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THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL CONTENT IN TEXT AND IMAGE OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

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Abstract: This research aims at revealing the influence of cultural contents in English textbooks on the attitude of elementary school students. Cultural content refers to symbolic meaning, artistic dimension and cultural values that originate from or express cultural identities that are inserted into teaching materials in textbooks. Text and image are two kinds of English textbook material containing cultural contents. Which one has a higher influence on the students' attitude? A phenomenological approach is adopted to describe the participant's experience related to the students' attitude as the result of absorbing cultural values found in an English textbook's cultural contents. The data is collected by sharing questionnaires to the respondents. There were thirty respondents to this research. They are English teachers at elementary school. The collected data is analyzed using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to measure the influence of cultural content on the textbook on the students' attitude. Finally, it is found that the cultural contents in the textbook have changes to the students' attitude, which change the students' attitude in terms of hard work, diversity, fighting spirit, mutual assistance, independence, honesty, discipline, beauty, equality, and care. The positive correlation is represented by the significant correlation (r), which is < 0.05. Definitely, the significant correlation value (r) is 0.41 for cultural content represented in images (weak correlation) and 0.35 for cultural content represented in texts (moderate correlation). Research on cultural value in textbook content is crucial because it may lead to a broader understanding of how to use appropriate teaching and learning resources to help students develop their cultural competency in a multicultural setting, which could improve their attitudes for they have gained knowledge about cultural variety.

Keywords: *Cultural content; effect; elementary school; student's attitude; textbook.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural content refers to symbolic meaning, artistic dimension and cultural values that originate from or express cultural identities that are inserted into teaching materials in textbooks. Culture is a group or society's shared values, ideas, rituals, customs, behaviors, artifacts, and symbols. It encompasses how people live, engage, and perceive their environment, creating identities and social structures in the process. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through language, traditions, art, religion, and institutions, influencing social norms, communication styles, and worldviews. (Tylor, 1871). In addition to its intrinsic value, culture has substantial social and economic significance. Through enhancing education and health, fostering tolerance, and offering chances for social interaction, culture enhances our quality of life and elevates the general well-being of both individuals and communities. Personal values support the development of credibility, self-awareness, task

prioritizing, and ethical decision-making (Riana, 2021). Because culture may be developed and conserved through education, which is passed down from one generation to the next, culture and education are mutually reinforcing (Nulhusni et al., 2022). In research, it is also stated that creating a solid workplace culture is one way to improve things. The purpose of organizational culture is to shape attitudes and behavior at work in line with the objectives of the organization. Keep in mind that cognition and emotion patterns can be emotionally influenced by cultural beliefs. Consequently, fostering the development of self-awareness to perform honorably and professionally (Sugiarti et al., 2021). Therefore, cultural practices need to be taught to young learners at school, especially by inserting cultural contents into textbooks. An excellent textbook serves as a learning aid in addition to covering all the content that has to be taught in the classroom. Textbooks serve as a learning aid and a storehouse of knowledge, including ethical principles or cultural practices (Kusramadhani et al., 2022).

In the context of intercultural competencies, students require various sub-components that range from essential to moderately important. The need for intercultural competence (IC) can emerge in various circumstances. It is often presumed that this involves interaction with a different "culture," where a person may need to work, study, or live—either temporarily or permanently—in an unfamiliar environment. Additionally, it is commonly expected that this setting will include a language that is not familiar to them. These situations can occur not only abroad but also within one's own country. Although international experiences are typically emphasized, relocating within one's own nation can also entail cultural and linguistic challenges similar to those faced in foreign countries (Byram, 2013b). Among these, the sub-component of cultural values is considered to be of significant importance to the students (Dirgayasa, 2022), although, in research, it is found that the identities of learners remain largely unchanged despite their exposure to foreign cultures, beliefs, values, and roles exposed in the textbook, there were some minor alterations observed, though these changes were not statistically significant (Afghari et al., 2012). However, in other research, it is found that the intentional incorporation of culturally relevant learning materials in English language teaching can yield beneficial results, as demonstrated. This research suggests that the process of learning English can be enhanced by integrating cultural elements. It indicates that equipping EFL learners with appropriate cultural resources might influence their cultural awareness and can positively affect their attitude (Al-Dawoody Abdulaal & Alenazi, 2023). It is also believed that establishing a research focus on language and culture is of paramount importance, as language serves as a repository of cultural expression. To thoroughly investigate the intricacies of culture, it is essential to examine the cultural and linguistic functions prevalent in various historical contexts. Language has undergone evolution and diversification throughout human history. Consequently, when defining or analyzing language, it is crucial to consider its cultural and practical implications (Luyen & Hoang, 2023). This is also supported by research stating that students are often presented with a narrow and stereotypical representation of the target society, and it can adversely influence their understanding and motivation to learn. Educators must recognize these constraints within their instructional content and strive to expand students' viewpoints by explicitly addressing these issues in the classroom or by enhancing the textbook material with additional resources. Future research should investigate other informational elements within EFL textbooks, such as the accompanying images and listening exercises, as these components may offer a greater representation of diverse cultures, genders, and ethnicities. Moreover, it is essential for subsequent studies to examine a broader range of materials across various educational levels to assess how EFL resources address cultural themes within the specified categories of popular culture and cultural heritage (Ponte & Alonso, 2021). As stated in research that the incorporation of popular culture in the chosen novels underscores its recurring characteristics and its influence on society. Research indicates that popular culture is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon that manifests distinctly across different contexts and eras, embodying a complex interplay of interrelated perspectives and values. It is proved by the novels authored by young Philippine writers that play a crucial role in shaping both cultural and linguistic landscapes (Peña, 2023).

