


The cultural representation in EFL textbook of merdeka curriculum

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Cultural representation English Textbook Merdeka Curriculum	The study aims to investigate the cultural representation of the EFL Textbook mandated by the Indonesian government in the Merdeka Curriculum for 10th-grade students. The frameworks used for the analysis are Moran's (2001) theory of five dimensions of culture (products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons) and Chao's (2011) theory of cultural categories (target culture, source culture, international culture, intercultural communication, and universality across culture). Qualitative content analysis is used as the research method. The study's primary data is an English textbook titled Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress, published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2022) as delivered in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The results show that the represented cultural dimensions in the textbook are products (34%), practices (31%), persons (15%), perspectives (13%), and communities (7%). Whereas, for the cultural categories, the result shows that the textbook represents the international culture (32%), source culture (29%), universality across cultures (20%), target culture (16%), and intercultural interaction (3%). Therefore, all cultural dimensions and cultural categories are represented in the textbook with different frequencies. However, the textbook needs improvement regarding the consistency of the cultural dimensions and categories.
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INTRODUCTION

Globalization remains constant and even irreversible in the modern world. With the rapid acceleration of national integration into the international system, globalization facilitates human movement and strengthens cultural linkages between groups (Raikhan et al., 2014). It is a multifaceted phenomenon that includes aspects of culture, ideology, politics, and other comparable fields besides economics (Shah & Khan, 2023). Globalization also impacts shifting cultural norms (Raikhan et al., 2014). The world's societies become more interconnected through interaction, and cultural symbols become more recognizable and adaptable (Ayaz, 2021). However, it escalates the dangerous loss of cultural identity (Raikhan et al., 2014). The younger generation picks up on each other's tastes, fashion sense, and routines, often making them interchangeable and faceless. The growing threat of assimilation—the more significant absorption of the lower culture, dissolved cultural minority in the culture of a great nation, disregarding the parental culture in mass

emigration to another country and obtaining citizenship—poses a concern to the potential loss of cultural identity (Raikhan et al., 2014).

To overcome the challenges of globalization, the education system should provide a solution to minimize the negative cultural traits of globalization. Education emphasizing national character as a component of national culture can overcome the problems (Santosa et al., 2015). The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has created innovations in education through the Merdeka Curriculum to enhance the quality and character of excellent human resources. The curriculum was inspired by the ideas of Ki Hajar Dewantara, which emphasized that education should focus on flexibility, independence, context, cooperation, and the development of noble character (Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). One of the principles emphasizes the enhancement of noble character, which relates to the goal of holistic education. It focuses on helping students develop their noble character rather than only their cognitive talents. Furthermore, the purpose of the English learning outcome in the Merdeka curriculum is to raise students' knowledge of intercultural competency (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

Adequate resources are needed to support the learning process and transmit the principles of cultural values in the Merdeka curriculum to students. Textbooks are among the most often used educational resources. Textbooks have continuously played a significant part in the introduction of new curricula. Teachers can oversee instructional materials and use them for both in-class and extracurricular activities with the help of textbooks (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). A textbook, or course book, is a book that teachers use to assist them in conveying the lesson to the students in the class (Harmer, 2007). Textbooks can serve as a foundation for lesson content, the distribution of skills taught, and the kinds of language practice that students engage in. According to Cunnigsworth (in Ayu & Indrawati, 2019), textbooks can be used as a valuable tool for self-directed learning, presentational material, ideas and activities, student reference, a syllabus that reflects pre-established learning objectives, and support for inexperienced teachers who are still building their confidence.

A textbook reflects the curriculum and the writer's mental awareness of the sociocultural system in cultural values (Sinaga et al., 2020). Books available to teachers and students significantly impact the direction and content of foreign language classes, particularly the cultural component (Wąsik, 2012). In addition, including cultural elements in curriculum and textbooks is crucial since it aids students in understanding their surroundings (Arslan, 2020). Specifically, in using English textbooks, it is necessary to consider the needs of learners, their cultural background, and their level of language ability when including essential language and cultural elements (Radić-Bojanić & Topalov, 2016). Since language and culture are closely related, teaching language curricula should include cultural competency and the structure and functions supported by language skills (Arslan, 2020).

