

**LOCAL CULTURE REPRESENTATION IN THE TEXTBOOK ENGLISH FOR  
CHANGE OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE  
ANALYSIS STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to analyze the representation of local culture in the textbook *English for Change*. This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis. The data were collected from texts, dialogues, and images found in the textbook. The findings indicate that local culture is represented through daily life themes, traditions, social values, and Indonesian social contexts, although the proportion remains lower than that of foreign cultures. These findings are expected to contribute to textbook development by encouraging a better balance between local and global cultural content.

*Keywords: Local Culture, textbook, ELT, Content analysis*

**ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi budaya lokal dalam buku teks *English for Change*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis isi (content analysis). Data diperoleh dari teks, dialog, dan gambar yang terdapat dalam buku teks. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya lokal direpresentasikan melalui tema kehidupan sehari-hari, tradisi, nilai sosial, dan konteks masyarakat Indonesia, meskipun persentasenya masih lebih kecil dibandingkan budaya asing. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi bahan pertimbangan bagi pengembang bahan ajar agar lebih menyeimbangkan konten budaya lokal dan global.

Kata kunci: budaya lokal, buku teks, ELT, analisis isi

## **A. Introduction**

Textbooks play a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. They function not only as linguistic resources but also as media for transmitting cultural values, ideologies, and particular worldviews. Through reading texts, dialogues, and visual images, textbooks shape students' understanding of social and cultural contexts related to the use of English.

In the Indonesian EFL context, the representation of local culture in English textbooks is a significant issue. The inclusion of local culture helps learners connect English learning with their own cultural experiences and identities. This perspective aligns with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening national identity, local wisdom, and cultural awareness in education. English textbooks are expected to introduce foreign cultures while also providing sufficient space for Indonesian culture.

However, many previous studies indicate that English textbooks used in Indonesia tend to be dominated by Western cultural

elements. This dominance may lead to an imbalance in cultural representation and influence students' perceptions of local and global cultures. Western culture is often portrayed as a symbol of modernity and global standards, while local culture is presented in a limited and superficial manner.

One of the English textbooks used under the Merdeka Curriculum at the senior high school level is *Bahasa Inggris: English for Change*. This textbook is designed to support language competence development as well as students' social and cultural awareness. Nevertheless, limited research has examined how local culture is represented in this textbook, particularly through textual and visual materials.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the representation of local culture in the textbook *English for Change*. The analysis focuses on texts and images containing local cultural elements to examine the extent to which the textbook supports the Merdeka Curriculum's goal of strengthening students' cultural

identity through English language learning.

## **B. Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretative design. The qualitative approach is chosen because the research aims to explore and interpret meanings, ideologies, and social practices embedded in the representation of local culture in the textbook rather than to measure data quantitatively.

The primary data source of this study is the textbook *Bahasa Inggris: English for Change*, which is used at the senior high school level under the Merdeka Curriculum. The research data consist of verbal and visual data, including reading texts, dialogues, activity instructions, as well as images, illustrations, and symbols that contain elements of local culture.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis. The researcher carefully read the entire textbook to gain a comprehensive understanding of its cultural content. Relevant sections representing local culture—such as traditions, daily practices, social values, and

Indonesian social contexts—were identified and systematically recorded.

The collected data were analyzed using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The analysis was carried out through three levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. Textual analysis focused on lexical choices, sentence structures, and visual elements representing local culture. Discursive practice examined how texts and images were produced and organized in the textbook, while social practice connected cultural representations to broader social, ideological, and educational contexts within the Merdeka Curriculum.

## **C. Research Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that Indonesian local culture is represented in the textbook *Bahasa Inggris: English for Change* through both textual and visual elements. These representations appear in the use of local names, Indonesian social contexts, daily life activities, and social values reflecting local cultural practices.

