

# CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF AN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADE THREE IN CIANJUR, WEST JAVA

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**Abstract:** This article reports the result of the research investigating cultural content of an English textbook for senior high school grade three in Cianjur, West Java. The data of the research were collected from reading passages in the English textbook for senior high school entitled “Look Ahead”, book three published by Airlangga publisher. To reveal what cultures are represented in the textbook, the cultural contents are categorized into the source culture, the target culture, or the international culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). To reveal how the cultures are represented in the textbook, the cultural contents are categorized into the aesthetic sense, the sociological sense, the semantic sense, or the pragmatic sense (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990). The research finds that the target culture is predominant in the textbook. The investigation found that 77.05% cultural contents refer to the target culture, 13.11% cultural contents refer to the source culture, and 09.84% cultural contents refer to the international culture. Regarding how cultures are represented in the textbook, generally culture is represented by the aesthetic sense (37.70%), the sociological sense (31.15%), the pragmatic sense (19.67%) and the semantic sense (11.48%). Based on the findings it is recommended that more source culture and international culture be included in the textbook.

**Keywords:** *Culture, the target culture, the source culture, the international culture, four senses of culture, textbooks.*

## Introduction

Language and culture are inseparable and bound to each other (Kramsch, 1998; Brown, 2000). Kramsch (1998) stated that language is the expressions of cultural reality, the embodiments of cultural reality, and the symbols of cultural reality. The inseparability of language and culture has led researchers to conduct investigations in the field of English language teaching taught in various cultural contexts. One of

the investigations concerning language and culture lies in how culture is represented in English textbooks.

According to McGrath (2002) textbooks carry cultural content. Textbooks play important role to provide valuable inputs in exposing students to new cultural expressions and diversity of cultures (Lund, 2006). Textbooks are ideology in the way they reflect a worldview of cultural system and a social construction to learners

and teachers which indirectly influence their view of culture (Aliakbari, 2004). Since the spread of certain language through textbooks can influence language learners' attitude, the decision on choosing English textbook should take the cultural contents in textbooks into consideration because as Philipson (1992) warned, English can erode the existence of local culture if the spread is not controlled and filtered.

In Indonesia, the objective of national education is set based on the cultural value and ideology of the nation and applied in all school subjects including English. Considering textbooks play important roles in English language teaching, English textbooks evaluation needs to be conducted to make sure the appropriateness of the English textbook. According to Fernandez et al (2011), the factors influencing the selection process of textbook in Indonesia vary from financial issue to the visual appearance of the textbooks. Then, the tendency that the textbooks chosen are not appropriate in term of cultural contents exists since the reasons of choosing the textbook used may not consider the contents of the textbook.

## **Literature Review**

### **• Textbook Evaluation**

In conducting the evaluation, a set of criteria and certain procedure need to be formulated in order to make the evaluation more objective and reliable (Cunningworth, 1995). In doing so, McGrath (2002) proposed three methods for textbook evaluation; the impressionistic method, the checklist method, and the in-depth method. This research employed generally the in-depth method evaluation.

In-depth method evaluation examines the textbook in deeper and more detailed way by focusing on particular aspects such as the kind of language description, underlying assumptions about learning or values on which the materials are based, or the relevancy of materials to the context of textbook users (McGrath, 2002). The decision on which aspects should be evaluated depends on the characteristic of learners and the context in which the textbook is used (Cunningworth, 1995). Hence, a textbook can be evaluated from different point of views by different textbook users. The advantage of this method is the deep and thorough description of the textbook evaluated. However, this method also has disadvantages; the aspects evaluated may not be representative of the whole book, it could only give a partial insight of the

materials, the process of evaluation requires expert knowledge and also time consuming (McGrath, 2002).

In its correlation to cultural content evaluation in the textbook, Cunningsworth (1995, p.vi) stated that “the contents of the textbook are intended to be essentially practical in nature”, and the practicality of the contents will always have a correlation with cultural contexts of the learners. In term of textbook evaluation, Cunningsworth (ibid) also put cultural relevancy as one of the checklist contents. However, Cortazzi & Jin (1999) stated that the evaluation related to culture is mostly not prioritized in the textbook evaluation. Considering the importance of teaching culture in English language learning, this research employs the in-depth method evaluation focusing on cultural content of the textbook to be evaluated.

- **Categories of Cultural Contents in Textbook**

Based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999) the materials in a textbook culturally are categorized into the source culture, the target culture, and the international culture. By analyzing the textbook based on this framework, the culture represented in the textbook can be revealed.

