



# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN CULTURES IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERLANGUAGE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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## Abstract.

Awareness of the existence of foreign cultures in Indonesia in various fields, especially in the field of education, that the influence of foreign cultures can have positive and negative effects on school students. What is meant by cultural awareness is Cultural Awareness: An introduction to the nuances of one's own culture and that of other cultures. Cultural Competence: The ability of individuals to use academic, experiential, and interpersonal skills to enhance their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, between, and between groups. This study aims to understand cultural awareness and the impact of foreign culture on students in schools. Qualitative methods used through observation and interviews and semi-structured observation. The participants in this study were six twelfth grade students consisting of three girls and three boys at a high school in Garut. Findings found in this study are the perceptions of students who study English Interlanguage books, namely that there are many learning cultures that can be imitated because they bring positive things and improve student learning values and can also motivate students to be more critical of cultural awareness.

**Keywords:** impact foreign culture, cultural awareness, students' perception

## INTRODUCTION

The government of Indonesia has introduced a new curriculum known as the Curriculum 2013 or K-13. It emphasizes on character building of the learners by integrating the local cultural values, norms, and information into the learning and teaching process in the classroom. It is the extension of the school-Based Curriculum; its primary purpose is to shape individuals who are faithful to God, good in character, confident, successful in learning, responsible citizens, and positive contributors to civilization. Additionally, this regulation is elaborated by Education and Culture Ministerial Regulations Numbers 67, 68, 69, and 70 on Fundamental Framework and Curriculum Structure from Elementary to Senior Secondary and Vocational Secondary School.

On the other hand, Gorjian & Aghvami (2017) investigated how influential English culture is. Comparing English material with textbooks will enrich students' understanding of English and American cultures as an essential aspect of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

The result showed that students from middle or upper-middle-class families are familiar with most topical items compared to community B. The researcher concluded that the textbooks represented middle-class values and lifestyles. Thus, effective interactions were accomplished by students in Community A. Conversely, in community B, the students are less interested and tend to neglect the lessons. She suggested that the teachers choose more appropriate topics that align with the student's culture. The study concluded that everyday items could support the learning and teaching a second language. In Indonesia, English is the main subject that students in high school must study. Although English has been taught in schools, their level of understanding has not been maximized in certain areas in Indonesia, especially in Garut.

From a preliminary study using a questionnaire, the researcher found that teachers tend to replace foreign cultural materials with local materials to help students get ideas about text genre material. The main reason is that students lack background knowledge about cultures from within and outside the country. Therefore, most English textbooks' material should be revised using specific cultural and contextual topics in teaching English to high school students. Become a professional English teacher, the teacher has a crucial role in encouraging students' enthusiasm not only to study English linguistically but also, and they are motivated to be passionate about the cultures. This means that teachers have to work hard in preparing ELT materials which include cultural values to be taught to all students.

They saw that Indonesian people today prefer foreign cultures that they consider more exciting or more unique and practical. Many local cultures have faded due to the lack of

future generations interested in learning and inheriting them. According to Malinowski in Mulyana (2005), a higher and active culture will influence lower and passive cultures through cultural contact. Malinowski's theory is particularly evident in the shift in our Western-leaning cultural values.

It is clear that the significant studies only show whether the cultural information in a textbook is adequate or not and what cultures are depicted more in the textbook. The previous studies did not divide the cultural information section in each book chapter. In addition, they did not investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the cultural information, did not explore how the teachers might integrate the local culture into the textbook material, and did not specify if the textbook used by the teacher complies with their current curriculum. Thus, the current study analyzed one textbook for senior high school students in Indonesian schools. The first *Interlanguage: English for Senior High School Students XII* by Priyana et al., (2008).

Furthermore, the researchers categorized the cultural information section in each book chapter. They investigated the strengths and weaknesses of each section and how it relates to each piece of cultural information. Also, it explored how the teachers might teach and integrate cultural awareness into their native norms during the learning process and defined whether the textbook complies with the current Indonesian curriculum.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Textbooks, in this case, English textbooks, teach language skills and values such as morals, character, and cultural values (Sulistiyo et al., 2020). Fundamentally, culture has an essential role in foreign language teaching. It links the language and culture (Choudhury, 2013). Furthermore, using a foreign language without knowing its culture might cause a violation of cultural norms, leading to miscommunication. Thus, cultural learning is crucial in the language (Lee et al., 2019), while language teachers could coin various cultural awareness to the students through textbooks.

