

REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research investigates the representation of character education values in online English textbooks used in secondary schools. Online textbooks that are aligned with the latest curriculum function as a fundamental source in instilling values, especially character education using critical discourse analysis. Research findings show that discipline, friendship/communicativeness, and fostering a love of reading emerge as the most prominent values. This research seeks to complement existing literature by offering insight into the representation of character education content in English textbooks used in elementary schools throughout Indonesia.

Keywords: Online Textbooks, English, Character Education

INTRODUCTION

Online textbooks play an important role in the learning process (Behnke, 2018), not only as a reference in preparing instructional design for teaching (Stern, L., & Roseman, 2004) but also as a medium for introducing concepts and forms of character education for students (Setyono & Widodo, 2018). The integration of character education in the learning process is part of a global education issue (Berkowitz, M. W., & Simmons, 2003), including in Indonesia. The importance of character education is also strengthened by Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character building. Therefore, all elements of education from elementary school to higher education are required to integrate character education in the education and teaching process with the aim of building students' character identity (Sulistiyo, U., Supiani, S., Kailani, A., & Lestariyana, 2020).

In the context of learning English in Indonesia, the main goal of learning English is to master spoken and written communication in the language (Gunantar, 2016). At the high school level, especially vocational schools, learning English is specifically for the specific purpose of following the available majors. Therefore, a teacher is expected to be able to prepare the learning process thoroughly by facilitating activities that involve students directly in the learning process so that active and interactive learning can be carried out.

Oakes and Saunders (2004) and Jusuf (2018) revealed that a textbook is an essential source of learning material in the classroom, and it increases students' knowledge related to cultural information and global situations. According to McKay (2004) emphasized that cultural content in textbooks should not be limited to native English-speaking countries or the target language, while local content must be present in textbooks. English teachers must understand that both native English-speaking countries and their local cultures need to be promoted.

Textbooks can be considered as instruments that play a greater role in shaping students' thinking, perspectives, and understanding of the world around them. They not

only introduce information about a particular subject, but also provide insight into social norms, customs, and values that may differ from a student's culture. Textbooks are useful either as input for classroom learning or to promote various cultural norms and values in the classroom, not limited to language classrooms (Ayu & Indrawati, 2018).

METHOD

The research methodology used in this research is library research, which is a form of research that uses literature as the object of study (Sawarjuwono, T., & Kadir, A.P., 2003). A key component of this approach is conducting a literature review. Through this process, this research aims to contribute theoretical and methodological insights to a particular field of study. In this literature review, there are three articles reviewed as follows :

- 1) Ilyas, H. (2015). *Critical thinking: Its representation in Indonesian ELT textbooks and education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of York).
- 2) Sulistiyo, U., Wulan, R., Al Arif, T. Z. Z., Efriza, D., & Anwar, K. (2021). A Critical Content Analysis of English Textbook for Senior High School Students in Indonesia.

The main goal of library research is to analyze and answer research questions by exploring various theories, propositions, principles, or ideas. This research adopts a descriptive analysis approach, which involves providing a detailed description of the data collected and offering readers a comprehensive understanding and explanation. In this case secondary data is obtained from previous research conducted by other scientists. These sources include books and primary scientific reports contained in articles or journals, both in print and digital format, with a focus on the history of Islam and politics in Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The content of the textbook is dividgamed into four main topics: Reading Text, Images, Dialogue, and Cultural Awareness. An in-depth content analysis is presented on each topic regarding cultural values or norms, both target and source cultures

Based on research results from Sulistiyo, U., Wulan, R., Al Arif, T. Z. Z., Efriza, D., & Anwar, K. (2021) detailed information including the components of each topic in the *Pathway to English for SMA/MA Grade XI*. Table 1 provides detailed information including the components of each topic.

