

## The representation of Indonesian cultural diversity in middle school English textbooks

Firman Parlindungan<sup>1\*</sup>, Irfan Rifai<sup>2</sup>, and Afida Safriani<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Health, Faculty of Public Health, University of Teuku Umar, Meulaboh, Aceh, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Department of English Teacher Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, exposure to the English language is primarily mediated through the use of English textbooks. What cultural knowledge and whose culture are represented in these textbooks become a critical issue because culture interweaves both language and thought. With this in mind, this study aims to examine how Indonesian cultural diversity and whose cultures are represented in middle school English textbooks. We argue that diversity and multicultural perspectives represented in these textbooks are the core of English language learning and teaching. We also contend that language textbooks play a pivotal role in the acquisition of both linguistic and cultural knowledge of English. Drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) semiotic approach to analyzing textual and non-textual representations of cultures, we found that the 2013 English textbooks for Grades 7 and 8 permeate Indonesian cultural values and practices that do not provide a balanced and equal depiction of Indonesian cultural diversity. The findings suggest the importance of inclusive representation of the richness of Indonesian local culture in a more salient manner, especially those of minority groups. Pedagogically, teachers are expected to design language materials with cultural sensitivity and appropriation for the inclusiveness of other cultural values that might not be covered in the textbooks.

**Keywords:** Cultural diversity; English teaching; English textbooks; middle school; semiotic analysis

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### INTRODUCTION

The practice of English language teaching (ELT) around the globe acknowledges the role of textbooks as the essential source of learning as Richards (2001) argued that "much of the language teaching that occurs throughout the world today could not take place without the extensive use of commercial materials" (p. 251). Widodo (2016) maintains that a textbook is one of the curriculum materials with prescribed competencies and procedures, which mediates language learning. Fundamental to this discussion is how textbooks shape the practice of ELT at the micro level of a classroom

and inherently determine whose culture is valued and learned through texts that serve as a curriculum artifact that facilitates language learning (Lantolf, 2011). Widodo (2016) argues that teachers approach and consider textbooks in the classroom differently, which is in most cases teachers are often "spoon-fed by the whole package of the curriculum" (p. 140), including textbooks. Cultural portrayal in textbooks has considerably received much attention of many researchers whose work mostly sheds lights on the presence of global vis-à-vis localized content and perspective embedded in texts (e.g., Pashmforoosh &

\* Corresponding Author  
Email: firman@utu.ac.id

Babaii, 2015; Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011; Sherlock, 2016; Siddiqie, 2011, Su, 2016; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Xiong & Qian, 2012). Other researchers also documented the response of English teachers to the portrayal of culture in English textbooks and the way in which the textbooks enacted the embedded culture in the texts into their actual practice (e.g. Chun, 2014; Forman, 2013).

Relevance to this study is the review of the existing literature investigating English textbooks that are currently used across Asia particularly in Southeast Asian contexts. The current contribution by Dat (2008) characterized the textbooks in use in Southeast Asia as “imported coursebooks, in-country coursebooks, and regional textbooks” (p. 265). The majority of ELT practitioners in Southeast Asia use imported coursebooks for global textbooks, while in-country coursebooks commonly refer to domestic or local textbooks. In comparison to the two former categories of textbooks, the latter are relatively unique in that they are designed by non-native English speakers, but exported and used in neighboring countries. For instance, the textbooks published by Singapore Asian Publications are commonly used in Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam (Dat, 2008).

Within the context of Indonesia, most of the imported textbook which mostly refer to ‘global coursebooks’ widely used at a university level due to the teacher trust in English accuracy in internationally published coursebooks (Zacharias, 2005) and autonomy in textbook selection. Despite the benefits of global coursebooks with regard to linguistic accuracy and a wide range of topics and genres (Dat, 2008) among other advantages, teachers struggled to interpret and engage with cultural content featured in the coursebook (Zacharias, 2005). The teachers’ struggle is most likely attributed to their unfamiliarity with the ideological content and information-related target-culture of English speaking countries, such as American and British cultures (Balenghizadeh & Jamal Motahed, 2010; Forman, 2013, Pashfroorosh & Babaii, 2015).

Following Dat’s (2008) three categorizations of ELT textbooks: imported, in-country, and regional textbook, this study aims to investigate the representation of Indonesian cultural diversity within the in-country textbook called “When English Rings a Bell” for secondary education specifically geared for Seventh and Eighth Grades (Grades VII and VIII). The fact that Indonesia is diverse in multiple ways including language, ethnicity, tradition, and religion, to name a few, validates the rationale for this study to critically examine how the cultural diversity is addressed and represented in the English textbook. Moreover, this study is worth investigating due to the fact that the textbook, “When English Rings a Bell,” is mandatorily used for secondary schools across Indonesia, which warrants a closer examination of whose culture is being represented in the textbook.

This study can provide the critical evaluation of current middle school English textbooks published by

the Indonesian Government, particularly in terms of discussion on cultural representations within the Indonesian cultural diversity. It will enrich a scholarly discussion on the role of local cultures in ELT materials. Practically, the analysis of both textual and visual narratives from the textbooks can inform teachers, researchers, and policy makers to assess whether the textbooks promote cultural inclusiveness and canalize meaning for ELT teaching or leave biases, stereotypes, and prejudices.

