

*Expressing Locality in Learning English:
A Study of English Textbooks for Junior High School Year VII-IX in Indonesia
Context*

Agnes Siwi Purwaning Tyas, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
Sekolah Vokasi, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper intends to investigate the transfer of English language to Indonesian students of junior high school in a multicultural setting. As a locus of discussion, the investigation problematizes English textbooks “Real Time: An Interactive English Course for Junior High School Students Year VII-IX” which signify the imbalance accounts of cultural elements as highlighted by both the target language and the local attributes. In other words, domination occurs generated by the English language as an authoritative translanguage submitted to “the Other”. Such premise has led to a question that this project would then analyze, referring to how the cultural elements of the target language are presented in the textbooks and gradually reduce the degree of the oppressive ideology.

Ideally, English teachers teach the language in accordance with the nature of language learning in which they are trained and expected to teach the language within the culture of the target language. This provides a penetrative space of a foreign ideology for its language to be taught. In the context of Indonesia, learning English as international language is considered dilemmatic. To some extent, the ideal pedagogical approach of English learning moves to different direction. English textbook in Indonesia incorporates the cultural elements of the target language, such as names, terminologies, and objects. The textbooks portray 128 foreign elements and 27 local elements. By having the cultural components, the textbook should promote learners’ cultural sensitivity of both cultures to avoid misunderstanding and confusion as well as support language learning as a bidirectional process instead of instrument of oppression. The analytical elaboration examines the cultural characteristics in the forms of form of names, terminologies, and imagery of both cultural domains; English and Indonesia. Thus, the learners are imposed to the culture of the target language and forced to internalize the concept of values under the influence of the target language which tend to marginalize their native culture.

Keywords: Bidirectional process, Identity, Local Culture, Oppression

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Introduction

Current curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes the notion that learning should foster the character building of the students. Curriculum of 2013 which is published by the Minister of Education includes character building in the learning goals which then should be carried out in the learning process. Such effort aims to build students' cultural awareness of their own culture and enforce their cultural identity in order to avoid the loss of values and identity in the middle of the globalized world. However, in the context of Indonesia, learning English as international language is considered dilemmatic. Ideally, English teachers teach the language in accordance with the nature of language learning in which they are trained and expected to teach the language within the culture of the target language. This provides a penetrative space of a foreign ideology for its language to be taught. If the foreign culture takes most parts of the instruction, this condition may lead to cultural crisis. It is then possible that the exposures to the native cultures are reduced and more penetrations from foreign culture are accommodated. The danger is that people can lose their identity or face the threat of losing their identity due to this cultural invasion (Freire, 1970, p. 152). Learners will respond more to the foreign cultures, imitate, and internalize the new cultures in their lives. Since learning is an instrument of domination, teachers should pay more attention to factors that pose some threats to identity.

As learning is shifting to knowledge-based process, providing students with necessary contents for language learning is considered beneficial. Non-linguistics contents should be put into consideration as well because the information that the students obtain from learning is believed can promote their culture and identity. Therefore, effective textbooks should accommodate exposures of both cultures. Teachers demand more English textbooks which can facilitate cultural dissemination of both local and global values. English textbook in Indonesia incorporates the cultural elements of the target language, such as names, terminologies, and cultural wisdoms, objects, and factual information. More textbooks signify the imbalance accounts of cultural elements as highlighted by both the target language and the local attributes. In other words, domination occurs generated by the English language as an authoritative translanguage submitted to "the Other". Such premise has led to a question that this project would then analyze, referring to how the cultural elements of the target language are presented in the textbooks and gradually reduce the degree of the oppressive ideology. This paper intends to investigate the transfer of English language to Indonesian students of junior high school in a multicultural setting. A series of textbooks published by local publisher, PT. Erlangga titled "Real Time: An Interactive English Course for Junior High School Students Year VII-IX" is analyzed to examine the presence of cultural contexts in English and Indonesia.

Cultural Identity

Miller describes that cultural identity as a condition when each individual favors differentiation and localization and validates human differences and the rights of diversity (in Miller, Kostogriz, & Gearon, 2009, p.127). In the context of language learning, people should promote cultural identity by respecting the diversity that the learners have, including their existing knowledge, backgrounds, motivation levels, and cultures. One should value the cultures of the target language and the local

cultures. By doing so, there is no culture being marginalized. The fact that learners are diverse requires each individual to give respect on others' identity as Pavlenko mentions that language learning should be carried out with respect to the ideological and sociopolitical processes which both enable (re)negotiation of identity (2009, p. 220). Therefore, promoting identity can be described as the effort to expressing the locality in the process of earning new language and learning its culture.

