

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Understanding the cultural context within which a language is spoken is critical to language learning. True mastery in a new language necessitates understanding its cultural background. In other words, language and culture cannot be separated as they are interconnected with each other (Kramsch, 1998; Brown, 2000), and true fluency is difficult to achieve without a thorough comprehension of both. As a result, comprehending the cultures in which a language is spoken is an important aspect of learning.

Learning the culture of a language requires understanding the values, norms, beliefs and practices of that culture embodied in the language. This includes knowledge of social customs, greetings, gestures, and appropriate behavior in various situations (Kramsch, 1993). For example, in some cultures it is customary to take off one's shoes before entering a house, while in others it is considered rude. Cultural knowledge also helps students interpret and understand the meaning behind language use. Language is deeply intertwined with culture, and certain words, expressions and idioms may have cultural connotations that are not immediately apparent to non-native speakers (Scollon, 2001). People from different cultures can have different meanings when using the same language. For example, when someone says 'lunch', a native speaker would probably refer to spaghetti or pizza, but an Indonesian would definitely refer to fried rice or Nasi Padang. In addition, learning the

culture of a language can enhance intercultural competence and encourage effective communication with native speakers (Kramersch, 1998). This allows learners to develop a deeper appreciation and respect for the cultural diversity of the language they are learning. By understanding cultural nuances, learners can avoid misunderstandings, build rapport, and establish meaningful relationship with their peers.

In the context of English as a foreign language, cultural content is frequently included in instructional materials such as textbooks. A textbook represents the curriculum as well as the writer's understanding of the sociocultural system in terms of cultural values (Sinaga et al., 2020). The books accessible to teachers and students greatly influence the direction and content of foreign language education, especially the cultural component (Wasik, 2012). In addition, integrating cultural components in curricula and textbooks is critical since it helps students comprehend their environment. Because language and culture are intimately intertwined, teaching language curriculum should incorporate cultural competency as well as the structure and functions provided by language abilities (Arslan, 2020).

The Merdeka Curriculum, the most recent Indonesian curriculum, is currently using in formal education schools. The Indonesia Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology confirmed that the Merdeka curriculum would be implemented in the new 2022/2023 school year (Qomariyah & Maghfiroh, 2022). The curriculum includes opportunities for regional authorities to incorporate local material based on their unique traits and wisdom. This curriculum education must be grounded in the nation's

culture. This depiction of local wisdom aligns with Pancasila's profile, which highlights global diversity. The purpose is to boost Indonesian locality's international competitiveness. The curriculum includes extensive coverage of cultural and geographical differences. As a result, the textbook based on this curriculum should include Indonesian cultural references.

The Merdeka curriculum's focus on culture aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy. The Merdeka curriculum was influenced by a focus on flexibility, independence, context, cooperation, and the development of noble character (Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). Rather of focusing just on cognitive skills, it aims to help learners develop their noble character. The curriculum policy aims to train Indonesian youth as global learners who uphold Pancasila principles (Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). This is known as the "profile of Pancasila students," and it consists of the following characteristics: global diversity, creativity, cooperation, trust in God Almighty, and critical thinking (Sholihah, 2021).

That being said, teaching culture goes hand in hand with teaching language. As a result, textbooks are expected to include a variety of cultural components, such as the source culture (Indonesian culture), the target culture (English-speaking country culture), and worldwide culture (Afriani et al., 2019). However, studies have shown that textbooks frequently fail to accurately depict the target culture. According to Sue Garton and Keith Richards (2014), instructional materials in nations such as Saudi Arabia and China are generated with little or no reference to cultures originating in English-speaking regions. Nonetheless, textbooks should ideally include

cultural components from the English-speaking nation, as English is a globally taught and studied language utilized by individuals from many cultural backgrounds (Chen & Le, 2019). As a result, increasing cultural sensitivity is critical for success in language learning (Lee and Li, 2020). Incorporating cultural components into language teaching allows students to perceive the world from a variety of perspectives, preparing them for more informed involvement on both national and international levels. This strategy can create more cultural awareness and comprehension, eliminate bias, increase knowledge of different cultures, and allow for successful and respectful conversation in many situations (Prihatiningsih et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, there is debate about how many cultures should be included in textbooks. Previous findings (Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012; Munandar & Ulwiyah, 2012; Santosa, 2015) suggest that teachers believe it is important to prioritize source culture over target culture. According to Whorf's (1956) theory of linguistic relativity, everyone experiences the world through their native language, making it easier for learners to acquire the target language using their own sources. On the same hand, Cortazzi and Jinn (1999), and Jiang (2010) emphasize that target culture may have a negative impact on source culture by causing learners to focus on target language culture rather than their own.

