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The Portrayal of Product Culture within English Educational Textbooks for Senior High Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the portrayal of product culture in English textbooks for senior high school students in Indonesia, focusing on the textbook “Bahasa Inggris: English for Change” for grade 11 students under the recently implemented Merdeka curriculum. Moran's checklist and Cortazzi & Jin's cultural categorization were used to identify and categorize cultural dimensions. Qualitative content analysis, complemented by quantitative data analysis, was used to comprehensively explore cultural representations. The findings revealed a significant emphasis on depictions of Places (47.2%), followed by Artifacts (28.3%), Institutions (13.2%), and Art Forms (11.3%), indicating an imbalance in cultural representation. In addition, most of the cultural content is from the source culture (Indonesia), with less representation from intercultural and international contexts. In conclusion, although the textbook “Bahasa Inggris: English for Change” lays the foundation for cultural learning, there are opportunities to improve the balance and inclusiveness of cultural representations. Recommendations are given to educators, English content developers, and future researchers to enrich students' cultural understanding and promote diversity in educational materials.

Keywords: Product culture; English textbook; cultural representation; high School; cultural awareness.

INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of product culture in English textbooks has a significant influence on students' understanding of language and cultural dynamics (McKay, 2012; Yuen, 2011). These materials not only shape perceptions of values and norms in English-speaking

societies but also influence students' broader cultural awareness (Cunningsworth, 1995). However, recent research has revealed flaws in these textbooks, such as oversimplified representations that often ignore the complexity and cultural diversity of the products (Amelia, Rachmawati & Rima, 2022). These oversimplifications risk perpetuating stereotypes and can lead to misconceptions among learners, thus highlighting the critical need for textbooks to provide authentic and nuanced cultural portrayals (Cunningsworth, 1995; McKay, 2012; Yuen, 2011).

Understanding the intricacies of cultural representations in English textbooks is crucial to fostering cross-cultural understanding and enhancing students' critical thinking skills, which are aligned with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum (Kemendikbud, 2022). Previous research has extensively studied cultural representations in educational materials (Böcü & Razi, 2016; Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018; Raigón-Rodríguez, 2018; Nurjanah & Umaemah, 2019; Sihombing & Nguyen, 2022; Baleghizadeh & Shayesteh, 2022), emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives for effective cross-cultural communication. This study differs from previous research by focusing specifically on the portrayal of product culture in the grade 11 English textbook 'Bahasa Inggris: English for Change,' which is a core component of the new Merdeka curriculum. By narrowing its focus on product culture and categorizing cultural origins into target culture, source culture, and international culture, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how tangible aspects of culture are represented in English language education materials.

To achieve this, this study adopts Moran's (2001) concept of culture, which concentrates on the "Product" dimension, which includes Artifacts, Places, Institutions, and Art Forms. In addition, Cortazzi & Jin's (1999) framework is used to analyze the categorization of cultural origins, which distinguishes between source culture (SC), target culture (TC), and international culture (IC). By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to offer detailed insights into how cultural elements are sourced, depicted, and interpreted in English language education materials. Such an approach not only enhances our understanding of cultural representations in the curriculum but also provides valuable guidance for educators who strive to promote culturally diverse and authentic learning experiences for students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbook

Textbooks are essential in language education, serving as a basic resource recognized by experts. Richards (2001) defines textbooks as primary study materials that provide a structured presentation of language to guide learners through different skill levels. Harmer (2007) underlines the role of textbooks as a framework for language learning, helping teachers in planning coherent lessons and providing diverse activities. Furthermore, Nunan (1992) highlights their importance in the creation of curriculum and student engagement, which meets individual needs and skill levels. Finally, Cunningsworth (1995) emphasizes the importance of aligning textbooks with program objectives, ensuring effective language presentation and support for diverse learning

styles. In essence, not only are textbooks essential for student learning, but they are also invaluable tools for educators in facilitating effective language teaching.

