



Cultural Contents on New Step-Up: Reading and Writing for University Students

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Abstract

EFL coursebooks still become an essential teaching medium for teachers and a primary learning source for students. This research aims at identifying the kinds of source culture and themes of culture in the reading texts, reading exercises, and writing exercises. The method used in this research was qualitative with content analysis. The textbook contains 14 chapters, divided into two subject materials. There were seven units for reading materials and seven units for writing materials. The analysis found that the international target culture and small “c” culture was dominantly presented in the reading texts. Another result showed that the small “c” culture was dominantly presented in the reading exercises. The last result revealed that the cultural contents were used in each unit of the writing exercises. Based on the research findings, it is suggested that the reading passages and reading exercises in the textbook should be developed more in terms of kinds of source culture and themes of culture. Also, English materials developers, especially the authors should include more source culture particularly in reading passages and reading exercises. Finally, it can be inferred that the textbook can be used as one of the learning sources in Islamic University.

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INTRODUCTION

Until today, EFL coursebooks have still become an essential teaching medium for teachers and a primary learning source for students. The course books are necessary to save time, effort, and money (Tomlinson, 2012). Some digital learning devices, such as smartphones, PC, and laptops, are more expensive than a coursebook. More importantly, the course books contain reliable content written by EFL professionals who understand the principles behind task design, educational theory, and the realities of teaching in the classroom (Rohmah, 2009). It means that learners may put their trust to learn proper knowledge from this medium.

Although course books are a reliable and valid source of knowledge, it does not mean that they should be used strictly. Rather than follow it as a script, it would be much better if teachers use their coursebook as a resource (Tomlinson, 2015). There are possibilities that some of its contents are less relevant to the students' culture. For instance, Indonesian students may not be familiar with dancing at the ballroom, which is common knowledge for French students. That is why the flexibility of delivering the content of course books depends on the teachers' flexibility and creativity. As stated by Mustofa and Martina (2019) there are some reasons why textbooks should support the local culture in English language teaching; they are (a) to make more relevant English learning, (b) to strengthen national identity, and (c) to avoid cultural misinterpretation and stereotyping.

Cunningsworth (1995) noticed that most EFL coursebooks carry (in) directly a set of cultural values called 'hidden curriculum,' which influences the students' cultural awareness, perceptions, and knowledge. Why is culture so influential in EFL coursebooks? This case is related to the latest trend of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as the new objective of EFL substituted the Communicative Competence (CC) as the previous one (Hamiloglu, Hamiloglu, & Mendi, 2010). It implies that mastering English is not enough because EFL learners need to understand the

diversity of global culture to apply their language and knowledge adequately based on its context. ICC puts learners as the center of language teaching, which means that teachers view their students as (multi)cultural beings and meaning makers (Kiss & Weninger, 2016).

Some recent studies were conducted to explore cultural themes in EFL coursebooks for Asian students. Faris (2014) stated that culture has become one of the concerned issues in the field of language testing and evaluation. In Saudi Arabia, Aldera (2017) analyzed the coursebooks' contents which university students used. The results found that the learners disagreed with foreign cultures' dominance that contradicted Saudi Arabia's culture. However, they showed a positive attitude towards a foreign culture that does not contradict their culture. In China, Liu and Laohawiriyanon (2013) conducted a study to report the cultural contents in EFL coursebooks for Chinese students. The findings revealed that there were only half of the contents can identify. In this identification, it was dominated by target culture content.

Meanwhile, international target culture and source cultural contents are only found in a small portion. A need of source data and imbalanced determination in New Horizon College English (NHCE) textbooks of social topics might not be adequate to create Chinese non-English primary students' ICC and this way might cause troubles when they take portion in intercultural communication. In Korea, Kim and Paek (2015) investigated the representation of culture-related contents in five EFL coursebooks for middle-school students. One of the notable results showed an imbalance in representing 'product' of big 'C' and 'practice' of 'little 'c' in those coursebooks. It implies that the representation of Korean culture tended to favor culture as little 'c'. So far, these studies conducted the post-use evaluation on coursebooks used by public institutions.