Multicultural education has been identified as encompassing three distinct types of transformation: personal transformation, transformation within schools and the teaching and learning processes, and societal transformation. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating two fundamental elements—dialogue and tolerance—as essential foundations

for effective multicultural education. The delineation of these three transformation types underscores the necessity for a comprehensive approach to achieving multicultural education. It is anticipated that this initiative will enhance the values of multiculturalism, foster student character development that is attuned to diversity, and ultimately cultivate an inclusive and harmonious educational atmosphere (Simatupang et al., 2024). These three types of transformation, which then, may be directed to create a school culture that has a positive effect on the students' learning achievement. In research, it is concluded that the culture within a school significantly influences students' academic success in a positive manner. Consequently, it is essential to implement recommendations aimed at enhancing the school culture (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021). School culture is the overall beliefs, values, and norms typical of the school, such as symbols, rites, ceremonies, etc. On the other hand, educators are supposed to modify and harmonize the cultural content presented in textbooks with the local cultures or norms by sourcing additional materials from diverse origins (Sulistiyo et al., 2021). It is also reveled in research that "…that most of the references to the three circles and cultural elements embodied in the textbooks were toward Inner Circle countries in American English File. Furthermore, in Interchange and English Result series, reference to Outer and Expanding Circles' varieties and cultural elements were comparatively more evident. However, all the three textbook series mostly represented Inner-Circle accents. These findings have implications for materials developers to adopt an EIL- aware approach and to avoid the sole representation of native speakers' linguistic norms and cultures in ELT textbooks" (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). A research found that even though Chinese and German students may interact with individuals from a variety of language and cultural backgrounds in global settings, it shows that Inner Circle cultures are still regarded with greater respect than those of the Outer and Expanding Circle nations (Zhang & Su, 2021). The Inner Circle comprises nations where English is the primary language, including the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The Outer Circle includes nations like Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Nigeria where English is a norm-developing language and is used as a second language in multilingual contexts. Lastly, the Expanding Circle includes nations like South Korea, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, and Iran where English is regarded as a norm-dependent language and is utilized as a foreign language for international communication (Kachru, 1991). It is highlighted that there is "simultaneous presence and interplay of these borrowings and the indigenous Indonesian culture, offering pupils a chance to cultivate a comprehension of culture within a worldwide context. Moreover, this study revealed that the cultural depictions and their integration into Indonesian settings offer English education that beyond mere proficiency in the English language. The cultural representations and their position as borrowings offer opportunities for the advancement of English as a constituent of global Englishes" (Sapoetra et al., 2026)

Textbooks play an important role in teaching moral values. Therefore, a textbook should show and promote cultural content, religious and moral values. At least there are three cultural values that might be revealed in research, namely appreciation of cultural products, respect for the right indigenous people, and finding peace and nature and with all forms of life. These values might be presented in an image, narration, dialogue, etc. (Sulistiyo et al., 2020). Other research found that the textbook presents four key themes related to multicultural values: (1) honoring the cultures of various ethnic and religious groups; (2) valuing the traditions of indigenous populations; (3) promoting conflict resolution and harmony with all forms of life and the environment; and (4) recognizing and appreciating innovative cultural expressions. The implications derived from this textual analysis highlight the necessity of incorporating multicultural resources from outer and expanding circle countries into English language teaching (ELT) textbooks, especially as English increasingly serves as a global lingua franca, cultural domination becomes an important consideration in the general context of EFL(Сет Aiptekin, 1982, Kachru, 1991). In most parts of the world, it is widely acknowledged that learning a foreign language is more suitably focused on developing communication skills than it is on understanding a purely academic subject. Communication in a general setting is never out of context, and it is rarely culture-free because culture is a part of most contexts. As a result, it is not acknowledged that learning languages and learning cultures are incompatible (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, Kramsch, 2018, Valdes, 1991)

