# An Analysis of Local Culture Representation in English Textbooks for Junior High School Students in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

*Incorporating local culture into textbooks is crucial for English language learning. This study aimed to analyze how local culture was represented in English textbooks for 9th-grade of junior high school students in Indonesia. The analysis focused on both textual and visual representations of cultural aspects, employing Yuen's (2011) framework, which identified products, practices, perspectives, and persons. This study utilized interpretive content analysis as a research method, encompassing the data analysis phases of preparation, organization, and reporting. Results showed that the textbooks successfully portray all four cultural aspects, with products being the predominant aspect. Additionally, religions emerged as a new aspect which was not specifically addressed in Yuen's previous study; however, during the analysis, they were depicted multiple times in the textbooks. Nevertheless, notable significant variations in the amount and types of data for each cultural aspect highlighted the necessity for a more balanced and comprehensive representation of culture in textbooks.*

**Key Words**: **Local Culture Representation, English Textbooks, Cultural Aspects Framework**

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks have been widely used in mediating English language learning. They play an important role in English Language Teaching (ELT) by serving as a structured and

comprehensive resource for teaching and learning English. As indicated by Richards (2001), in language teaching, the primary instructional tools include textbooks, along with workbooks, cassettes, and teacher's guides, constituting the most prevalent teaching resources. English textbooks typically address language skills topics, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and other related materials (Cunningsworth, 1995). Moreover, as highlighted by Richards (2001), the content of each English textbook varies in accordance with the language program. Despite each textbook possessing a distinct focus and purpose, they commonly incorporate materials aimed at enhancing students' English skills. These encompass lessons on grammar and vocabulary, exercises for reading comprehension, writing prompts, and various other related activities.

Apart from incorporating language skills materials, it is crucial to include cultural content into English textbooks, particularly local cultural content. English is acknowledged as a foreign language in Indonesia. To teach English effectively as a foreign language, integrating cultural references into English textbooks is important, especially local cultural references (Dahmardeh & Kim, 2021). Portraying local culture in English textbooks is crucial as it enhances the material by increasing its relevance, authenticity, and significance, fostering cultural understanding and appreciation among students. The inclusion of balanced and unbiased representation of local culture in the textbooks holds the potential to enhance the motivation of English language learners as they are able to relate the topics and materials to their own environment (Shah & Elyas, 2019).

Several previous studies conducted on how culture is represented in English textbooks. The study conducted by Shah & Elyas (2019) pertaining to the representation of source culture of TESOL textbooks showed a little attention to source/local culture in the textbooks. Instead, the textbooks primarily focused on target culture (English-speaking countries). Furthermore, the study conducted by Baleghizadeh & Shayesteh (2020) also presented an imbalanced representation of cultures, as the cultures of English-speaking countries occupy a larger space in the textbooks,

particularly in aspect of practices. In contrast, the study conducted by Dahmardeh & Kim (2021) revealed the representation of culture was mostly based on source culture, particularly in aspect of perspectives.

Previous studies were conducted to examine cultural representation in textbooks; the present study focuses more on analyzing the representation of local culture in English textbooks for junior high schools in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW
### The roles of English textbooks

Textbooks serve a crucial function in facilitating effective ELT practices by offering structured and organized materials for language instruction. They have been important in supporting students' learning both within and outside the classroom (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). They also establish a framework for language instruction and serve as a guide for teachers in the planning and delivery of lessons. In accordance with Cunningsworth's perspective (1995), textbooks represent as the most effective resource for achieving learners' objectives. He explained the roles of textbooks in English Language Teaching (ELT) and outlined the presentations as:

1) A resource for presentation material (spoken or written)
2) A source of activities for learners practice and communicative interaction
3) A reference sources for learners
4) A syllabus
5) A resource for self-directed learning or self-access work
6) A support for inexperienced teachers

### Culture and Language

The term culture has been defined by many scholars. Kramsch (1995) provides two definitions of culture. The first definition, from the humanities perspective, refers to art, literature, social institutions, and objects that express the identity of a social group. The second definition, from the social sciences, includes collective attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and shared memories within a community. Furthermore, Hall (1997) argues that culture

encompasses all aspects that distinguish the lifestyle of a social group. Moreover, Soler and Jorda (2007) define culture as a social construct based on collective perceptions of oneself and others. These definitions relate to all aspects of social life such as values, customs, language and behavior of a group of people.