Culture is a complex system that consists of all knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, customs, and other skills and behaviors that man has developed as a member of society (Tyler in Spencer-Oatey, 2012). It comprises explicit and implicit patterns of behavior acquired and passed down through symbols, forming the unique accomplishments of

human groups, including their manifestation in artifacts (Kroeber & Kluckhohn in Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Moran (2001) categorized cultural representation into five dimensions: products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. The products dimension includes four major categories: art forms (dance, music, painting), institutions (law, family, political and cultural issues), places (cities, towns, buildings), and artifacts (cuisine, language, currencies) (Maron in Hassaskhah & Abdollahi, 2021). Practices dimension can be seen in rituals, cultural activities, and holiday celebrations (Moran in Kumala & Lestari, 2021). Perspectives refer to cultural materials that express beliefs, values, attitudes, and perceptions (Moran in Alkhatnai et al., 2006). Communities describe the particular social settings, conditions, and organizations where people participate in cultural practices such as religious ceremonies and social and cultural clubs (Kim & Paek, 2015). Persons can be represented by well-known icons or individuals in a culture (Yuen, 2011).

Furthermore, according to Chao (2011), there are five distinct categories from which the culture in a textbook can be categorized: target culture, source culture, international culture, intercultural communication, and universality of culture. The categories were integrated from Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) concept of culture categories. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) divided the culture into target, source, and international cultures. The term target culture (TC) refers to cultural content in textbooks that reflect the customs and traditions of the target language. It shows the cultures of the native English countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, etc. Source culture (SC) is defined as cultural material found in textbooks that include the culture of the language learner. International culture (IC) refers to other cultures worldwide that are excluded from the target and source cultures (Cortazzi & Jin in Santosa et al., 2015). Then, due to the growing necessity for intercultural communication competence (ICC), Chao (2011) developed the concept of five categories of culture with the addition of intercultural interaction and universality across cultures. Through exercises like case studies, problem-solving, and role-playing, Intercultural Interaction (ICI) entails comparison, reflection, or knowledge of the distinctions and similarities between the local/source and the target/international culture (Chao, 2011). Then, the term Universality across Culture (UC) refers to generic knowledge and content that is not specific to any nation or culture; instead, it focuses primarily on linguistic practice and information (Chao, 2011).

The concept of culture in Merdeka curriculum related to Ki Hajar Dewantara's point of view of education. It highlighted the importance of education on flexibility, independence, context, cooperation, and the formation of noble character, inspired the Merdeka curriculum (Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). Instead of just emphasizing cognitive skills, it focuses on assisting children in developing their noble nature. According to the curriculum policy, education should prepare Indonesian youth to be globally competent lifelong learners dedicated to preserving Pancasila ideals (Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). Known by another name, this is the "profile of Pancasila students," who exhibit the following qualities: global variety, creativity, cooperation, faith in God Almighty, and critical thinking (Sholihah, 2021).

Hall & Hewing (in Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012) stated that one of the most important current issues in applied linguistics and English language instruction is the examination of ESL/EFL book content. Therefore, scholars have conducted various research related to

cultural values in textbooks. In this case, it focuses on the Indonesian context. First, research on analyzing the cultural contents of an English textbook for senior high school was conducted by Faris (2014), using the theory of Cortazzi & Jin (1999).