Consequently, English educators are encouraged to adopt creative approaches in teaching multicultural elements and to utilize

multimodal resources to actively engage students in language-learning activities that are rich in cultural context (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). Cultural contents are dominantly represented in visual images in elementary school because they strengthen the verbal description of physical appearance (Prihatiningsih et al., 2021). The goals of educators should be both practical and instructive. All forms of language instruction, but the primary focus will be on foreign language instruction as it is implemented in general education, should foster critical thinking and global action while fostering communication and interaction skills. In some recent research to demonstrate this, it integrates the goals of language instruction and citizenship education into the idea of intercultural citizenship and puts new theory into reality (Cem & Alptekin, 1984, Byram, 2013a, Alptekin, 2002),

Many researchers did their research on the cultural content contained in textbooks. One of them found that the culture depicted in the textbook was primarily influenced by source culture, which accounted for 50%, followed by global culture at 37%, international culture at 8%, and target culture at 5% (Ira, 2018). In more specific items, research found that the cultural values identified in the texts of the English coursebooks include prestige, honesty, discipline, alignment, individuality, diversity, hard work, generosity, creativity, beauty, equality, fighting spirit, mutual assistance, care, pride, independence, and belief. Among these, three values stand out as particularly prominent: diversity, beauty, and alignment. These findings suggest that English teachers can incorporate these cultural values into their teaching methodologies (J. Lekawael et al., 2018). In addition, teachers might use gamification to improve and motivate students by increasing vocabulary to advance their language skills (John, 2024). Gamification is a method of teaching by using game instruments to stimulate students' eagerness in language learning. Further research is also suggested to focus on the influence of cultural values on teenagers' attitudes. Cultural values are considered very important to be taught to the younger generation because, apart from maintaining local cultural values, they also have the potential to establish good character in students so that they are able to behave well in their lives, both in social and individual life. And to respond to the suggestion of previous research, this research aims to reveal the influence of cultural contents in English textbooks on students' attitudes.

METHOD

This research is accomplished by adopting a qualitative design in which it is used to explore and understand individuals or groups' perceptions of certain problems (Creswell, 2009). Based on the research problem, the researchers explore and understand teachers' ascription of cultural contents in English textbook to the students' attitudes. Specifically, an interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenological approach is used to describe the participant's experience related to the students' attitude that might be the result of absorbing cultural values found in English textbooks' cultural contents (Creswell, 2016).

The data collection is conducted by giving questioners to 30 English teachers of elementary schools in Medan who teach at five different school. They are at between 26 and 30 years old and have approximately 7-10 years experiences in teaching English. Still, the researchers do not mention the name of the interviewee and the name of the school as ethical considerations that should be respected and understood to keep the confidentiality (Ary et al., 2014) and to respect the ethical concerns with human conduct (Miller et al., 2012). The questionnaire is adapted from the questionnaire that has been applied by previous researchers (J. Lekawael et al., 2018, Ira, 2018). The questionnaire is designed I Skala Likert to measure the influence of cultural contents in English textbooks to the students' attitudes through the perception of the teachers. The Skala Likert is made up to five options (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree) for the answers (Rohmad & Sarah, 2021; Joshi et al., 2015). Then, the collected data is analysed by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient to measure the correlation between the variables of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is found that cultural content has an influence on students' attitude. The cultural content options embedded in the questionnaire are visual images and text. Text includes dialogue and story or narration. The analysis shows that both image and text have a positive correlation to the students' attitudes because the significant correlation (*r*) value of them are less than 0.05. However, they have different descriptors of the correlation

coefficient (*r*) (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). The correlation between cultural content in images and students' attitudes is seen from its correlation coefficient value of 0.375. It is categorized as a weak correlation with a significant correlation value (*r*) of 0.041. On the other hand, the correlation between cultural content in texts and the students' attitudes is seen from its correlation coefficient of 0.416. It is categorized as moderate correlation with a significant correlation value (*r*) of 0.35.

