

## **A Cultural Portrait of “little c” Themes in an English Textbook Used by Indonesian Junior High School Students: A Content Analysis**

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**Abstract.** In recent decades, cultural content analysis of EFL textbooks has received a wide attention in ELT pedagogy. This research aims at analyzing the cultural themes, especially “little c” and culture categories presented in an English textbook used by Junior High School students in Indonesia. This study was carried out using Xiao’s suggested themes for detecting “little c” that represent food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and gesture/body language. Besides, it also investigated the culture categories proposed by Cortazzi and Jin, namely source culture, target culture, and international culture. The result showed that the presentation of the source, target, and international culture are in an imbalance proportion. The textbook’s content mostly exposes target culture and source culture. Meanwhile, international culture was not exposed. Moreover, value and food dominated the cultural theme in the textbook. Meanwhile, lifestyle and customs are less exposed. Furthermore, three themes of “little c” (holiday, hobbies, and gestures) were not exposed at all. Due to the imbalance proportion of cultural content, the textbook developers should provide a more balanced proportion of cultural contents in terms of themes and categories to help learners gain more knowledge related to intercultural understanding.

**Keywords:** cultural content, English textbook, source culture, target culture

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language and culture cannot be separated. Language is not only used to communicate but also to express people's cultural thoughts and beliefs. On another hand, culture is inseparable part of the language. Brown (2000) defined this kind of phenomenon as an interwoven relationship between language and culture. He said that a language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of a language. Therefore, teaching a language cannot be separated from its culture to get the significance of both language and culture.

Teachers use a textbook as one of the media for teaching English. Cunningsworth (1995) said that textbooks play an essential role in the ELT classroom. Teachers use the textbook for planning and giving lessons, and students rely on the textbooks for linguistics content and model. Thus, textbooks become

one of essential tools that facilitate the process of language and culture learning. Textbooks become one of the primary sources of input that is expected to be the media of exposing culture. Two kinds of textbooks commonly used: international or global produced textbooks and local ones.

English has a status as an international language or *lingua franca*. Since English has become an international language, there is a debate concerning whose cultural materials that English materials should expose in the English textbook. Some traditional scholars said that foreign language learners need to learn materials that focus on the native language cultures so the learners will become aware of the target cultures as well as their own cultures. On the other hand, McKay (2012) said that the cultural content of ELT materials should not be restricted to native English-speaking cultures only. Thus, the textbook should contain the cultures of the native language and other cultures too.

Talking about culture learning in language education, Yuen (2011) examined the representation of foreign cultures in the English textbook in four aspects, namely products, practices, perspectives, and persons. The result shows that the cultural contents regarding the product, especially entertainment, travel, and food, appear most frequently. The other three aspects, especially perspectives, are less frequently presented. Aliakbari conducted another research about the cultural content of high school student's textbooks in Iran in 2005. The result showed that the cultural contents of the textbook are extremely limited and basic. The culture was dominated by cultural free. Based on the previous research, this researcher focused this research on the “little c” themes proposed by Xiao and the culture categories proposed by Cortazzi and Jin.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Learning a language cannot be separated from learning its culture because learning a language involves learning different aspects of culture of the language users and how the language users see other cultures according to their particular culture. Language represents the culture of its own and other cultures too. For example, on the word ‘couch potato,’ if a person does not understand American culture, he/she will not know that it means a lazy person. Thus, to understand an expression, people should acquire some knowledge about the culture where the language is used.

Experts believe that culture relates to human life and their societies. In fact, culture is difficult to define. There are several definitions of culture. Hinkel (1999) says that culture is a field of study into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities. Additionally, Brown (2000) defines culture as the concepts, customs, abilities, arts, and tools that portray a given group of people at a particular time.

Thus, culture refers to everything related to human life in a particular group of people.

