

A STUDY ON CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Sugirin, Siti Sudartini, Suciati, Lusi Nurhayati
Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
e-mail: sugirin@uny.ac.id

Abstract

The first phase of this two-year study aims at describing the teachers' awareness to include culture in the teaching and learning process, what cultural aspects are included in the English textbooks used in a number of schools in the Province of DIY and how the cultural elements are inserted in the books. The research data were obtained through a focus group discussion (FGD) attended by 20 English teachers from 5 regencies in the Province of DIY and from 7 English textbooks used by these teachers. The data from the FGD were analyzed using qualitative data analysis, while the books were discerned using content analysis. The results of the analyses show (1) the teachers have inserted cultural elements in their teaching and learning process, following the explicit and implicit modes of insertion used in the textbooks; (2) the cultural elements in the books consist of knowledge, behaviors, and artifacts; and (3) there are 409 western cultural elements and 739 Indonesian ones, but they are not followed by adequate explanations to anticipate confusion and misunderstanding.

Key words: cultural aspects, EFL textbooks, cultural integration

INTRODUCTION

As any language is inseparable from its culture (Colson, 2008; Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2006; Williams, 2010), teaching a new language will inevitably involve teaching a new culture. Only through introducing and developing understanding of the culture of the target language will a language learner be able to function properly in the target language. This phenomenon often poses a dilemma for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia. On the one hand, they have to maintain the development the students' understanding and mastery of the local culture, the local values, and the national identity. On the other hand, they have to make the students develop understanding the culture of the native speakers of English in order to make the English language learning comprehensive.

Williams (2010) further asserts that while language and culture are intertwined, language is more than just words that transmit meaning. All cultures have their biases, practices, values and traditions that are inseparable from the language used in communication. In addition, Indonesia consists of over 13.000 islands, with hundreds of ethnic groups and hundreds of different cultures. It is impossible to find a city, a town, or even a district, with a single culture. All these parts of the country accommodate and practice multi-cultures. The implication is that, for the success of the EFL teaching, the EFL teachers need to understand not only a single culture, but they must have a good understanding of multi-cultures shared by the community, the Indonesian community, as well as those shared by the speakers of the language they teach - English. In other words, the EFL teachers should understand and practice multicultural education.

Sinagatullin (2003: 83) defines multicultural education as ‘an idea stating that all students, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, race, culture, social class, religion, or exceptionality, should have an equal opportunity to learn at school.’ Sinagatullin (2003: 114) provides further explanation that one of the goals of multicultural education is ‘to help students acquire attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to successfully function within their own micro-culture, mainstream culture, and the global community’.

This definition of multicultural education shows its resemblance to the concept of the national education, i.e. education based on *Pancasila* (the Five Principles) and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, rooted on the values of religion, Indonesian national culture, in response to the demand of the current era (Article 1 Verse 2 of the 2003 Act on the National Education System). This multicultural-based education is a means to improve cultural awareness or cultural sensitivity in the practice of teaching and learning a foreign language, especially English. Tanaka (2006: 37) claims that the concept of ‘cultural awareness’—understanding of different cultures—has been emphasized as an essential part of English learning and teaching.

The main principle of multi-culture-based education is the presence of cultural differences, which also constitutes a basic issue in the foreign language teaching and learning. Brown (in Richards and Renandya, 2002: 13) asserts ‘whenever you teach a

language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting'. Therefore, it is impossible to implement the concept of multicultural education effectively without involving all the components related to the teaching and learning process, including the curriculum, teachers, students, and other aspects such as teaching and learning methods and materials.

As textbooks are generally considered to be the major source of the teaching materials, they play an important role in disseminating cultures or cultural elements in the teaching and learning process. Tiwari (2008) also considers textbooks as an instrument to achieve the instructional goals, to help teachers in preparing the teaching and learning, in preparing tasks, in planning the classroom management, and in guiding the students' learning both at school and at home. Meanwhile, Richards and Schmidt (2002: 339) state that the use of modules allows for flexible organization of a course and can give learners a sense of achievement because objectives are more immediate and specific. Similarly, Kaiser (2005: 223) considers that textbooks are practically used as a didactic instrument in teaching institutions.