Cultural content in texts influence students' behaviour better than in images because texts provide deeper and more detailed narratives about cultural values, allowing students to understand their context and meaning more comprehensively. In addition, reading texts involves higher cognitive processing, such as analysis, interpretation, and reflection, so that students are more active in understanding and internalizing cultural values. Then, texts allow students to imagine and identify with characters or stories that contain cultural values, which can influence their attitudes and behaviour more deeply (Vygotsky, 1930).

Apparently, the advantage of reading texts is that it improves students' critical thinking skills, where, students who read cultural texts can develop critical thinking skills because they have to understand, evaluate, and relate information in the text to their own experiences. Furthermore, information obtained through reading texts tends to last longer because it is processed more deeply in memory compared to simply seeing images. And Texts often contain dialogue, narration, and explanations that can introduce moral and social concepts more effectively than static images that only provide visual representations (Piaget, 1964).

The cultural contents embedded in the English textbooks of elementary school are presented in the form of images and texts. The researcher decided to see the correlation between cultural content in the images and text to the students' attitudes. This data is obtained from responses to the questions in the questionnaire given to the respondents. Furthermore, the researchers also analyze further the attitude change of the students and the influence of the cultural content after having learned about culture.

The following table is the result of analyzing data using Pearson Coefficient Correlation to measure the correlation between visual images containing cultural contents and the students' attitude.

Table 1. Correlation between Visual Images containing Cultural Contents to the Students' Attitude

Correlations			
		Visual Image	Students' Attitude
Visual Image	Pearson Correlation	1	.375*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	5.867	-2.467
	Covariance	.202	-.085
	N	30	30
Students' Attitude	Pearson Correlation	-.375*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-2.467	7.367
	Covariance	-.085	.254
	N	30	30

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From table 1, it is seen that the coefficient correlation of visual images towards the students' attitude is 0.041. This means that visual images containing cultural contents have significant correlation to the students' attitude, because if the correlation coefficient is < 0.05, then it has a significant or positive correlation (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). Furthermore, this correlation coefficient value is described according to its interpretation that is described in table 3.

Table 2. *Correlation between texts containing cultural contents to the students' attitude*

Correlations			
		Text	Students' Attitude
Text	Pearson Correlation	1	.416*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035
	N	30	30
Students' Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.386*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	
	N	30	30

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From table 2, it is seen the coefficient correlation of texts towards the students' attitude is 0.35. It means that text containing cultural contents has significant correlation to the students'

attitude, because if the correlation coefficient is < 0.05, then it has a significant or positive correlation (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). Its interpretation correlation coefficient is described below base on the range presented in table 3.

Table 3. *Interpretation of correlation coefficient (Schober & Schwarte, 2018).*

Absolute Magnitude of Correlations Coefficient Range	Interpretation
0.00 – 0.10	Negligible Correlation
0.10 – 0.39	Weak Correlation
0.40 – 0.69	Moderate Correlation
0.70 – 0.89	Strong Correlation
0.90 – 1.00	Very Strong Correlation

Table 3 shows the interpretation of the correlation coefficient in a certain range of values. As is seen in table 1 and table 2, the significant correlation of visual images and text to the students' attitude is less than 0.05 (<0.05). This means that both images and text containing cultural content have a correlation to the students' attitude. Furthermore, they have different values for their correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient value of visual images is 0.375. Thus, it is in the range of 0.10 – 0.39, indicating that images containing cultural content have a weak correlation to the students' attitudes. In addition, the correlation coefficient value of text is 0.416. Thus, it is in the range of 0.40 – 0.69, indicating that text containing cultural contents has moderate correlation to the students' attitude.

To strengthen the influence of cultural contents on the students' attitudes, the researcher spread a questionnaire to the same respondents to obtain any attitude change of the students after having learned cultural contents from an English textbook. Some behavioral changes of students that indicate cultural content influence the students' attitude, namely: prestige, honesty, discipline, alignment, individuality, diversity, hard work, generosity, creativity, beauty, equality, fighting spirit, mutual assistance, care, pride, independence, belief (J. Lekawael et al., 2018). The following is the response of the respondents obtained from the questionnaire in the Google Form.