Textually, local culture is presented through dialogues and reading passages that depict social interactions in

Indonesian contexts, such as family life, school activities, and everyday routines. According to cultural representation theory, texts do not merely convey information but actively construct social meanings (Hall, 1999) In this textbook, local culture is constructed as familiar and closely related to students' lived experiences.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly at the textual level ((Fairclough, 1991)), lexical choices and sentence structures indicate that local culture is often represented in a descriptive and surface-level manner. Local culture mainly functions as a background for language practice rather than as a central topic of discussion. This suggests that local culture serves as a supporting context for language learning rather than as a primary discourse.

In addition to written texts, local culture is also represented through visual elements such as illustrations of community activities, school environments, and social interactions reflecting Indonesian life. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), images in textbooks are important semiotic resources that contribute to

meaning-making. The visuals in this textbook help reinforce local cultural messages, although their frequency and depth remain limited compared to foreign cultural representations.

At the level of discursive practice, local cultural representation is organized to support communicative language learning objectives. However, at the level of social practice, the findings suggest that the representation does not fully align with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on strengthening local identity and cultural awareness. The continued prominence of foreign cultural elements indicates an imbalance in cultural representation, consistent with previous studies (Alfaya et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the findings indicate that while local culture is present in the textbook *English for Change*, its representation remains limited and has not been fully utilized as a means of fostering students' cultural awareness and identity development

#### **D. Discussion**

The findings indicate that Indonesian local culture is present in the textbook *Bahasa Inggris: English for Change*,

yet its representation remains limited and largely surface-level. This result aligns with (Hall, 1999) theory of cultural representation, which emphasizes that representation is a process of meaning construction rather than a neutral reflection of reality. In this textbook, local culture is constructed mainly as a background for language learning rather than as a central discourse explored critically.

Viewed through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework (2015), at the textual level, local culture is represented through simple lexical choices and descriptive contexts. Local cultural elements mainly appear in everyday settings such as school life and a interactions, without deeper exploration of cultural values. This suggests that local culture is not positioned as an equally important source of cultural knowledge compared to foreign culture.

At the level of discursive practice, the representation of local culture appears to be shaped by communicative language teaching objectives. Local cultural contexts are used to facilitate language comprehension. However,

(Tika & Fithriani, 2023) argue that textbooks should go beyond using culture as a linguistic context and instead function as tools for identity construction and cultural awareness.

From a multimodal perspective, visual elements representing local culture support the textual messages, but their frequency and variety remain limited. According to Kress and van (Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, 2006), images play a significant role in conveying ideological meanings. When local cultural visuals are less prominent, the cultural messages received by students become weaker than those associated with foreign cultures, which are often more visually emphasized.

At the level of social practice, the representation of local culture in *English for Change* does not fully align with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on strengthening cultural identity, local wisdom, and balanced global awareness. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Alfaya et al., 2023), which reveal persistent cultural imbalance in Indonesian ELT textbooks.

Therefore, this discussion highlights that although local culture is included in the textbook, its representation needs to be strengthened so that it functions not only as a language-learning context but also as a medium for developing students' cultural identity and critical cultural awareness.

### **E. Conclusion**

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the textbook *Bahasa Inggris: English for Change* represents Indonesian local culture through both textual and visual elements. Local cultural representations appear in everyday life contexts, social interactions, and the use of familiar names and settings, indicating an effort to relate English language learning to students' cultural experiences.

Nevertheless, the representation of local culture in the textbook remains limited and relatively superficial. Local culture primarily functions as a supporting background for language learning rather than as a central discourse explored in depth. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, local culture is not yet positioned on an equal footing with

foreign culture, particularly Western culture, which continues to be more prominent.

Therefore, strengthening the integration of local culture in English textbooks is essential to align with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. English textbooks should not only facilitate language proficiency but also contribute to the development of students' cultural identity, critical awareness, and intercultural understanding. This study is expected to provide valuable insights for textbook writers, curriculum developers, and educators in designing culturally balanced and contextually relevant English learning materials.

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