The presence of foreign cultures has heavily influenced culture in the current era of globalization, but learning English cannot be separated from foreign cultures and textbooks. Bishara & Away (2015) said that the cultural content of the materials used to teach English to Arabic speakers in secondary schools in Israel contains more western culture than Arabic. This impact the misperception of non-native speakers as a minority to maintain their ideology and power.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, researchers used qualitative methods in collecting data. According to

Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a means to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to social or human problems. It was chosen because this study examines the problems that arise, namely the online learning system. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of cultural awareness in English textbooks that are students' problems in English textbooks. This method is feasible to use in this study.

In conducting research, research requires settings and participants to be observed. Participants in this study were six twelfth grade students, 3 male students and 3 female students from 2 majors, namely IPA and IPS. The reason for choosing this participant was because it was considered appropriate to strengthen the data to be obtained. From this data, students with the highest, moderate and low scores and interest in learning English were taken.

Since the research focused on discovering the students' perception of cultural awareness in an English textbook, the research used the interview for collecting the data that were analysed As Creswell (2014),stated that an instrument is a tool for collecting the data the instrument used in this research was an interview to find out the students' perception of cultural awareness in an English textbook. Also, the interview question consists of 10 initial questions based on students' perception about British and American cultures.

Moreover, each participant to get accurate data. Each participant is given time to answer questions accordingly during the interview process, the researcher used a mobile phone. To obtain information data, the study used a recording application with participants to record voices.

The procedure of collecting data was conducted by interview. The interview carried out by observing every activity in the school and checking textbooks that were used as learning materials. The researcher conducted interview with participants throught telephone interviews or group interviews, so for this study researcher conductd face-to-face interviews. The interview will be conducted with students after school activities end, to obtain detailed information and descriptions of students' opinions about cultural awareness of English textbooks in schools. In the interview the researcher gave 10 questions about each culture in English textbook.

Data analysis is the important step of every researcher. In this research used Miles, Huberman & Saldana's theory in analysing the data. It stated that there four steps of data analysis, as follow:

- Data Collection

The data analysis process began with data collection in the field in this step. The research started with the data from the transcript of interview.

- Data Reduction

Data reduction was the second steps in analysing the data in this research data reduction was the process of selecting, focusing, sampling, abstracting. Looking at the themes, patterns and discarding unnecessary in this step, the research reduced by summarizing, selecting and focusing data on things that were in accordance with research objectives.

- Data Display

The third steps of analysing the data in this research was data display Data display phase was done in the form of a brief description by using narrative text, it can also be in the form graphics, matrix and chart Data display is done after the data has been reduced or summarized In this step, the data obtained from document analysis and interview were analysed the presented in the form of the result in interview The data result of interview is giving coded to organize the data. Each coded data was analysed in the form of reflection and presented in text form phone. To obtain information data, the study used a recording application with participants to record voices.

- Drawing Conclusion

After completing data reduction and data presentation, the last step in analysing the data in this study was drew conclusion. In this step, the researcher made conclusion to answer the problems and research questions of this study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

At this point, the researcher presented the research findings based on the research problem in the first chapter. The research problem in this study is “What are students’ perceptions towards British and American culture in senior high school English Textbook?”. There are 10 questions that divided into 10 topics that relate to British and American’s culture based on the textbook ‘Interlanguage: English for Senior High School Students XII’ which were found out in the cultural tips.

- Americans’ Preference for Directness in Communication

At this point they were asked about the statement above, whether the value is different from the value in Indonesia or the same. And many respondents gave their perceptions for this value and it is different from Indonesia’s value or no. below the perception from student’s

*P1: Iya, berbeda dengan Indonesia karna di Indonesia menjawab ‘ya’ bisa jadi ‘tidak’ dan menjawab ‘tidak’ bisa jadi ‘ya’.*

(Yes, it is different from Indonesia because in Indonesia answering 'yes' can be 'no' and answering 'no' can be 'yes'.)