In principle, a textbook is a book written for the teacher(s) and the students in a class or a school, which present a set of teaching and learning materials in a subject or closely-related subjects (Tiwari, 2008). A textbook can take the form of printed materials for the students to read or printed materials plus tasks for the students to carry out. In regard to the EFL textbooks Richards and Schmidt (2002: 550) define a 'textbook' as:

A book on a specific subject used as a teaching learning guide, especially in a school or college. Textbooks for foreign language learning are often part of a graded series covering multiple skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking, and grammar) or deal with a single skill (e.g. reading).

In line with its function as a guide (Richards and Schmidt (2002: 550), Choudhury (1998: 154) claims that a textbook also serves as a binder of all the teaching and learning process to make it a system which enables the checking of the necessary elements missing and unnecessary repetition. This confirms one of the requirements of a good textbook, conformity to the comprehensiveness of the content based on the

competency standard as indicated by the basic competences covered in the book (Board for the National Standard of Education, 2007-2011). The Guide to Textbook Writing (BSNP 2007-2011) explicitly mentions the 8th of the 14 points of requirements for the content appropriateness is the development of the “unity in diversity” perspective. A recommended EFL textbook should reflect appreciation and respect upon multicultures and community plurality, which include various cultural values and local, national, and global wisdoms. In conjunction with the concern on the possible erosion of the commitment to the local cultures mentioned earlier, special attention should be paid to the students’ understanding of the local cultures.

As has been mentioned earlier, language is inseparable from culture (Colson, 2008; Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2006; Williams, 2010). Foley (2001: 19) mentions that language is often treated theoretically as a sub-system of culture within cognitive anthropology but in practice, the structure of language as revealed by modern linguistics has generally served as the paradigm for analyzing other aspects of culture.

In the meantime, Linton (in Mesthrie, et al., 2009: 28) defines culture as “the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.” This means that culture also functions as “design for living,” which gives meaning to the way and the form of habits considered appropriate and acceptable within a certain community group, while language is treated as “a cultural activity and, at the same time, an instrument for organizing other cultural domains” (Sharifian & Palmer, 2007: 1). In this context, Taylor (in Peoples & Bailey, 2009: 22) define culture as “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” In other words, knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, traditions and other practices obtained by human beings as part of the community, constitute cultural components. Peoples and Bailey (2009) conclude that culture is learned, shared and owned together. Culture makes someone complete and simultaneously causes a difference at the level of group. Hence, culture distinguishes one community group from the other groups.

Other than covering the system of religion and traditional ceremonies, the system of social organization and community, the system of science, arts, the system of economy and income earning, and the system of means and technology, language constitutes a cultural component reflecting the community's culture, which distinguishes it from other communities. These seven elements will always be found in any community with its variations (Koentjaraningrat, 1996, in Simanjuntak, 2011).

Cultural differences are the main issues in cross-cultural education. Grant dan Lei (2001: 10-11) suggest four main components of education which consider linguistic and socio-cultural differences, i.e.:

- (1) subjective and objective support of the identity of socio-cultural and linguistic minority students;
- (2) constructing curriculum contents implying and reflecting the positive value of the plurality of cultures and languages;
- (3) building communicative, action-oriented skills;
- and (4) accepting socio-cultural diversity and the plurality of ideas as a challenge for democracy.

Most trained EFL teachers are well aware that EFL teaching and learning cannot be effectively carried out without understanding the culture of its speakers' communities. Consequently, EFL teachers are demanded to teach not only the language but they must also provide cultural contexts in which the language is used. Thus the EFL students must also learn the culture of the speakers of English because, to be able to communicate effectively in English, a speaker is demanded to be competent not only in the English language but also in the culture of the native speakers of English.