Culture has a different description among experts. Lee (2009) is one the expert who frames culture into two categories, “Big C” and “small c”. First, “Big C” defined as facts and statistics of a target speech society regarding the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals, and customs. While, small “c” refers to the undistinguishable and deeper sense of a target culture (related to socio-cultural values, norms, and beliefs, taking into consideration such socio-cultural variables as age, gender, and social status). Brody adds another definition of culture. Brody (2003, as cited in Yuen, 2010) defines culture as the product of civilization. He divides culture into two aspects: the first is the “Big C” aspect, and the second is “little c” aspect. He defines the “Big C” as the product of civilization which refers to formal culture, including the formal institutions (social, political, and economic), the great figures of history, and those products of literature, fine arts, and the sciences that belong to the category of elite culture. Moreover, Brody defines the “little c” as the way of life of a particular of people which refers to daily living studied by the sociologist and the anthropologist: housing, clothing, food, tools, transportation, and all the patterns of behavior that members of the culture regard as necessary and appropriate.

Bennett, Bennett, and Allen in Yuen (2010) define the “Big C” and the ‘little c’ as “objective culture” that includes institutions, artifact, and everyday behavior. Then they add the term “subjective culture” that includes the world view maintained by the members of a group or society such as values and beliefs. The example of “objective culture” is churches and going to church. Meanwhile, the belief in God is the example of “subjective culture”.

The *Standard for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project) divides culture in 3 aspects. They are products, practices, and perspectives. Products refer to “Big C” practices refer to “little c” and perspectives refer to subjective culture. Moreover, Moran in Yuen (2010) added another aspect of culture, namely “persons”. Therefore culture not only represents the products, practices, and perspectives but also represents well-known icons or individual we know.

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999, as cited in Liu & Laohawiriyanon 2013), there are three basic types of materials for language textbooks. They are source culture materials, target culture materials, and international materials. Source cultural material draws on the learners' own culture as content. In the case of Indonesia, this would involve using mostly materials about Indonesian society and culture, and thus inherently familiar to the learners. The target culture draws on the culture of a country in which English becomes the L1. In this case, students

would spend most of their time reading and learning about life in native English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and etc. The international target culture material uses a wide range of materials from a variety of cultures in English- and non-English-speaking countries around the world in which English is not as a first language, but they use English as the international language.

Although there are many definitions of culture, according to experts, the concepts of culture are similar. The “Big C” cultures consist of aspects that are related to the major or big things of a country. In another hand, the “little c” cultures consist of aspects that are related to social interaction in everyday life. Related to the classification of cultural contents, some researchers propose several detail aspects of culture. Xiao (2010) proposes some detail themes to refer to the “Big C” and the “little c”. He proposes nine themes under the “Big C” namely politics, economy, history, geography, literature/art, social norms, education, architecture, and music. In the “little c” themes, he proposes seven aspects, namely food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and gesture/body language. This research focused on investigating the “little c” themes in an English textbook. To make it clear; the definition of each theme is as follows:

1. Food refers to things that people or animals eat; a particular type of foods.
2. Holiday refers to a day when most people do not go to work or school, especially because of a religious or national celebration.
3. Lifestyle refers to how a person or a group of people lives and works.
4. Custom refers to an accepted way to behave or do things in society or a community.
5. Value refers to beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.
6. Hobby refers to activities that people do for pleasure when they are not working.
7. Gesture/ body language refers to a movement that you make with your hands, your head, or your face to show a particular meaning.

Liu and Laohawiryanon conducted a cultural content research in 2013. They investigated cultural content in Chinese EFL textbooks at university level. Their study revealed that the target culture dominated the contents of textbooks. Meanwhile, source and international cultures had limited exposure. Based on the cultural themes, the “small c” had a more dominant percentage than the “Big C”. Value dominated the “small c” content.

Besides, Jing Xiao researched the cultural content of an in-use EFL textbook and English major students' attitudes and perceptions towards cultural learning at Jiangxi University of scientific and technology in 2010. He investigated a book

entitled contemporary college English for listening 3 (book3). From his research, he found out that the cultural contents were dominated by the target culture, while source culture and international culture had limited exposure. The most frequent cultural themes represented in the textbook were the “Big C” themes such as politics, education, history, music, and economy. Meanwhile, “the little c” had limited exposure.

