

AN ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN EFL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDONESIA

Raihan Helmi,
raihanhemi@gmail.com

Yayu Sri Rahayu
yayusrirahayu58@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed cultural representation and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in the English for Nusantara Grade VIII textbook. Using a qualitative content analysis method, this research examined texts, dialogues, and illustrations to identify the types of cultural representation and assess how the textbook fosters ICC. The findings revealed that Source Culture dominates (70.5%), followed by International Culture (25.8%) and Target Culture (3.8%). In terms of ICC, Knowledge (31.3%) and Attitudes (23.7%) were most frequently represented, while Discovery & Interaction (9.9%) appeared least. The results indicate that while the textbook promotes national identity and some intercultural awareness, opportunities for interactive and critical cultural engagement are limited. These findings suggest the need for more balanced cultural exposure and tasks that develop students' intercultural competence.

Keywords: Cultural Representation., Intercultural Communicative Competence., EFL Textbook., Content Analysis., English for Nusantara

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English textbooks have received increasing attention because they are expected to support both national identity development and global communication competence. Indonesian educational policy encourages students to appreciate local cultural values while developing openness toward international communities. However, previous studies have shown that Indonesian EFL textbooks often present cultural information descriptively rather than encouraging deeper intercultural reflection and interaction (Putra et al., 2020; Agustina & Kencana, 2023).

Cultural representation in textbooks can be examined through Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework, which categorizes culture into three types: Source Culture, Target Culture, and International Culture. Source Culture refers to learners' own culture, Target Culture represents English-speaking countries, and International Culture includes cultures beyond learners' and English-speaking communities. This framework provides a useful approach for evaluating whether textbooks provide balanced cultural exposure.

Furthermore, cultural representation should not only be evaluated based on the presence of cultural information but also on its potential contribution to students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Byram (1997) argues that ICC involves several interconnected dimensions, including attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Therefore, textbooks should ideally provide opportunities for learners to understand cultural differences, negotiate meanings, and critically reflect on cultural perspectives.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What types of cultural representation are portrayed in the English for Nusantara Grade VIII textbook?
2. How does the textbook contribute to the development of students' intercultural communicative competence

LITERATURE REVIEW

In EFL contexts, textbooks often become the primary cultural source available to learners. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), textbooks function as "cultural mirrors" because they reflect particular cultural values and perspectives through texts, images, dialogues, and learning activities. They categorize cultural representation in textbooks into three major types: Source Culture, Target Culture, and International Culture. Source Culture refers to learners' own cultural background, Target Culture represents cultures associated with English-speaking countries, and International Culture includes cultures from countries beyond the learners' and target language communities.

The balance among these cultural categories has become an important issue in EFL textbook research. While incorporating learners' own culture can strengthen identity and cultural appreciation, excessive emphasis on local culture may limit learners' exposure to international perspectives. Conversely, excessive representation of English-speaking countries may create cultural dominance and reduce recognition of other cultural identities. Recent research highlights that textbook cultural representation often remains uneven, with many materials emphasizing visible cultural information while providing fewer opportunities for critical cultural engagement (Xu et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, studies on EFL textbooks have shown similar concerns. Previous research indicates that Indonesian textbooks generally include local cultural elements to support national identity; however, cultural content is frequently presented as factual information rather than as opportunities for students to analyze cultural differences and develop intercultural awareness (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Irawan & Daud, 2021). Therefore, evaluating cultural representation in current Indonesian textbooks remains important, particularly after curriculum changes and the introduction of new government-developed learning materials.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative content analysis approach. The data were taken from the English for Nusantara Grade VIII textbook published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022). The entire textbook served as the corpus of analysis, including written texts, dialogues, exercises, and visual materials. Cultural representation was analyzed using Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework, and ICC elements were identified based on Byram's (1997) model. The analysis focused on identifying, categorizing, and quantifying cultural and ICC indicators.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed 134 instances of cultural representation: Source Culture (70.5%), International Culture (25.8%), and Target Culture (3.8%). This distribution indicates a strong emphasis on Indonesian culture and identity, with limited exposure to global and target cultures. This finding supports previous research indicating that EFL textbooks often present cultural information unevenly. Xu et al. (2024), through a scoping review of 62 studies on foreign language textbooks, found that cultural representation problems remain persistent, including cultural omission, imbalance, and limited attention to intercultural interaction. Similarly, Yonata et al. (2024) found that some English textbooks used in Indonesia still provide insufficient representation of diverse global cultures, limiting learners' broader cultural awareness.

In terms of intercultural communicative competence, 131 indicators were found, dominated by Knowledge (31.3%) and Attitudes (23.7%), followed by Interpreting & Relating (21.4%), Critical Cultural Awareness (13.7%), and Discovery & Interaction (9.9%). These results suggest that the textbook promotes cultural understanding primarily through factual information and positive attitudes toward diversity, but offers fewer opportunities for students to practice intercultural interaction. This pattern reflects findings from previous textbook studies. Agustina and Kencana (2023) reported that Indonesian EFL textbooks contain cultural materials that support ICC development, but interactive intercultural opportunities remain limited. Putra et al. (2020) similarly found that Indonesian English textbooks frequently present cultural information but provide limited demonstrations of meaningful intercultural interaction.

Therefore, although English for Nusantara Grade VIII contributes positively to students' cultural awareness, additional activities are needed to transform cultural knowledge into intercultural competence. Overall, the textbook aligns with national goals to strengthen local identity while gradually introducing international awareness.

CONCLUSION

The English for Nusantara Grade VIII textbook demonstrates a strong representation of Source Culture, emphasizing Indonesian values and traditions. While it integrates elements of intercultural competence, its focus remains on knowledge and attitudes rather than interactive or critical engagement. To enhance intercultural learning, future textbook development should incorporate more tasks that promote reflection, dialogue, and cross-cultural comparison. The study highlights that effective EFL textbooks should move beyond the presentation of cultural facts toward the development of meaningful intercultural learning experiences. Future textbook development should maintain local cultural representation while incorporating more diverse global perspectives and activities that encourage comparison, reflection, dialogue, and critical awareness.

This research contributes to EFL textbook evaluation by providing evidence of how a recently developed Indonesian government-endorsed textbook represents culture and supports ICC development. The findings may assist textbook writers, teachers, and curriculum developers in designing materials that balance local identity with global intercultural competence. Future research may extend this study by investigating how teachers and students interpret and utilize cultural content in actual classroom practices.

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