Meanwhile, the 2003 Act of the Republic of Indonesia on the National Education System suggests the teachers' responsibility for maintaining the Indonesian national culture, rooted on the values of religion and local wisdoms. If the teachers do not realize this from the outset, the learning and mastery of the foreign or target language culture will lead to the degradation on their understanding of their own culture. If this process keeps going without intentionally-taken steps to maintain the local culture, the EFL teaching may lead to behavior changes as the results of the internalization of the cultural values they have learned which, in turn, will degrade or even eradicate their understanding of the highly valued local culture. Such continuous process will damage

the sustainability of the local culture. Therefore, understanding the local culture and the sensitivity towards the content of the foreign culture are needed in the foreign language teaching context, particularly the teaching of English, one of the foreign languages to be taught from kindergarten to university. This reality demands the early introduction and understanding of the local culture. Linton (in Mesthrie, et al., 2009: 28) defines culture as “the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.”

The term ‘local culture’ is often related to the term ‘tradition’ which textually means “customs transmitted from generation to generation which are still practiced in the community, based on the evaluation and consideration that the existing practice is the best” (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2005: 1208). From this term, ‘tradition’ comes the derived word ‘traditional,’ which has a similar meaning, an attitude or a way of thinking and behaving or acting consistently following the norms and customs learned and shared from generation to generation. Thus the meaning of the concept of tradition is closely related to that of the concept and area of locality. The local concept that has been considered the best existing practice is what Wales (Nyoman Sri Subawa, 2008: 351) calls ‘local genius.’

Geriya (2003: 2 in Nyoman Sri Subawa, 2008: 351) considers ‘local genius’ as part of ‘local wisdom’ which has been selected, tested, and outstanding in quality, locally and globally, so that it plays an important role not only in shaping identity and pride but also in developing competence and potentials for competition across geographical areas and cultures. Anderson (2002: 6) calls this local genius ‘cultural artefacts of a particular kind.’ This shows that the term ‘local genius’ also refers to tangible objects. In the area of medicine, local genius also means the use of local potentials such as the richness of flora as medicine, i.e., herbal medicine. It is the unique characteristics in each culture which Wales (Nyoman Sri Subawa, 2008: 351) calls ‘local genius.’

Meanwhile, the area in which the ‘local genius’ exists is as broad as the meaning giving of the human culture itself which, substantively, as proposed by the

anthropologist, Honingmann (in Koentjaraningrat, 1990:186-187), covers three major aspects, i.e. *ideas*, *activities*, and *artifacts*. Koentjaraningrat (2005, in Bhaswara, 2008) further classifies cultural aspects into four forms as: (1) ideological values, (2) system of ideas, (3) system of behaviors and patterned actions, and (4) physical objects (artifact). The relation between Honingmann's dan Koentjaraningrat's categories of cultural aspects can be seen through the following figure.

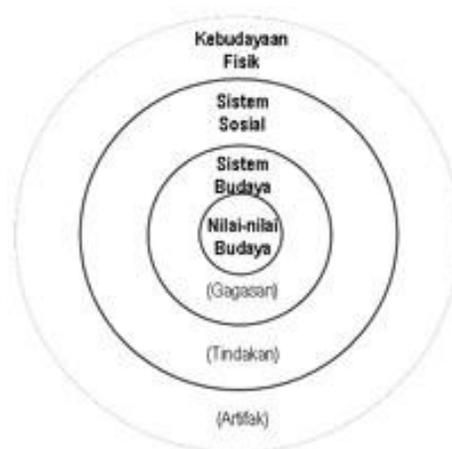


Figure 1. Concentric Frame of Culture
(Koentjaraningrat 2005, in Bhaswara, 2008)

Koentjaraningrat (2005) classifies the cultural domain of ideas into two separate categories, system of culture and value of culture. However, these two categories are both abstract in nature. Honningmann's categorization and that of Kuncaraningrat pertain to three core aspects: (1) ideas, (2) activities/behaviors, and (3) artifacts (physical objects). For the purpose of practicality, this paper adapts these three aspects, naming them: *knowledge*, *behaviors*, and *artifacts*.