### **Linguistic and cultural diversity in Indonesia**

Indonesia is a linguistically and culturally diverse nation. More than seven hundreds of local vernaculars exist with a range of various dialects from different ethnic groups (Marcellino, 2008; Widodo, 2016). National cultures can be observed in cities across Indonesia reaching its countryside with different local languages, but the national language or the national lingua franca is Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian language) legitimized in the Indonesian constitution as a language of wider-communication among Indonesia people who do not share the same local language. Widodo (2016) observed that although Bahasa Indonesia is accepted as a national lingua franca, Indonesians often code-switch from a local language to another or from Bahasa Indonesia to a local language and in vice versa. Given linguistic diversity in Indonesia, Widodo and Fardhani (2011) group language use in Indonesia into three main categories of language use: a national lingua franca (i.e., Bahasa Indonesia), majority indigenous languages (e.g., Javanese, Minangkabau, Sundanese), and minority indigenous languages (e.g., Alas, Luwu). In daily encounters, most of the Indonesians use either their local languages or Bahasa Indonesia. The majority indigenous languages, such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau exert greater influence on Bahasa Indonesia and national cultures in terms of assimilation and acculturation. As Widodo (2016) reported, “majority indigenous languages are the languages of which the number of speakers exceeds 1 million, and minority indigenous languages are viewed as those spoken by less than 200,000 people” (p. 130).

In order to explore how Indonesian local cultures are represented in English textbooks and whose cultures are being represented considering the diversity of Indonesian cultures, we draw upon the concept of cultures and role of cultures in ELT materials. Analyzing cultural representation requires a critical understanding of what culture means. Spradley (1980) points out that the construct of culture embraces three fundamental components of human life: (1) cultural behavior: what people do; (2) cultural knowledge: what people know; and (3) cultural artifact: what things people make and use. As an extension of the real world, textbooks as a classroom entity should be closely related to cultural aspects of people, particularly for language teaching because culture and language are entangled (Canagarajah, 1999). Engaging students’ own cultural experiences and values in language teaching can

promote better outcomes of learning (McKay, 2002; Shahed, 2013). In contrast, excluding local cultural information from language teaching or textbooks might create assumptions that students' own experiences and values are marginalized (Canale, 2016; McKay, 2012; Mukundan, 2005).

The role of English materials gains prominence in socializing cultural elements embedded in the target language instruction. A number of studies highlighting cultural representation in English textbooks captured the contested embodiment of local vis-à-vis international culture within the textbooks (e.g., Shin, Eslami, and Chen, 2011; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Yamada, 2010), the ideology of English (e.g., Xiong & Qian, 2012), and the stereotypical view of a particular cultural group portrayed in the textbook (e.g., Siddiqie, 2011).

Investigating the representation of culture in the English textbook adopted in Chinese high schools, Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2012) reported that the textbook highlighted a target culture in a greater amount than the local and other cultures. This finding challenges the inclusiveness of the textbook in developing students' knowledge of English and culture. In a similar vein, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2015) compared localized- and international English textbooks used in many language centers in Iran. They uncovered the absence of the source culture represented in the localized textbooks and the visible evidence of intercultural elements that are aesthetically and sociologically embodied in the international textbooks. With few references of the source culture, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad observed that it is most unlikely to enhance students' intercultural understanding without adequate exposure to similarities and differences between target and local cultures.

Song (2013) also examined patterns of cultural representations embedded in Korean EFL textbooks using content analysis. It is found that the textbooks advocate American English and culture by neglecting local cultures at a superficial level of discussion. Song also found inequality of race and gender in the textbooks because white American male characters are more dominant over others. The same findings of Su's (2016) a study examining Taiwan EFL textbooks positioned American English and culture as the only acceptable standard form of English.

Situated in Bangladesh, Siddiqie (2011) analyzed the textbooks for a secondary education level (6 – 12 grades) that were designed based on the new curriculum. The study suggests that the textbook placed greater emphasis on the mixed/blended representation of local and international cultures. Although promoting an intercultural perspective that is evident across the textbooks of multiple grades, the textbooks for grades 9-10 in particular depict stereotypical images of a certain cultural group through overgeneralization without adequate updated evidence. While focusing on secondary school English textbooks, Widodo's (2018) current research has explored the incorporation of moral

values into the existing Indonesian English textbooks particularly for Grade 10. Drawing on Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics (SFL), Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodality, and Fairclough's (1992, 1995) critical discourse analysis, the study demonstrated the prominent role of textbooks as a silent agent of character virtues manifested in the Indonesian local culture. Such values are represented in textual and non-textual artifacts, such as images, graphs, and diagrams.

Cultural analysis of English textbooks, in spite of the diversification of the local culture within a given country, has become a small but growing interest of researchers (see Cho & Park, 2016; Dinh & Sharifian, 2017; Jackson, 2017). Given the fact that Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in culture, language, ethnicity, and religion, it is crucial to critically unpack whose values are being added and favored in ELT materials as explored in Widodo's (2018) study. The present study, thus, seeks to examine cultural representation in the locally published English textbooks for secondary schools in Indonesia to continue intellectual dialogues on this topic.

## **METHOD**

English in Indonesia is formally taught beginning from junior high schools, which are from grades 7 to 9. In each grade, junior high school students receive 160 minutes lessons in a week. The number of hours is normally divided into 4 (weekly) class periods. The government, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, provides and approves English textbooks to be used across Indonesian schools. Those textbooks are expected to main learning resources and made available and accessible for all teachers and students across the country as core teaching materials.

