

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In today's increasingly connected world, English language skills have evolved from a mere advantage to a necessity. This language is the key to unlocking global knowledge, technology, international business, and opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. In the classroom, especially in Indonesia, textbooks are among the most pivotal learning resources. They act as a map for teachers and students, guiding what to learn and how to learn it. However, English textbooks do not only teach grammar and vocabulary. Subtly, they also convey the values, lifestyles, and perspectives of the culture from which they originate. When students read about "*John getting ready for Halloween*" or "*Emma shopping at a large London mall*," they are not only learning the language but also being introduced to a cultural context that may be vastly different from their own lived experiences.

A significant problem arises when English textbooks are dominated by Western cultures (such as American and British). Imagine a student in *Sorong*, *Wakatobi*, or *Banyuwangi* constantly reading about snowy winters, life in metropolitan apartments, or European historical events.

These themes can feel distant, foreign, and irrelevant to their daily realities, which may be intimately connected to the sea, traditional ceremonies, or local markets. This disparity can lead to several adverse outcomes: 1) Materials perceived as irrelevant can demotivate students and hinder comprehension; 2) Students may subconsciously internalize the notion that foreign cultures are superior or more modern, while viewing their own cultural heritage as outdated, thus becoming passive consumers of global culture rather than confident ambassadors of their own; 3) The curriculum may emphasize understanding other cultures without equipping students with the linguistic tools to explain and celebrate their own culture in English.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) encompasses not only grammatical competence but also intercultural communicative competence. In this context, EFL textbooks serve not merely as linguistic resources but as crucial cultural mediators that shape students' perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of both the target culture and their own (Yuen, 2011). These materials implicitly and explicitly convey values, social norms, and worldviews, making them powerful instruments in identity formation and cultural transmission (Lalrodingi, 2022). The ideal textbook, therefore, should provide a balanced and respectful representation, integrating the *source culture* (the students'

local culture), *the target culture* (English-speaking countries) and *international cultures* to foster informed global citizenship.

Within modern educational frameworks, the integration of local culture is a cornerstone of culturally responsive pedagogy. This approach posits that learning is most effective when connected to students' existing knowledge and lived experiences. Theoretically, incorporating local culture into learning materials significantly enhances student engagement, motivation, and sense of belonging (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023). Furthermore, it enriches language acquisition by providing a familiar context for communication and develops essential intercultural competencies by enabling students to compare and contrast cultures, a vital skill in our globalized era (Setiawati, 2023).

Recognizing this imperative, educational paradigms are shifting toward greater contextualization. Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of learning that incorporates local wisdom and student needs. The core concept of "*Merdeka Belajar*" (Independent Learning) advocates for student-centered education where learners feel connected to and engaged with their material. Consequently, integrating local culture into English language learning is no longer optional but a necessity. The goal is to achieve a

balance: students must master English for global communication while maintaining and valuing their cultural roots. They should become individuals who can “*think globally, act locally*,” capable of explaining ‘Rendang’ or ‘Tari Saman’ in English with the same ease as discussing “Halloween.”

However, a significant gap persists between this theoretical ideal and classroom practice. Recent empirical studies reveal a severe imbalance in the cultural content of EFL textbooks used in Indonesian secondary schools. This disparity shows that textbooks remain heavily oriented toward foreign cultures, often overlooking the richness of local traditions, values, and practices. This issue is particularly pertinent for newly published textbooks under the Merdeka Curriculum.

In response to the curriculum’s mandate, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) has published a new textbook series entitled “*English for Nusantara*.” This series is explicitly designed to incorporate contemporary content and local wisdom from across the Indonesian archipelago. While this government initiative is a positive step worthy of appreciation, its claims necessitate rigorous scholarly examination. Is local culture integrated meaningfully into lessons, dialogues, readings, and tasks, or is it merely used as

decorative elements such as an image of Borobudur Temple alongside a text about London? This critical question is the central motivation for the research titled “*Content Analysis of Local Cultural Representation in the ‘English for Nusantara’ Textbook for Secondary School.*”

The choice of this research focus is driven by several compelling reasons. Firstly, it directly addresses a key national educational policy by evaluating the primary official resource mandated for the Merdeka Curriculum. Secondly, as a government-published and widely disseminated textbook, “*English for Nusantara*” functions as a high-stakes cultural artifact with the potential to shape the cultural perceptions of millions of students, making its content analysis crucial. Thirdly, this study addresses a gap in existing research. While prior studies have noted superficial cultural inclusion in older textbooks or analyzed single grade levels, this research aims for a comprehensive and systematic examination of the complete junior high school series (Grades VII, VIII, and IX). This longitudinal perspective is essential to assess whether cultural integration is a sustained and coherent pedagogical strategy.