In Indonesia, where English is considered a foreign language, including local cultural components into English textbooks is critical for effective English language instruction. The lack of localized materials and instructional methodologies that authentically reflect indigenous culture is acknowledged as

a contributor to the difficulties experienced in English language acquisition (Shah & Elyas, 2019). The addition of local cultural elements in English textbooks can improve long-term information retention by motivating students to study about topics that are relevant to their own lives. As noted by an educator cited in Shah & Elyas (2019), English textbooks should encompass elements of the local culture, as this enables students to connect with the material they are studying and, in turn, mitigates the psychological barriers that often impede language acquisition. Moreover, integrating local culture into educational materials can assist students in cultivating a strong sense of national identity by fostering their comprehension and connection to their own cultural heritage. In general, the incorporation of local culture into English textbooks serves multiple purposes, such as rendering the content pertinent, genuine, and meaningful, while also fostering cultural comprehension and appreciation among students.

In relation to those issues above, the researcher wants to determine if the textbook's cultural content is balanced according to Cortazzi & Jinn's (1999) approach for dealing with (1) cultural types. In addition, some other cultural contents that should be analysed are the distribution of (2) cultural dimension by Moran (2001), he divides culture into five aspects, that are products, practices, perspectives, persons, and communities. Experts distinguish between three cultural categories (SC, TC, and ITC) when representing culture in English textbooks. This includes addressing people's names, displaying food and drinks, lifestyles, religious ceremonies, beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives.

Moreover, teachers must be culturally conscious when teaching English to their students. According to Reiman (2009), cultural awareness raising involves engaging students in activities that promote understanding, sensitivity, flexibility, and tolerance for cultural diversity in the classroom. Teachers must choose appropriate content for their students based on their understanding of local culture, values, and national identity, as well as their understanding of native English speakers' cultures to facilitate English language learning.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of cultural content in English textbooks. Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012) found that Indonesian primary education English textbooks prominently feature local culture, emphasizing cultural relevance. Gunantar (2017) also noted the prevalence of Indonesian cultural elements in junior high school textbooks, advocating for a balanced inclusion of local and target cultures. Qodriani and Kardiansyah (2018) discovered that cultural dimensions in secondary education textbooks tend to focus more on perspectives, enhancing students' cultural viewpoints. Similarly, Setyono and Widodo (2019) identified multicultural values such as respect for pluralism in Indonesian EFL textbooks, promoting intercultural competence. Lee and Li (2020) compared English textbooks in Mainland China and Hong Kong, revealing that Mainland textbooks focus on British culture, while Hong Kong textbooks present a more balanced view of international cultures. This diversity in cultural content can enhance global awareness and intercultural sensitivity among students. These findings underscore the need for English textbooks to integrate both local and international cultural elements

to foster a comprehensive cultural understanding and intercultural competence in students.

According to the description above, textbooks have a significant role in improving teaching and learning processes and cultural content. A study on assessing EFL textbooks is necessary to understand the cultural content, including cultural categories and dimensions in English textbook, especially for grade 7. This study aims to help educational practitioners incorporate cultural content analysis while selecting textbooks.