Culture and language are interconnected. The language a community uses reflects its culture, shaping thoughts and ways of life based on shared beliefs. Yuen (2011, p.459) describes language as a code system (products) used, to signify thoughts (perspectives), for communication (practices), by different people (persons). According to Kramsch (2012), without language and other symbolic systems; the habits, beliefs, institutions, and monuments that form culture would remain mere observable realities, devoid of the deeper meanings that render them cultural phenomena. Representation plays a significant role in the relationship between language, culture, and meaning (Hall, 1997). It involves utilizing language to convey the meaning of things. Cultural representation pertains to using language to express the significance of culture. It is important because it shapes perceptions, influencing the way people perceive and treat individuals from different cultures.

## Local culture representation of English textbooks

Local culture, often referred to as the source culture, denotes the cultural background of the learners (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). In line with Hall (1997) definition of representation, local culture representation pertains to the utilization of language as a means to communicate the significance and interpretation of the local culture. In this research, the local culture referred to is Indonesian culture. The local culture can be represented through various media; one of them is English textbooks. In the present study, researcher examined the potrayal of local cultural content in English textbooks through the analysis of textual and image data.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using Interpretive Content Analysis (ICA) to analyze the data. ICA is particularly useful in analyzing complex and subjective data, such

as text, images, and other media (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). The interpretive paradigm encompasses the analysis, interpretation, or decoding of elements within the chosen textbooks (Baig, Javed, Siddiquah, & Khanam, 2021). Through the application of ICA, the researcher is able to enhance comprehension of how culture is represented in textbooks, elucidating latent themes or meanings that may not be readily evident.

This study utilized a document sheet for data analysis, implementing open coding and category creation following Elo & Kyngas (2007) guidelines. Codes were applied to identify cultural elements (products, practices, perspectives, and persons), as defined by Yuen (2011). Based on the approach outlined by Elo & Kyngas (2007), the analysis of the textbooks is divided into three phases: preparation, organizing, and reporting.

During the preparation phase, the researcher decided on the analysis scope and selected English textbooks. The samples comprised two English textbooks for 9th-grade junior high school students in Indonesia, titled "Bright: An English" (2018) by Erlangga, and "Think Globally Act Locally" (2018) by The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Subsequently, the researcher chose to concentrate on the local cultural content within these textbooks. The analysis involved examining textual data, including reading passages, dialogues, sentences, and words, as well as image data in the English textbooks.

Moreover, in the organizing phase, open coding was used to identify cultural aspects in selected English textbooks. A manual coding system, including codes for **Products (PD), Practices (PT), Perspectives (PP), Persons (PS), books (B), and pages (P),** was created for systematic content analysis. To differentiate between the two textbooks, "Bright: An English" was coded as B1, and "Think Globally Act Locally" as B2. Tables 1 and 2 display examples of data coding for both textual and image data in the document sheet. Following the coding of data, similar codes were grouped to create categories for each aspect. This organizational step is crucial for a clearer understanding of emerging patterns and themes in the data, preparing it for further analysis.

Finally, in the reporting phase, following coding and categorization, the researcher interpreted the data to reveal implicit meanings and provided a concise further explanation in the findings section.

**Table 1.** Examples of coding in document sheet (textual data)

| No. | Unit | Theme | Textual Data | Code | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 5 | Everybody is always in the middle of something | It's four o'clock now, and look, the _gorengan_ street vendors is passing in front of my house. | B2/P.102/PS | Gorengan street vendors are typically small business owners who sell variety of _gorengan_ (fried snack) widely consumed by Indonesians. Therefore, it represents the aspect of local persons. |

**Table 2.** Examples of coding in document sheet (image data)

| No. | Unit | Theme | Image Data | Code | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 2 | Let's live a healthy life! |  | B2/P.18/PT | Visiting a sick friend is a common Indonesian custom, symbolizing care and empathy. Therefore, it represents the |

| No. | Unit | Theme | Image Data | Code | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  | aspect of local practices. |

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of this study revealed the four cultural aspects—products, practices, perspectives, and persons—in two selected textbooks, with products being the predominant cultural aspect. Both textbooks demonstrated the representation of local culture in both textual and visual forms. Nevertheless, textual data held greater prominence compared to image data. Table 3 and 4 present the frequency of each aspect in the respective textbooks that signifies local culture.