The result showed that in an Indonesian English textbook entitled “Look Ahead,” it was found that 77.05% of cultural contents refer to the target culture, 13.11% of the source culture, and 09.84% of the international culture. Second, the study by Permatasari (2022) analyzed the cultural contents of an English e-textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia with curriculum 2013. The result showed there was an imbalance between the source culture, the target culture, and the international culture. The source culture is more dominant than the textbook's target and global cultures. Third, the study by Jayanti & Mustofa (2023) found that the target culture mainly appeared, compared with source and international cultures in the English textbook Intan Pariwara Publishing with the Merdeka curriculum learning. Next, the content analysis technique analyses an English book entitled “Work in Progress” for class X (Al-Ghozali, 2023). The study used McDonough and Shaw’s theory and criteria to analyze the content in the English textbook. The results of this study showed that the grade X English textbook “Work in Progress” fulfilled both the external and overall evaluation. The book includes audio listening and multimodal texts with accompanying graphics by the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. Based on previous studies, the Merdeka Curriculum English textbook analysis still needs to be improved, specifically on the cultural content analysis in the textbook.

Therefore, this study intends to analyze the cultural content in the English textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture underpinning the Merdeka curriculum. The study is designed to shed light on and deepen our understanding of how cultural content is represented in an EFL textbook used nationwide as part of the Merdeka Curriculum. Additionally, it can provide language textbook authors with the knowledge to create multicultural language resources that foster intercultural understanding. Thus, this study examines how the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has represented culture in a widely used EFL textbook. The research questions are: (1) What cultural dimensions are represented in the English textbook endorsed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in the *Merdeka* Curriculum? (2) What cultural categories are represented in the English textbook endorsed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in the *Merdeka* Curriculum?

METHOD

The descriptive qualitative research was explicitly included in document analysis or content analysis. Its main objective was to analyze cultural content representation in the EFL textbook by the Merdeka Curriculum published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2022). The researchers use the content analysis method to analyze data in-depth, detailed, and complete about the cultural content represented in the textbook. In this study, content analysis was combined with descriptive qualitative research. Since the researcher is the one who must gather the data, locate the sources, and do the investigation, the researcher serves as the instrument in content analysis. However, the researcher needs guidelines to determine the cultural content in the textbook from Moran's (2001) theory

about cultural dimensions and Chao's (2011) theory regarding cultural categories. The steps in data collection are developing coding schemes, coding cultural contents, and analyzing the results (Kim & Paek, 2015). First, Moran's (2001) theory of cultural dimensions is used for the coding scheme for the first research question; the five components comprising the cultural dimensions are products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. For the second research question, the theory of Chao (2011) is used for the coding scheme, which divides the culture categories in the textbook into five parts: target culture (TC), source culture (SC), and international culture (IC), intercultural interaction (ICI) and universality across culture (UC). Second, the researchers analyze the textbook using cultural dimensions and categories coding schemes. Lastly, the researcher analyses the results of the coding process. Data analysis research has four main stages: decontextualisation, recontextualisation, categorisation, and compilation. After the categories are determined, the process of analysis and writing starts. When conducting a qualitative content analysis, the researcher must evaluate the data gathered objectively and from a neutral point of view.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Dimensions

The results of the cultural contents analysis of the English textbook Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2022) are compiled and divided into two findings: cultural dimensions and cultural categories. The study analyses the pictures, informational tables, practices/tasks, and passages/texts. The textbook has six chapters with the themes: (1) Great Athletes, (2) Sports Events, (3) Sports and Health, (4) Healthy Foods, (5) Graffiti, (6) Fractured Stories. The results are shown below.

Table 1. The cultural dimensions based on textbook chapters

Chapter	Title	Cultural Dimensions	Frequencies
1	Great Athletes	Persons	18
		Perspectives	2
		Practices	14
2	Sport Events	Communities	8
		Perspectives	1
		Practices	17
3	Sports and Health	Perspectives	6
		Products	4
		Products	10
4	Healthy Foods	Practices	5
		Perspectives	1
		Products	12
5	Graffiti	Perspectives	5
		Products	16
6	Fractured Stories	Products	16
Total			119

