

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### A. Research Background

Cultural teaching is considered part of language learning. Some researchers even include culture as the fifth skill in language learning, after listening, speaking, reading, and writing.<sup>1</sup> Language is very closely related to language. As Brown said, language and culture are inseparable.<sup>2</sup> This is because language is the embodiment of a culture.<sup>3</sup> According to Politzer, teaching a language without teaching its culture is like teaching meaningless symbols or symbols with the wrong meaning.<sup>4</sup> In other words, in learning a language we must understand the cultural background to know the habits of the people. That way, there will be good communication without misunderstanding the meaning of the language.

In the context of foreign language education, English has been very popular for many years. This cannot be separated from the status of English as the dominant global lingua franca (language used by people with different native languages to communicate).<sup>5</sup> In the formal education curriculum, English is taught as a compulsory subject from elementary school to college.<sup>6</sup> In Indonesia, English is taught

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<sup>1</sup> Minna Maijala, "Culture Teaching Methods in Foreign Language Education: Pre-Service Teachers' Reported Beliefs and Practices," *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 14, no. 2 (March 14, 2020): 133–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2018.1509981>.

<sup>2</sup> Sasan Baleghizadeh and Leyli Amiri Shayesteh, "A Content Analysis of the Cultural Representations of Three ESL Grammar Textbooks," ed. Shuying Li, *Cogent Education* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 1844849, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1844849>.

<sup>3</sup> Ka-Ming Yuen, "The Representation of Foreign Cultures in English Textbooks," *ELT Journal* 65, no. 4 (March 2011): 458–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq089>.

<sup>4</sup> Shu-Feng Tseng, "The Importance of Culture in Language Learning" 7, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>5</sup> Mina Patel, "In Our Rapidly Changing World, What Is the Future of English language?," n.d., <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/our-rapidly-changing-world-what-future-english-language>.

<sup>6</sup> Darío Luis Banegas, "English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific: From Policy to Pedagogy," *Innovation in Language Learning and*

starting from elementary school, but some kindergartens have started teaching basic English to their students. The purpose of learning English in the Indonesian national curriculum is to open students' insight regarding themselves, social relations, culture, and global job opportunities.<sup>7</sup> Seeing cultural differences will help students to understand, appreciate, and be tolerant of foreign cultures without forgetting their own culture. For this reason, students need to be equipped with intercultural understanding to prevent intercultural misunderstandings. The classroom is the most appropriate place to promote intercultural understanding, as described by Bradella in McCandless et al.<sup>8</sup>

Intercultural understanding helps students build awareness of cultures around the world, to develop respect and tolerance for other cultures.<sup>9</sup> To give students an understanding of the cultural aspects of a language, texts, and cultural representations need to be presented in the foreign language class.<sup>10</sup> Textbooks are the right learning media to use for that. Textbooks can be said to be the most important source of material in learning English in Indonesia. Generally, students only learn English at school with the textbook as the material source. Textbooks are very helpful for teachers as references and guides in teaching. In addition, textbooks are also important to build effective teaching and learning processes,

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*Teaching* 13, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 294–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2019.1566912>.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, “Capaian Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka,” n.d., <https://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum-A/capaian-pembelajaran>.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor McCandless et al., “Assessing Intercultural Understanding: The Facts about Strangers,” *Educational Review* 74, no. 5 (July 29, 2022): 957–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2020.1825336>.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Cortazzi and Lixian Jin, “Cultural Mirrors Materials and Methods in The EFL Classroom,” *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Mohammad Ahmadi Safa and Somayeh Tofighi, “Intercultural Communicative Competence Beliefs and Practices of Iranian Pre-Service and in-Service EFL Teachers,” *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 16, no. 2 (March 15, 2022): 164–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1889562>.

with students actively expressing their ideas in class.<sup>11</sup> But what kind of textbooks are good for promoting intercultural understanding in students?

All cultures and communities in the world are relevant in teaching English because English now belongs to people all over the world. Even the number of English speakers in a foreign language is more than native English speakers.<sup>12</sup> This statement is also supported by data from Cogo, that 80% of global English communication is done by non-native speakers.<sup>13</sup> Therefore an English textbook can't present only American and British cultural content.