In *Bright: An English* (B1), the textual representation of local culture encompasses the four cultural aspects: products, practices, perspectives, and persons. However, visual representation was limited to the products aspect, with a noticeable absence of image data depicting local cultural representation within practices, perspectives, and persons. Meanwhile, in *Think Globally Act Locally* (B2), three cultural aspects—products, practices, and persons—were discovered in both textual and visual forms. Unfortunately, instances of local cultural representation in the perspectives aspect within this textbook could not be found.

Additionally, during the analysis, several examples of local cultural representation showcasing the religious practice and diversity existing in Indonesia were discovered. Indonesia officially acknowledges six religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Confucianism (Hidayat, 2021). This highlights the importance of considering the religions aspect when delving into the understanding cultural representation in textbooks. This finding provides the inclusion of an additional cultural aspect: religions (RG).

**Table 3.** The representation of local culture in B1

| No. | Cultural Aspect | Textual Data | Image Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Products | 77 | 19 |
| 2. | Practices | 9 | - |
| 3. | Perspectives | 8 | - |

| 4. | Persons | 3 | - |
| 5. | Religions | 1 | - |
| | Total | 98 | 19 |

**Table 4.** The representation of local culture in B2

| No. | Cultural Aspect | Textual Data | Image Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Products | 48 | 26 |
| 2. | Practices | 14 | 14 |
| 3. | Perspectives | - | - |
| 4. | Persons | 19 | 12 |
| 5. | Religions | - | 12 |
| | Total | 81 | 64 |

**Local Culture Representation**

The analysis of local culture representation in this study focused on textual and visual forms. Regarding the textual form, it was manifested through reading passages, dialogues, sentences, and words contained in the English textbooks. Meanwhile, the visual form was depicted through image data. Table 5 and 6 present the interpretation of selected data regarding local culture representation in both textual and visual forms.

**Table 5.** Interpretation of local culture representation (textual data)

| No. | Unit | Theme | Textual Data | Code | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 7 | I Love Indonesian Folktale | TIMUN MAS | B1/P.98/PD | Timun Mas is one of Indonesian folktales, originating from Central Java. Therefore, it represents a local product of folktale |

| No. | Unit | Theme | Textual Data | Code | Interpretation |
|-----|------|-------|--------------|------|----------------|
|     |      |       |              |      | literature     |

In table 5, it presents a narrative titled "Timun Mas," originating from Central Java. The tale narrates the story of a girl called *Timun Mas* attempting to escape from an evil giant called *Buto Ijo* who tried to catch her. This folktale is testament to Indonesia's cultural heritage, holding a distinguished place among local products.

**Table 6.** Interpretation of local culture representation (image data)

| No. | Unit | Theme | Image Data | Code | Interpretation |
|-----|------|-------|------------|------|----------------|
| **1.** | 5 | Everybody is always in the middle of something |  | B2/P.96/RG | Two students in the standard white-blue junior high school uniform in Indonesia, one wearing a hijab, symbolize religious diversity in Indonesia. Therefore, it can represent as a local religions. |

In Table 6, it shows a picture of two Indonesian junior high school students identified by their white-blue uniforms (standard uniform for junior high school students in Indonesia) with one of them is wearing a hijab—a religious obligation for Muslim women. The interaction between them demonstrates respect and tolerance. Hence, it represents religions by highlighting the presence of religious diversity in Indonesia and the value placed on respecting it.

**Products**

Products from Indonesian local culture showed in the selected textbooks include names of regions (Jakarta, Solo, Bangka Belitung, and more); tourist destinations (Raja Ampat, Maimun Palace, Borobudur, and more); local cuisine (Padang food, Gudeg, Lemper, and more); folktale literatures (Timun Mas, Kebo Iwa, Sangkuriang, and others); Indonesian vocabulary (*menyapih* (wean)*, menggenggam* (grasp)*, bayi* (baby), and more); native Indonesian animals (Orangutan, Komodo, and Sumatran Tiger), and Indonesian-made products (angklung musical instrument, the traditional North Sumatran cloth known as 'Ulos', the distinctive Papua bag called 'noken', and more).
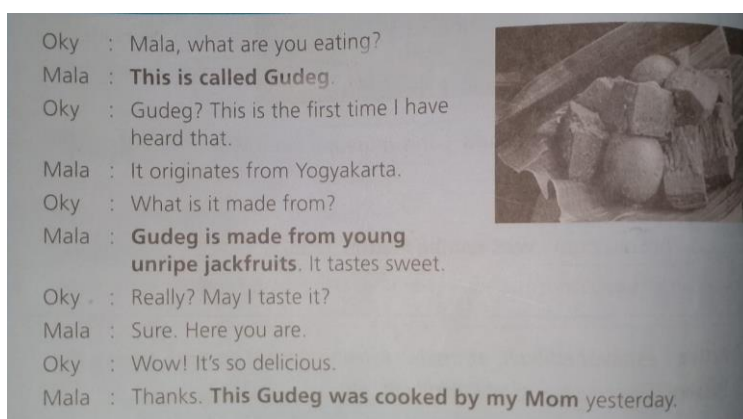


