



## **THE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL CONTENT IN READING PASSAGES OF THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS *BAHASA INGGRIS* FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADE X-XII**

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### **Abstract**

This research is a descriptive research which is intended to reveal the cultural aspects and how cultural contents are presented in reading passages. The data in this research was obtained from the English textbooks entitled *Bahasa Inggris* for Senior High School grade X-XII written based on curriculum 2013 by Kemendikbud RI. This research employed the descriptive approach with the instrument was the cultural content checklist. After conducting the research, the cultural aspects found in the reading passages were religion and religious rituals; history and politics; foods and drinks; ecology; economy; leisure time, music, and arts; dressing; science and literature; social behaviour, and etiquette; family and male-female relationship; naming systems; geographical names; cultural products; and tribe. Based on the data in this research, it was revealed that Indonesian cultural contents were dominantly used in the reading passages. Furthermore, the presentation of cultural contents was found in forms of monologues, dialogues, and pictures. Since Indonesian cultural contents dominated the reading passages, the evaluation towards these three textbooks needs to be conducted. The cultural contents of the target culture need to be added into the reading passages.

**Key words:** cultural contents, cultural content checklist, Indonesian culture, target culture, English textbooks.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Language and culture are interconnected each other. Learning a language necessarily means learning the culture of that language (William, 2010). Language is a means to convey a particular culture, while culture is by which ones understand how to use a language appropriately. Consequently, culture cannot be abandoned in the language learning. As the matter of fact, cultural contents are embedded into the educational curriculum. As the result, there should be an integration of cultural contents in learning four skills of language. Cultural content, implicitly should be integrated into reading skill. The cultural

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presentation in reading can be in form of cultural words and phrases from geography, occupations, past times, historical events, and personalities (Neff & Rucynski, 2013).

Integrating cultural contents in reading materials is necessary for it may help students improving their reading comprehension skill (Anderson & Pitchert, 1976). There are some research related to the developing textbook in English language teaching. One of them is research which is conducted by Nazirman and Syafe'i (2014) related to the developing pattern book through animation movies as young learners' reading media. This happens because the student's cultural schemata will be shaped at the time they have the cultural knowledge (in forms of cultural contents) in their minds. This cultural knowledge will assist students in understanding and comprehending the texts. The closer relationship student's schemata and the passages have, the better reading comprehension will be achieved (Anderson & Barnitz, 1998). In this way, the cultural contents are necessary due to their role in shaping student's cultural schemata for assisting them in comprehending reading texts.

Byram (in Hinkel, 1999: 201-202) clarifies more about the presentation of cultural contents in the teaching materials. They should provide accurate and up-to-date information, present realistic pictures, present contextual phenomena not separated facts, and correlate the historical and contemporary materials. Further, cultural contents should not stereotype certain cultures.

After a short notice, it was seen that some were un-updated and unrealistic. In addition, from a slight observation it was also seen that reading passages containing Indonesian cultures were dominant. Cultural contents presenting English culture should not be trivialized since the aim of curriculum is to familiarize students with cultural contents of target language (English culture). Since culture is an integral part of language, thus, integrating cultural content in reading passages should be done. In short, this research will investigate cultural content in reading passages of the English textbooks entitled *Bahasa Inggris* for Senior High School grade X-XII.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employed a descriptive research since it tried to describe educational phenomena (in this case cultural content presented in the reading passages) in the English textbooks. Gall (2003: 290) mentioned that descriptive research is a typical quantitative research which describes educational phenomena carefully. Its aim is revealing what particular people or things refer to. The research questions frequently appear in forms of "what is", "how many", "what kinds of", and "how frequently". Using a descriptive approach, this research was intended to reveal the cultural aspects and how the cultural contents were presented in the reading passages.

Data in this research were collected from the three textbooks entitled *Bahasa Inggris* for senior high school grade X, XI, and XII written based on curriculum 2013. The instrument used to collect those data was cultural content checklist proposed by Byram (in Hinkel, 1999: 202) which has been elaborated by Mahmood, Asghar, and Hussain (in Dwiek & Al-Sayeed, 2015: 7-8).

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After conducting the identification towards the reading passages, 15 cultural aspects were found including religion and religious rituals; history and politics; foods and drinks; ecology; economy; leisure time, music, and arts; dressing; science and literature; social behaviours and etiquette; family and male-female relationship; naming systems; geographical names; cultural products; and tribes.