According to Cunningsworth, bias-oriented textbooks will affect students' worldviews. A biased worldviews can lead to discrimination against students who favor certain culture, and they will find it difficult to appreciate cultural differences.<sup>14</sup> Alptekin also explained that textbooks must contain cultural content that reflects the fact that English is an international language, and must meet the communication needs of learners in global and local contexts.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that textbooks that contain a balanced portion of local and global cultural content, not biased or dominant in certain cultures are needed to increase intercultural understanding. In this way, students can learn to understand the diversity of their own culture while increasing awareness of other cultures.

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<sup>11</sup> Aswadi Jaya et al., "Analisis Tuntutan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Konteks Penerapan Keterampilan Abad 21 pada Materi Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris," n.d.

<sup>12</sup> Ufuk Keles and Bedrettin Yazan, "Representation of Cultures and Communities in a Global ELT Textbook: A Diachronic Content Analysis," *Language Teaching Research* 27, no. 5 (September 2023): 1325–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820976922>.

<sup>13</sup> Hajar Abdul Rahim and Ali Jalalian Daghig, "Locally-Developed vs. Global Textbooks: An Evaluation of Cultural Content in Textbooks Used in ELT in Malaysia," *Asian Englishes* 22, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 317–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2019.1669301>.

<sup>14</sup> A. Cunningsworth, *Choosing Your Coursebook*, Handbooks for the English Classroom Series (Macmillan Education Australia, 1995), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=yTBVvgAACAAJ>.

<sup>15</sup> Cem Alptekin, "Towards Intercultural Communicative Competence in ELT," *ELT Journal* 56, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 57–64, <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/56.1.57>.

Cultural content analysis in textbooks has been widely conducted in various studies, ranging from local to international researches. In research on cultural content in textbooks in Indonesia, source or local cultural content is found to be more dominant. Some of the findings in local research include an imbalance between the 4 aspects of culture (products, perspectives, practices, products) in 3 English textbooks.<sup>16</sup> Another study found that local cultural content was more prominent than international cultural content.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, research on elementary school English textbooks also shows that source culture content is found more than target culture and international culture.<sup>18</sup> While the target or international culture dominates in textbook content in studies outside Indonesia. Some international studies include the analysis of two textbooks from China and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong textbooks, local and international cultures are presented in a balanced manner, while in Chinese textbooks, local culture and British culture still dominate.<sup>19</sup> Another study showed that the textbooks focused more on the United States, Great Britain, and Europe with little critical analysis of the content.<sup>20</sup> Different results were found in another study that analyzed cultural content in imported and local books in

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<sup>16</sup> Jismulatif et al., "The Representation of Foreign and Indonesian Cultures in English Text Books for Junior High School in Indonesia," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 3 (September 17, 2022): 4217–30, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i3.2016>.

<sup>17</sup> Soni Ariawan, "CULTURAL ASPECTS REPRESENTATION IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK AND ITS IMPLICATION ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING," n.d.

<sup>18</sup> Nelly Mustapidaturrohmah, Putu Dian Danayanti Degeng, and Widya Caterina, "A CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE EFL TEXTBOOKS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDONESIA" 13, no. 1 (2022).

<sup>19</sup> Jackie F. K. Lee and Xinghong Li, "Cultural Representation in English Language Textbooks: A Comparison of Textbooks Used in Mainland China and Hong Kong," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 28, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 605–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1681495>.

<sup>20</sup> Ya-Chen Su, "The International Status of English for Intercultural Understanding in Taiwan's High School EFL Textbooks," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 36, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 390–408, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2014.959469>.

Malaysia. Intercultural content in local textbooks was found to be more extensive.<sup>21</sup>

From some of the research above, the researcher found several differences between previous studies and the research that will be conducted by the researcher. The first is the object of research. In this study, the researcher used the textbook *Bright an English* for grade seven. There are several reasons why the author chose this book. Among them is that this book is an merdeka curriculum book, which is the curriculum currently used in Indonesia. In addition, the researcher chose a book published by Erlangga because this publisher has received the Prestigious Top Brand award 8 times in a row for the "education book" category.<sup>22</sup> The second research focus. This research will analyze cultural elements and cultural categories in English textbooks. The third is that this research was conducted in the Indonesian context, while some of the international researches above were conducted in the context of Malaysia, Taiwan, and China. As explained above, the author will continue the research on cultural content analysis in textbooks, with different objects. Based on that, the researcher is interested in examining how culture are represented in *Bright an English* textbook, and whether the cultural content in the textbook is still biased towards certain cultures.