In Chapter 1, the cultural dimensions depicted in the textbook are *persons* (f=18) and *perspectives* (f=2). In the first chapter, it focuses on describing many great athletes around the world. The most dominant content is about Christiano Ronaldo, such as the pictures, descriptive text, reading comprehension task, listening audio, and writing assignment of the athlete. Besides, there are other local and international athletes, although their appearances are less frequent than Christiano Ronaldo's. In the second chapter, the contents represent the cultural dimensions of *practices* (f=14), *communities* (f=8), and *perspectives* (f=1). They mostly talk about attending sports events with the structure of recount texts. Also, various sports games are shown in the chapter with the Olympic Games theme. Furthermore, the cultural dimensions portrayed in the third chapter are *practices* (f=17), *perspectives* (f=6), and *products* (f=4). This chapter concerns the relationship between sports and health by presenting various physical exercises and healthy life habits. In the fourth chapter, *products* (f=10), *practices* (f=5), and *perspectives* (f=1) are displayed in the textbook. The chapter promotes various traditional healthy foods and describes how to eat healthily. Next, it is found that *products* (f=12) and *perspectives* (f=5) appeared as the cultural dimensions of the fifth chapter. It brings up the topic of Graffiti trends in Indonesia and worldwide. There are various pictures of graffiti and expository texts related to graffiti. Lastly, the theme of *Fractured Stories* shows *products* (f=16) as the most represented cultural dimension in the chapter. The cultural products are formed as narrative stories such as fables, legends, fairy tales, and folklore. Then, the data from the textbook is analyzed comprehensively into five cultural dimensions, as shown below.

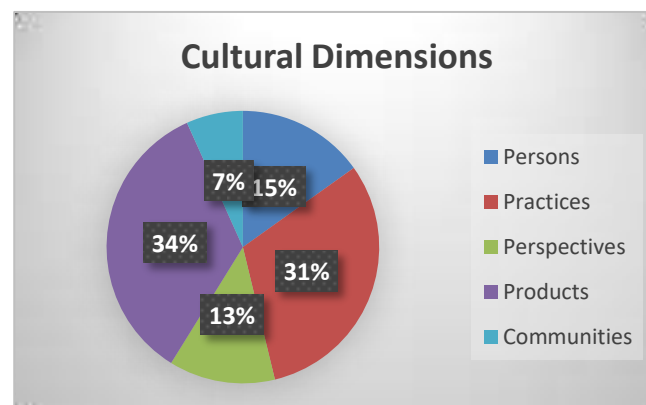


Figure 1. The percentages of cultural dimensions

From the data above, the most frequent cultural dimension in the book shows the *cultural products* with 34 % of the frequencies. The examples of *cultural products* depicted in the book are the pictures (foods, graffiti, fractured story of Malin Kundang and Little Red Riding Hood), the tables (lists of foods and drinks), the texts (a narrative text of little red riding hood, Shrek, and a recommendation to watch popular target language movies), the tasks (listening tasks of dialogue about *cireng sambal* and explanation of graffiti; writing task of creating a fractured story of narrative text). The finding is in line with other studies,

which reported that the most frequent cultural dimension found in the textbook is *products* (Alfaya et al., 2023; Kim & Paek, 2015). In Kim & Paek's (2015) study, 51% of cultural products are represented with entertainment and foods as the most discussed topics in the textbooks. Products are essential in showing the code (products) system used in a specific culture (Yuen, 2011). Products can be shown in English textbooks as pictures, illustrations, or realia (Kumala & Lestari, 2021).

The second most frequent cultural dimension is practices with 31% of the frequencies. The practice dimension shown in the book is related to sports and healthy habits, such as the pictures of pancak silat, rowing, volleyball, wall climbing, hockey, exercising, and eating healthy foods. For the writing content, there are Indonesian youth mental health reports and writing tasks of procedure texts on how to maintain physical or mental health as students and how to eat healthily. Language textbook material is typically incomplete and generalized, primarily highlighting the standards of behavior (Paige et al. in Yuen, 2011). Thus, practices are the essential cultural dimension in the textbook in various cultural contexts as they influence students' behavior toward a particular culture.