Language Learning and Instrument of Oppression

Freire mentions that education is the exercise of domination because education becomes an act of depositing (1970, p. 72). Learners expose themselves to a new concept and internalize it in their minds. There is a ruling power that drives the process of earning the contents, including the information that should be given and this involves the act of distinction. Referring to the contents in English textbooks, the acts of distinction and domination appear as a form of symbolic power that decides what is culturally valuable and what is not (Freire, 1970, p. 67). Therefore, contents in textbooks become instrument to impose ones' cultures towards others. People who are non-native to the cultures are exposed and they tend to be forced to internalize the cultures to learn the foreign language. This condition portrays the oppressive ideology which takes into account.

Bidirectional Process

Pavlenko describes language learning as a bidirectional process where the boundaries of the target language category are modified without changing that of the native language (2009, p. 175). Pavlenko further mentions that the acquisition process involves immersion process (2009, p. 170). Bidirectional process enables learners to bring themselves to a new horizon without ever losing their existing or prior knowledge. When they are exposed to a new concept, they also recall their memories upon the pre-existing knowledge they have in mind. That is also how bidirectional process works in language learning. When the students learn a new culture, they reinforce their local culture, so they build their sensitivity towards both cultures.

Methodology

The study examined Real Time textbooks for Junior High School Year VII to IX. The textbooks consist of three textbooks. The three textbooks researched were written by non-Indonesian author edited by two Indonesia editors published by a local commercial publishing company, PT Erlangga. The textbooks present variety of cultural representations of both foreign and local cultures which include names, terminologies, cultural notes, factual information, and images. The study employed content analysis where analytical elaboration was used to examine the cultural characteristics in the forms of form of names, terminologies, and imagery of both cultural domains, which lead to a discursive context on how language acts as signifier and signs. In addition, the study also focused on the distribution of both cultures to identify if there was dominating culture which could lead to cultural invasion.

Discussion

Language learning should promote the cultures and identity since it is always conducted in multicultural setting. The different background, culture, and identity between the learners and the native speakers require more contents that can value the differences and similarities between both cultures. Morgan and Cain mention that meanings and values are learned concurrently with language (2000, p. 4). Since language and culture are inseparable, the contents and activities should raise awareness of the multicultural values. One of the media used to disseminate the cultures is textbook, so good textbook should portray the language as well as the cultural values and identity.

Book	Foreign Cultures					Local Cultures				
	Names	FI	CN	Term	Im	Names	FI	CN	Term	Im
RT 1	53	4	14	7	50	48	3	-	-	4
RT 2	56	2	8	3	58	37	1	1	-	6
RT 3	71	6	10	2	52	27	8	1	-	5

Table 1. The Distributions of Foreign and Local Cultures

Language and culture are interconnected because language denotes and embodies specific cultural factors (Morgan and Cain, 2000, p. 6). The use of language can represent the identity of the speakers and the culture underlies the language used by the speakers. Therefore, when ones learn a new language, they also expose themselves to the values and cultures of the native speakers. Byram and Morgan mentions that language learning has to be complemented with culture-specific meanings, which include cultural elements and social features (1994, p. 1). This becomes the basis of integrating cultures and their manifestations in the language learning contents, particularly textbooks.

Based on the analysis, foreign and local cultures are represented in the forms of names, terminologies, cultural notes, factual information, and images. They reflect how the cultures are manifested in the real life context as perceived by the learners. The cultural forms serve as signifiers which create mental images of the cultural identity. They appear as the portraits which are recognized and perceived by the senses of the learners (Greimas, p. 8). By using names, terminologies, cultural notes, factual information, and pictures, the writer wants to create mental images that will be processed by the learners as internalized concepts in their minds.

Names

In order to portray the cultures of the target language, the writer uses names of people and places. Names like Jim, Jack, Jane, Ken, Mrs. Jones, Darla, and Stephanie or surnames like Bates, Smith, Robinson, and Baley are common to use in the West. The textbooks also mention names of various places like Los Angeles, Tucson, Perth, Arizona, San Diego, Atlanta, Disneyland, Grand Canyon, Mount Helen, Empire State Building, New York, and University or Arizona which are located in foreign countries. The writer uses these names to give context and setting that the events take place in

foreign countries and almost all of the conversations are performed by people from English-speaking countries under the circumstances of foreign cultures.



Image 1. The presentations of local people and local names

To accommodate the background of Indonesian learners, the textbooks often mention common local names like Fitri, Toni, Anton, Meta, Rani, Margo, Sujatmiko, Sudirman, Gunardi, and Rudi. These people are depicted as Indonesians speaking to foreigners in various situations, such as invitation, introduction, and request. In addition, to make the contexts more localized, the writer uses several names of big cities or famous tourist attractions in Indonesia, such as Medan, Semarang, Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Bromo, Senggigi Beach, Lombok, Bali, Kuta, and Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. The setting illustrates that English is spoken in Indonesia as international language. However, due to less exposure to the cultural setting in Indonesia, most of the contents are presented with the influence of foreign cultures. The learners will build the mental images of the situations.

