandated English textbook for seventh grade entitled "English for Nusantara" formulated especially for supporting *the Merdeka* curriculum. This textbook was formulated by Damayanti and several other textbook writers in 2022 to support the release of the *Merdeka* curriculum. It has several scopes and sequences, where the textbook is separated into five chapters. There is Chapter Zero, where the book introduces the pilot characters in the book who will appear frequently in each chapter, then the first chapter, entitled "About me," where students are introduced to the topic of how to introduce themselves. Then the next chapter, entitled "Culinary and Me," this chapter introduces various culinary and related expressions to the students. Next, in chapter three, the book introduces the students to vocabulary around domestic chores around the house, the chapter entitled "Home Sweet Home ."In chapter four entitled "My School Activity," students learned about related activities in school scope. Finally, in the fifth chapter entitled "This is My School," students are encouraged to discuss the conversations around school-related activities. For the secondary sources, the researcher uses some related

books, articles, and journals, especially those that talk about cultural representations in the school textbooks.

There are several steps that the researcher should take in order to analyze and conduct this research. First of all, the researcher downloaded the textbook from *SIBI (Sistem Informasi Perbukuan Indonesia)*, an official book website run by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, and an original e-book version of the textbook was downloaded. Afterward, the textbook was reviewed page by page, and the researcher took screenshots of related pages that especially portrayed cultural scenes in many forms. The researcher did not exclude any part of the chapters to avoid subjectiveness in collecting the data. After this step is done, the researcher conducts the next step, which is the data analysis. This research is completed by completing several steps. After collecting the data, the data were analyzed one by one and categorized by source language, target language, and international language. Any data that refers to Indonesian culture will be categorized as source culture, then any data that refers to American/British culture will be categorized as target culture, and any data that refers to any other country's culture besides the countries that already mentioned before will be categorized as international culture. After done all of that, the researcher will draw a conclusion to see which representation is dominating the whole material in the textbook to determine whether the newest mandated English textbook for the seventh grade of the *Merdeka* curriculum presents sufficient cultural material.

The method and analysis in qualitative research are possible to be modified or even adapted depending on the phenomenon being researched. Because qualitative research emphasizes the different issues with specific contexts, there are lots of adjustments and adaptations in qualitative data collecting, analysis, and verification techniques. Different phenomena require different methods or techniques, and because of that, there is almost no specific guide to every topic in qualitative research. However, a thorough investigation of the collected data is verified by following the theoretical framework by Cortazzi and Jin where the data is categorized into three concepts, they are source culture, target culture, and international culture. By following this framework, the researcher already manifested a triangulated concept and avoided invalid data.

### **3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The study concentrates on visual representations of multicultural values in the English textbook. In the textbook, there are multicultural values through a series of visual representations such as pictures, photographs, comic strips, and other visual media that depict multicultural values that both students and teachers could pay attention to. Following the conceptual framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), the researcher found the following representation of source culture, target culture, and international culture:

### **3.1 Source Culture**

#### **3.1.1. People**

At the beginning of the textbook, there are pre-materials, where the pilot characters are introduced to some basic English materials. In the pre-materials, the pilot character, whose name is Galang, is introduced along with his family members. The pilot character is a character that appears in the book, and he is in charge of presenting the materials. Galang Rahmansyah is the pilot character of the book, he is thirteen years old and comes from Kalimantan. Along with Galang, there are Pak Rahmansyah, his father, a farmer; Bu Posma, his mother, a tailor; Sinta, his older sister; and Tamara, his younger sister. Bu Posma comes from Medan, while Pak Rahmansyah is a local in Kalimantan.

Galang has some friends who are also presented as a form of multicultural race that exists in Indonesia. First, there is Andre Tanudjaja, a descendant of the Tionghoa family; Monita Turangan, a girl who comes from Manado; Pipit Saitri, a Sundanese Leni who has Minang's blood; and Made Wirawan, a Balinese. The pilot characters also continue in the school setting, there is an English teacher, Bu Ida, Balinese, and the principal who comes from Papua, Pak Edo.

This introduction to the pilot characters is the representation of the source culture, where all of the pilot characters are Indonesian. They come from various backgrounds in Indonesia and come together as characters who share a familiarity with family, classmates, and teacher-student relationships. This portrayed the cultural diversity that happens in local Indonesian schools regularly, where people from various backgrounds and places share the same environment.

#### **3.1.2 Lifestyle**

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The lifestyle of Indonesian people, especially Indonesian students, is presented in the textbook, where Galang likes to go fishing and his friend like to play mobile games. This is a portrayal of what Indonesian students like to do outside school activities. In this book, there are lots of other hobbies that Indonesian people have besides fishing and playing mobile games, such as reading and sports. The book also presents the hobbies of older Indonesian people, such as Bu Posma, who likes to play badminton with her daughter.