For further details, the findings were explained in some points below:

### a. Religious and religious rituals

Religious and religious rituals was presented in the sentence “*It has the largest number of Muslim of any country*”. Religion in this sentence referred to Islam since the word *Muslim* described the people who follow the religion of Islam. Other sentences which depicted religious and religious rituals aspect were “*Yes, God willing.*”; “*Always remember we have God*”; “*...how to ask for help to God*”; “*God knows everything...*”; “*It takes a man with strong faith to start a communication with God ...*”; “*Rancho had very strong faith in God*”. Since there was no specific religion mentioned, thus, Islam was the only religion presented in all these three English textbooks.

### b. History and politics

History and politics was found in forms of famous figures such as *President of Indonesia, Soekarno* and the first wife of Prince Charles, *Princess Diana*. Further, the ideology or idealism mentioned were *dynamism, colonialism* and *matrilineal systems*.

### c. Foods and Drinks

Three out of five indicators which presented the cultural aspect of foods and drinks were found in the passages: famous dishes; food recipes; and cooking utensils. The famous dishes mentioned were roasted sweet corn and meatball, found in the text *Tanjung Puting*. Nevertheless, there were no international well-known dishes like *rendang, sushi, kari* or typical fast foods like pizza, hotdog, or others were stated in the reading passages. Food recipes were *chocolate, strawberries, whipping cream, and dash almond extract*. Cooking utensils were found in form of modern ones like *microwave* and *refrigerator*.

### d. Education

This aspect appeared in the sentence like “*...students admission system has three phases...*” which referred to educational system. The next phrases found were *high school, Islamic boarding school, state-run school, public school, private school* referring to kinds of school; *arts, geography, social sciences, history* referring to school subjects.

### e. Ecology

Indicators employed in identifying this cultural aspect were rivers, lakes, seas, mountains, animals, weathers, climates, plants, and waterfall. Phrases representing rivers were *River Avon* and “*From the pinnacle of the hill one could see the rapid flowing of stream...*”. There was only one phrase indicating sea in

the passages; that was *Caspian Sea*. Mountains were indicated by phrases like *Preseli Mountains* and *Zagros Mountains*. Animals were coded in words such as *zebra*; *proboscis monkey* and *orangutans*, *fish* and *dinosaurs*. Furthermore, plants were identified in phrases like *seasonal gardens*; *natural woodlands*; *cocoa*; *Palm Oil Plantation*; *red kidney bean flowers*; "... *field of ripe corn*..." Waterfall, the highest number of indicators found in the passages, identified in forms of phrases such as *Cuban Rondo*, *Niagara George*; *Horseshoe Falls*, *the American Falls*, *Bridal Veil Falls*; *Canadian Falls*.

#### **f. Economy**

Economic aspect was also identified in some phrases such as currency and industrial buildings. Currency was found in phrases such as *Rupiah*, *Franc* and *Peso*. Moreover, there were several phrases indicating the activities related to economic development in certain regions or countries. These phrases were coded into the indicator of industrial buildings. The examples of phrases for this indicator were *Mall of America*, *Pike Place Market*; *B & Bs*; *Cihuluy Garden and Glass*; and *Prosperous Company*.

#### **g. Leisure time, music, and arts**

Indicators used to identify this aspect were entertaining activities, popular music, traditional music, famous singer, actors, actresses, famous painters, and entertainment. Entertaining activities were coded in form of phrases like *drawing*, *painting*, *creating manga*, *festival of sounds*, *classical music*, *folk music*; '*soul of Seattle*'. Some famous singers were also identified like *Yusuf Islam* and *Siti Nurhaliza*.

Meanwhile, the only actor encountered in the passage was *Tom Cruise* and the only name appeared to be an actress was *Julia Roberts*. Entertainment indicator, in addition, were identified in several phrases such as *CJes Entertainment*, *the artiste agency for JYJ*, *JYJ World Tour Concert in Singapore*, *at Singapore Indoor Stadium*, *Space Needle*, and *Music Projects*.

#### **h. Dressing**

The aspect of dressing was identified by using some indicators such as male and female's dress, formal dress, casual dress, and dress code for certain occasions like marriage and funeral. Phrases indicating male and female's dress were *theatre gown* which represented female's dress. There was no male's dress encountered in the passage. Formal dress was identified in the phrase *uniform*, while casual dress was presented in forms of *shirt*, *skirt*, and *jeans*.