According to the Center for the Indonesian Curriculum and Textbooks (Puskurbuk, 2016) of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the national curriculum has been changing over times since 1947. The 2013 English Curriculum is the most recent product of language policy and curriculum development in Indonesia. Framed in this curriculum system, English textbooks place greater emphasis on local cultures. They are produced massively in the e-book form and distributed freely online. For this study, we analyzed two current English textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Cultures of Indonesia in 2014 entitled "Bahasa Inggris: When English Rings a Bell." The two textbooks are designed for seventh and eighth graders (13-14 years old) and follow the 2013 Indonesian National Curriculum. The reason we focus our analysis on these grades are: (1) in the curriculum, English is officially taught in Grade 7 and offered in Grade 8. The textbooks are designed for these students, and (2) the images and the descriptions of the characters, cultural values, behaviors, and artifacts are crucial parts of the textbook as they convey multiple interpretations. For junior high schools (Grades 7-8), basic competencies

are broken down into cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. These competencies are delineated based on such core competences as different domains of spiritual attitudes, social attitudes, knowledge, and skills, i.e. understand knowledge (facts, concepts, and procedures) based on curiosity about science, technology, arts, and culture as well as observed phenomena (Widodo, 2016). The textbooks are organized into multiple functions: interpersonal, transactional, and functional texts that focus on descriptive, recount, narrative, procedure, and factual reports (Widodo, 2016). In practice, the initial implementation of the K-13 English curriculum was limited to certain grades in each level of secondary education because the government wanted to examine how the new concept and content of the curriculum worked in school.

In analyzing the usage of images and the development of the characters, we employed Kress and van Leeuwen’s semiotic approach (2006). Weninger and Kiss (2013) suggest that analyzing learning materials, such as textbooks need a careful examination of the complex process of meaning making mediated through textual and visual texts. Meaning is socially

constructed by the interaction of different agencies: students, teachers, and materials. Therefore, Weninger and Kiss (2013) argue that “texts, images, and tasks that form an activity should be treated together because it is their interplay that facilitates learning and creates opportunities for cultural messages to surface in the lesson” (p. 696). Using a semiotic approach, we are able to uncover the meanings of the texts, images, and tasks that concur with Spradley’s (1980) three fundamental components of human life: (1) cultural behavior, (2) cultural knowledge, and (3) cultural artifacts. It is important to note that the entity, ‘people,’ is the main cultural dimension or a cultural actor or agent in which their representation in the textbooks is seen as ‘characters.’

Characters are a representation of unique cultural ethnical groups. These characters in the textbooks, along with other images and descriptive texts, are categorized using Spradley’s (1980) three fundamental components of human life. Table 1 and Table 2 below show a distribution of our data in pagination, which might illustrate how each element and unit of analysis represented in the textbook.

Table 1. The representation of three fundamental components of human life through characters, images, and descriptive texts (Grade VII)

	Images	Characters (in pages)						Texts
		Udin	Edo	Siti	Lina	Dayu	Beni	
Cultural- Behavior	4, 6, 12,16,155	12, 48, 126	25, 136, 157	54, 79, 126	7, 81, 98	80, 126	7, 52,74,	30
Cultural- Knowledge	5, 34, 60, 61, 97,	151	152	151	152	125	30	153, 62
Cultural- Artifacts	27, 28, 119,120, 159, 160	159	27	28, 159	30	27	27	

In the textbook for Grade 7, the three fundamental components of human life appear on some pages listed in Table 1. For example, page four of the textbook (Activity 2) provides four samples of interactions for students to practice greetings in English. In this section, Udin is illustrated as greeting his dad while he is still on bed. Siti, on the other hand, is illustrated as greeting her mother who is busy preparing breakfast in the kitchen. She is all ready to go to school. Another girl character, Lina, is illustrated as saying “good morning” to her mother when she is headed for school.

The example of cultural behavior on page four of the textbook portrays the expected gender-ness behaviors and social roles of Indonesians. The presence of Udin’s father in his room may imply that in the context of Indonesian culture, the boy needed someone to wake him up in the morning while the girls, Siti and Lina, are more independent. Pages 6, 12,16, and 155, also represent more cultural behavior issues such as boys walking ahead of girls (Page 6) and boys doing sport (Page 6). The six characters used to introduce activities or as illustrations of activities. The number of

the pages shows the frequency of their appearances to represent the three components of life. Further descriptions of the other fundamental components of human life are available in the findings and discussion sections of this article.

Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) five presentation analytical perspectives were used to help analyze what the characters and the images are representing. They are focalization, affect, pathos, ambience, and graduation. Focalization is the point of view of the mode. It is about “who tells” the story or from whose eyes the story is created. When seeing the mode from both Affect and Pathos perspectives, we emphasize the emotional impacts that the images or texts try to accomplish to the reader. The use of the colors in the images or characters, ambience, was also analyzed. Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) mentioned that the semiotic meaning of color is a visual resource that can serve three meta-functions: ideational (appearance of things), textual (showing contrasts), and interpersonal (indicating emotional effect on viewers). When coming to textual analysis using the graduation perspective, we aimed to analyze the

evaluative meaning (adverb-based evaluation) of the texts and images and their descriptions. As such, we analyzed the character, cultural behavior, cultural

knowledge, and cultural artifacts embedded in textual and visual narratives.