In 2017, Karim Sadeghi and Zhila Sepahi conducted research entitled the cultural content of three EFL textbooks: teachers' and learners' cultural preferences and cultural themes of textbooks. They investigated three textbooks entitled Top Notch, Summit, and Passages. The results of their research show that the Top Notch book exposing the small c mainly in daily life, food, and customs/norms. Meanwhile, the big c was mainly about geography. Furthermore, the books' summit and passages were dominated by the small c in the form of values and beliefs. Based on the related researches above, this study aims to look at the representation of “little c” and culture categories within the English textbooks used by Junior High School in Indonesia based on Xiao and Cortazzi and Jin's theory.

## METHODOLOGY

This research focused on investigating what cultures that filling a Junior High School textbook. The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What kind of “little c” themes are presented in the English textbook entitled *Bright An English* for grade IX?
2. What categories of culture are presented in the English textbook entitled *Bright An English* for grade IX?

The design of this research is a descriptive content analysis that focused on investigating cultures contents in a Junior High School textbook for grade IX entitled *Bright An English*. Ary (2010) defines content analysis as research that focuses on analyzing and interpreting recorded material to learn about human behavior. The material may be public records, textbooks, letters, films, tapes, diaries, themes, reports, or other documents. This study is qualitative research that tried to describe the cultural content of the textbook. However, it also applied a quantitative element in the form of data percentages. The percentage is compared and analyzed to investigate the most frequent occurrence, less frequent occurrence, and least frequent occurrence.

## Textbook

The main data source of this research was an English textbook used by grade IX Junior High School student entitled *Bright An English*. The writer of the textbook is Nur Zaida and it is published by Erlangga Publishing in 2018. It has 11 chapters and two reviews. This textbook is a local textbook. The researcher used this textbook because it is used at present, and it suits the English 2013 Curriculum.

## Procedure

The research begins with choosing the textbook, then examines the cultural content of the textbook, especially the little c themes. The researcher uses the checklist proposed by Xiao to differentiate the cultural themes, whether they are food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, or gesture/body language. Furthermore, the researcher categorized the themes found in the textbooks into categories of culture, whether they are target culture, source culture, or international culture as proposed by Cortazzi and Jinn.

## Data collection

The data were collected based on two checklist models. The first is Xiao's suggested themes for detecting little "c" that represent food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and gesture/body language. The second is cultural categories based on Cortazzi and Jin, namely source culture, target culture, and international culture.

Table 1. Coding guidelines for the seven themes of "little c" culture according to Xiao

Themes	Definitions	Examples
Food	things that people or animals eat; a particular type of food	Dietary characteristics
		Etiquette when people eat
		Types of food
Holiday	a day when most people do not go to work or school, especially because of a religious or national celebration	Origin, purpose, and significance of the holiday
		People's particular activities on holiday
Lifestyles	how a person or a group of people lives and works	Daily routines schedule
		Activities and styles of family life
		Styles of entertainment, consumption, and fashion
Customs	an accepted way of behaving or of doing things in society or a community	Wedding ceremony traditions
		Invitation card traditions

Values	beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life	Identifying what is good, beneficial, useful, beautiful, desirable, appropriate, etc. both positive and negative values are involved <hr/> Values for love, life and jobs <hr/> The new ethic <hr/> Suggestion on better ethics
Hobbies	activities that you do for pleasure when you are not working	TV program preferences <hr/> Reading books
Gesture/body language	a movement that you make with your hands, your head or your face to show a particular meaning	Body postures, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements. Humans send and interpret such signals subconsciously.

Table 2. Coding guideline for categories of culture proposed by Cortazzi and Jin

Cultural categories	Explanations
Source culture	It refers to the native culture or the learners' own culture
Target culture	It refers to the culture of a country in which English is spoken as an L1. It includes English speaking countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, and USA)
International culture	It refers to cultures of all countries in the world except for the learner's own culture and English-speaking countries' culture

### Data analysis

First, the researcher categorized the data gathered from the textbook into several categories whether they are food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, or gesture/body language. After differentiating the data based on the theme, the data then was determined into their categories whether they are source culture, target culture, or international culture. Finally, the researcher made the percentages of the data frequency. The percentage then compared and analyzed to investigate the most frequent occurrence, less frequent occurrence, and least frequent occurrence. The researcher then compared the result of this research to the result of the previous research.