#### **i. Science and literature**

Only two indicators of this cultural aspect were identified in reading passages: different field of literature and biography of important persons. The different fields of literature was coded in form of phrase *science fiction*, whereas the biography of important persons was found in form of text about Parker Pearson.

#### **j. Social behaviours and etiquette**

This cultural aspect had three indicators namely greeting and parting expressions, exchanging gifts, and acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Only one out of three cultural indicators was present, that was acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. The acceptable and unacceptable behaviours were stated in form of phrases such as "*Perhaps now more than at any other moment in the*

*history of the world, society, government, and statesmanship need to be based upon the highest code of morality and ethics.*” Those were the acceptable behaviours. The unacceptable ones, in contrary, were “...no soldier or civil servants are above the law”; “...she was constantly teased by her classmate for failing in junior high school.”; “... no one has any right to make people feel inferior”.

Not only did the passages presented acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, but there were also several phrases indicating social behaviour and etiquette in form of habits. The examples of phrases and sentences presenting this indicator were “...wearing black and white clothes”; *they are nomadic and live their life based on hunting and gathering...*”. Most of the habitual activities found in the reading passages depicted the tradition of certain tribes exist in Indonesia (Source Culture) which were Baduy and Anak Dalam.

#### **k. Family and male-female relationships**

Cultural aspect indicators to identify this aspect were the role of men and women, equality between men and women, family gathering, and family relationship. The only indicators found was family relationship, while the other three cultural aspect indicators were absent. The indicators which were present in the reading passages were *sister, brother, father, his wife, sons, his daughter; his own cousins, uncle.*

#### **l. Naming systems**

Naming systems were identified by using the indicators such as first names and male and female names. First names were identified in several names such as *Yusuf Islam, Cat Steven, Tom Cruise, Andrea Hirata, A. Fuadi, Johny, Rancho Lucas; George Sebastian; John Donaldson; Jeanne Forestier; General Istu Hari Subagio; Birute Galdikas.* The first names of those are *Yusuf, Cat, Tom, Andrea, A (Ahmad), Rancho; George and John, Jeane, Hari, and Birute* respectively. The first names like *Yusuf, Ahmad, and Hari* were typical Asian people’s names. Meanwhile, names like *Cat, Tom, John, Adrea, Jeane, George, Rancho and Birute* were typical names of western people.

Further, the female names were identified in the phrases like *Caroline, Hannah, Alia, Saidah, Siti Nurhaliza, , JK Rowling, Nura, Juna, Kiki, Dinda, Sherly, Julie; Tri Rismaharini; Loisel; Ramponneau; Jeanne Forestier; Matilda.* The male names, in the other hand, were found in some phrases such as *Yusuf Islam, Cat Steven, Tom Cruise, Andrea Hirata, A. Fuadi; Johny; Rancho Lucas; George Sebastian, John Donaldson, Hari Subagio, Birute Galdikas.*

#### **m. Geographical names**

The indicators employed to identify this cultural aspect were regions in Asia, America, Australia, Europe, and Africa. Regions in Asia were found in the phrases like *Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bali, Sulawesi, Borneo, Papua; Asia, Azarbijian, Kerman region, and Baluchestan region; Banten; Jambi, Kaduketu, Bukit Duabelas, the island of Sumatera, south of Jambi province, South Sumatera; etc.* Countries involved as the cultural aspect in the reading passages were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippine, Azarbijian, and Baluchestan.

Regions in America presented in some phrases such as *Minnesota, USA, Fort Niagara Scene, Indian Village, Canadian province of Ontario, Seattle, Emerald City, and Freemont; Bainbridge Island, San Juan Islands, Friday Harbor); Hatfield and 25 Saint John Court; and Mulkiteo*. Most of those regions were the prominent ones in America.

#### **n. Cultural products**

Cultural products were identified in the words and phrases such as *Pottery, animal bones, Stonehenge, Durrington Walls, plates, monument, ceramic; plates; vessels; bowls; Downtown's galleries; boutiques; coffeeshouses; cafes; art galleries; graves; perahu klotok; lost civilizations, abandoned cities, and puzzling monument*.

#### **o. Tribes**

The last cultural aspect identified was tribe. There were three phrases found that presented tribe in the reading passages. They were *Baduy People; Suku Anak Dalam; and Minangkabau tribe*. All of these tribes exist in Indonesia.