Table 2. The representation of three fundamental components of human life through characters, images, and descriptive texts (Grade VIII)

	Images	Characters (in pagination)						Texts
		Udin	Edo	Siti	Lina	Dayu	Beni	
Cultural- Behavior	9,87, 97	14, 32, 100	11,32, 100	32, 100, 175	100, 160	97, 160, 175	14, 76	48, 100, 200
Cultural- Knowledge	68, 149, 150							207, 155
Cultural- Artifacts								141, 48, 27, 30, 31

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This textbook analysis aims to investigate the representation of Indonesian local cultures in the two middle school English textbooks. In this analysis, we semiotically examined whose cultures are represented and how such cultures are portrayed in the two textbooks. The units of the analysis were verbal texts, images, and tasks, which reflect Indonesian local cultures. In this section, we would like to report findings organized into four main themes: characters as cultural agents, cultural behavior, cultural knowledge, and cultural artifacts.

**Representation of characters as cultural agents**

Six students' characters and two teachers' characters are represented in the two English textbooks: "When English Rings a Bell." The students' characters are named Beni, Lina, Udin, Dayu, Siti, and Edo. The two

teachers do not have specific names, but one is a male and the other is a female. These characters are used throughout the textbooks. As Sahril (2014) points out, those characters are claimed to be representing Indonesian diversity from cultural, geographical, religious, and gender differences.

As can be seen in Figure 1, a male character like Udin is said to represent Muslim boys from Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara Barat. His physical appearance is illustrated with eyeglasses (in the seventh grade textbook), curly hair, and tanned brown skin. The second is the character of Beni who represents Christian boys from eastern parts of Indonesia as well as Chinese descendants. Beni has straight hair and light skin. Another male character is Edo who has dark brown skin, and curly hair, and he is a representation of Papuans.



Figure 1. The portrayal of characters in "When English Rings a Bell" (Grade VII, 2014, pp. 1-11)

In addition to the male characters, three female student characters include Siti, Dayu, and Lina. Siti represents Muslim girls from over Indonesia who dress in an Islamic way. Dayu is a Hindu girl from Bali wearing a headband. Lina represents the Chinese descendant from Medan with a bow ribbon in her hair. The following series of images is the illustration of their appearances.

In Figure 2, the visual descriptions of the characters, however, seem to be different from one book to another (VII and VIII). The first difference lies in the overall style of drawing that influences the clarity of the

visual representation of the characters. Among the six main characters, Dayu and Udin, are represented differently in the eighth grade textbook. Dayu, a Balinese girl is portrayed as having brighter skin without the headband, and Udin representing a Muslim boy is depicted as no longer wearing glasses.

The illustrators of the two books are different. The different illustrators of the eighth grade textbook may have had different ideas on how to represent a Muslim boy and a Balinese girl. However, why these two characters are different remains unclear. Stereotyping people wearing glasses may influence either the seventh

or the eighth grade textbook illustrators when adding or omitting the glasses from the Udin character. We argue that the difference in the representation of Udin, reveals gaps in the composition process of the books. Wallace (n.d.), a known book illustrator, suggests that both

writers and illustrators need to work together during the creative process to avoiding a misinterpretation of the descriptive narrative, which the writer expects the reader to see.

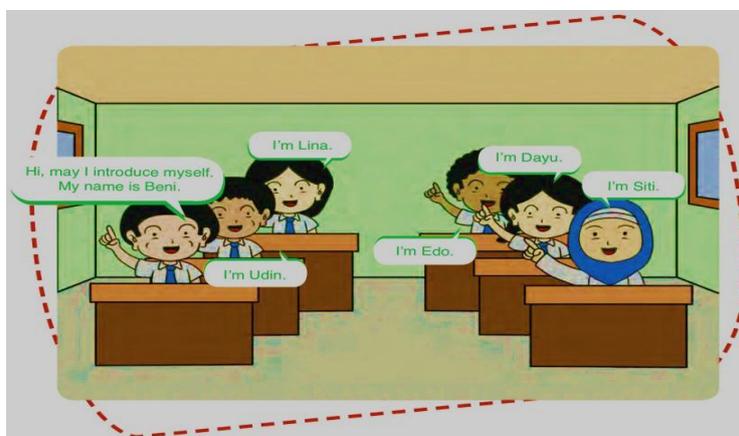


Figure 2. The depiction of characters in “When English Rings a Bell” (Grade VIII, p. 9)

To this end, the characters of the two textbooks depict indigenous people of Indonesia as described by the skin color, hairstyles, names of the characters, religion, and geographical consideration. For example, Edo represents Papuan boys, where the majority of the people has darker skin color with curly hair and is Christian. Compared to Edo, Udin has brighter skin color represented Muslim boys from the western part of Indonesia where the majority is Muslim and have typical straight hair. Instead of using American characters like in the study by Song (2013) analyzing cultural representation in Korean EFL textbooks, the two Indonesian English textbooks showcase a close representation of characters to local cultures. However, we argue that these depictions might not be appropriate to better represent cultural diversity of Indonesia because it might lead to possible stereotypes of either majority or minority groups.

**The depiction of cultural behavior**

The value of local Indonesian cultures permeates the images and texts in the textbooks indicating cultural behavior of politeness and discipline. First, Indonesia students are expected to show good conduct and respect when interacting with others. For example, in the textbooks, students are expected to lower their head or kiss their parents’ hands when shaking a hand (see Figure 3). This handshaking ritual is usually performed when a child leaves home or when returning home. In both the textbooks, this cultural tradition is portrayed in the discourse of leaving for and returning from school scenes. The act of handshaking is an act of showing respect to parents. For this reason, students should lower their head when shaking a hand for greeting and parting parents, but they do not need to do so when shaking a hand with peers. The following excerpts from the textbooks illustrate how handshaking is performed with parents.