The source culture materials refer to materials presenting language learners’ own culture. The aims of the source culture

materials are accommodating learners’ need to talk about their culture with visitors and helping learners to be more aware of their own cultural identity.

The target culture materials refer to materials presenting the culture of English native speakers’ countries such as The United States and The United Kingdom. The textbooks of this category are the most popular instruction materials in the EFL context. The aim of the target culture materials usually is exposing users to the cultural contexts of the target language

International culture materials refer to materials presenting a wide variety of culture in countries where English is not used as first or second language but as an international language such as in China and Brazil. The aims of the international culture materials are raising users’ intercultural awareness and making users familiar with various socio-cultural contexts.

- **Four Senses of Culture**

Culture in the textbook can also be categorized based on the four senses of culture framework proposed by Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi (1990). This framework covers the general categorizations of culture which are the totalist view and the mentalist view, and the big “C” culture and the small “c” culture. The culture within this framework is categorized into four senses: the aesthetic sense, the sociological

sense, the semantic sense, and the pragmatic sense. By using this framework, how cultures are represented in the textbook can be revealed.

The aesthetic sense of culture refers to the media, the cinema, music, and above all literature-research (literary researches) which are often to be one of the main reasons for language teaching. The aesthetic sense of culture can be perceived as the tip of an iceberg or the big “C” of culture. The sociological sense of culture refers to the organization and nature of family, home life, of interpersonal relations, material conditions, work and leisure, custom, and institutions. The sociological sense of culture can be perceived as the bottom of an iceberg or the small “c” of culture.

The semantic sense of culture refers to the conceptual system embodied in the language and, according to the Whorf-Sapir Hypothesis, conditioning all our perceptions and our thought process. Many semantics areas (e.g., food, clothes, institutions) are culturally distinctive because they relate to a particular way of life- that is to our sociological sense of culture. So these cultural features – like culture in one’s sociological sense – may differ for English from one English-speaking country to another.

The last, the pragmatic sense (or sociolinguistic) refers to the background knowledge, social skills, and paralinguistic skills that, in addition to mastery of the language code, make possible successful communication. It includes: (a) the ability to use appropriate exponents of the various communicative functions, (b) the ability to use appropriate intonation patterns, (c) the ability to conform to norms and politeness, which are different from the learners’ culture, including taboo avoidance, awareness of conventions governing interpersonal relations—questions of status, obligation, license, which are different from learners’ culture, and (d) familiarity with the main rhetorical conventions in different written genres e.g., different types of letters and messages, form-filling, advertisements.

- **Integrating Culture Teaching in English Language Teaching**

The targetculture should be taught along with the teaching of the target language (Byram, 1989; Kramsch, 1993; Hinkel, 1999; Cortazzi& Jin, 1999). However, as English nowadays is considered as an international language or a lingua franca, the language should also enable non-native speakers to describe their own norms and culture by using this international language (Hardy, 2004; McKay, 2003). English speakers nowadays

do not only confront the culture of American or British people, but they also confront the culture of non-native speakers and introduce their own culture (Xiao, 2010; Kachru and Smith, 2008). This tendency makes the teaching of the target language culture only is not sufficient to accommodate communicative competence of English as an international language. The source culture should also be taught compatible with English. In term of teaching materials, Cortazzi& Jin (1999) suggested that both inter- and intra-cultural variations should be represented in order to show learners that English users' culture is not monolithic.

Adaskou, Britten &Fahsi (1990) found that the teaching of target language culture in Morocco resulted in learners' less motivation in learning. Some learners were also triggered to compare the target language culture and their own culture and they felt their culture is inferior compared to the target language culture. Gass&Selinker (2008) explained that the success of the target culture acquisition is determined by social distance and psychological distance. Social distance refers to the equality of the social status of each culture, while psychological distance refers to the attitude of individuals toward the target language learned. Positive attitudes toward the target language

learning will enhance learners' understanding of the target language and promote intercultural understanding. On the other hand, if learners feel alienated from the target language and culture, the language learning process will be certainly hindered. Byram and Morgan (1994) explained that no matter how good and proficient learners are in learning the target language, the cultural values of their native language will remain and affect the learning of the target language. Denying their native language culture means denying their own identity.

Peterson and Coltrane (2003) suggested the teaching of culture should be carried out in the non-judgmental fashion where the distinction between the source culture and the target culture do not clash to each other. It is in line with Kramsch (1991) suggesting that the teaching of target culture should encourage learners' inter-cultural understanding and create "the intersection of learners' culture and the target culture". In conclusion, the purpose of teaching the target language culture is not to shift the mindset of language learners, but to aid the learning process of the target language and to create inter-cultural understanding, where learners can behave accordingly in various socio-cultural situations. According to McGrath (2002), the integration of local culture into

English textbooks specifically should also be carried away.