### FINDINGS

Based on the data collection, there were 59 data of cultural themes especially the “little c” themes found in the textbook. Unfortunately, the textbook did not present all themes. There were several missing themes. They were holidays, hobbies and



gestures. Hence, the distribution of the themes was in imbalance proportions. The Table 3 below illustrates the distribution of the “little c” themes.


Table 3. Distribution of the “little c” themes

	Food	Holiday	Lifestyle	Customs	Values	Hobbies	Gesture	Total
Data	19	-	3	7	30	-	-	59
Percentage	32.2%	0%	5%	11.8%	51%	0%	0%	100%

## Values

Values tell about what is right and wrong and what is important in life. From the textbook, the value is about showing sympathy, giving good wishes, praising someone, congratulating someone in his/her success, birthday, a baby born, graduation, etc. It also shows belief about something that is not good for our life. Here are some examples:

Table 4. Examples of values


Data	Chapter (page)	Explanation
Salma: You look happy. What's up? Adam: I've been elected as this year's model student of Solo City. Salma: <b>Wow! I'm so happy for you.</b> Adam: Thank you.	1 (2)	From the conversation, there is a sympathy uttered by Salma to Adam. Since Adam is happy, Salma feels happy too. Showing that we care for each other is something that is right and important in our life. Value can be represented by showing sympathy.
	1 (3)	The picture beside is a greeting card. The card shows that the writer is welcoming the new baby and giving him/her a good wish. Congratulating and giving a good wish is something that is right and important in our life; it should be done to maintain a good relationship between people. That is included as value.
What a beautiful painting! You have a talent to be a painter.	1 (6)	The sentence beside is a compliment sentence. In this case, the cultural theme is represented by the compliment. It is good to praise someone. Praising means that we appreciate what someone has done. It will build a good relationship with other people. That is included as value.



## Food

Another domination of the themes was food which exposed to something that people eat and the way they ate the food, such as using the left hand to eat. The foods exposed to the textbook were pancake, salad, sandwich, burger, *gudeg*, *rendang*, *pempek*, etc. Here are some examples:



Table 5. Examples of food

	Data	Chapter (page)	Explanation
Okky:	Mala, what are you eating?	8 (106)	In the dialog, Mala mentions <i>Gudeg</i> . In this case, the cultural theme is represented by the exposure of <i>Gudeg</i> . <i>Gudeg</i> is a traditional food from Yogyakarta
Mala:	This is called <i>Gudeg</i>		
Okky:	<i>Gudeg</i> ? This is the first time I have heard that.		
Mala:	It originates from Yogyakarta		
		Review the first term (87)	There are sandwiches on the picture. In this case, the cultural theme is represented by the exposure of sandwich. People in English usually eat sandwich for their breakfast.

## Customs

The customs found in the textbook were mostly about Indonesian folklore such as *Timun Mas*, *Lebai Malang*, *Cindelaras*, *Kebo Iwa*, *Kelingking*, *Pesut Mahakam*, and *Prambanan Temple*. Here are some examples:

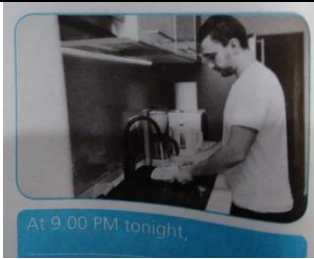
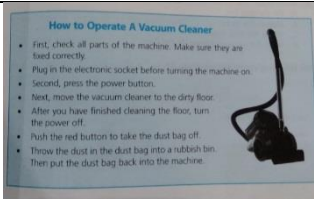
Table 6. Examples of customs

	7 (89)	The picture exposes about Prambanan temple. The history of Prambanan tells about Indonesian folktales about Roro Jonggrang and Bandung Bondowoso. It is a well-known folktale from Central Java. Folktale is a kind of custom.
	7 (90)	The picture beside shows some folktales from Indonesia. It represents a cultural theme, namely, custom.