Figure 3. Handshaking as a cultural ritual in “When English Rings a Bell“ (Grade VII, pp. 3-5)

The act of handshaking in social interaction between students and teacher and that between students

and their parents while lowering head is common and expected throughout Indonesia regardless of a

geographic location, religion, or social status. According to Forshee (2006), “Indonesian etiquette involves a formal politeness to others that requires deference... kin and elders enjoy respect...” (p. 44). The act that younger people should lower their heads when shaking older people’s hands is to show respect. The habit of hand kissing or handshaking is not particularly predominated by Indonesians. In another context, Duque (2007) found that the act of kissing a hand symbolizes “an act of submission” when a subordinate or someone with a lower socio-economic status performs this hand kissing ritual, but it becomes an act of recognition when performed by a superior. Rachmadiana (2012) argues that hand kissing and bowing are two ways of communicating and interacting between groups of different ages (younger to the elderly) that uniquely become the cultural habits of Madurese, Javanese, and Sundanese ethnic groups. The latter two are the two most dominant ethnic groups in Indonesia. The hand shaking or handkissing tradition in Indonesia, in our argument, does not necessarily resemble submission or recognition. For many of us, it is carried out as means of showing respect and love of the young ones to the elderly. A value, which due to cultural globalization, has changed into “high five-ing” or other forms of greetings or salutations.

Second, we found that the use of images, dialogues, and tasks in the textbooks also expose familial and societal values that involve children’s assignment of household chores in their spare time, particularly those related to cleaning and taking care of gardens, a house, or pets. In the context of Indonesian culture, the act of assigning children to do household chores is usually based on adults’ intention of ‘disciplining’ or task sharing. Household chore assignment by adults, however, may also reveal the societal concept of gender roles. Klein, Graesch, and Izquierdo (2009) studying children’s household chores in Los Angeles families found that household chores assignment indicates “more about parents’ perceptions than about the nature and quality of children’s involvement in household work” (p. 100). Older children, particularly female children in the household tend to take more responsibilities on tasks. Attitudes towards sex roles in the context of cultural practices can be seen from a traditional or non-traditional viewpoint. The former positions women as a caregiver who is responsible for the welfare and cleanliness of the house. Hence, in this view, girls are often educated to fulfill such expectations. Children have been traditionally assigned to household chores related to cleaning a house. Indonesian males, on the other hand, have been traditionally viewed as a breadwinner and a leader in the family. The main responsibilities of adult males in the family are to make a living for the family, and they are also responsible for the education of their family members. Boys, for this matter, are often seen as the successors of their fathers and are traditionally given more access to higher education and opportunities (see Putri & Lestari, 2015). Boys are usually assigned to do

more physical house chores like taking up water from the well and filling up the bath tub for the whole family members or fixing family’s vehicles. Figure 4 shows how a traditional view of household chores for boys depicted in the Indonesian English textbook.



Figure 4. Traditional household roles (Grade VII, p. 126)

The following illustration of household assignment (Figure 5), somehow, represents the non-traditional perspectives on sex roles, which cross the boundaries of traditional sex roles. It is portrayed that a father cooks; a mother sweeps the floor; a daughter waters plants; and a little brother washes his bicycle. The portrayal of the father cooking demonstrates a shift in the sex role concept or a perception of male roles in the family; whereas it seems acceptable now to find that a father cooks for the family. Utomo (2016) confirmed that through her study of attitudes towards work and family roles among later-year university students in Jakarta and Makassar in 2004, there is a shift in gender equality between the generations of the samples and their parents. This shift revolves around sharing arrangement of responsibilities in earning versus caring within marriage that men can do housework and women can get employed.

The assignment of domestic chores from adults to children continues at school. The task from the textbook for the eighth grade shows that there is a continuity of similar expectations from home to school. Figure 6 displays a task where students are expected to relate their own experience of cleaning the class with a lesson on present continuous tense. In Figure 6.1, students are asked to identify what the characters are doing, and in Figure 6.2 a conversation between Siti and Dayu. Siti asked: “Are you mopping the floor again? You’ve just finished mopping it.” Dayu responded: “Well, I tripped over the stool and fell and slipped my milk all over the floor.” This evidence indicates that students are expected to take care of their own classroom on a daily basis. They are responsible of making sure that the classroom is always clean.

In addition, as shown in Figure 7, the cleaning chores are reinforced in one of the instructional texts that portrays Dayu, the Balinese girl. This text contains lexical choices, such positive modality (i.e. must), negative modality (i.e. must not), and a present conditional or hypothetical statement (i.e. we can learn well, if...) so as to express “obligation” and

“prohibition.” The discourse of cleaning chores is clearly represented through the character of Dayu and linguistic choices to argue that the relationship between a good learning environment and cleanliness. For this

reason, students must be responsible to do some cleaning chores. It is important to note that the use of “we” imposes responsibility on all the students. It also denotes shared responsibility.