This study moves beyond a simple quantitative tally of cultural elements to conduct a qualitative analysis of how culture is represented. The critical issue is not merely whether local culture is present, but how it is portrayed. The

research will investigate whether representations are authentic, diverse (encompassing various regions of Indonesia), and substantive, or if they are superficial, stereotypical, and dominated by certain cultural groups.

A preliminary review of the “*English for Nusantara*” series corroborates concerns raised in the literature. Elements of local culture, such as images of traditional clothing (batik) or mentions of local foods (*rendang*, *sate*), are present but often appear as isolated vocabulary items or visuals without deeper contextual integration or explanation. In contrast, themes, scenarios, and narratives reflecting Western daily life tend to be more dominant and narratively developed. This observation underscores the need for a systematic analysis.

To answer the research questions, this study employs the theoretical frameworks of Cortazzi & Jin (1999) and Yuen (2011), which categorize culture in textbooks into three types: Source Culture (the learner’s local culture), Target Culture (the culture of English-speaking countries), and International Culture (other world cultures). The primary analytical focus is on the representation and depth of Source Culture. The research method is a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2023), beginning with quantitative content analysis to measure the frequency and proportion of cultural representations, followed by qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to explain and

contextualize the quantitative findings, thereby producing comprehensive answers to the research questions.

The benefits of this research are substantial. The findings will provide teachers with a critical lens to evaluate and supplement textbook materials, empowering them to design more culturally responsive and engaging lessons. For curriculum developers and policymakers, the results will offer evidence-based feedback to guide the revision and enhancement of future textbook editions, ensuring they genuinely fulfill the Merdeka Curriculum's vision of nurturing globally competent yet culturally rooted Indonesian learners.

Thus, this study is expected to provide constructive input for textbook publishers, educators, and the government, ultimately supporting the development of a generation that is not only proficient in English but also proud and capable ambassadors of Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage to the world.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background described above, this study identifies several critical issues in the development and implementation of EFL textbooks in Indonesia, particularly in the book *"English for Nusantara"*:

1. There is a significant imbalance between the representation of the target culture (Western) and the source culture (local Indonesian) in EFL textbooks.
2. The government textbook, *“English for Nusantara”* claims to include Indonesian culture. However, early observations show this inclusion is often shallow.
3. There is a gap between the mandate of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes contextual and culturally relevant learning and its actual implementation in textbooks, which are used as the main reference.
4. This research fills this gap by performing a systematic, multitiered analysis that goes beyond mere quantitative frequency tallies. Utilizing Yuen’s (2011) analytical framework, the study precisely explores the depth and quality of local cultural representation assessing if indigenous cultures are depicted through their material goods, social practices, fundamental viewpoints, and representative individuals. The main goal is to assess whether local cultural content is effectively incorporated into the educational foundation of the textbook or is simply ornamental.

C. Limitation of the Research

In order for this study to be more focused, targeted, and thoroughly examined, the scope of the problem is limited to the following:

1. The analysis is exclusively confined to the government published textbook series “*English for Nusantara*” for Junior High School (Grades VII, VIII, and IX). Consequently, the findings and conclusions generated are not representative of other EFL textbooks utilized within the Indonesian educational system, including those designed for Senior High School or publications from private publishers.
2. The analysis focuses on the representation of local Indonesian culture. The representation of target cultures (e.g., British/American) and international cultures is only analysed as a comparison to see the balance.
3. The study uses Yuen’s (2011) categories of cultural elements as the sole analysis framework, namely: Products (*food, clothing*), Practices (*ceremonies, rituals*), Perspectives (*values, beliefs*), and Persons (*cultural figures*).

As a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2023) integrating quantitative

content analysis followed by qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), this research interprets the manifest and latent content of the textbook itself. It does not incorporate the perceptions, experiences, or receptions of teachers and students.

D. Research Question

1. How is Indonesian local culture represented in the “*English for Nusantara*” textbook for secondary school when analysed through Yuen’s (2011) categories of cultural elements (*products, practices, perspectives, persons*)?
2. What is the proportional balance between the representation of local Indonesian culture (Source Culture) and foreign target cultures (e.g., British/American) in the textbook?

E. Objectives of the Research

1. To identify, inventory, and categorize representations of local Indonesian culture in the textbook using Yuen’s (2011) framework of *products, practices, perspectives, and persons*.
2. To analyse qualitatively how the local cultural elements are presented (e.g., *through texts, images, tasks*) to determine whether the representation is authentic, meaningful, or merely tokenistic.