METHOD

This paper is written based on the inconclusive results of a research study conducted in the Province of Yogyakarta Special Territory (DIY). The study is the

initial step (needs analysis) of a longer Research and Development (R & D) study. The goals of this first phase are: (1) to describe the teachers' awareness to include cultural elements in the teaching and learning process, (2) to identify what cultural aspects are included in the English textbooks currently used by the junior high school teachers in the Province of DIY, (3) to identify the patterns of insertion of these cultural aspects in the English textbooks used.

To achieve these goals, the researchers conducted Focus Group Discussion (FGD) attended by twenty English teachers representing state and private junior high schools from the city of Yogyakarta and the four regencies of Bantul, Sleman, Kulon Progo, and Gunung Kidul. In addition, ten postgraduate students of Applied Linguistics of Yogyakarta State University also participated in this FGD. Before the FGD, the participants were asked to complete a quiz about the English textbooks currently used in their respective schools. Then the FGD followed, focusing on the participants' awareness of the presence the cultural insertion in the textbooks and what they had done to include cultural aspects in their teaching and learning process. Interviews were also conducted with junior high school students in the city of Yogyakarta and Sleman regency to see what cultural aspects expected to be included in the textbooks or in the teaching and learning process.

The data from the FGD were analyzed following Miles and Hubermann's (1994) qualitative data analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and inference making. Based on the quiz completed, the textbooks used by the majority of the schools represented by the FGD participants were selected. The selected textbooks were discerned to find the cultural elements included using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). These cultural elements were then classified based on the cultural aspect categorization mentioned earlier, ie., aspects of *knowledge*, *behavior*, and *artifact*. Upon the completion of the classification, further analysis was conducted to see other dimensions of the cultural elements such as origin, proportion, media used, clarity of the message, and possible interpretation or misinterpretation.

In this study data validity was achieved through (1) data sources, i.e. the textbooks selected were those actually used by the teachers participating in the study, while the teachers truly represented the four regencies and one city in the Province of DIY; and (2) careful data collection process (i.e. in questions asked during the FGD, in discerning the textbooks to make the inventory and analysis of the cultural elements). The reliability of the data was achieved through (1) source triangulation (textbooks, teachers' information, students' expectation; (2) method triangulation (quiz, FGD, documentation); and (3) inter-rater discussion (the four researchers analyzed all the seven books and then compared and discussed the results to formulate findings).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the FGD shows that, in the teaching and learning process, the junior high school teachers of English in the Province of DIY teach the language as well as its culture. The cultural aspects taught include both Western and Indonesian cultures, which are usually based on the elements of culture and modes of cultural insertion included in the textbooks they use. After discerning the textbooks most of these teachers use, a general picture can be obtained about the cultural aspects included, the modes of the cultural insertion, and the media used.

The cultural aspects found are related to gender, ethnicity, and race. Gender aspects are shown by the use of models for illustration or the use of people's names in the reading texts representing the two sexes, females and males. The aspects of race and ethnicity are shown, for instance, by the use of: (1) varied names pertaining to different ethnic groups both from the same or different nationalities, such as people from Indonesia, India, Japan, Germany, USA, etc. (Butet, Made, Hans, Alice, etc.), and (2) a variety of texts and pictures related to specific food of different origins (pasta, pizza, fried rice, etc.).