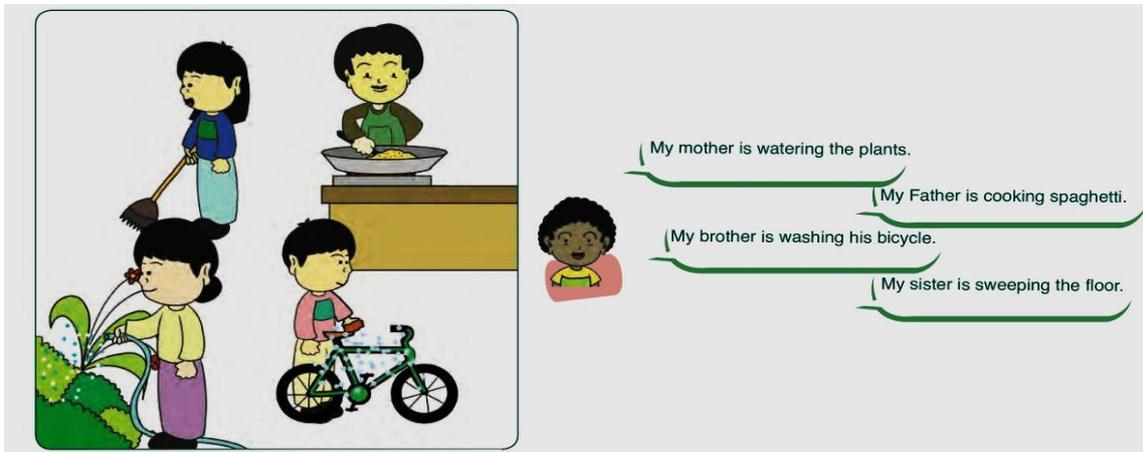


Figure 5. The representation of non-traditional household roles (Grade VIII, p. 97)

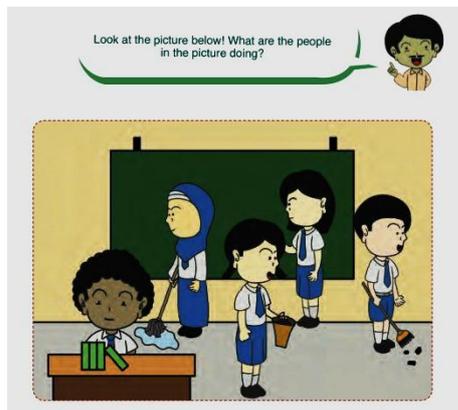


Figure 6.1. Cleaning chores at school (Grade VIII, p. 87)

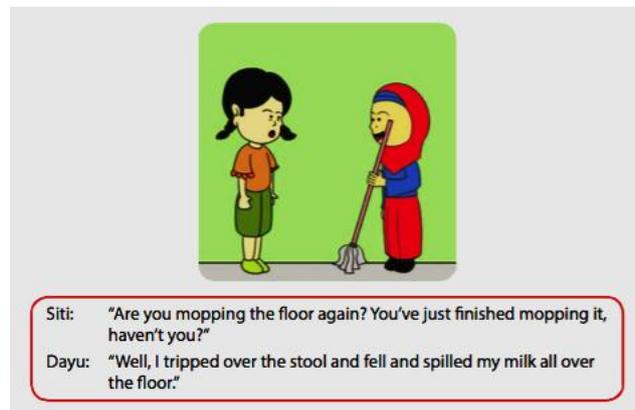


Figure 6.2. Dayu and Siti's conversation (Grade VIII, p. 112)



Figure 7. Reinforcement of cleaning chores (Grade VIII, p. 27)

In addition to domestic chores and handshaking, we also found a set of images that prompted students to guess the venue where the activities depicted take place (see Figure 8). The first image shows Udin helps his father change the car's tire. The image depicts the role

of the father pumping the air, and Udin holds on to the tire. This may refer to our previous finding on the sex role and perception that boys are successors of their fathers. In this image, the father is demonstrating what a man should know of Udin.

The second image portrays Dayu alone in the kitchen. It is not clear if Dayu is depicted as doing the cooking or preparing the meal. In relation to the traditional view on sex roles, it seems that placing a girl character in the kitchen is a normal practice. It is perhaps expected that the reader would know what a girl would do in the kitchen. The third and the eight figures are Siti's family performing prayers before having a meal and watching TV together.

The fourth image portrays Beni washing his Body in the Indonesian context of bathing. The figure really sets the local scene of bathing to which most Indonesian

children would be able to relate. The fifth, Dayu is reading a book on a chair that resembles school's desk and chair. This image portrays Indonesians' perception of reading activity; that it is school related, and once it is done outside of the school, it is done individually and in a silent way. In many different parts of the world, reading might be perceived as a social practice and done mostly outside of the school. If the author of the textbook had a different perception and interest in readings, the image that he or she used to describe reading activity on figure might have been different.



Figure 8. Daily activities and the settings (Grade VII, p. 126-127)

The sixth image depicts Beni and Udin studying together by wearing their school uniforms. The setting of the image seems to provide clues to readers that Beni and Udin are studying at home, probably after school. This indicates that homework is a routine ritual in the Indonesian way of "doing schooling." Students often stay longer in school or visit their friends' homes in order to do homework.

Other example of roles and expectations across gender is the connection between individual activities and larger social practices in the society. In the eighth grade textbook, we found two excerpts that perpetuate Indonesian cultural behavior across gender differences and how it is positioned in the society. Look at the excerpts below.

- Beni : "Let's go to your mom and ask her how to make stuffed tofu."  
 Dayu : "Today she is in Posyandu till late afternoon. She's doing vaccination for the babies and small kids in my neighborhood."  
 Dayu : "Where is Edo? Usually he comes earlier than me."  
 Lina : "He cannot come to the study-group meeting today. He's helping his father fixing the fence of his house."

