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

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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.

Keywords: 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