Terminologies

The textbooks mention some terminologies that do not appear in local culture of Indonesia. The terms include potluck party, feet for measurement, summer camp, slumber party, hitchhiking, and barbeque party. Indonesian learners are not familiar with these terms because they do not have the same cultures. When learning these concepts, they are exposed to the new cultures. They will construct and internalize the concepts of potluck party, feet, summer camp, slumber party, and barbeque party which are common in foreign countries. This condition is conflicting with the idea to express the locality because the textbooks tend to omit other cultural terminologies that are present in Indonesia context.

Cultural notes

Unlike other English textbooks in Indonesia, Real Time adds cultural notes as parts of the units. These cultural notes are available at the end of the units which allow discussions on foreign cultures. Some examples of the cultural notes are celebrations in America, healthy lifestyle in America, American parents, family in America, culture of teenagers in the US, American friendly culture, and 'Time is Money' in America. Almost all contents discussed in cultural notes are about the cultures of the

Americans. Some images also follow the discussions to give clear pictures of how the cultures are practiced.

1. Americans shake hands with each other when first introduced or when they meet again, but rarely when they part.
2. It is acceptable for an American to start a conversation with a stranger but the conversation should be ended immediately if the person does not seem to want to talk.
3. It is impolite to talk during the performance of a concert or play.
4. Americans usually accept the compliment graciously and with thanks.



Image 2. Americans manner

The textbooks do not mention cultures of Indonesia in the cultural notes. The example of the cultural notes above illustrates how Americans hold manners in socializing with others. The fact shows that language learning has been ‘Americanized’. Failures to promote the local cultures can lead to the loss of identity during the learning process. In fact, multicultural language learning should accommodate students’ diversity, especially their cultures, identities, and values.

Factual information

The writer discusses seasons, topography, price, measurement, abbreviations, NASCAR sports in America, and American Express card as factual information of the cultures of the target language. By doing so, the writer wants to promote the foreign cultures. The textbooks also discuss some factual information from Indonesia. This effort is to disseminate both cultures in the process of language learning. The learners then can internalize both values to avoid losing the identity and culture.

- Maya : Which channel is your favorite?
Tara : I like channel E-news.
Maya : Why do you like it?
Tara : Well, it has many interesting programs, such as soap operas and quiz shows.
Maya : I don't like watching soap operas. I like watching news and music programs.
Tara : What is your favorite channel?
Maya : Hmm, I like both CNN and MTV.
Tara : I like MTV too. It has many good programs.
Maya : We have to be careful though. We are not supposed to watch too much TV.
Tara : You are right.

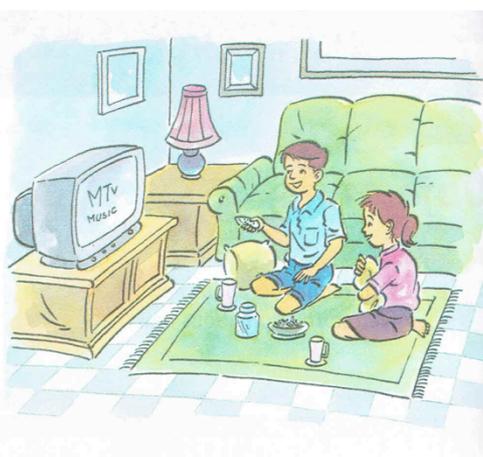


Image 3. Conversation between Two Friends about Foreign TV Channel

The image above illustrates the conversation between two friends. They are talking about their favorite TV programs. Unfortunately, the TV programs that they are

talking about are not from local TV. CNN and MTV are American-based TV channels. Using these as the examples of TV program instead of local TV programs will reduce the value of local identity.



DID YOU KNOW?

Antara is Indonesia's National News Agency. It was founded by Adam Malik, Soemanang, A.M. Sipanhoentar and Pandoe Kartawigoena on December 13, 1937. *Antara* was the one which first announced the proclamation of Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945.

Image 4. Factual Information about Local Culture

In order to bring more localized content, Real Time textbook for grade IX describes one of our national mass media. The writer mentions *Antara*, a national news agency which was founded and published in Indonesia. To express more local contents, teacher using the textbooks can provide more additional examples of factual information in Indonesia. The discussion can be followed by presenting the examples of local identity.

Images

Most of the pictures in the textbooks illustrate the cultures of the target language. The images show some cultural aspects and phenomena, such as celebrations in the US, food, iconic places in the US, coupons, and fairy tales in the US. The images are mostly used to support descriptions of objects or customs in the cultural notes or situations in the conversations, so the learners can understand the settings and contexts. In all units, the textbooks also present some images showing the activities of Americans family, workers, and students. They portray how they socialize, celebrate some important events, study at school, or play to represent how the Americans live.