- **The Use of Textbook in Indonesia**

Textbooks play a dominant role in English teaching in Indonesia. Pasassung (2003) claimed that Indonesian English teaching is dependent to 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 (2002) stating that many teachers regard textbook as a 'holy book' which cannot be modified and skipped. 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.

The research was conducted to investigate what cultures are represented and how the cultures are represented in an English textbook of senior high school grade three in Cianjur, West Java. The findings might be used to determine whether the textbook used by students and teachers in the site is suitable or not. It is also hoped that the findings are useful for

further English textbook development, especially in term of cultural contents.

### **Methodology**

This research generally is descriptive qualitative research attempting to "investigate quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials" (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p.426). This research involved selecting text, determining the unit to be coded, developing content categories, and analyzing data. The data were categorized based on the types of culture in language materials by Cortazzi & Jin (1999) and the framework of four senses of culture proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990).

The data of the research mainly were in the form of reading passages from the English textbook used by teachers and students in a senior high school in Cianjur, West Java, entitled *Look Ahead* book three written by Th. M. Sudarwati and Eudia Grace and published by *Airlangga* publisher. The reading passages were chosen since they have high possibility to contain cultural values (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990). The data were collected by selecting the reading passages available in each unit of the textbook. Illustrations were analyzed only

if they help describing the contents of the reading passages.

Data analysis was divided into two main steps. First, in order to reveal what cultures are represented in the textbook, the contents in the reading passages were categorized into the source culture, the target culture, the international culture, or culture neutral (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999). The source culture refers to Indonesian culture. The target culture refers to British, American, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand cultures or the culture belong to The Inner Circle countries (Kachru, 1992), and the international culture refers to cultures which do not belong to the source culture and the target culture. Culture neutral contents are contents in the textbook which do not refer to any culture, such as scientific explanation.

Then, in order to reveal how the cultures are represented in the textbook, the cultural contents found in the reading passages were categorized into the aesthetic sense, the sociological sense, the semantic sense, or the pragmatic sense (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990).

**Data Presentation and Discussion**

The findings related to cultural contents analysis of the English textbook are summarized and presented into two categories: what cultures are represented in the textbook based on the categorization proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and how the cultures are represented in the textbook based on the four senses of culture framework proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990). The result of the investigation is shown in the table below.

**The Frequency of Cultural Contents Distinctive Occurrences in the Textbook**

Category of Culture	The Aesthetic Sense	The Sociological Sense	The Semantic Sense	The Pragmatic Sense	Total
The Source Culture	4	4	0	0	8 (13.11%)
The Target Culture	16	13	6	12	47 (77.05%)
The International Culture	3	2	1	0	6 (9.84%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 (37.70%)</b>	<b>19 (31.15%)</b>	<b>7 (11.48%)</b>	<b>12 (19.67%)</b>	<b>61 (100%)</b>

**• What Cultures the Textbook Represents**

According to the data shown, the cultures represented in the textbook are the target culture, the source culture, and the international culture. In term of frequency,

the target culture representation significantly outnumbers the source culture and the international culture. The number of the reading passages containing the target culture contents is more than a half of the total reading passages. Considering the fact that Indonesia belongs to The Expanding Circle country and regards English as a foreign language (Kachru, 1992 cf. Jenkins, 2009), exposures to the target language cultural contexts are considered important due to very limited English environment nearby (Byram, 1989). Thus, the finding of the investigation showing that the target culture outnumbers the source and the international culture is reasonable. The purposes of including more target culture contents in the textbook can be exposing learners to 'new' experiences (Dat, 2008) and show how other group of society with different cultural backgrounds live (Byram, 1989). However, in term of type of textbooks based on their production and publication, the finding that the target culture is predominant in the textbook produced locally is not in line with Dat (2008) and Cortazzi & Jin (1999), stating that the source culture usually are predominant in textbooks produced locally. Dat (2008) stated that the representation of the source culture content in local textbooks is one of the strengths of local

textbooks due to the practicality and familiarity for the learners. Thus, the textbook investigated in this research can be considered to lose its strength as local textbook due to the less representation of the source culture.