Indeed, EFL coursebooks designed and produced in European or American countries mostly use events, incidents, or actions which often carry target cultural viewpoints on life and society (Aldera, 2017). The target cultural

viewpoint describes the native events from their native's point of view. The event description has two sides. On the one side, this description is easier to be acquired by EFL learners who have similar background culture to the natives. On the other side, there is challenging to learn this description for any EFL learners who have not had a similar background culture. In the few decades, EFL of non-native speakers' experts has discussed this following issue.

Cultural Contents

Regarding culture-related teaching materials and textbooks in the English classroom, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) provide a novel look at the sources of cultural information. They classified the sources of cultural information into source culture (learner's own culture), target culture (any English-speaking countries where English is spoken as a first language), and international target culture (English-speaking or non-speaking English counties around the world where English is not used as a first language).

The reason for introducing source cultural contents in ELT textbooks is to cultivate learners' knowledge of their own culture. Students will have a chance to learn about topics and vocabularies which are related to their native background in English so that they can interact with people from different cultural backgrounds McKay (2002). Target cultural knowledge has long been a main component in the ELT classroom. The rationale for integrating target culture into English classroom lies in firstly that learning a target culture will enhance student motivation and develop their attitudes toward language learning (McKay, 2002). Secondly, the author's consideration of using target culture in the classroom makes it possible for users from different societies to make best use of the same materials in both EFL and ESL contexts. As well, since it is difficult for native English speaking ELT textbook writers to source cultural data other than from their own culture, they should look to the target culture for that information (Alptekin, 1993).

Themes of Culture

Culture can be in general divided into two types: Big "C" culture and little "c" culture (Lee 2009; Peterson, 2004). Lee (2009, p. 78) refers to Big "C" culture as "the culture which represents a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society." For Peterson (2004), the culture relating to grand themes, is classified under Big "C" culture which includes the following themes such as geography, architecture, classical music, literature, political issues, society's norms, legal foundation, core values, history, and cognitive processes.

Regarding small "c" culture, it involves the routine aspects of life and encompasses everything as a total way of life. For Lee (2009, p. 78) this type of culture is "the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture" including attitudes or beliefs and assumptions. Peterson (2004) defines small "c" culture as the culture focusing on common or minor themes. It includes themes such as opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing styles, food, hobbies, popular music, and popular issues, and certain knowledge (trivia, facts).

Reading

Reading is an intensive process in which the eye quickly moves to assimilate text. Very little is seen accurately. It is necessary to understand visual perception and eye movement in order to understand the reading process. Reading is to interpret on understand (a printed passage) as having a particular meaning, the form of a specified word sentence on a passage in a particular edition of literary works.

Writing

Writing is not simply a matter of putting words together. Writing is a continuous process of thinking and organizing. Rethinking and reorganizing (Boardman, 2002, p. 11). Written text has several conventions which separate it from speaking. Apart from differences in grammar and vocabulary, there are issues of a letter, word, and text formation, manifested by

handwriting, spelling, and layout punctuation. Nagaraj (1996, p. 134) states unlike listening and speaking, writing is not natural to the human. It is a skill, which has been developed in a civilized society to pass on knowledge or messages.

METHODS

The data of this study are reading passages and exercises provided in the New Step-Up Reading and Writing textbook published by Language Development Center UIN Walisongo Semarang.

Given the research objectives and nature of the problem, this study is a textbook analysis research, the research belongs to textbook analysis, and we collect the data from the analysis as the data source. Yin (2011, p. 147) says, "Collecting refers to the compiling or accumulating of objects (documents, artifacts, and archival records) related to the topic". In this research, we use content analysis.

As this research belongs to content analysis of the cultural contents on reading passages, reading exercises and writing exercises in the textbook, the main instrument in this research is the researchers themselves. Besides, we also use theoretical framework to answer research questions and do checklist worksheet to obtain the result of the research. Furthermore, to analyze the kinds of source culture, we use the framework proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). Meanwhile, the themes of cultural contents would be analysed based on Lee and Peterson's Framework (2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part displays the findings that explain and present the kinds of source culture and themes of culture presented in the textbook and present the analysis of quality about the cultural contents on reading passages and exercises found in the New Step-Up Reading and Writing textbook for university students, the other one is discussing the findings with the theory that has been chosen as the theoretical framework and

relating the findings to the previous researchers' findings.