Image 5. The representation of local culture

The locality is expressed by presenting some images that relate to the local cultures. Several units portray several pictures of Indonesian cultures, such as traditional dance, memento, traditional means of transportation, local folktales, and cultural icons in Indonesia. The pictures also describe how Indonesian students spend their time at

school. However, only some images are followed with descriptions or stories. To give example, textbook for grade IX contains a picture about the story of Timun Mas and several units in textbook for grade VIII and IX present several images that describe Kuta and Tanah Lot, whereas, other images are not followed by descriptions. The image presented above portrays Barong, a traditional dance from Bali.

Expressing the Locality

Since language learning is conducted in multicultural setting, the contents given should accommodate students' diversity in terms of cultures, values, and identities. Expressing the locality in the textbooks will work best to disseminate the values of both cultures and reduce the sense of oppression and domination of one culture to another.

Real Time textbooks have presented some cultural representations of both cultures. However the distributions are still imbalance because the textbooks represent more Americanized contexts. The use of names and the presentations of factual information, cultural notes, and images build the context and identity of the American cultures. Therefore, this is quite effective to help the students internalize the cultures of the target language. In order to promote local culture and reduce the domination of foreign culture representations, the textbooks have added more contextualized and localized contents. Several units in the textbooks present conversations between native speakers and students from Indonesia. Typical Indonesian names are also mentioned in several parts of the textbooks. By doing so, the textbooks have managed to accommodate the identity of local people. They are portrayed as local people with local identity who take parts in international communication.

Cultural contents in the textbooks also present factual information about Indonesian cultures. In several units, the writer describes the cultural and tourism icons of Indonesia such as Borobudur, Kuta, and Bromo. By learning the language, the students also learn about the local cultures as well. In addition, the textbooks also provide several images to represent the values and cultures of Indonesia. The representations of the local cultures in the textbooks will build students' awareness of their identity while internalizing new concepts of foreign cultures in the language learning process. As what Brown mentions, language learning is connected with cultural learning because when ones teach a language, they also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (in Richards and Renandya, 2002, p. 13).

Language Learning and Cultural Representation

Although the number of the local cultures is limited, Real Time textbooks have expressed the local cultures of Indonesia. The use of images, factual information, and local names try to build more localized contexts and promote the local cultures during the process of learning others' language. While learning, Kramsch mentions that language learners should promote the attitudes, values, and beliefs they share with the social group they belong to (in Carter & Nunan, 2001, p. 202). Not merely receiving the new language and its cultural values, language learners should express their local values and identity. One way to teach the culture is by understanding the cultural background portrayed in the literature (Haynes, 2007, p. 60). If the contents in the

textbooks provide enough cultural exposure, the learners will find it easier to build the mental images about the cultures that they are supposed to learn.

If the contents can represent both cultures, the learning will promote the dissemination of both cultures and encourage the students to appreciate the diversity. The students will understand the similarities and dissimilarities between them and restrain any negative attitudes towards one culture. On the other hands, most English textbooks used have not put enough information about the local culture. Most images, cultural notes, factual information, and names represent foreign cultures and have stronger penetrations on the students.

Language Learning and Identity

Learning is a form of domination and oppression. People with authoritative power decide what to learn, how to learn, and when to learn. Textbook writers can decide what are valuable to mention in the textbooks. Real Time textbooks present more contents about American and Western cultures which include the way they live and socialize. In order to reduce the degree of oppression, the writer tries to mention various forms of local culture. However, compared to the number of foreign cultures, this is still inadequate, so the textbooks have more Americanized or Westernized identity. This idea shows how learners as non-native members encounter the identity of native speakers (Byram & Grundy, 2003, p. 2).

Identity is multiple and shifting (Kostogriz in Miller, Kostogriz, & Gearon, 2009, p. 116), so identity is fluid. It keeps changing as people progress towards the goal. Learners' concept on identity can also change as they move towards the learning goals. Therefore, multicultural awareness is necessary to build because they can acquire the target language without ever losing their identity. The expectation is that they can internalize the culture of the target language and relate it with their own culture. Based on Kostogriz (in Miller, Kostogriz, and Gearon, 2009, p. 122), multicultural awareness itself can be raised by contrasting the target culture and the learners' culture and identity. Learners should be encouraged to value the diversity.

Conclusion

Cultural learning follows language learning. Contents in English textbooks do not only mention the language aspects but also represent culture and identity of the native speakers. In order to reduce the domination of one culture to another culture, the contents should promote both cultures. Although still considered imbalance, Real Time textbooks have provided several cultural representations of Indonesia by using names, factual information, and images. The presence of these items helps the learners to understand the values and cultures of the target language without ever losing their own identity.

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Contact email: agnesiw@ugm.ac.id