The analysis revealed that the cultural aspect which was prominently embedded in the reading passages was geographical names, as much as 51 coded-cultural-words. Almost a half of the total number of geographical names in the reading passages were dominated by Indonesian cultural contents. It was also found that the reading topics mostly discussed tourism destinations, social behaviours and etiquette, and current issues occurred in Indonesia. Text about *Tanjung Puting National Park, Baduy People, Suku Anak Dalam, President Soekarno: Speech at the Opening of the Bandung Conference April 18, 1955, and Bukit Barisan Military Command, and Indonesia Opens Regional Recycling Conference* were the instances of reading materials containing Indonesian culture.

Regarding to how cultural contents are presented in reading passages, Adaskou (1990: 5) mentioned some ways to convey cultural contents in the teaching materials such as “informative or descriptive texts; texts about foreign attitudes and opinions; dialogues; questionnaires, contextualized practice activities; writing tasks; lexis—particularly idioms—and unfamiliar collocations; the exponent of communicative functions; and illustration in student’s book and other visuals”. In line with the idea proposed by Adaskou, reading passages in these three English textbooks were identified in forms of monologue texts especially descriptive, narrative and informative texts (factual report), dialogues, and pictures.

Cultural content inserted in the descriptive text can be in form of the description of a person, an animal, a place, and a thing. The description of a person could be seen in the text *an email from Hannah, a letter from Saidah, and the text My Best Friend*. In addition, the description of a thing could be seen in the text of *Humber Bridge*. It described the length of the bridge (1,410 meters), and the materials it was made of. Meanwhile, a description of a place can be seen in the text *Tanjung Puting National Park, Visiting Niagara Waterfall, and Batu City*.

Almost similar to a descriptive text due to its similar text organization structure, a factual report comprises about a group of people, animals, places, and

things. However, a factual report is more general than a descriptive text. Some examples of factual report found were *The Secrets of Stonehenge*, *Persian*, *Baduy People*, *Suku Anak Dalam/Orang Rimba*. Cultural content in narrative text, furthermore, is often given in form of fairy tales, fables, legend, or myths. Cultural contents found in the narrative texts are in form of moral lessons, specifically belongs to social behavior and etiquette. The instances of narrative text found were *The Enchanted Fish* and *Vanity and Pride*.

Text in form of news also contains some cultural contents. In these English textbooks, the news can be found in the text *Bukit Barisan Military Command*, *Jakarta Metropolitan Area*, *Tenants Advised to Obey regulations on Apartment*, *Indonesia Opens Regional Recycling Conference*. The cultural contents mostly found in the news text are naming system, geographical name, and history and politics. Through learning this news item, students are enriched with the current happenings and information around them.

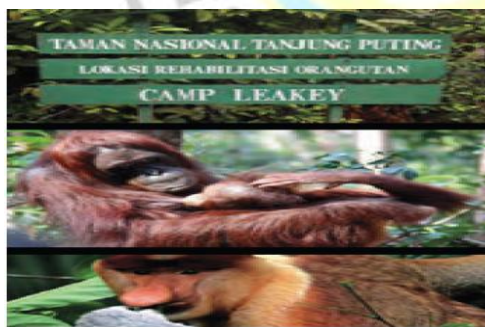
a. Cultural Content in Form of Dialogue

The difference between monologue and dialogue is in the way the writer's thought is presented. In monologue text, the writer's idea is presented through explanation, description, analysis, or report. Conversely, in a dialogue, the writer involves two or more people to discuss a particular issue. The dialogues are sometimes found in monologue text as to emphasize or to contextualize the story in a monologue text. In the text of *Congratulations*, for example, the dialogue between the boss and his friends who congratulate him on his success.

b. Cultural Content in Form of Pictures

Several examples of pictures function as the illustration of the reading passages in these three English textbooks were provided in the explanation below:

i. Picture 6.2 (Textbook Grade X)



Source: <http://orangutanexplore.com>  
Picture 6.2

The picture is colored. It portrays the orangutans domesticated in the Taman Nasional Tanjung Puting, *Lokasi Rehabilitasi Orangutan*. The picture is in form of real thing, not in form of cartoon. However, the picture is not really captivating as it is not presented in a good angle. The cultural content presented in this picture is ecological aspect, especially animal.

ii. Picture 8.2 (Textbook Grade X)



Source: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/79/Stonehenge\\_from\\_the\\_northeast.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/79/Stonehenge_from_the_northeast.jpg)  
Picture 8.2

The picture is coloured. It depicts the uniqueness and the mystery of Stonehenge. It is one of the cultural products in Wales, England. The picture is interesting. The cultural content presented in this picture is cultural product, specifically Stonehenge.

iii. Picture 1.1 (Textbook Grade XI)



The picture is in form of cartoon. In other words, this picture is not in form of authentic material. However, it is appealing since the colour is good and it reflects what is stated in the story well. It portrays the fisherman and the fish which can talk.

iv. Picture 3.1 (Textbook Grade XI)



The picture depicts a great orator who is the president of Indonesia. It is coloured in black and white. Since this picture portrays the famous Indonesian political figure, it can be concluded that it contains the cultural content history and politic.