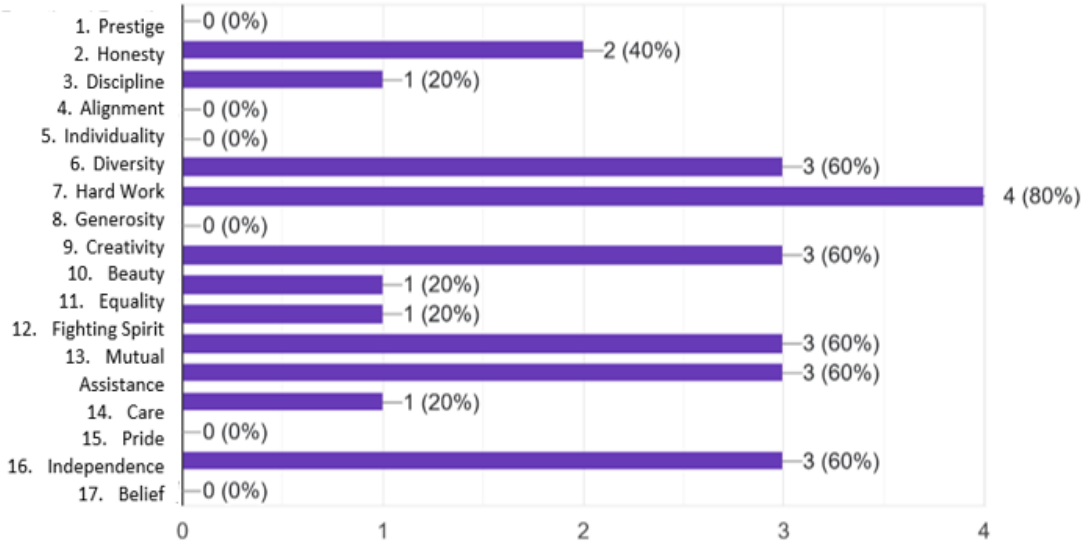


Figure 1. *Students' attitude showing the positive influence of cultural contents in English textbook*

The diagram shows that cultural contents influence the students' attitude in terms of hard work (80%), diversity, creativity, fighting spirit, mutual assistance, and independence with 60% for each, honesty (40%), discipline, beauty, equality, and care with 20% for each. All the attitudes with percentage are of positive attitudes, while those with zero percent are mostly negative attitudes. Therefore, it could be said that the cultural contents in the textbook have a positive influence on the students' attitude.

CONCLUSION

Cultural contents embedded in English textbooks have a positive influence on students' attitudes, such as the appearance of hard work, diversity, fighting spirit, mutual assistance, independence, honesty, discipline, beauty, equality, and care. This finding is similar to other researchers, showing that the attitude which is dominantly changed due to cultural contents in the textbook is diversity, beauty, and alignment (J. Lekawael et al., 2018), and by inserting cultural contents in the textbooks, students might gain wider insight of cultural value in multicultural context that is potential to give influence to their better attitude

in their social life (Lin et al., 2020). As it is stated that cultural value refers to the significance, nature, quality, or character of human civilization that is generally thought to be the essence of all cultural form of human beings, and practically emphasized on the tradition standards to organize people's live such as norms and custom (J. Lekawael et al., 2018). Additionally, the textbook's cultural content is given through text and image representation. However, there is a weak correlation between students' attitudes and cultural contents in visual pictures (images), and moderate correlation between student's attitudes and cultural contents in text. The results of this study require more investigation to determine the reasons behind the weak or nonexistent correlation between text and image. The elements or concepts of cultural contents in the text or graphics may be presumed to require improvement. They may be too complex for the pupils to comprehend, or the presentation of the content require an appropriate approach or model in teaching like what is stated in a research that the diversity of French cultures, as well as regional Francophone cultural histories and dialects, were introduced to French-language students from wide range of origin in Vancouver though a digital storytelling technique. The students were able to recognize the diversity of their learning community and the potential global nature of their Francophone course material by using the narratives exercises to reflect on their own identities. They were able to learn new research skills, gain cultural competency in an entertaining way, and enhance their language proficiency, including, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and general communication by using digital storytelling (Kamranian, 2024).

However, further research is suggested to be conducted to dig into and analyze the cultural content in images and text in English textbooks of elementary school because both lexical and grammatical levels might be a manifestation of certain culture, and might illustrate cultural nuances embedded in the text (Ponton et al., 2023). By understanding multi-cultural nuance embedded in textbook, students might have wider insight which might drive them to live in harmony in multi-cultural society. As it is argued that the more immersion to the contents of textbook is then the better the learning will be (Byram, 1997). Attitude might be identified through the intercultural competencies by which the language the students use. If the students have good intercultural competencies, it shows their good attitude as well.

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