In conclusion, gender-based social roles are the core of cultural representation in the Indonesian society. Those social roles are constructed in the texts, images,

and tasks that suggest that students understand their roles in their society, such as behaving politely and being disciplined. The two values are disseminated equally regardless of to which cultures they are attached indicating that those values are expected at all levels of society and ethnic groups.

### **The portrayal of cultural knowledge**

In this section, we report our findings regarding to the recognition of national and cultural knowledge found in the textbooks. The textbooks engage students in knowing and discussing Indonesia's national days, geography, and miscellaneous rules. In fact, these are specifically addressed as separate chapters. In the seventh grade textbook, for example, there is a chapter that covers national holidays and heroes. The chapter begins with a discussion on names of days and months, followed by some Indonesian national holidays and Remembrance Day. Students are asked to fill in the blank of a dialogue between a teacher and a student with a figure next to the sentence as a hint (pp. 60 – 62). Following the activity, a complete list of national days in Indonesia is shown in Figure 9.

Secondly, in the eighth grade textbook, there is a chapter called "I am Proud of Indonesia," which specifically aims to engage students with national and cultural knowledge on geography. Indonesia's map and archipelago are used as a focal point for information on the diversity of the country (pp. 149 – 157, grade VIII) presented in the following text.

**Complete the short dialog based on the picture.**

1 Proklamasi Kemerdekaan Republik Indonesia Source: 30 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka

**When do we celebrate .....?**

**My project is to make a poster of "important Days in a Month".**

OCTOBER 2012						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

National Days in Indonesia	
April 21 <sup>st</sup>	Kartini Day
April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Earth Day
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Labor Day
May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	National Education Day
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	National Awakening Day
May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Reformation Commemoration Day
June 1 <sup>st</sup>	Pancasila Day
July 22 <sup>nd</sup>	National Children Day
August 17 <sup>th</sup>	Independence Day
October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Pancasila Sanctity Day
October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Batik Day
October 5 <sup>th</sup>	Indonesian National Armed Forces Day
October 28 <sup>th</sup>	Youth Pledge Day
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Heroes' Day
December 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Mother's Day

Figure 9. Indonesian national days (Grade VII, p. 61-62)

“Indonesia is a big country. It is between two continents, Asia and Australia, and between two oceans, the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. It is the largest archipelago in the world. There are more than seventeen thousand islands in Indonesia. We have a lot of islands. The big ones are Papua, Kalimantan, Sumatera, Sulawesi, and Java. Of the five islands, Java is the smallest, but is the most populated one. We can find people from around Indonesia in Java. Indonesia is on the equator. It is a tropical country. The sun shines brightly everyday, so it is mostly hot. It has two seasons, the rainy season, and the dry season” (Grade 8, p. 150).

The excerpt above strengthens the knowledge of how rich Indonesia is. It presents some geographical and demographic features, such as geographic locations and sizes, archipelago, population, islands, waters, mountains, and climate, which explicitly suggest students to be proud of being Indonesian citizens. These features are made clear and explicit since the beginning of the chapter because the purpose of the chapter is that “I will learn to describe people, animals, things in order to make them stand out, to show my pride of them, to promote them, and to criticize them” (p. 132).

Thirdly, both the textbooks provide information about some rules that students should know in society. Those rules are including some traffic signs and other signs that can be found in such public facilities as national parks, mosques, or schools. As a member of the society, students are expected to build their awareness of some rules or social norms of the society. These norms are applied to any ethnic groups to which they belong to. In the seventh textbook is stipulated that the learning objective of knowing the rules is that “I will learn to make instructions, short notices, and warnings or cautions” (p. 177) as seen in Figure 10, for instance.

Based on the explanation above, central to the idea of cultural knowledge, we found three pieces of information related to what people know constructed in the two textbooks: Indonesia’s national days, geography, and miscellaneous rules. Each of the

information is explicitly described and depicted through texts and images suggesting that students take pride and build awareness of cultural representation when learning English.

### The representation of cultural artifacts

Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups, and each has its own unique cultural artifacts. We found that there are at least four ethnic groups explicitly presented in the eighth grade textbook. The four ethnic groups represented are from Bali Island, Padang (West Sumatera), Papua, and Java. These cues can be seen from the traditional costume as well as the traditional house embedded in the images as shown in Figure 11.

According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2010), a multilingual and multicultural country with hundreds of ethnic groups and cultures. The Bureau, however, regroup these numbers and squeeze them into 32 tribal groups including Jawa (40.22 %), Sunda (15.5%), Batak (3.58%), Sulawesi (3.22%), and Madura (3.03). Hence, the decision of using Balinese, Papuan, Javanese, and Minagkabau artifacts (drawings) are not based on the quantity of the tribal groups. We argue that the inclusion and exclusion of the four artifacts and many others are sociopolitical decisions since only four dominant groups are represented.