Culture

Culture makes a significant impact on many aspects of our lives, from clothing choices to food preferences. Our behaviors and actions often reflect our cultural background, even if we are not aware of it. According to Moran (2001), culture encompasses a group's collective way of life and beliefs shaped by the society to which they belong. Spencer-Oatey (2008) describes culture as a set of shared ideas and behaviors that influence how individuals behave and perceive others in their group. Sapir (2014) views culture as customs and beliefs passed down from generation to generation, which contribute to the distinctiveness of our lives. Likewise, Samovar and Porter (2017) define culture as everything that is acquired and learned by individuals over time, including beliefs and possessions. In essence, these experts agree that culture greatly influences our lifestyles and interpersonal interactions.

Cultural Product

In this study, the focus is on the product dimension of culture, as outlined by Moran's theory. Products in culture include tangible and intangible elements that are created, adopted, or transformed by its members, ranging from physical objects such as tools and clothing to abstract concepts such as language and institutions such as government and religion (Moran, 2001). Indicators of product culture include artifacts, which are individual objects that reflect cultural practices; places, which combine natural and man-made structures with cultural meaning; institutions, which represent organized systems that govern daily life; and art forms, which express aesthetic and philosophical values (Moran, 2001; Klopff). Product culture descriptors further categorize these elements, which include tangible objects, physical locations, organized systems, and expressive media, all of which serve to reflect and shape cultural practices, values, and behaviors. Understanding these diverse indicators and descriptors is essential for cultural education and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Based on Moran's (2001) model of cultural representation and Cortazzi & Jin's (1999) content analysis, this study investigates the cultural representation of secondary school textbooks, which focuses on investigating what cultures populate secondary school textbooks. The research question is formulated as follows:

1. What types of product-related cultural themes are explored in the 'Bahasa Inggris: English for Change' textbook for 11th graders?
2. What types of product cultural aspects in the 'Bahasa Inggris: English for Change' textbook for 11th graders derived?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

In this study, researchers chose to use a qualitative approach in the form of content analysis. Content analysis is a research method used to analyze written or visual content systematically and objectively. Content analysis itself is a method used to analyze content

systematically and objectively so researchers can dig deeper into cultural representations in English language learning materials. The reason for choosing this content analysis method is that it allows researchers to systematically analyze written material with a focus on a particular thematic, in this case, cultural representation of products. By using content analysis, researchers can dig deeper into how product culture is presented in textbooks and understand how it is perceived in the context of English education.

Data collection instruments

Textbook analysis checklist

To examine the presentation of culture in the chosen textbooks, two textbook analysis checklists were designed. The first checklist used the checklist proposed by Moran (2001) to identify the themes of cultural products: artifacts, places, institutions, and art forms. Secondly, the researcher used the checklist as proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) regarding the aspect of cultural products contained in the textbook to determine whether they are from the source culture (Indonesia), target culture, or international culture.

The textbook

The textbook used in this study is an English textbook entitled "English: English for Change" for 11 -grade of Senior High School as the main data source. This textbook is the work of Puji Astuti, Aria Septi Anggaira, and Atti Herawati, published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022, and is also a textbook that uses the Merdeka curriculum. This textbook contains five chapters with different themes and consists of 288 pages. Then, each chapter has language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting.

The procedure of data collection

The study was started by selecting textbooks, and then examining the cultural content of the textbooks, especially the minor themes. The researcher used the checklist proposed by Moran (2001) to distinguish the themes of cultural products, whether artifacts, places, institutions, or art forms. The researcher then categorized the themes contained in the textbooks into several cultural aspects, whether they are from the source culture (Indonesia), target culture, or international culture, as proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999).