1.2 Problem Identification

Language learning is inseparable from cultural understanding, yet often cultural aspects are neglected, leading to many language learners not achieving fluency due to a lack of understanding of the associated cultural context. One major problem is the imbalance of cultural content in English textbooks, which often do not reflect native, target and international cultures in a balanced way. Textbooks in countries such as Saudi Arabia and China, for example, tend to ignore the culture of the English-speaking country (Garton & Richards, 2014). In addition, the lack of local cultural elements in English textbooks can reduce student motivation and cause difficulties in learning, so it is important to include local culture so that students can connect better with the material being studied (Shah & Elyas, 2019). The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes local wisdom and international competition, requires adjusting learning materials in accordance with Indonesian cultural values, but it is necessary to evaluate the extent to which current textbooks match the focus of this curriculum. Cultural awareness in teaching is also a challenge, where

teachers need to select appropriate content based on local and target cultures to improve students' intercultural competence and effective communication with native English speakers (Reiman, 2009). On the other hand, there is a research gap regarding cultural content in English textbooks for grade 7 based on Cortazzi & Jinn's (1999) cultural categories and Moran's (2001) cultural dimensions. An analysis is needed to understand how cultural content is presented in textbooks and whether it includes products, practices, perspectives, communities and individuals.

1.3 Research Limitation

This study has some limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the focus of the study is limited to the analysis of the 'Bright an English' textbook for grade 7, so the findings may not be generalizable to other textbooks or other educational levels. Secondly, the analysis utilized Cortazzi & Jinn's (1999) theory of cultural categories and Moran's (2001) cultural dimensions, which means other theoretical approaches that may be relevant were not used in this study. Thirdly, the research focuses on the educational context in Indonesia, so the results may not be fully applicable to educational contexts in other countries with different cultures and curricula. Fourthly, the qualitative approach used involved content analysis which could have limitations in terms of researcher subjectivity and interpretation. Fifth, the research was conducted within a limited timeframe and resources, which may have affected the depth and breadth of the analysis. Sixth, the study may not have included direct perceptions from teachers and students regarding their textbook use and learning experiences, which could have provided valuable additional insights.

Lastly, the new Merdeka Curriculum implemented in the 2022/2023 academic year is still in its early stages, so changes and adjustments that may occur in the future are not included in this analysis. Taking these limitations into account, the results of the study should be interpreted with caution, and further research is needed to address these limitations and expand the understanding of the integration of cultural content in English language teaching.

1.4 Research Questions

The research formulates two questions based on the problem identification as follows:

1. What types of culture are found in the English textbook 'Bright an English' for Junior High School grade VII?
2. How are these cultures presented in the English textbook 'Bright an English' for Junior High School grade VII?

1.5 Research Objectives

There are two objectives in this research as follows:

1. To investigate the types of culture found in the English textbook 'Bright an English' for Junior High School grade VII
2. To describe how these cultures are presented in the English textbook 'Bright an English' for Junior High School grade VII

1.6 Research Significance

Significance of this research can be viewed from theoretical and practical perspective. They can be explained as follows.

1. Theoretical Significance

This study focuses on the English Language Studies subject, specifically the investigation of cultural material in English textbooks. The study makes a significant addition to the subject by offering Moran's cultural dimension framework as a tool for analyzing cultural material. As a result, the research has the potential to enhance the understanding of how to examine and analyse cultural contents in English textbooks, ultimately enriching the existing knowledge in this area.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this research has significance to several stakeholder concerning on education

- a) English Teacher. This research is beneficial to teachers in schools who use textbooks as a basis for constructing lesson plans. Teachers can then analyse and select which cultures should be more prominently represented in English students' textbooks. From the results of this study, it is hoped that English teachers who initially only focus on the four skills in English learning can start to insert cultural content in the learning process. This research will make teachers knowledgeable and competent to select whether books are appropriate and improper for Indonesian learners, and then, depending on the culture, it should be

more dominating, even if provided in a foreign language. It will increase learners' awareness of the culture itself.

- b) Author. This research served as the foundation to design new data materials suitable for the students. It is important to develop this project because we will have the possibility to offer the students with more suitable materials according to their specific needs
- c) Future Researcher. The results of the study are expected to serve as a valuable reference for future studies on the same topic, offering an understanding of how to efficiently examine cultural content in English language textbooks. The research also offers an overview of how to use Moran's cultural dimension framework to analyse cultural contents. As a result, future researchers can benefit from the study by learning how to analyse cultural contents in English textbooks, thereby improving their understanding and knowledge of this important area of study.
- d) Government. Based on this research, the researcher can assist the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MONEC) in filtering the textbooks used by junior high school students. Furthermore, MONEC can create new standards by considering the cultural content in them to filter the textbooks that can be circulated and used by schools in accordance with the context of the Merdeka curriculum.