Oky    : Mala, what are you eating?
Mala   : **This is called Gudeg**.
Oky    : Gudeg? This is the first time I have heard that.
Mala   : It originates from Yogyakarta.
Oky    : What is it made from?
Mala   : **Gudeg is made from young unripe jackfruits**. It tastes sweet.
Oky    : Really? May I taste it?
Mala   : Sure. Here you are.
Oky    : Wow! It's so delicious.
Mala   : Thanks. **This Gudeg was cooked by my Mom** yesterday.

**Figure 1.** Local product - Gudeg



**Figure 2.** Local Product **-** Angklung

**Practices**

All aspects related to behaviors, customs, daily life, and society falls categorized as practices. The local practices showed in the selected textbooks relating to common activities and daily habits of Indonesians (wearing uniforms in school, helping each

others, visiting family/friend, and greeting friends); common events (Independence Day competitions); adhering to regulations (age restrictions for motorcycle riding); economic practice (price fluctuations); political practice (presidential elections held every 5 years); and even negative practice (killing endangered animals).

3. In Indonesia, presidential elections _____ every five years.

**Figure 3.** Local practice **–** Political practice



**Figure 4.** Local practice – Junior high school students wearing white-blue uniform

### Perspectives

The collective perception, encompassing values, beliefs, and worldviews are denoted as perspectives. Perspectives of local culture in the textbooks show values, such as the importance of family bonds; and the perspective of prioritizing safety and security, particularly in relation to driving. Beliefs in the supernatural also shape the cultural perspectives. Local cultural content in perspectives aspect is limited and appears the least compared to other cultural aspects.

5. Teenagers under seventeen should not ride a motorcycle.

**Figure 5.** Local perspective – prioritizing safety

### Persons

In the selected textbooks, persons are portrayed through popular figures, such as Kartini. Furthermore, unknown individuals

such as Indonesian society (model student of Solo city, Indonesian young generation); names of Indonesian people (Lina, Edo, and Siti); and images of teachers and students in school uniforms, symbolizing the educational people in Indonesia, also can be the representation of local persons. As Yuen (2011) stated that one of the cultural persons can be shown through unknown people.



**Figure 6.** Local person – Kartini



**Figure 7.** Local person – Indonesian junior high school students

**Religions**

Religions presented through religious practice, such as praying to God. Religions also showcased through religious diversity, reflecting different beliefs and viewpoints. For example, in textbooks, it shows through the image of a girl wearing a hijab. The hijab is a religious obligation for Muslim women. In textbooks, it is shown several times the girl has a good relationship with anyone. It shows respect and religious tolerance for one another.

Once upon a time, an old woman lived in a small village. She was so lonely that she prayed to God to give her a companion. One day, a giant heard her prayer and knocked on her door, "I can help you have a baby. But you must give the baby to me when she is seventeen years old." Too excited about the fact that she would have a companion, the old woman at once agreed to the condition.

**Figure 8.** Religious practice – Praying to God



**Figure 9.** Religious diversity

## CONCLUSION

The study examined the representation of local culture in 9th-grade junior high school English textbooks, specifically "Bright: An English" and "Think Globally Act Locally" using Yuen's (2011) cultural aspects framework: products, practices, perspectives, and persons. The predominant aspect observed was products, appears more frequently than the other three aspects, especially perspectives. Additionally, the researcher also introduces an additional aspect: religions, addressing a gap in Yuen's previous study. Through analysis, several instances portraying religious practice and diversity in Indonesia were identified.

Integrating local cultural elements into English textbooks is crucial for enhancing English language teaching in Indonesia. This strategy motivates learners by connecting topics to their environment (Shah & Elyas, 2019). This study offers insights into local culture representation of English textbooks for junior high schools in Indonesia, providing foundation for future developments. However, despite efforts to align with Yuen's cultural aspects, significant variations in data quantity highlight the necessity for a more balanced and comprehensive representation of culture in textbooks.

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