Table 1

Coding guidelines for the four themes of "Product Culture," according to Moran (2001)

Themes	Definition	Example
Artifact	Artifacts are individual objects created, adopted, or adapted by members of the culture.	Food, language, money, and tools.
Place	Place includes the use or interpretation of physical features of the natural	Buildings, cities, and houses.

	environment.	
Institution	Institutions are organized systems that include physical things and established practices.	Family, law, economy, religion, education, and politics.
Art form	Moran (2001) states that art forms reflect the aesthetics and philosophy of a culture.	Music, clothes, dancing, painting, movies, and architecture.

Table 2

Coding guidelines for cultural aspects proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999)

Cultural aspects	Explanations
Source culture	It refers to the native culture or the learners' own culture. (Indonesia)
Target culture	It refers to a country's culture in which English is spoken as an L1. It includes English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA).
International culture	It refers to cultures of all countries in the world except for the learner's own culture and English-speaking countries' culture

Data analysis

First, the researcher categorized the data collected from the textbooks into several categories, whether it was artifacts, places, institutions, or art forms. After differentiating the data by theme, the data was then determined into ka, whether it was source culture, target culture, or international culture. Finally, the researcher made a percentage of the frequency of the data. The percentages were then compared and analyzed to determine the most frequent, least frequent, and least frequent occurrence. The researcher then compared the results of this study with the results of previous studies.

FINDINGS

1. Cultural Product Themes

Based on the results of the analysis, 53 cultural theme data were found on the product in the textbook. However, the imbalance of cultural product data is found in textbooks. Therefore, the distributions of the cultural product themes are in imbalanced proportions. Table 3 illustrates the distribution of product themes.

Table 3*Distribution of the "Product" Themes Based on Moran*

	Artifact	Place	Institution	Artform	Total
Data	15	25	7	6	53
Percentage	28.3%	47.2%	13.2%	11.3%	100%

a. Place

According to Moran (2001), physical environments such as dwellings, villages, and cities embody culture as a place, reflecting how culture shapes its environment. Examples found in the textbook are Labuan Bajo, known for its natural beauty; Kuta Beach in Bali, which is a tourism attraction; the historical importance of the Nile River; the marine biodiversity of Wakatobi and Raja Ampat; the vastness of Borneo; the ecological role of mangrove areas; the cultural importance of Atlatomulco; the industrial heritage of Birmingham; the urban context of San Pedro; the diversity of New York; and others. These places showcase diverse cultures and environments, which shape lifestyles and interactions.

Picture 1*Examples of places found in the textbook*

The product culture in picture 1 refers to "Place," which refers to *Kawasan Hutan Mangrove*, Indonesia. Mangrove forests are forest ecosystems that grow in coastal areas, and river estuaries inundated with salt water. *Kawasan Hutan Mangrove* has an important role in maintaining biodiversity, protecting the coast from abrasion, and being a habitat for various types of flora and fauna.

b. Artifacts

Artifacts, which refer to objects that are shaped, adopted, or adapted by individuals within a culture, are the most common. These objects can be physical or abstract Moran (2001). Found in textbooks such as graduation attire, high school uniforms that reflect school identity, hoe tools that reflect agricultural history, local fruits that are part of natural diversity and eating habits, pasta that is an Italian culinary product, and temple buildings such as Borobudur, Prambanan, and Mendut. All of these artifacts play an important role in building and maintaining cultural identity and communicating the values upheld in society.

Picture 2

Examples of artifacts found in the textbook



The term cultural product in Figure 2 refers to the “Artefact” as seen in the picture, namely the Borobudur temple building. Borobudur Temple is one of the largest Buddhist temples in the world and one of the most important historical and cultural relics in Indonesia. The temple is located in Magelang, Central Java.

c. Institutions

Society forms formal institutions to organize the practical aspects of daily life, such as politics, law, economics, education, religion, and family (Klopf, 1998, p. 156; Stern, 1983). In the textbook, institutions such as Stanford University, which is a center of higher education in the United States; SMA 7 Manado, which represents a secondary education institution in Indonesia; Bogor Institute of Technology which plays a role in the development of science and technology, PT Sawit Mandiri Lestari Business which reflects the economic sector in the plantation industry, University of Sheffield in the UK which is an academic institution, The Dirty Buildings Bill which reflects aspects of legal regulation related to the environment, and others.