Table 1. Topics in book

Topics	Titles/Situation	Chapter/Pages	Source	Total
Reading Text	Garbage and Flooding	1/14	The Jakarta Post Newspaper	14 texts
	Why Books are Important for Us?	4/59	-	
	Saving Up	4/59	-	
	Why Students Should Stop Cheating	4/61	-	
	Shopping	4/62	-	
	Restaurants' Customer is Declining	4/74	-	
	Benefit of Curry	4/75	-	
	No title	5/84	-	
	Auctions	5/88	-	
	The Advantages of Broccoli	5/89	Learningenglish.vo a.news.com	

	Mentawai Island	5/90	The Jakarta Post Newspaper	
	Mutual Assistance	7/128	-	
	Building Safer structures against Earthquake	8/143	www.born.gov.au	
	Flooding	8/146	www.nssl.noaa.gov	
	Tsunami	8/147	www.tsunami.gov	
Pictures	Rivers	1/ 4		20 pictures
	Attitudes Towards Garbage	1/10		
	Giving and Asking Opinion (Mother and Daughter)	2/20		
	(Father and Son)	2/23		
	Asking and Giving Opinion			
	Pictures of Asian Women and African men	4/52 and 53		
	American Breakfast	4/60		
	Cheating Generalization	4/61		
	Curry	4/75		
	Tea	5/80		
	Tsunami	5/85		
	Auctions	5/88		
	Envelope and Stamp	6/109		
	Indian Wedding and Expressing Gratitude in Many Languages	7/118		
	Wrecked Building	8/139 and 141		
	Music Instrument	9/156		
	Singer/Musician	9/157		
	Songs	9/164 – 167		
Dialogue	Choosing Picture	1/5		30 recordings
	Dictation and choose the correct answer	1/6 (two recordings)		
	Talk show	1/8		
	Agreement	2/21 (two recordings)		
	Listen and repeat, costumer suggestion	2/22 (two recordings)		
	Listen and repeat	3/37		
	Choose the correct answer	3/38 (two recordings)		
	Choosing books	4/53		
	Ticking purpose of reading, advertisement	4/54 (two recordings)		
	Listen to a monolog	4/62		
	Tea	5/81		
	Listen to the correct answer, listen and repeat	5/82 (two recordings)		
	Fill in the blank an e-mail	6/97		
	Listen to 5 monologues	7/117		
	Listen and match the picture	7/118		
	Listen and complete a dialogue	7/119		
	Listen and practice the dialogue	7/122		
	Disaster	8/139 (three recordings)		
	Disaster	8/140 (two recordings)		

Cultural Awareness Section	Earthquake	8/141	7 contexts
	Music	9/157	
	Suggestion and Recommendation	1/8	
	Suggestion Box	2/25	
	RSVP	3/42	
	Passive Voice	5/83	
	Personal Letter	6/100	
	Interpersonal Language	7/121	
	Peter Pan	9/160	

Each topic outlined in Table 1 in the textbook includes information about the target and source cultures. This allows teachers to establish and connect these values with the students' own norms and culture. For example, although the 'reading text' section mostly explores Indonesian culture and the 'pictures' feature the target (American) culture, both sections attempt to highlight elements of American and Indonesian culture. Specifically, the 'reading texts' section consists of 14 texts strategically divided by the author to provide examples of Indonesian and American culture and values. Therefore, because the Indonesian government curriculum emphasizes the integration of local culture into language classes, this textbook remains in line with the current educational framework. Some themes in this section resonate with local culture, regardless of the year of publication. The next subsection describes the findings regarding reading texts, dialogue, images, and cultural awareness.

Reading Texts

By using a critical approach in analysis, this research identifies and evaluates the representation of character education values conveyed through these readings. The focus is on the way these values are introduced, understood, and interpreted through the texts students study.

There are 14 reading texts in the book entitled *Pathway to English for SMA/MA Grade XI*, most of which focus on explanatory texts. However, of the 14 texts, researchers only identified nine texts that explicitly discussed cultural values. Basically, the Curriculum approach still uses a genre-based method, using certain types of texts to facilitate mastery of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, as emphasized by Lin (2006). This approach underscores the understanding and production of specific text genres, as suggested by Gao (2007), highlighting communicative competence in mastering various types of texts.

Even though cultural information appears more in explanatory texts and some examples in descriptive texts, this information still involves Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) among students. Singh and Shaari (2019) explained that HOTS aims to encourage students' cognitive development, fostering creative, critical and reflective thinking abilities, which are categorized into knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Pictures

The textbook features a total of twenty pictures across its chapters, serving various themes. However, some sections lack equal representation of cultures and themes. For example, the depiction of flood caused by garbage cleverly integrates both Asian and Western perspectives, yet predominantly features Western characters. This trend of favoring Western depictions persists in other sections too, contributing to unequal representation, as highlighted in Song's findings.