P2: *Orang Amerika lebih suka to the point ketimbang Indonesia yang suka bertele-tele, untuk nilai nya berbeda sekali.*

(Americans prefer to the point rather than Indonesians who always long-winded, for its value are completely different.)

Based on what have been answered by the respondents, mostly the directness that becomes American's culture is different with the situation in Indonesia. They realized that the value of American people is proper where the directness is needed.

- Gestures of 'Crazy' Across Cultures

At this point the respondents were asked about the differences in signaling to say 'crazy' in each country, and they gave their view about the differences of this gesture in every country.

P1: *Menurutku unik dan memiliki perbedaan tersendiri.*

(I think it's unique and has its own differences.)

P2: *Karena kultur yang berbeda ya memang seharusnya di negara manapun akan beda isyarat nya.*

(Because it has different cultures, and yes it should be in any country will be different gesture.)

In this point, respondents gave their views about the gestures that are usually done by people in certain countries. They said every country has their own culture in showing or describing something including 'crazy' gestures.

- Waving in the US and Indonesia

At this point they were asked about how to wave a hand that turns out to be able to give a different meaning in each country, and these are some respondents' view for this situation:

P1: *Menurutku unik dan memiliki perbedaan tersendiri.*

(I think it's unique and has its own differences.)

P2: *Untuk gerakan melambatkan tangan di Indonesia juga pun sudah berbeda-beda makna.*

(For the waving movement in Indonesia also has a different meaning.)

Same case as the previous point, this phenomenon shows that every country has their own culture to describe something.

- Greeting After 00:00 in English-Speaking Countries and Indonesia

At this point mere was asked about his opinion of the above statement, whether they still use "Good night" to greet people met at night but not when someone is going to sleep, and these are some views from the respondent about the statement.

P1: *Tidak, biasanya saya memakai ucapan 'goodnight' ketika seseorang akan*

*tidur.*

(No, I usually wear a 'good night' greeting when someone is going to sleep.)

P2: *Saya sering mengatakan hello saja, untuk goodnight hanya untuk memutus pembicaraan saja.*

(I often say hello only, for goodnight only to break off the conversation only.)

Some respondents have been applied the use of 'good evening' in a proper time and use 'good night' as a closure when they have conversation with the others. They have understood the application of the greeting as it should.

- **Americans' Perception of Silence**

The respondents were asked about their opinion on the American perception that silence means understanding and about interrupting the conversation when there are many pauses, whether this is done in Indonesia or not. And this perception brings many views by respondents for the research.

P1: *Ya, tidak berbeda dengan Indonesia.*

(Yes, it is having no different from Indonesia.)

P2: *Ini juga dapat ditemukan di orang-orang Indonesia akan tetapi mereka diam berarti mereka belum paham, itu bedanya.*

(This can also be found in Indonesian people, but they are silent means they do not understand yet, that's the difference.)

It gives more wide difference between US and Indonesia by seeing this perception. In Indonesia, being silence means that you don't understand about the presentation or someone's explanation.

- **Americans' Style of Debate**

Also, at this point, the respondents were asked about his response to the American way of debating. Whether they already know or know the way the debate or do not know at all. These are some views from the respondent about the statement.

P1: *Belum tau, karna tidak terlalu tertarik dengan debat.*

(I don't know, because I'm not interested in debate.)

P2: *Ini adalah hal yang baru dalam dunia perdebatan menurut saya.*

(This is something new in the world of debate in my opinion.)

From the results of the answers stated, almost all students who were asked to answer did not know about this Parliamentary American Debate.

- **How British People Value Punctuality**

The respondents being asked about whether they have implemented that value in their daily lives or yet, then several statements are expressed by the respondents below:

P1: *Belum, karna di Indonesia ketika membuat janji jam 9 itu artinya jam 9 kita baru akan siap-siap bukan sudah di tempat.*

(Not yet, because in Indonesia when making an appointment at 9, it means that at 9 we will only be ready not already in place.)

P2: *Saya sudah menerapkan sistem tepat waktu dan hasilnya pun memuaskan semuanya.*

(I have implemented the system on time and the results are satisfactory.)