### **3.1.3 Culinary**

Culinary is part of the culture; in this book, there is a chapter discussing specifically the culinary culture of different cultures; however, mostly, it is about Indonesian cuisine. As discussed before, Indonesia is a country with a multicultural environment; there are various races and tribes in Indonesia, and for these reasons, Indonesia has lots of multicultural aspects, including culinary aspects. There are lots of culinary in Indonesia that come from various places since Indonesia has lots of islands. Various Indonesian culinary are presented in this book, such as *rica-rica*, *nasi goreng*, *pisang goreng*, *es teh*, *rujak*, *pecel*, and many more. It is also could be seen that Indonesian food is consumed by the pilot characters in their daily life, showing part of Indonesian lifestyle where Indonesian people consume Indonesian food combined with some other country culinary. It shows how complex multicultural values in Indonesia are.

### **3.1.4 Traditional Buliding**

An astounding presentation of Indonesian traditional buildings is presented in the textbook. It is an Indonesian traditional house called *rumah panggung*. In Kalimantan, previously, it was common to have *rumah panggung*, however, as time goes by, it is kind of rare, however, the presentation of it in the textbook has been a good representation of Indonesian traditional house to introduce to the student. Students are introduced to the things around the house, from verbs to vocabulary around the house, including chores and dishes.

## **3.2 Target Culture**

Target Culture is the culture that refers to the native speaker of English. In this textbook, there is only one target culture presented. Moreover, the representation of target culture in this textbook is in a form of enrichment, which is most likely would be discussed in the class. It shows the culinary culture in Britain, where people in Britain have a culture to drink tea. The culinary culture is called 'teatime', where they spend time to specifically drinking tea

and, usually accompanied by sweets or savory snacks. Tea in Britain is seen as an optional go-to drink that could be enjoyed on many occasions.

### **3.3 International Culture**

International representation also happened in the section where students were supposed to learn the example, Malaysia has appeared to be one of the examples used in explaining the material.

#### **3.3.1 Lifestyle**

There are several appearances of international culture in the textbook. They are located in several chapters of the book, and although they are not much, this international culture appears more than the target culture. Most of the international culture appears in the form of enrichment sections, but the rest appear in the comic strips of the pilot characters.

#### **3.3.2 Culinary**

Another international culture is portrayed in their comic strip, where Monita-one of the pilot characters- is making a black forest cake. It is known that black forest cake is not part of Indonesian culture, however in this book portrays that one of the pilot characters likes to adopt lots of international culture, such as baking non-traditional cake.

## **4. CONCLUSION (Times New Roman 12pt, Bold, Capitalized)**

First, it could be seen that there is a complex representation of the Indonesian culture, or in this research, referred to as a source culture. This research found that there are people, lifestyles, culinary, and traditional buildings of Indonesian culture in this textbook. Complex representation of the pilot characters in this textbook, where it could be seen that the pilot characters come from different parts of Indonesia, but they still get along so well despite their differences in culture's background. It is believed that the writers of this textbook wanted to present a complex kind of students based on real Indonesian students, as it is a fact that there are many kinds of students in Indonesia.

Secondly, it is unfortunate that the writers of the textbook presented a very complex source culture representation, but there is not much cultural representation besides the source culture, so it can be seen that the textbook focused on introducing various cultures of the source culture, or Indonesian culture. The target culture only presents once, talking about their culinary of teatime culture. It is unfortunate to find that, because this book is intended to teach English to students, however, it lacks of the target culture of the preferred language.

As it is significant for the students to know the culture of the language that they are currently learning, especially since seventh grade is the prime age to introduce materials to the students. Then, although not as complex as the source culture representation, the international culture made several appearances in the textbook, covering two topics of lifestyle and culinary. International cultures such as *Manga*, parkour, no shoes inside Asian houses, and the oldest school to ever exist in this world are presented in the textbook.

It could be concluded that the newest mandated English textbook of the *Merdeka* curriculum for seventh grade did not present a balanced cultural diversity representation. Source culture is heavily dominating the materials of the textbook. Although it seems to match the theme of the textbook, which is "English for Nusantara", it is still significant to include the target culture of the English language since it could affect the learning process for the students. Students and teachers alike can be guilty of taking optical media for granted. Exposing these values is critical for improving student and teacher comprehension of multicultural values depicted in this textbook.

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Indicate sources of funding or help received in carrying out your study and/or preparing the manuscript if any before the references. (Times New Roman 12pt, 1.5-spaced)

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