As mentioned earlier, the cultural aspects inserted can be generally classified into *knowledge*, *behavior*, and *artifact*. Pertaining to the modes of cultural insertion, in most parts of the books the authors tend to insert cultural aspects implicitly, i.e. by

integrating them in the language materials. In some other parts, the cultural insertion is done explicitly by the presentation of cultural aspects as a topic of a text or as part of a unit of language materials with cultural notes pertaining to the cultural aspects inserted. The media most authors use are in the forms of pictures and writings.

The seven junior high school English textbooks most used in the Province of DIY are: (1) *Real Time: An Interactive English Course for Junior High School Students Year VII* (Bates, N., 2007); (2) *English on Sky I for Junior High School Year VII* (Mukarto, et al., 2007); (3) *The Bridge to English Competence for SMP Grade VII* (Kistono, et al., 2006); (4) *Interactive English Junior High School Grade VII* (Iragilia S, et al., 2009); (5) *English in Focus I for Grade VII Junior High School* (Wardiman, A., Jahur, M.B., and Djusma, M.S., 2008); (6) *Passport to the World I* (Djatkika, Priyanto A.G, and Dewi I.K., 2009); and (7) *Scaffolding: English for Junior High School Students Grade VII* (Joko Priyana, Riandi and Anita Mumpuni. (2008).

The following tables show figures on the insertion of cultural aspects in the seven textbooks above.

Table 1. Insertion on Western Cultural Aspects

Title of the book	Form of insertion	Cultural aspects		
		Knowl	Behav	Artifact
<i>Real Time ...</i>	Picture	2	12	10
	Writing	4	17	12
<i>English on Sky ...</i>	Picture	0	10	4
	Writing	2	27	19
<i>The Bridge to English Competence ...</i>	Picture	11	21	32
	Writing	56	6	23
<i>Interactive English ...</i>	Picture	2	24	21
	Writing	5	24	13
<i>English in Focus ...</i>	Picture	7	2	0
	Writing	5	0	0
<i>Passport to the World ...</i>	Picture	0	1	0
	Writing	11	0	0
<i>Scaffolding</i>	Picture	0	20	2
	Writing	3	1	0
Total = 409		108	165	136

It can be seen from Table 1 that the total number of elements representing the Western cultural aspects are almost evenly distributed, i.e., knowledge, behavior, and artifacts are represented by 108, 165, and 136 elements, respectively. *The Bridge to English Competence for SMP Grade VII* appears to dominate the number of cultural elements included (149 or 36,4% out of the 409 elements present).

Table 2. Insertion on Indonesian Cultural Aspects

Title of the book	Form of insertion	Cultural aspects		
		Knowl	Behav	Artifact
<i>Real Time ...</i>	Picture	0	3	0
	Writing	0	2	13
<i>English on Sky ...</i>	Picture	0	14	5
	Writing	2	57	46
<i>The Bridge to English Competence ...</i>	Picture	0	13	109
	Writing	0	41	233
<i>Interactive English ...</i>	Picture	0	12	79
	Writing	6	1	0
<i>English in Focus ...</i>	Picture	1	18	0
	Writing	6	2	0
<i>Passport to the World ...</i>	Picture	0	54	4
	Writing	6	0	0
<i>Scaffolding</i>	Picture	0	8	3
	Writing	1	0	0
Total = 739		22	225	492

In contrast, Table 2 shows that the cultural elements present are not evenly distributed, with 22, 225, and 492 elements representing knowledge, behavior, and artifacts, respectively. *The Bridge to English Competence for SMP Grade VII* remains dominant in the number of cultural elements included (396 or 54% out of the 739 elements of culture present); the uneven distribution of the cultural aspects is even more apparent with 0, 54, and 342 elements representing knowledge, behavior, and artifact, respectively. The absence of or the low percentage of the presence of cultural knowledge may be due to a take-it-for-granted attitude that the users of the textbooks are mostly Indonesians who no longer need explanation or knowledge of their own culture. However, confirmation and further justification are needed.