Furthermore, cultural person is the third most frequent cultural dimension with 15% of the frequencies. The examples of Persons are the pictures of several athletes (Christiano Ronaldo, Anthony S. Ginting, Boaz Salosa, etc.), a profile table of LeBron James, an infographic of Greysia Polii's achievements, and a short descriptive text of Leani Oktilla Ratri as one of the paralympic heroes as Moran (in Chao, 2011) stated that an influential person's life history and sense of self are fundamental to cultural development. According to Moran (2001), persons and communities are seen as the primary elements in developing learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) because they introduce known individuals to represent the cultures of a nation.

However, 13% of the cultural dimension represented in the book is distinguished as Perspectives. Examples of perspectives of the cultural dimension are the essential traits of being a great athlete, the etiquette to be a good spectator, physical health lifestyle tips, etc. Then, communities are the least frequent of the cultural dimensions (7%). Examples are the symbol of the Olympic games, the event of watching a football match of Bangladesh vs Indonesia, Real Madrid vs Valencia, which described the activities of participating in community programs or events. It is suggested that more textbook content related to communities and perspectives can be added to strengthen the balance of cultural dimensions of the textbook. Communities consist of certain social situations (like national cultures), events (like religious ceremonies), and organizations (like various social clubs) where people engage in their cultural customs (Kim & Paek, 2015). Meanwhile, perspectives reflect the attitudes, values, ideas, and perceptions that underpin the products and direct people's actions in the practice of culture (Kim & Paek, 2015).

Categories of Culture

The categories of culture depicted in the textbook were analyzed based on Chao (2011), which divided the culture into five types: target culture (TC), source culture (SC), international culture (IC), intercultural interaction (ICI), and universality across culture (UC). The textbook shows different kinds of cultural categories, as described below.

Table 2. Categories of cultures per chapter

Chapter	Title	SC	TC	IC	ICI	UC	Total
1	Great Athletes	8	1	7	2	2	20
2	Sport Events	1	7	8	2	6	24
3	Sports and Health	2	3	8	0	13	26
4	Healthy Foods	12	0	5	0	1	18
5	Graffiti	6	6	2	0	1	15
6	Fractured Stories	6	2	7	0	1	16
Total							119

The data above shows that the textbook represents the cultural categories proportionally in almost all aspects of the classes. In the first chapter, it consists of SC (f =8), TC (f = 1), IC (f = 7), ICI (f = 2), and UC (f = 2). The contents show the picture of the source culture, texts, tasks, target culture, international culture, intercultural interaction, and universality across cultures. It is followed by the second chapter, which includes all categories of culture. In the third chapter, the most dominant culture is universality across cultures, representing universal physical exercises and healthy habits. Furthermore, the healthy food theme in chapter four portrays the various traditional nourishing foods, including the source culture category.

However, the fifth chapter shows the existence of Graffiti and displays various Graffiti pictures from Indonesia and other countries. The last fracture stories theme of the sixth chapter represents different narrative stories from international, target, and source cultures. Furthermore, the summary of the cultural categories represented in the textbook can be seen below.

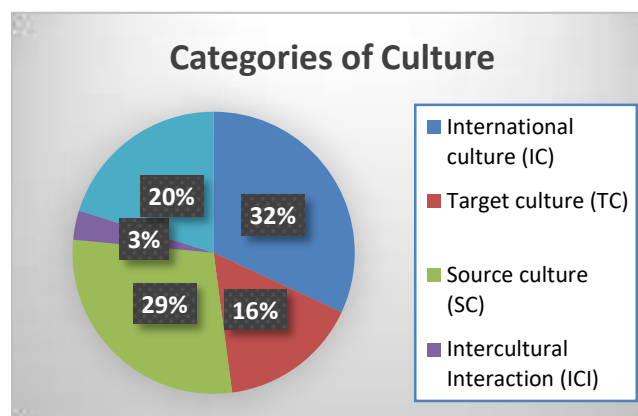


Figure 2. Categories of Culture

From the data above, the most frequent cultural category represented in the textbook is International Culture (IC) (32%). The International Culture (IC) associated with the book are the pictures (Christiano Ronaldo, Olympic symbol and games, paralympic games, etc.), listening to audio (Christiano Ronaldo, a supporter's experience on watching the football match of Real Madrid vs. Valencia in Santiago Bernabeu stadium, etc.), texts ("Simple Tips