Nonetheless, some pictures strive for inclusivity, depicting global cultures, foods, and an equal distribution of male and female characters. However, there's a notable lack of clarity and depth in certain images. For example, a picture illustrating cheating among students focuses on white individuals, potentially indicating a bias towards Western educational settings over Eastern ones.

The imbalance extends to agricultural depictions and outdated portrayals, such as the representation of the auction system without recognizing its current online adaptation. Similarly, a picture of an envelope lacks detail, missing an opportunity for educational exploration, like introducing stamps from different countries.

Despite these disparities, a chapter dedicated to Indian wedding ceremonies stands out for its richness in cultural detail, linguistic terms, and diverse relationships portrayed. However, this chapter diverges from the broader themes discussed in the textbook.

Chapter eight, centered on disasters, lacks comprehensive visual aids, failing to provide sufficient visuals related to the variety of disasters mentioned. Some images also deviate from instructions, hindering students' understanding or completion of tasks.

The final section on musicians and musical instruments strives for cultural inclusivity, showcasing both Eastern and Western influences. This section demonstrates a more balanced approach in representation compared to other parts of the textbook. However, all images share a limitation—their monochromatic presentation, possibly diminishing their impact in engaging classroom learning environments.

Dialogue

The textbook introduces cutting-edge technology allowing access to spoken text via QR codes, streamlining the learning process by eliminating the need for teachers to hunt for English models. With just a smartphone and internet access, both students and teachers can conveniently download digital content from the web.

However, the dialogues predominantly feature speakers using British English, centering on England and neglecting other English-speaking regions. This exclusive focus on British English might limit students' exposure to diverse English accents and hinder their confidence in practicing English pronunciation. Despite this, the dialogues maintain gender balance in terms of male and female speakers.

Cultural Awareness

The book includes seven cultural awareness features, but researchers only evaluated three main features: suggestion boxes, RSVPs, and interpersonal language. Textbooks present cultural awareness as a medium to emphasize the importance of understanding culture in language learning. In the case of RSVP, for example, teachers can compare the differences in the way RSVP is done at weddings in the West and in Indonesia to awaken students' understanding of their own culture. The topic of giving advice can also give rise to discussions about how Indonesians give advice to their colleagues, illustrating differences in communal values.

In addition, the cultural awareness section also discusses interpersonal language. This book presents examples of Indonesian culture in everyday conversations. Teachers can exploit differences in communication cultures, for example, differences in the context of use of transactional language and body signals, to spark students' interest in their own cultural identities and values. This gives students a new perspective in appreciating and understanding other cultures, avoiding judgment or stereotypes.

Textbooks tend to feature Western culture rather than Asian culture in images, dialogue, and cultural awareness information. However, the reading text information shows equality in the representation of Asian culture and general information. Research also shows the importance of teachers bringing and promoting their own culture in line with classroom discussions even though the target culture is emphasized. This shows the need for teachers' extensive knowledge of cultural values to support English classes. Although incorporating local culture into the English classroom requires additional effort from the teacher, it is still important to achieve English competency.

CONCLUSION

Teaching media, such as textbooks, play a role in conveying information about a country's culture, norms and beliefs. Apart from being a means of raising class awareness about cultural differences, this media should not favor one particular culture over another. As a guide, teachers need to carry out an in-depth analysis of all books used in class.

The results showed a preference for textbooks in native English-speaking cultures, although some also included non-native English-speaking cultures. This causes an imbalance in cultural representation, reading content, and images in textbooks, which tend to favor certain countries and cultures.

This research focuses on cultural aspects in four main topics: reading texts, images, dialogue, and cultural awareness. In conclusion, a critical analysis of English textbooks for high school students in Indonesia identifies strengths and weaknesses in the representation of cultural values and norms. Although the book shows balance in its representation of target and source cultures, there are still areas for improvement especially regarding gender representation, food depictions, and emphasis on Western educational environments. Language teachers can utilize these findings to enrich the use of textbooks in English classes, evaluate textbook materials, select cultural information, and integrate it with student norms.

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