Comparison of the cultural aspects in Table 1 and Table 2 shows that the number of the Indonesian cultural elements exceeds that of its counterparts, the Western cultural elements (409 Western and 739 Indonesian). This gives an impression that the textbooks have adequately accommodated the local cultures so that there should be no worries about the degradation of the local cultures through the students' contact with the Western cultures. However, a close examination on how the cultural elements are presented, there are phenomena that may confuse the local norms or undermine the position of the local cultures. The following pictures are two of the many examples present in the textbooks.

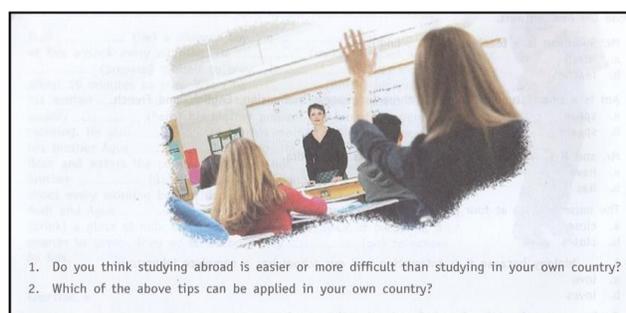


Figure 1 A student raising the left hand for asking permission to speak (Bates, 2007: 34)

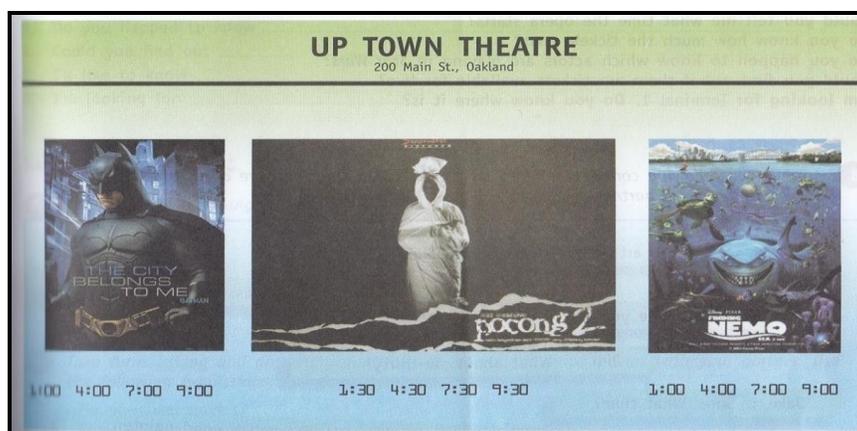


Figure 2 *Pocong* vs Robotics (Bates, 2007: 59)

Figure 1 shows a common phenomenon in a typical western classroom or meeting room. In the western culture, raising the left or right hand as a sign to interrupt or ask a question and giving or receiving something with the left or right hand are equally polite and acceptable. Frequent exposures of such a behavior to the students without a correct explanation on the differences between the western norms and the Indonesian ones will give them an impression that they can also give a book to the teacher with the left hand. This is, of course, against the local or Indonesian norm.

In Figure 2, there is a contrast between the Indonesian movie and the western one, which may reflect the contrast of the cultures of the two peoples. Linton (in Mesthrie, et al., 2009: 28) defines culture as ‘the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn ...’ While the Indonesian people are still busy with the mystery of ‘pocong’ (ghost), the western people keep developing their technology which is already advanced (robotics, planet life, etc.). This contrast may be interpreted as a reflection that the Indonesian people prefer dreaming about the past to thinking about what to do for the future. The American people seem to think the other way around. Such a contrast may build an image of the Indonesian inferiority in the way of thinking and the world’s technology forum.