## Lifestyle

The lifestyle found in the textbook was about what people do in their daily life, such as shopping in a supermarket, using a vacuum cleaner to clean the house, and a man doing the dishes. Here are some examples:

Table 7. Examples of lifestyle found in the textbook

	5 (64)	The picture beside shows a man does the dishes. It is a kind of lifestyle because in some countries it is not appropriate if a man does the dishes.
	Review the first term (81)	The pictures besides exposes a vacuum cleaner, a tool that is usually used to clean the house. It is a kind of lifestyle because not all people in this world use such kind of machine to clean their house.

Another finding of this research was about the category culture. Based on the data taken from the textbook, the textbook exposed about target culture and source culture only. The textbook's content did not expose about the international culture. The Table 8 below illustrates the distribution of culture's categories.

Table 8. Distribution of culture's categories

	Source culture	Target culture	International culture
Data	13	46	-
Percentage	22%	78%	0%

## Target culture

Target cultures dominated the textbook's content. It appeared 46 times in the textbook. The target cultures presented in the textbook were dominated by values, then followed by food and lifestyle. The other four themes, like holiday, customs, hobbies, and gesture/body language, were not found. The value about showing sympathy, giving good wishes, praising someone, congratulating someone in his/her success, birthday, a baby born, graduation were exposed to materials related to the target culture. The foods of target cultures exposed in the textbook were

pancake, salad, sandwich, burger, etc. the lifestyle related to the target culture that appeared in the textbook were shopping in a supermarket, using a vacuum cleaner to clean the house, and a man doing the dishes.

### Source culture

Cultural themes related to source culture had limited exposure. Only custom and food of source culture were found in the textbook. The rest five themes namely holiday, lifestyles, values, hobbies, and gestures/body language, were not exposed. The customs of source culture exposed in the textbook were all about Indonesian folktales such as *Timun Mas*, *Lebai Malang*, *Cindelaras*, *Kebo Iwa*, *Kelingking*, *Pesut Mahakam*, and *Prambanan Temple*. Besides, the foods of source culture found in the textbook were *gudeg*, *rendang*, *pempek*, etc.

### DISCUSSIONS

This study investigated the category of culture and the “little c” themes represented in a Junior High School textbook for grade IX entitled *Bright An English*. The result revealed that the target culture dominated the textbook’s content. It explored mostly about value. This finding was in line with the finding of Liu and Laohawiriyanon’s research. In their research, the target culture also dominated the textbook’s content, especially the “little c” theme in the form of value. The textbook’s content of this research also explored more about values, especially the values of the target culture. The result was also in line with Xiao’s research that was dominated by the culture of the target culture. Compared to Sadeghi and Sepahi’s research, this research also had the same result as their result. The little c themes found in their research were daily life, food, custom/norm, value, and belief. This research also showed the same findings with their research.

Value, food, lifestyle of the target cultures exposed in the textbook will give the students a description of how people out there life. It is important to know what is right and wrong related to other people's cultures. So, when the students meet people from different cultural backgrounds, they can do the right thing and avoid doing something inappropriate according to specific cultures. It is also useful to know what other people eat and how they live because when talking about culture, many people usually talk about food and the way of life. On the other hand, the source cultures exposed in the textbook were about custom and food. The exposure of those themes in the textbook will give the students a topic to discuss with people from different cultural backgrounds. The students can introduce their own culture to them.

The fact that the target culture dominated the cultural content in the textbook did not suit the 2003 Act of the Republic of Indonesia on the National Education System which stated that teachers in Indonesia had to maintain the development of students' understanding of their own culture. Then according to McKay (2012), the English materials should contain local culture too. So, the cultural content of the target culture and source culture should be a balance.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings, the cultural categories found in the textbook were target culture and source culture. The international culture was not found. Then the distribution of the cultural categories was imbalance since the target culture dominated the cultural content in the textbook. Furthermore, not all "little c" cultural themes proposed by Xiao were found in the textbook. Holiday, gesture, and hobbies were not found. The value and food dominated the "little c" theme. So the distribution of "little c" themes was also imbalance. Due to the imbalanced distribution of cultural categories and cultural themes found in the textbook, the textbook developers should provide a more balanced proportion of cultural content in terms of themes and categories to help learners gain more intercultural understanding.

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