

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the study's background, formulation, objective, and significance of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research

Textbooks play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process, particularly in English language education. Textbooks are commonly used in education and often serve as the primary resource in classrooms for several reasons. First, they are easily accessible and commercially available[1]. Second, they provide a guide or framework for students, outlining the behaviors and skills to be developed.[2] Third, they assist teachers in lesson planning[3]. Lastly, textbooks can serve as a flexible syllabus, enabling teachers to modify content to suit their students' needs [4]. Textbooks are an effective tool for teaching English, particularly when used as a guide. They provide valuable resources for self-directed learning or independent study. Cunningsworth highlights that textbooks are created by experienced and highly qualified professionals, with the content often rigorously tested through pilot studies in real teaching environments before publication. As one of the most consistently used tools in the teaching and learning process, especially in English education, textbooks are an accessible source of knowledge. They also act as a crucial teaching aid, helping students grasp and develop a clear understanding of the subject matter [5].

The textbook is a primary and imperative teaching aid for language learning in an academic context, and EFL/ESL teachers draw on them as a core foundation for their teaching. Learners feel influenced by the textbooks they use for learning the English language and in the process they come across social, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversities. Textbooks play a central role in language learning, providing access to both linguistic elements and cultural norms [6]. They influence students' cultural and social perspectives, shaping attitudes and behaviors. However, there is debate over the cultural content in EFL courses, as it can sometimes create negative perceptions of the target culture [7]. Therefore, English

teaching should focus on integrating learners' cultural and contextual backgrounds rather than imposing western norms universally.

EFL textbooks have received considerable attention due to teachers' heavy reliance on them [8]. Beyond linguistic content, cultural representation is a key factor in textbook selection [9]. Research has highlighted issues such as cultural bias[10], lack of relevance to local contexts [11], simplistic portrayals of culture [12], and an imbalance between local and foreign cultures[13]. This studies primarily focus on East Asia, the Middle East, and the USA, with little research conducted in multicultural Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia. Despite growing interest in cultural representation in general English textbooks [14], [15], [16]. Cultural content in TEFL remains underexplored [17] and overlooked [18]. Given the crucial role of EFL textbooks, it is essential to examine their cultural representations to determine their impact on students' intercultural awareness and competence. As we know, an English textbook is crucial for discussion, and students tend to accept the lesson material provided by the teacher because the textbook remains the primary resource for developing lesson plans. Indonesia, aware of its own culture, faces the challenge of teaching a foreign language.

As a tool for teaching English, it is more effective if textbooks are used as the main learning tool. The researcher wants to address these issues because the researcher found some problems that Indonesian students are facing in the education field at the moment. First, it started from stigma and discrimination against students from social minority groups, which remains a global challenge in education [33]. Social minority groups, including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, and economic minorities, often experience unfair treatment that negatively affects their academic and psychological development [34], [35], [36]. Research indicates that students from these groups face significant barriers in achieving academic success on par with their majority-group peers due to social prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination embedded within school environments. Second, textbooks serve as the primary learning resource, and due to the close relationship between language and culture, they play a significant role in shaping students' social and cultural perspectives. Textbooks influence students' attitudes and behaviors toward other cultures[37]. Moreover, several studies have highlighted that many EFL textbooks

often contain cultural biases, lack relevance to local contexts, or present overly simplistic culture [38], [39]. To enhance students' global competencies and intercultural understanding, textbooks must provide diverse cultural perspectives. Suppose textbooks predominantly focus on one type of culture. In that case, students may develop a limited worldview and be less open to cultural diversity, which could hinder their ability to engage in effective international communication.

Culture is a fundamental aspect of human life. As social creatures, humans cannot exist in isolation from others. Human lifestyles are influenced and shaped by culture. Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel explain that culture includes all the elements that relate to how individuals think, feel, and behave. It encompasses everything that contributes to shaping one's way of life[23]. English language learning goes beyond linguistic aspects and includes cultural understanding to enhance students' communicative competence. Language and culture are closely intertwined, as cultural awareness enables learners to use language more naturally and contextually.

In the EFL context, the representation of culture in textbooks plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of different values, traditions, and perspectives. Therefore, analyzing the cultural content in English textbooks is essential to ensure their relevance to students' needs and learning objectives. English and culture are inseparable and bound to each other. Language serves as the expression, embodiment, and symbol of cultural reality[24]. The intrinsic connection between language and culture has prompted researchers to explore English language teaching within diverse cultural contexts. The key area of investigation in this field focuses on how culture is portrayed in English textbooks.

There are many different ways to classify cultural material in textbooks. Cortazzi and Jin categorized cultural content in textbooks into three categories: source culture, target culture, and international culture. The first culture is the L1 culture, which is Indonesian culture; the second is the target culture, which is American and British culture; and the third is international culture, which is a culture that is not related to either the source or the target language and may be Asian or European. Cultural representations in textbooks have a major impact on students' worldviews and how they view different cultures, claim Cortazzi and Jin

[25]. With an addendum to the hypothesis, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad concur with the suggestion made by Cortazzi & Jin. The fourth element, the culture-free aspect, was introduced by Tajeddin & Teimournezhad [26]. The term "culture-free" describes aspects of culture that are not specific to any one civilization. In his research, Yuen divides cultural aspects into products, practices, views, and personalities to separate them using theory [23]. Gomez Rodriguez's surface and deep culture framework distinguishes between two types of culture. Deep culture is the subliminal, controversial form of culture, whereas surface culture is the overt, joyous form of culture [24].