Figure 12 confirms our finding that only artifacts of dominant ethnic groups are salient in the two textbooks. The figure shows four restaurants that are affiliated to local culture heritages that represent Padang, Sunda, Manado, and Makassar with their unique ethnic buildings. According to Forshee (2006), Indonesians houses (as seen in Figures 11 and 12) have specific meanings. “The specifications of their construction, design, accompanying rituals, building materials, divisions, and location demand careful attention to *Adat* (customary law), ancestral protocol, and local beliefs in spirits” (p. 83). For example, the Minangkabau house (Siti in Figure 11) and restaurant (*Rumah Makan Padang* in Figure 12) retain saddleback-

sloping roof forms. The upward arching roofs symbolize paired water buffalo horns, which relate to the philosophical name of Minangkabau as “the wining water buffalo.” The roofs then signify valuable animals with wealth. The upward curving arches at the end may also symbolize ritual significance as the seen and unseen worlds. In fact, with a massive urbanization of

Minangkabau people all over Indonesia, ethnic buildings now might indicate a prestigious family with a great house that perpetuates social status and identity. Those restaurants in Figure 12 can be easily found across Indonesia, and students might also be familiar with the food served. However, what makes those dominant cultural artifacts included is still unclear.



Figure 10. Miscellaneous signs (Grade VII, p. 185)



Figure 11. Cultural artifacts of four dominant groups (Grade VII, p. 27-28)

Other cultural artifacts portrayed in the textbooks include Anklung (traditional musical instrument from West Java), Batik (traditional fabric which has been widely recognized as a national identity), Ulos (traditional fabric from North Sumatera), Noken (traditional bag from Papua), Payung Geulis (traditional umbrella from West Java), Rencong (traditional blade

from Aceh), Wayang (traditional puppet from Java), Tatah (traditional wooden sculpture from Bali), and some traditional foods like Lemper, Satay, Pempek, and Krupuk, but were used in separation from the four chosen cultural representations. Look at Tables 1 and 2 in the methodology section for further reference of cultural artifacts.



Figure 12. Artifacts of four dominant ethnic groups (Grade VII, p. 160)

Since cultural artifacts exhibit the beauty, uniqueness, and complexity of a society, each of them delineates social and cultural meanings. Indonesian textiles such as Ulos of North Sumatera mark social importance and relationship to the supernatural. This shows status markers of the owner in all rituals, exchange between families, indicators of ethnic identity, and in need of everyday life. Another kind of fabric that Indonesians are attached to is Batik. Unlike Ulos which is made by *ikat* method (tying or binding), the patterns of Batik are finely drawn or stamped with wax. Some parts of Indonesia have their own unique patterns, which are closely related to their local wisdom (Forshee, 2006). In the eighth textbook, Dayu is involved in a conversation with Lina describing Mrs. Herlina. Dayu sees Mrs. Herlina who is wearing Batik and black pants, but then Lina responded that all of the ladies, in that context, are wearing Batik and black pants. Dayu gives Lina other descriptions of Mrs. Herlina that make Lina recognize which one is Mrs. Herlina (p. 141). This conversation is about describing people by mentioning Batik as a common uniform which Indonesian people wear. Though no cultural meanings are encapsulated in the conversation between Dayu and Lina, it seems that the target audiences are expected to recognize Batik as part of the Indonesian cultural artifact. Another excerpt about Batik indicates that Indonesian people wear Batik as a casual or semi-formal style. "Siti says: you can wear a Batik shirt or a formal shirt, but please don't wear T-shirt" (p. 48). This comparison between Batik, formal shirt, and t-shirt, might suggest target audiences of when to wear Batik.

## CONCLUSIONS

The questions of this study are as follows: (1) how are Indonesian local cultures being represented in the English textbooks? and (2) whose cultures are being

represented considering the diversity of Indonesian cultures? Our central argument is that diversity and multicultural perspectives represented in textbooks are crucial to English language learning and teaching. The teaching of English in any context reflects teaching both linguistic and cultural knowledge of English that potentially infuse different belief systems associated with countries where English is used. Using a semiotic approach that focused on the textual and visual narratives of the texts, images, and tasks, we are able to discover important aspects of human life that represent culture, such as characters, cultural behavior, cultural knowledge, and cultural artifacts.

We argue that the Indonesian English textbooks, *When English Rings a Bell* (2014) for Grades seven (VII) and eight (VIII) adopt a localization approach to ELT materials. The localized English textbooks are grounded on the thought that engaging students with local cultural information for English teaching is crucial as a motivating factor for them to learn both the language and the culture (Shin, Eslami & Chen, 2011). This aims to avoid a heavy loading of 'foreign' culture elements. Our findings also support Sharifian and Din's findings (2017) that local cultures in ELT materials can be a tool to increase student awareness of cultural concepts and practices, which may enable students to talk about it in intercultural communication. Culture then is not only shared by and within the local context, but also across cultural and geographic borders. As such, localized English textbooks serve to integrate cultural elements into the reading and dialogues that exemplify authentic input to local vernaculars (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015).

We also maintain that textbook analysis should focus on the complex process of meaning making mediated through textual and visual materials. This study has employed a semiotic approach that focused on text, images, and tasks as the unit of analysis, allowing

for examining descriptive elements of textbooks that go beyond the number of frequency. Meaning is socially constructed by the interaction of different agencies: students, teachers, and materials. Therefore, we support Weninger and Kiss's argument (2013) that "[t]exts, images, and tasks that form an activity should be treated together because it is their interplay that facilitates learning and creates opportunities for cultural messages to surface in the lesson" (p. 696).

Our findings also continue the dialogue on the pivotal role of local cultural representation in ELT materials as reported by previous researchers (see Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2012; Canale, 2016; Forman, 2014; Siddiqie, 2011; Song, 2013; Widodo, 2018). We contend that what cultural knowledge and whose culture are represented in ELT textbooks become crucial because culture is an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. ELT materials used in any institutional contexts reflect teaching both linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge of English that potentially infuse different belief systems associated with countries where English is used.

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