## B. Research Focus and Scope

This research will focus on the reading passage, dialog, and pictures in the textbook *Bright an English* for seventh grade published by Erlangga. Furthermore, in analyzing the representation of cultural content, the researcher will use the content analysis method which is included in the literature research. In conducting the analysis, the researcher will use Yuen's theory to identify four cultural elements (product, practice, perspective, person) and Cortazzi & Jin's theory to classify 3 cultural categories (source culture, international culture, target culture).

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<sup>21</sup> Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh, "Locally-Developed vs. Global Textbooks."

<sup>22</sup> Erlangga Publisher, "Tentang Erlangga Group," n.d., [https://erlangga.co.id/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7716&Itemid=265](https://erlangga.co.id/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7716&Itemid=265).

### C. Research Problems

1. What cultural elements are presented in *Bright an English* textbook?
2. What cultural categories appear dominantly in *Bright an English* textbooks?
3. What is the relevance of the internalization cultural content in *Bright an English textbook* with Merdeka curriculum?

### D. Research Objectives

To fill the gaps, this study will investigate:

1. The cultural elements that dominate in *Bright an English* textbook.
2. Cultural categories that appear most in *Bright an English* textbooks.
3. The relevances of the internalization cultural content in *Bright an English textbook* with Merdeka curriculum

### E. Research Significances

Textbooks should be a source of teaching materials that make it easier for teachers. However, it requires criticality in determining a textbook or teaching material that will be used in learning English. Practically, this research will provide an enrichment of knowledge of English textbook studies that are more oriented towards international culture, neutral, and unbiased. The results of this study have two major meanings, namely:

1. Theoretical Significance  
The results of this research are expected to be able to provide benefits for future studies related to cultural studies in English language teaching, especially in the use of textbooks as learning media.
2. Practical Significances
  - a) For Teachers  
Through this research, teachers are expected to be more careful in choosing textbooks as learning media, by paying attention to the local & international cultural content contained therein.

- b) For Textbook Writers  
This research is expected to make writers aware of the importance of neutral cultural content in textbooks, to instill Intercultural Understanding in students.
- c) For Researchers  
This research is expected to be a reference for future researchers related to the study of cultural content analysis in textbooks.

## F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Cultural content  
Cultural content refers to the symbolic meanings, artistic dimensions, and cultural values that express the identity of a culture. In this research, the context of cultural content is the content of the target culture, local culture, and international culture represented in the Bright an English textbook.<sup>23</sup>
2. Textbook  
Textbook is a book that is used as a learning guide in schools and colleges that contains certain subjects.<sup>24</sup>
3. Intercultural Understanding  
Intercultural means involving two or more cultures. Thus, intercultural understanding can be defined as one's understanding of cultural diversity, to achieve successful intercultural communication.<sup>25</sup>

## G. Organization of Thesis

1. Chapter I – Introduction  
This chapter describes the background, research focus, research problem, research objectives, research significance, and thesis structure.

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<sup>23</sup>Jack C Richards, “The Role of Textbooks in a Language Program,” 2005. Hélène Ruiz Fabri, “Games within Fragmentation: The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions,” *The World Trade Organization and Human Rights: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 2009, 191–220, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781953044.00013>.

<sup>24</sup> Jack C Richards, “The Role of Textbooks in a Language Program,” 2005.

<sup>25</sup> McCandless et al., “Assessing Intercultural Understanding.”

2. Chapter II - Literature Review  
This chapter describes the theories related to the research topic. It contains theoretical descriptions, theoretical frameworks, and reviews of previous research.
3. Chapter III - Research Methodology  
This chapter describes the methods used by the author in conducting research and analysis.
4. Chapter IV - Findings and Discussions  
This chapter presents the results of the research data analysis and discussion.
5. Chapter V - Conclusion and Suggestion  
This chapter contains conclusions from the research results and suggestions for future research.