Data

Examples of institutions found in the textbook

“My two years at Stanford taught me many things. Accounting, finance, you name it. But I also learned to shift my perspective on what leadership truly is.”

The term cultural product based on the data refers to an “Institution.” Stanford is mentioned in the textbook caption, which is closely related to product culture and institutional themes. Stanford, located in California, is an institution of higher learning known for its academic excellence and cultural influence.

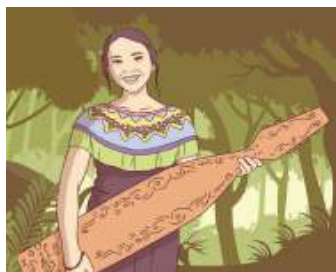
d. Art Forms

According to Moran (2001), art forms, such as literature, music, dance, painting, and traditional clothing. In this context, cultural products that focus on art forms include diverse entities, such as *batik* that depicts the beauty of traditional motifs, books such as “Kita dan Kata” and “Ini tentang segala yang aku kira tidak akan pernah baik-baik saja” that explore various aspects of human beings and life, the story “Coraline” that offers an evocative look into a fantasy world, paintings of the Indonesian flag that emphasizes the nation's identity, a musical instrument from Indonesia called *sage* and other works that

present the richness of creativity and cultural expression. All of these reflect the importance of art as a medium to convey values, stories and emotions in our society.

Picture 3

Examples of art forms found in the textbook



The term cultural product in Picture 3 refers to the “Art Form” of musical instruments. As shown in the picture, a woman is holding a musical instrument. The instrument is called “Sape,” and it is a stringed instrument typical of the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan, Indonesia.

2. Cultural Product Aspects

Other findings in this study centered on the aspect of cultural products. Analysis of the textbook data revealed that cultural representations were evident in all dimensions, including target culture, source culture, and international culture. However, an imbalance of cultural product data was found in the textbooks. Therefore, the distribution of cultural aspects is also in an unbalanced proportion. Table 4 provides an illustration of the distribution of cultural aspects of the products.

Table 4

Distribution of culture's aspects (Cortazzi & Jin)

	Source Culture	Target Culture	International Culture	Total
Data	37	11	5	53
Percentage	69.8%	20.8%	9.4%	100%

a. Source Culture

This points to the original culture or culture of the learners themselves. Based on the data, it was found that the source culture (Indonesia) dominated the content of the textbooks. This culture appears 37 times in the textbook. The source culture presented in the textbook is dominated by artifacts places, followed by institutions and art forms. Places refer to Labuan Bajo, Bantar Gebang, Kampung Naga, Gresik, Ciliwung River, Kuta Beach Bali, Borobudur Temple, and so on. Artifacts are shown by the presence of white and gray high school uniforms, local Indonesian fruits, Rp 100,000 banknotes which are a medium of exchange that has economic value, and price tags in Rupiah. Institutions are shown by

the mention of Bogor Institute of Technology, which represents higher education institutions in Indonesia, and PT Sawit Mandiri Lestari Business. Art forms that appear in the textbook are batik, which depicts the beauty of traditional motifs; a paper titled “Kita dan Kata” and “Ini tentang segala yang aku kira tidak akan pernah baik-baik saja”.

b. Target Culture

It focuses on the culture of a country where English is the L1. It includes English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States). The cultural theme related to the target culture has a less frequent occurrence. It was found that this culture appeared 11 times in the textbooks. The target culture presented in the textbooks is dominated by places, followed by institutions and art forms. The places found in the book are New York, Birmingham, and others. The mentions of Sheffield University in the UK and Stanford University indicate institutions. An art form in the textbook is the English-language fantasy storybook “Coraline.”

c. International Culture

This aspect refers to the culture of all countries in the world except the learner's own culture and the culture of English-speaking countries. Cultural themes related to international culture have the least exposure to source and target cultures. Based on the data, it was found that this culture appeared six times in the textbook. Places and artifacts dominate the international culture presented in the textbook. The places found in the book are Atlacomulco in Mexico and the city of Bonn in Germany. Artifacts related to international culture appear in the textbook in the form of food, such as pasta, which is a typical Italian food.