Cultural Contents on Reading Passages

New Step-Up Reading and Writing textbook for University students was published by the Language Development Center of UIN Walisongo Semarang. This English textbook consists of 14 chapters, which are divided into 2 subjects for Reading materials and Writing materials. There were 7 chapters for Reading material and also 7 chapters for Writing material. From 7 chapters of Reading material, firstly, we analyzed the types of Cultural contents presented in the textbook. The result shows that international culture was dominantly presented in the textbooks shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Kinds of Source Culture Information on Reading Passages

Kinds of Source Culture	Unit						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Source Culture							
Target Culture						V	
International Target Culture	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Neutral							V

From Table 1, it can be seen that the units (1-6) show an international target culture on their reading text. The term "international target culture" describes a culture that is native to countries whose primary language is not English, as stated by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), source culture (the learner's own culture), target culture (any country whose first language is English), and international target culture (any country that speaks English where English is not used as a first language). For the example unit 1 mentioned about Arabian society, unit 2 was found the word "Afrika" etc.

The target culture was only found in unit 6 by the word "The United States" and "Six

Dollars” and the source culture was only found in unit 2 by the word “Indonesia”. While neutral was only found in unit 7 because no other source of culture found in it, based on the text it was under title “Divorce”, no word in the passage refers to any of source culture, target culture or international target culture.

Table 2. Themes of Culture on Reading Passages

Themes of Culture	Unit						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Big “C” Culture	V	V		V		V	
Small “c” Culture	V	V	V	V	V		V

From Table 2, it can be seen that small “c” culture was dominantly found in the reading passage. From 7 units of reading passages there were 6 units identified. Lee (2009) stated that EFL learners who are knowledgeable of small “c” culture of the target culture will be better able to understand how people communicate in that culture. Big “C” cultures were identified in unit 1 by the word “education”, in unit 2, unit 4 and unit 6 by the word “Business”.

Cultural Contents Presented on Reading Exercises

The kinds of source culture in reading exercises showed that the source culture was identified in unit 2 by the word “Indonesia” and unit 4 by the word “Rupiah”. Target culture was found in unit 5 by the word “English term” and unit 6 by the word “United states”. International target culture was found in unit 1 by the word “Arabian society”, unit 4 by the word “Europe” and unit 5 by the word “Greek”. Meanwhile reading Exercises in Unit 3 and Unit 7 were identified to be neutral because the exercises did not refer to any of source culture, target culture or international target culture as stated in Table 3.

Table 3. Kinds of Source Culture Information on Reading Exercises

Kinds of Source Culture	Unit						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Source Culture		V		V			
Target Culture					V	V	
International Target Culture	V			V	V		
Neutral			V				V

The themes of culture on Reading Exercises show that the small “c” culture is more dominantly exposed on Reading Exercise in New Step-Up Reading and Writing Textbook. From Seven units, it was found that there were 6 units with small “c” culture. Meanwhile 4 units of Reading Exercises were contained with Big “C” culture. For example exercise of unit 4 that contained Big “C” culture by the word “business” and small “c” culture by the word “Islam”.

Table 4. Themes of Culture Information

Themes of Culture	Unit						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Big “C” Culture	V	V	V	V			
Small “c” Culture	V	V	V	V	V	V	V

Big “C” culture is evidenced by the word “Business” as stated by Lee (2009, p. 78), Big “C” culture is defined as “the culture which represents a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society.” Small “c” culture is evidenced by the word “Islam” as religion. In terms of little “c” culture, it covers routine aspects of life as well as encompasses everything as a total way of life. Lee (2009, p. 78) describes this type of culture as “the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture” including attitudes or beliefs and assumptions.

Cultural Contents Presented on Writing Exercises

From the analysis, it was found that the reading exercises are varied. The detail information about the reading exercise can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Kinds of Source Culture on Writing Exercises

Kinds of Source Culture	Unit						
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Source Culture	V	V	V	V	V		V
Target Culture	V	V		V	V	V	V
International Target Culture	V		V	V	V		
Neutral							

McKay (2002) said that by learning English about topics and vocabularies that are related to their native culture, students will be able to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. The result showed from the table above, that most of the unit writing exercises cover all kinds of culture. It was in line with McKay (2002). But some unit did not cover all cultures such as no International target culture exist in unit 8 and Unit 14, no Target culture found in unit 10 and no source culture in Unit 13. Meanwhile Neutral was not found in writing exercises.