3. To quantify the frequency and proportion of local culture (*Source Culture*) representations against foreign target culture (*Target Culture*) representations.

F. Benefits of the Research

The results of this study are expected to provide significant benefits for the English language learning process in Indonesia

1. Theoretical
 - a. This research will provide empirical data and a deeper analysis that tests and refines existing theoretical frameworks, particularly those of Cortazzi & Jin (1999) and Yuen (2011), within the specific context of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. The findings will contribute to the broader academic discourse on how culture is mediated through language learning materials.
 - b. By systematically investigating the integration of local culture, this study will offer concrete evidence and insights that enrich the theoretical foundation of culturally responsive teaching. It will demonstrate the practical application of the theory in textbook design, moving from

conceptual ideals to a critical analysis of their tangible execution.

- c. The comprehensive, multigrade level analysis will highlight specific areas where the representation of local culture is lacking or superficial. This will help identify precise gaps (e.g., underrepresentation of Eastern Indonesian cultures, lack of cultural perspectives) that can be explored in future more focused research, such as critical discourse analysis or ethnographic studies on.

2. Practical

- a. For Textbook Authors and Publishers

The results of this study will serve as a source of constructive feedback and specific recommendations for improving subsequent editions of the *English for Nusantara* textbook and other EFL materials. It can guide authors on how to move beyond tokenistic representation to a more meaningful, deep, and balanced integration of local cultural content across all grade levels.

- b. For Curriculum Developers and Policymakers

The findings will provide valuable evidence-based insights for evaluating the alignment between the Merdeka Curriculum's policy and its implemented

learning resources. This can inform future policy decisions and curriculum reviews to ensure that the mandate for contextual and culturally relevant learning is effectively translated into the textbooks provided to schools.

c. For Teachers

This research will raise awareness about the importance of cultural content in textbooks. These findings can help teachers critically select and adapt materials, as well as supplement textbooks with local cultural content to increase engagement and relevance for students. It can also guide teachers in designing more innovative and contextual teaching strategies.

d. For Students

Ultimately, students will benefit from a more engaging and meaningful learning experience. Textbooks with better representation of local culture can increase motivation, reduce cultural alienation, and empower students to use English as a tool to express their own identities and cultures, thereby improving their overall intercultural communication skills.

G. Definition of Key Terms

English textbooks are structured educational resources specifically designed for teaching and learning the English language. In this study, it refers specifically to the government published series *English for Nusantara* for Junior High School Grades VII, VIII, and IX. These textbooks typically contain lessons, exercises, and assessments that cover various aspects of language acquisition, including grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and cultural elements relevant to English-speaking contexts. They serve as primary tools for educators to guide students through the learning process and facilitate their understanding of the language.

Local culture refers to the unique set of traditions, values, practices, and identities that characterize a specific community or region. In this study, local culture refers to the tangible and intangible elements of Indonesian culture explicitly mentioned or depicted in the *English for Nusantara* textbook. These elements are categorized and analyzed using Yuen's (2011) framework into four dimensions: Products (tangible items, e.g., *Rendang*, *Batik*), Practices (behaviors and rituals, e.g., *Tari Saman*, *gotong royong*), Perspectives (values and beliefs, e.g., respect for elders), and Persons (individuals who represent the culture). In the context of this research, local culture encompasses the

cultural elements that can be integrated into English language learning. By incorporating local culture into the curriculum, educators can enhance the relevance and engagement of the material for students, fostering a deeper connection between the language being learned and the students' own cultural backgrounds.

Content Analysis & Thematic Analysis Content analysis is a systematic research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts and other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). In this study, a sequential explanatory design is employed: (1) Phase 1 - Quantitative Content Analysis is conducted first to measure the frequency and proportional distribution of cultural content; (2) Phase 2 - Qualitative Thematic Analysis is conducted subsequently to explain, elaborate, and contextualize the quantitative findings. The sequential relationship ensures that the qualitative findings are grounded in and responsive to the quantitative patterns observed in the data.

Thematic analysis refers to the six-phase reflexive qualitative method developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2022) for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. In this study, it is applied to interpret the quality of local cultural representations across four analytical dimensions: Depth of Representation, Authenticity and

Diversity, Pedagogical Integration, and Perspective Transmission.

Secondary Schools / Junior High School are educational institutions that provide education to students typically between the ages of 12 to 18, covering grades 7 through 12. In this research, the focus is on middle and high school education in Indonesia. This stage of education is crucial for students as they not only develop language skills but also explore their identities and values, making it an important context for integrating local culture into English language learning.