for Healthy Eating,” List of foods and drinks in comparison using “this” and “that,” etc.), writing tasks (a procedure text of how to maintain physical or mental health as students, how to eat healthily). The result differs from other studies, which found that the target culture (TC) mainly appeared as the most prevalent cultural category. Jayanti & Mustofa (2023) reported that the Target Culture (TC) most occurred in the Merdeka curriculum English textbook by Intan Pariwara Publishing.

Secondly, Source Culture (SC) is determined to be the most frequent cultural category (29%). The exposure of source culture in the textbook can be seen from the pictures of Indonesian athletes (Anthony S. Ginting, Boaz Salosa, Greysia Polii, etc.), Indonesian traditional foods (Es Cendol, Aceh Noodles, Pempek, etc.), and Indonesian self-defense sport (pencak silat). This finding aligns with some studies that found Source Culture (SC) is the chief cultural category in the English textbook (Santosa, 2015; Kim & Paek, 2015; Permatasari, 2022). According to the findings, the reader is concerned and utilizes local more than the target culture. Further, the book effectively conveyed and modified the core ideas of the curriculum.

Furthermore, the third most frequent cultural category is Universality across Culture (UC). It explains the information and subjects that are general and universal to all nations and cultures (Kim & Paek, 2015). The samples of UC in the textbook are pictures of exercising, sleeping, reclining on the couch, a bowl of fruits, etc. It is also found in Kim & Paek’s (2015) study. The term UC category describes source materials unrelated to any one nation or culture, such as language skills and learning techniques.

The result showed that the Target Culture (TC) appeared in 16% of the representation in the textbook. The TC examples in the book are the pictures of several graffiti and sports, the short narrative story of Shrek, and the recommendations of watching Target Culture movies such as Peter Pan, Beauty and The Beast, Maleficent, etc. However, as stated previously, the finding is different with another study which reported that Target Culture (TC) most occurred in the Merdeka curriculum English textbook (Jayanti & Mustofa (2023).

The last category of culture in the textbook is intercultural interaction (ICI). With only 3% representation in the book, intercultural interaction is the least frequently found cultural category. It includes comparing, contemplating, or being aware of the distinctions and parallels between the local/source and the target/international cultures. The examples of ICI in the textbook are comparing the most and least popular athletes based on other students’ opinions, a mind map of comparing the traits of a great athlete, watching a video of the Bangladesh national football team, being amazed by Indonesian supporters, and comparing the similarities and differences of the Japan 2020 Paralympics with other Paralympic Games (Rio de Janeiro in 2016, London in 2012, or Beijing in 2008). Kim & Paek (2015) also found that Intercultural Interaction (ICI) showed very limited in five English books (Kim & Paek, 2015). Therefore, the reinforcement of ICI is needed for further textbook development as it plays a crucial role in language learners’ intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Kim & Paek, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The study aims to identify the cultural characteristics and categories included in the "Work in Progress" textbook for students in the tenth grade, which was released by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia in 2022. The findings demonstrated how the English textbook "Work in Progress" portrayed cultural dimensions, with 'products' emerging as the most prominent cultural component, followed by persons, perspectives, practices, and communities. Furthermore, the cultural categories are examined, and it is discovered that International Culture is the most prevalent category, followed by Source Culture, Universality across Culture, Target Culture, and Intercultural Interaction. According to the Merdeka Curriculum, the study is intended to provide profound insights into the cultural elements and categories included in an English textbook issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022. Moreover, the study is expected to extend academic reports on cultural representation in English texts. To disclose the cultural content of English textbooks, improvement in terms of cultural dimensions and categories is required. Further research related to artistic representation is also recommended. Different kinds of books intended to deliver the Merdeka Curriculum must be analyzed with various school levels (elementary to high school) and cultural frameworks.

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