DISCUSSION

1. Product Cultural Themes in Textbooks

An examination of the grade 11 EFL textbook “Bahasa Inggris: English for Change” shows a major focus on cultural themes related to places, artifacts, institutions, and art forms. Places such as Labuan Bajo and the Ciliwung River are highlighted for their geographical and environmental diversity. Artifacts such as graduation attire and Rupiah money reflect everyday cultural values, while institutions such as Stanford University and the Illegal Building Law are mentioned to illustrate the structure of society, albeit less frequently. Art forms such as batik and literature are also featured, emphasizing creativity in conveying cultural values and emotions.

These findings are in line with previous research that emphasizes the importance of including diverse cultural content in EFL textbooks. Böcü and Razı (2016) highlighted the emphasis on geography in the Life textbook series, similar to the current study's focus on geography and environmental themes. Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017) noted differences in cultural themes in Iranian EFL textbooks, similar to the current study's emphasis on tangible artifacts. Raigón-Rodríguez (2018) and Nurjanah and Umaemah (2019) observed an imbalance in the cultural dimension, with a predominance of product themes, which is in line with the findings of this study. Sihombing and Nguyen (2022) and Baleghizadeh

and Shayesteh (2020) also highlighted this imbalance and advocated for a more balanced representation of cultures to enhance cross-cultural competence.

2. Product Cultural Aspects in Textbooks

An analysis of the 11th-grade EFL textbook “Bahasa Inggris: English for Change” found various cultural aspects divided into source culture, target culture, and international culture using Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework. The results showed that source culture was the most prevalent, followed by target culture, and international culture was less prevalent. Source culture includes local artifacts such as fruits and Indonesian currency, places such as Labuan Bajo and Borobudur Temple, institutions such as Bogor Institute of Technology, and art forms such as Batik and Indonesian literature. Target culture features places like New York and Birmingham, institutions like the University of Sheffield and Stanford University, and art forms such as the storybook “Coraline.” International culture includes places like Atlamulco in Mexico and artifacts like Italian pasta.

These findings are in line with previous research on cultural content in English textbooks. For example, Böcü and Razi (2016) found a balanced representation of source, target and international cultures in the Life series, but noted an overemphasis on geography. Similarly, this study emphasizes a balanced representation of culture in English textbooks, with a primary focus on Indonesian culture. Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017) emphasized the importance of diverse materials, which aligns with this study's emphasis on cultural relevance to Indonesian society. Raigón-Rodríguez (2018) and Nurjanah and Umaemah (2019) highlight the imbalance in cultural products and practices, while Sihombing and Nguyen (2022) and this study reveal the dominance of local cultural content. Jismulatif and Putri (2023) also emphasized the heavy focus on Indonesian culture in textbooks and advocated for more balanced cultural content to promote global awareness and intercultural competence.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the portrayal of product culture in grade 11 EFL textbooks, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in cultural representation. Although Indonesian culture dominates, there is a need for broader representation to foster global awareness. Balancing cultural themes in educational materials will improve students' intercultural competence, fostering empathy and understanding. Addressing imbalances will prepare students for diverse linguistic and cultural contexts and promote global citizenship. Suggestions include supplementing the curriculum with culturally diverse resources and developing pedagogical strategies to integrate cultural content. Future research should explore cultural representations in English language education and advocate for the promotion of cultural diversity. In conclusion, achieving balanced and diverse cultural representations in EFL education is essential to foster intercultural competence and prepare students for a globalized world.

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