In the current educational landscape, the Merdeka Curriculum is Indonesia's latest curriculum, which remains optional in the formal education system. According to Nadiem Makarim, the Minister of Education, Culture, and Research, the Merdeka Curriculum was officially introduced in the 2022/2023 school year [25]. One of its key principles is the flexibility granted to regional authorities to integrate local content that reflects the characteristics and wisdom of their respective regions. It aligns with the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly the global diversity principle, which aims to elevate Indonesia's local identity to an internationally competitive level. Given this foundation, textbooks developed under the Merdeka Curriculum should incorporate Indonesia's rich local culture, ensuring that students gain both linguistic competence and a strong cultural foundation in their learning experience. Merdeka Curriculum adopts a flexible and student-centered approach, adjusting learning materials to students' needs, including the presentation of cultural content. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, one of its key principles is to provide a more authentic and meaningful learning experience, emphasizing contextual learning through cultural integration in teaching materials. Additionally, culture-based learning in the Merdeka Curriculum supports the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly in fostering global citizenship values.

Curriculum that includes cultural diversity, human rights, and anti-discrimination content can help students understand the importance of respecting differences and treating others fairly [40]. Additionally, teacher and staff training in addressing discrimination is essential. Well-trained educators are more sensitive

to the needs of minority students and can foster a more inclusive classroom environment, ultimately promoting equitable education for all. However, when no students are aware of the cultural content used in the EFL textbook, it can hinder the development of lesson plans, homework, and assignments. Additionally, many teachers often neglect to introduce the cultures represented in each chapter or page of the material to be discussed.

According to the Education First Proficiency Index, English proficiency in Indonesia remains at a low level, highlighting the need for enhanced English learning quality to compete globally. EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) is the most extensive global ranking of countries and regions based on adult English proficiency. Released annually, it serves as a key international reference for assessing English skills among adults. EF EPI reports outline common challenges in learning English and provide insights into the most effective strategies for enhancing proficiency. However, improving English proficiency is not solely about language skills; the cultural content presented in English textbooks also plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding and engagement with the language. Besides that, there are a lot of problems related to cultural content written in the English textbook. For instance, in a study conducted on Indonesian textbooks, such as discrimination, bullying, and cultural stereotypes that can undermine the effectiveness and fairness of EFL textbooks [27]. Cultural stereotypes and oversimplified beliefs about groups contribute to prejudice, miscommunication, and conflict [28]. Gender stereotypes, a common form, are prevalent in EFL textbooks, often portraying men in dominant roles while reinforcing traditional gender norms [29]. Additionally, textbooks may present skewed cultural representations, leading to discrimination and exclusivity. These challenges are further intensified by low proficiency in intercultural communication [30]. Therefore, EFL teachers must critically assess textbooks and promote inclusive, balanced, and gender-sensitive education to foster understanding and equity [31].

However, a challenge arises when English learning materials are often dominated by foreign cultural content, potentially leading to a local cultural identity crisis if not balanced with Indonesian cultural values. The dominance of English in global communication must be addressed through a curriculum that balances local

and global values[32]. Therefore, it is crucial to design teaching materials that develop language skills and integrate local cultural elements, ensuring that students gain a comprehensive and contextually relevant learning experience. If textbooks predominantly feature only one type of culture, students may develop a limited worldview and become less open to cultural diversity. Moreover, a lack of cultural variety in textbooks can lead to low intercultural awareness, reducing students' ability to engage effectively in global communication. Therefore, ensuring a balanced representation of different cultures in EFL textbooks is crucial for fostering intercultural competence and preparing students for real-world interactions.

In this study, the researcher examines the English textbook Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress for Grade X. Several factors underlie the selection of this textbook. Firstly, it is widely implemented in teaching English to tenth-grade students across Indonesian senior high schools, as it is officially approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture to fulfill the requirements of the standardized 2013 revised curriculum. Secondly, Grade 10 serves as a crucial transitional phase from junior to senior high school, during which students begin to engage with texts that are more complex both linguistically and culturally.

According to Stephen Krashen (1982), at this stage, rich and meaningful language input is essential for students to acquire language naturally. Third, Grade 10 is the initial level of high school in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which has a different approach compared to grades 11 and 12. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), the “Work in Progress” book for grade X was developed to form a foundation for communication and broader cultural understanding, so cultural representation in this book should be considered from the beginning. Fourth, Tomlinson (2011) explains that textbooks are systematically developed based on curriculum standards, covering basic competencies, key materials, and broader cultural elements. In contrast, the worksheets are more exercise-oriented without in-depth cultural exploration. Fifth, Michael Byram (1997) explains that intercultural communication competence must be built from the beginning of learning in high school so that students can understand other cultures without losing their own cultural identity. Lastly, Paul

Nation (2001) explains that language learning has stages, where grade 10 plays a role in building the foundation of more complex reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in grades 11 and 12. If grade 10 books do not have a balanced representation of culture, then cultural understanding in later grades will be affected, making it more important to analyze.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the formulation of the research is:

1. How is the cultural content presented in the textbook *Bahasa Inggris* Work in Progress for X Class Senior High School?

1.3 The Purpose of the Research

From the formulation above, the purpose of this research is :

1. The purpose of this research is to analyze how the cultural content is presented in the English textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris* Work in Progress for X Class Senior High School.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The results of this research are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to:

1.4.1 Educators:

The researcher hopes this research will help English teachers to be careful in choosing textbooks in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, and understand the extent to which cultural elements are integrated into the textbook.

1.4.2 Textbook Authors and Publishers:

The result of this study can be a reference for developing new books, which in this regard is related to the consideration of the amount of cultural content and types of culture that may occur in the textbook.

1.4.3 Future Researcher:

The researcher hopes that future researchers can analyze the titles of English textbooks that are by the Merdeka curriculum. Future researchers can use this research as reference material, and more analysis will get more noticed by the government.