There were 22 pictures containing cultural contents found in the reading passages of those three English textbooks. As mentioned by Byram (in Hinkel, 1999: 202) pictures and illustrations in the textbook must realistically portray the cultural contents. After scrutinizing the passages together with the pictures and illustrations, mostly the pictures were found realistic. Those pictures and illustration were indeed the real objects taken from the real situation. For instances Picture 6.2 which portrayed orangutans in the Taman Nasional Tanjung Puting, Lokasi Rehabilitasi Orangutan. The picture realistically depicted the orangutans and where they could live.

Not only were the pictures portrayed realistically, but they were also fully coloured. Thus they were more attractive to students. The only picture which was two-tone coloured was the picture of President Soekarno when giving a speech in Asia-Africa Conference. The drafter made it two-tone-coloured-picture probably due to the tendency to portray the authentic context of the picture. Overall, the pictures in English textbooks *Bahasa Inggris* had fulfilled the requirements for a good teaching material proposed by Tomlinson (2011). According to him, a good teaching material should have the characters like novelty, variety, attractive presentation, and appealing contents.

The pictures encountered in reading passages of those three English textbooks have two functions: as the illustration of previous statements and as anchorage (if the image comes first, followed by the text explanation) as stated by Barthes (in Kress, 2006: 18). The pictures accompanying reading passages like President Soekarno giving a speech in Asia-Africa Conference functions as the illustration of the text. Additionally, pictures which function as the anchorage were the Humber Bridge picture and the picture of Persian Pottery. The picture was given first, followed by the explanation below it. Cultural content presented in this picture is cultural product, specifically the cultural product of London.

Cultural content in form of monologues and dialogues were also helpful in developing student's competence in carrying out communication orally and written in English. Hall (2002: 111) further explains that language learning should fulfil both learner's goal in learning the language and the need of sociocultural circumstance around them. Hence, by providing students with the context in



which certain expressions, utterances, and attitudes were used, the language learning had guide students to fulfil the needs of sociocultural environment around them.

## D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### 1. Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn upon the research findings in chapter IV. Cultural aspects found in the reading passages of those three English textbooks were religion and religious rituals; history and politics; foods and drinks; education; ecology; economy; leisure time, music, and arts; dressing; science and literature; social behaviours and etiquette; family and male-female relationship; and first names. Indonesian cultural contents found more frequent compared to cultural contents of target culture (English speaking countries' cultures). In fact, reading passages which discuss Indonesian tourism destinations, educational systems, and currents issues happening in Indonesia are found more often in those three textbooks. Words or phrases that reflect Indonesian culture were found in form of naming systems, geographical names, tribes, historical events, and social behavior and etiquette.

Furthermore, the presentation of cultural contents in these three English textbooks were found in forms of monologues, dialogues, and pictures. Monologue texts employed in the passages were descriptive, narratives, news, procedure, and factual report. Dialogues were found in the topics of expressions like congratulations, compliment, asking for suggestion, and others. Pictures presenting the cultural contents were mostly authentic and coloured. As a result, they were helpful for students to gain understanding on those reading passages since pictures were interesting as well as gave the context of reading contents.

### 2. Suggestions

Based on the research findings and conclusions above, some suggestions can be offered. *First*, cultural contents of target culture should be added more in the reading passages of these three English textbooks. Indonesian culture should not be the dominant cultural contents in the reading passages. *Second*, cultural aspects employed in the reading passages should be delivered explicitly by teachers during the teaching and learning process. Students might be unable to identify the cultural contents in reading passages due to its implicit presentation.

For the other researcher in this field, it is suggested that they can elaborate more significant cultural-related-issues found in reading passages of English textbook for senior high school students. Reading passages which highlight gender bias, human right issues, religious issues, or international relationship issues can be further analysed in detailed ways.

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