Table 6. Themes of Culture on Writing Exercises

Themes of Culture	Unit						
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Big "C" Culture	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Small "c" Culture	V	V	V	V	V	V	V

In writing exercises both Big "C" culture and small "c" culture were identified in all exercises from unit 8 to unit 14. Wintergerst and Mcveigh (2010) argued that students with both

big "C" and little "C" cultures have the ability to effectively participate in intercultural settings. For example, exercise in unit 8 mentioned about education that indicated to the Big "C" culture and hobby that belongs to small "c" culture.

The findings related to the cultural contents of the New Step-Up Reading and Writing textbook for university students are going to be presented by showing the kinds of culture found in the reading passage in the book. Kinds of culture that were analyzed in this study are referred to the theory brought by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) about source of cultural information; source culture, target culture, and international target culture. This finding is also analyzing the themes of culture; Big "C" culture and small "c" culture from Lee (2009).

Furthermore, other research also has same result, such as by Liu (2012) which identify the type and kind of culture described in Chinese EFL textbooks for the university level. Meanwhile, Liu reports the result that the dominated culture was target cultural contents, while international target culture and source cultural contents contained in a very limited. Another result came up from Lappalainen (2011) which revealed that the textbook consisted mainly dealt with specific facts, not everyday life, beliefs, or values of the people. From it, Lappalainen's research result did not meet with the theory used in her research. The result of Pohjanen's Master's thesis (2007), her analysis also showed that the textbooks' cultural contents consisted mainly of specific facts and it did not discuss the everyday life, beliefs, and values of the people. Many stereotypes are presented in the textbooks, and many facts are just mentioned but not discussed further.

The analysis was done by referring to Cortazzi and Jin (1999) about source of cultural information; source culture, target culture, and international target culture. As mentioned in the table of previous chapter, the result of cultural contents analysis on reading exercises showed limited, not all cultures covered in the reading unit. International Target culture was dominantly presented among other types of cultures.

This finding was similar to the research result conducted by Ekawati and Fakri (2012) that some EFL textbooks not only reflect Target culture but also Source and International culture as well. The findings also found that there was an unbalanced among culture items, which meant that International Target Culture was dominantly presented than Source Culture and Target Culture.

This finding is also analyzing the themes of culture; Big “C” culture and small “c” culture from Lee (2009). The finding showed that, themes of culture in Reading exercises were dominated by small “c” culture and lack in target culture. This research agreed to the research finding conducted by Arslan (2016) in English textbook in Turkey. The findings also found that there was an unbalance among culture items.

The result of cultural contents found in writing exercises showed almost complete, there were almost all cultures cover most of the unit, only few of culture did not exist. As stated by Ekawati and Fakri (2012) that some EFL textbooks not only reflect Target culture but also Source and International culture as well.

It can be concluded that the cultural contents in writing exercises in this book were almost complete in each unit. This can be considered quite ideal to exercise the readers.

CONCLUSIONS

From the research findings and its discussion, there are several things to conclude. Firstly, most all of the units reading passages show an international target culture. International target culture can be referred to any kind of culture in countries where English is not their first language. In addition, there are some passages contain small “c” culture. Besides, it is also found that unit 7 indicates Neutral culture.

Secondly, from 7 units of Reading Exercises found that Reading Exercise dominated on small “c” culture but target culture and source culture are lack presented in reading exercise even though students should receive a lot of material about the target culture to expand their knowledge about English.

Thirdly, related to cultural contents on writing exercises, it was found that most units covered almost all cultures.

Since culture is integral to the interaction between language and thought, how it is represented in ELT textbooks becomes extremely important. It is important to note that materials used in any institutional context teach both linguistics and cultural aspects of English. This may potentially introduce belief systems associated with places where English is used.

It is suggested that the reading passages and reading exercises on the textbook should be developed more in terms of kinds of source culture and themes of culture.

English materials developers, especially the authors should include more source culture especially in Reading passages and Reading Exercises. For the teacher based on the passages in the textbook, it can be used as one of the learning sources in Islamic University.

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