In one of the textbooks there seems to be an effort to introduce the English cultural aspect mixed with a Javanese or Indonesian one. It may seem to fit the context, but it is confusing and can be misleading. In English, the use of Mr., Mrs., or Miss is normally followed by the last name or surname, e.g. Bill Clinton as Mr. Clinton, Kathy McKown as Miss McKown, etc. In Javanese or Indonesian such titles are usually given their equivalents as *Bapak/Pak*, *Ibu/Bu*, and *Nona/Mbak*. For persons such as Sinton Panjaitan and Uci Panggabean, addressing them as Mr. Panjaitan and Miss Panggabean is appropriate because their second names are family names or surnames. At school, students are accustomed to addressing the teacher *Pak Joko* for Joko Putranto. In the English class they almost always call him Mr. Joko. In fact this is what actually appears in one of the textbooks investigated in this study. Consequently, it is common to hear students addressing a native speaker lecturer or teacher as Miss Catherine for Catherine

Foster. In her country, the students usually address her as “Miss Foster” or simply “Catherine.” Without a proper clarification, this erroneous practice will persist.

These examples are only a small sketch of what may be said about how cultural insertion in a textbook may have on the reader’s perception and response. The interpretation may be biased, but it may serve as a warning to the foreign language teachers and textbook writers that great care must be taken in inserting cultural elements in the textbooks as well as in the teaching and learning process.

As mentioned earlier, the cultural elements found were categorized into three aspects: *knowledge*, *behavior*, and *artifacts*. For examples, cultural knowledge appears in the form of greetings related to the English concept of time (parts of the day), such as: good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and good night, etc., the concept of politeness by the use of expressions such as: thanks, please, would you ..., etc. Behaviors can be seen in the American habits of dining out and taking an annual leave or vacation, the way of introducing oneself or others, farmers’ activities in Indonesia, shaking hands in both western and local cultures, etc. Artifacts are represented by the pictures of buildings, vehicles, household appliances, kitchen utensils, arts and crafts, and articles of clothing and accessories, etc.

Overall, the presence of the cultural elements in each book seems to have not been based on comprehensive planning to include all knowledge, behaviors, and artifacts appropriate for each grade or level of education. In regard to the concept of multi-cultures, all of the seven books investigated have not shown clear indicators of the balanced presence of the micro/local, mainstream and global cultures which, in Sinagatullin’s view (2003: 114), will help students acquire attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to successfully function in their future.

In addition, in this global era, the Indonesians will not communicate in English only with the native speakers of English (the English, the Americans, the Australians and the New Zealanders), but they will have more frequent encounters with the non-native speakers who also speak English (the Chinese, the Indians, the Pakistanis, the Vietnamese, the Koreans, the Japanese, the Germans, the Dutch, etc.). Therefore, they

also need to familiarize themselves with the different cultures of these peoples. As Grant and Lei (2001: 10-11) suggest, cultural differences are the main issues in cross-cultural or multicultural education. Understanding these cultural differences is one of the requirements to function successfully in multicultural communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that, to different degrees, the seven EFL textbooks investigated have inserted cultural elements which are classified into knowledge, behaviors, and artifacts, in both western and Indonesian cultural contexts. To some extent, three of the seven textbooks have also shown the authors' awareness of the need to accommodate cross-cultural differences pertaining to both native speakers and non-native speakers of English. However, care has not been fully taken to anticipate cultural sensitivity as seen from cultural elements which may be biased against a certain culture. Despite the adequate percentage of the local cultural elements present, each book has not evenly distributed the elements to represent the localities or regions proportionally.

In response to Grant and Lei's suggestion (2001: 10-11) that cultural differences are the main issues in cross-cultural education, this paper proposes that, in efforts to infuse cultural elements, EFL textbooks written for the Indonesian students should (1) accommodate local, mainstream (Indonesian), Asian and global cultural elements; (2) focus on cultural aspects that may induce misunderstanding or confusion, completed with proper explanation and illustration; (3) be presented in both explicit mode (with an explicit topic on one or more of the cultural aspects) and implicit mode (with cultural elements included, which may induce the students' curiosity and the teacher's awareness of the need to deal with them in the teaching and learning process).

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