On the results of the interview, the students answered that there are those who have and have not applied it to their daily lives.

- Topics of Conversation in Britain

The respondents were asked about their responses to the above points. They were asked whether being careful when speaking was important for everyone, not just English. And here are the perceptions by the respondents.

P1: *Ya, sangat penting untuk semua.*

(Yes, it's very important for all people.)

P2: *Itu harus diterapkan di semua negara.*

(It should be applied in all countries.)

At this point all the respondents agreed with this topic of conversation in Britain. They argue that it is very crucial, because in talking to the opponent is required to be careful and not offend them. There are a lot of good topics to talk about.

- Group Reading

At this point the respondents were asked about their response to this group reading cultural tips. Do they agree with group reading activities that can share multiple points of view or not. These are the statements:

P1: *Ya, setuju.*

(Yes, agree.)

P2: *Iya setuju.*

(Yes, agree.)

On this point, all respondents agree with the existence of a reading group.

- How to Start Conversation with People of Different Backgrounds

The respondents were asked their responses to the point above, whether they think starting the topic by asking about their favorite is enough or not, and here are some opinions from the respondents.

P1: *Menurutku sudah karna dari situ akan menciptakan topik lanjutan.*

(I think it's because that would create an advanced topic.)

P2: *Iya sudah cukup sekali karena interest seringkali berhasil.*

(Yes, it is enough once because interest often works.)

At this point almost all respondents agree with the existence of a conversation with a stranger that begins with a simple thing like asking about preferences.



Culture in Interlanguage English textbook delivers the cultural contents which are supported by visual images and text. The visual images included illustration and photograph in English that give the visual explanation about related materials in the text. The existences of visual images are helpful for the students or readers to understand what the materials about rather than decorative purposes especially when they are related to their culture. The use of cultural tips in the textbook gives many positive things for the students also it is attractive to be read. By reading the text in the column and visual images, students can get more insight about British and also American culture that perhaps has not been known by many people.

In the textbook 'Interlanguage: English for Senior High School Students XII' named Cultural Tips, the researcher found out ten values that can be discussed about British and American culture. They are 'Americans' preference for directness in communication', 'Gestures of 'crazy' across cultures', 'Waving in the US and Indonesia', 'Greeting after 00:00 in English-speaking countries and Indonesia', "Americans' perception of silence", 'Americans' style of debate', 'How British people value punctuality', 'Topics of conversation in Britain', 'Group reading', 'How to start conversation with people of different backgrounds'.

As what has been stated in second chapter, according to Mendis (2022), American people are directed, open and honest. The topics that were found on textbook have described those situations. Respondents answer the questions that relate to Americans' directness, openness and honesty with the comparison with people in Indonesia. There are some huge differences that are said by the respondents. They can analyze the differences and try to connect with culture in Indonesia.

Beside American culture, British culture also described. British people are well-known as a person who has high politeness. Starting a conversation with British in Britain is counted as something uneasy due to British cultures that said they feel awkward. As a result, a newcomer needs to be careful when talk about some topics, especially with people that just met, older than them, etc. When we first meet someone, it can be difficult to know how to start a conversation, especially if your cultural background and mother tongue are different. But, as British people, they usually identify accent and class.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results of research that has been done, there is a conclusion on the results of interviews that have been conducted regarding the opinion of the students about the

awareness of British and American cultures contained in the textbook. This can be proven from the way all of six students answered the questions given during the interview session, where the students can compare between British culture, American, and the culture in Indonesia itself as a culture that they have hold since they were born. Their answers to each question given almost the same and agree. Thus, with their opinions, it is concluded that they are aware of the cultural differences between the three cultures of these countries (British, American, and Indonesian). Therefore, it means they are aware of the culture contained in the textbook under study.

The researcher addresses some of the advantages according to the result of the research finding. Hopefully, the students have a solid motivation to learn English through foreign cultures that presented in Interlanguage English Textbooks. In particular, the students may need further knowledge about other cultures, especially in British and American cultures that always show in Interlanguage English textbooks. Secondly, teacher. Teachers can try to increase knowledge about foreign cultures, so that teachers can convey the material available properly and appropriately so that students can understand about foreign cultures, especially British and American cultures.

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