Furthermore, the learners in the research site may not be familiar with the target language cultural context. The learners are from English as foreign language country, and they live in rural area where traditional values generally are still upheld well. English communication usually occurs with other non-native speakers or with English speakers from various cultural background visiting tourism objects nearby. The target culture contents in the textbook may not be practical for the learners. Some of them may even be contradictive with learners' local values. Then, when the content is not practical for the learners, the possibility of negative psychological distance to occur is high (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The learners may feel less motivated to learn the target language since the contents are considered unnecessary. Besides, the learners in the research site need the ability to explain their own socio-cultural contexts to other people. Foreign visitors and tourists visiting the research site may want to know about particular rituals or customs nearby. Hence, the learners need the ability to



explain those things in English. Including more source culture contents is also beneficial since it can make learners feel engaged as if the contents are part of their experience (Brown, 2000; Cunningsworth; 1995; Sahidudin, 2013).

Regarding the representation of the international culture, the textbook investigated is insufficient to treat English as an international language. As Smith (1976 cf. McKay, 2003) stated, English has become an international language, “the ownership of English has become ‘de-nationalized’ and English learners do not need to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers of English”. The less representation of the international culture in the textbook investigated is insufficient to portray how English can also be used to communicate with non-native speakers of English. Matsuda (2003) who found similar findings in her textbook investigation suggested that the characters of people in Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries should be included in the textbook in order to promote English as an international language. Cortazzi & Jin (1999) who seem to support more inclusion of the target culture in textbooks also agree that both inter- and intra-cultural variations need to be represented in the textbook in order to show that English world does not belong to a unified monolithic culture.

#### • **How the Cultures are Represented in the Textbook**

The cultural contents were categorized into the aesthetic sense, the sociological sense, the semantic sense, and the pragmatic sense (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990) as well. The investigation found that cultures were represented in all senses of culture. The representations of culture were through various types of text describing literature, cinema, custom, stereotyping, food, etc.

Cultural contents in the textbook generally are represented by all senses of culture. The aesthetic sense was found predominant in representing culture in the textbook, followed by the sociological sense, the pragmatic sense, and the last was the semantic sense. The finding that cultures mostly are represented by the aesthetic sense is in line with Kramsch (1991) and Xiao (2010) stating that many English classrooms regard cultures merely as the big “C” of cultures or the product of cultures which can be discerned. Kramsch (1991) suggested that cultural contents in the aesthetic sense should be explained to the extent why the cultures are formed and what values behind the cultures are. In case of the textbook investigated, the cultural contents in the aesthetic sense were not explained enough to the extent that it is

related to culture as the way of life, for instance the aesthetic sense in the form of cinema *SpongeBob Squarepants the Movie* on page 37 and *Jungle Book 2* on page 171. Those aesthetic sense contents can be used to explain the way of life of particular culture, such as explaining why a character in the movie wants to choose his/her own way of life or why particular characters are represented in certain ways. Culture as the way of life needs to be included because it is related to the usage of the target language in the real social context. Introducing the cultural aspects of language and the social context where it is used can enhance learners' "language awareness component" of learning and improve the language proficiency of learners (Byram, 1991 cf. Hinkel, 1999).

Some target culture contents found in the textbook were not carried out in what Peterson & Coltrane (2003) stated as a 'non-judgmental way', where one culture to another is treated equally and the cultural difference is explained with grounded reasons. Some cultural contents seem to imply that one culture is better than the other. Ideally, the cultural contents should be represented in the way that one culture is different from the other, hence the 'third culture room' where people understand each others' culture (Kramsch, 1991) can be created. To some extent, some target culture found in the textbook

instance the aesthetic sense in the form of may be the hidden curriculum which Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989 cf. McGrath: 2002) meant. The cultural contents may try to suggest that particular people or culture is superior.

## **Conclusions**

This article has presented the result of cultural content analysis of an English textbook for senior high school grade three in Cianjur, West Java. The investigation of the textbook has revealed two major points; the target culture is predominantly represented in the textbook compared to the source culture and the international culture, and the culture in the textbook mostly is represented through the aesthetic sense.

Although the textbook was written by local authors and produced by local publisher, the target culture representation is predominant in the textbook. More than a half of the reading passages contain the target culture contents. In term of how cultures are represented in the textbook, the aesthetic sense ranks the top to representing culture in the textbook, followed by the sociological sense, the pragmatic sense, and the semantic sense. It is in line with some investigations,

revealing that culture in English class mostly is referred to the big “C” of culture.

Based on the findings, discussion, and the conclusion of this research, first, it is suggested that English materials developers, especially English textbook authors should include more source culture and international culture contents. Second, it is suggested that cultures should be delivered in non-judgmental way where one culture to another is treated equally.

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