

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five main sections describing the research's basic information, including the background, problem formulation, study objective, significance of the research, and operational definition.

A. Background of the Study

In the contemporary landscape, English has assumed a pivotal role as the primary means of communication in international and intercultural settings. This transformation has necessitated a profound emphasis on language learners' intercultural communicative competence (Henceforth ICC) and heightened cultural awareness to ensure socially appropriate language use. According to Byram et al. (2013), ICC involves understanding and appreciating different cultures, engaging in intercultural communication, and applying linguistic and cultural knowledge in diverse contexts. The importance of learning the culture of the language being learned, such as English, cannot be overstated. Culture is an integral part of language and is crucial to language learning. Understanding the cultural context in which a language is spoken is essential for effective communication and building meaningful relationships with native speakers. It allows learners to grasp the nuances of the language, such as idiomatic expressions, humour, and social etiquette, which are deeply rooted in the culture.

Moreover, learning the cultural heritage of the language fosters motivation and appreciation for the language, as it provides a broader understanding of the norms, values, and implicit theories driven by the culture. As a result, learners become more confident and competent when communicating in the language by navigating cultural nuances and avoiding misunderstandings. Therefore, integrating culture into language learning is vital, as it enhances language proficiency and promotes cultural understanding and effective communication across cultures.

Research on ICC by Kim (2020) has shown that, for language learners to communicate effectively with others from different cultures, it is essential to integrate ICC into language teaching, which can be achieved through activities that raise awareness of other cultures and promote understanding of cultural differences. Another study emphasizes the importance of integrating ICC into language teaching and proposes strategies for enhancing intercultural competence across the teacher education curriculum. The methods include activities that help students critically examine cultures and develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences (Mai, 2018). Sukandi (2013) provides an example of how ICC can be developed through cultural text-based teaching in the EFL classroom. This approach aims to improve students' ICC by integrating relevant cultural content into language teaching and providing opportunities for students to engage in intercultural communication.

The Korean Ministry of Education's progressive stance in redefining the aim of English education illuminates the evolving significance attributed to intercultural

competence. In 2011, the Ministry emphasized the transition from merely nurturing native English speakers to fostering intercultural speakers, acknowledging the intrinsic link between language proficiency and cultural understanding. In response to this paradigm shift, the revised English curriculum mandated a comprehensive inclusion of multicultural components alongside Korean culture in English textbooks (Cunningsworth, 1995). Given the pivotal role of English textbooks in language education within Korean secondary schools, these materials are not only conduits for language input and practice but also carriers of cultural values.

This phenomenon, often referred to as the “Hidden Curriculum” (Chao, 2011; Chapelle, 2009; Savicki, 2008; Hinkel, 1999), emphasizes the importance of examining the cultural content embedded in textbooks to understand its potential impact on learners’ cultural perceptions over an extended period. The latent implications of this hidden curriculum on learners’ cultural perceptions and knowledge may surpass that of the official curriculum, especially with prolonged exposure (Cunningsworth, 1995). Thus, a comprehensive examination of the types and organization of cultural content within English textbooks is imperative to gauge its appropriateness and potential influence on learners.

Culture and language skills are closely linked, so communication skills require the knowledge to think and act appropriately according to the language associated with that culture. In particular, the issue of how culture is represented in English textbooks and the idea of integrating language and culture have been

discussed in recent research over the past decade (Yi, 2000; Harbi, 2017; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Silvia, 2015). Students who learn about a particular culture can develop positive attitudes in their community and become more tolerant of other cultures. Students can also learn to speak and write in a culturally appropriate way. One of the ways to integrate culture and language is to design English teaching materials with cultural content. Harbi (2017) explained that English textbooks are guidelines for shaping images of the English language and culture.

Cultural contents in English textbooks and how they satisfy cultural education needs in English teaching and learning are important and interesting topics to be analyzed. Wong (2011) writes, “Textbooks should not simply aim to provide a body of knowledge. Rather, it should stimulate student interest, develop creativity and interactive learning, and create cultural awareness.” In particular, the content of textbooks should be suitable for students and consistent with national educational goals. As a result, culture also plays a vital role in developing textbook content, as culturally oriented textbooks enable students to develop cross-cultural communication skills.

Both Indonesia and Korea consider English to be a foreign language, as evidenced by the research studies conducted in both countries. In Indonesia, English is regarded as an additional language, and it is widely used in business, education, and pop culture. However, Bahasa Indonesia remains the primary language of instruction in schools and universities. In Korea, English is taught as a compulsory

primary school subject, and it is considered an essential yet complex undertaking for Korean learners. English is used for international communication in both countries, and learners must perfect and improve their English language skills to communicate effectively with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Despite the challenges, South Korea stood in 49th place in the “2023 English Proficiency Index,” based on the test results of 2.2 million adults from 113 countries who took the standard English Test” in 2022, slightly higher than Indonesian. The relatively satisfying result has motivated the researchers, as a native south Korean who is familiar with the implementation of the education system in her home country, to examine the English subject book typically used in English language learning for high school and to compare it with the course book commonly used in Indonesian school.

Comparing books allows for a critical analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. This analysis can include examining the topic provided in the books and the direction they are trying to reach, including insights into the cultural and social contexts in which they were written. It can reveal how different authors approach similar themes or issues, reflecting the prevailing attitudes of the respective countries, South Korea and Indonesia. It is necessary for the researchers whose cultural background is Korean and who study abroad in Indonesia to analyze the cultural values emphasized or challenged in each book. Consider how these values contribute to the development of characters and the story's overall themes. If the books

positively represent diverse cultures, they may contribute to a more inclusive and accepting mindset. This inclusivity can extend to various aspects of life, including personal relationships, workplaces, and communities, which can be used as a consideration for adopting both cultures.

This comparative analysis is not merely an academic exercise; it holds profound implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers involved in shaping the educational landscape (Tomlinson, 2011). By delving into the nuances of cultural content representation, this study aspires to contribute insights that can inform pedagogical strategies, curriculum design, and cross-cultural communication skill development. As the examination of cultural content in English textbooks unfolds, it is anticipated that the findings will serve as a valuable resource for enhancing students' cultural awareness and communication abilities, fostering a generation equipped to thrive in our increasingly interconnected global society.

Thus, the initial focus of this investigation lies in dissecting the cultural elements woven into Korean 3rd-grade English textbooks. By meticulously analyzing the texts, the researcher will identify the types of cultural content presented, ranging from everyday practices and traditions to historical references and artistic expressions. This exploration will offer valuable insights into the values, norms, and perspectives that Korean society seeks to impart to its young learners through English language instruction. Similarly, the researcher will turn our attention to unveiling the cultural tapestry within Indonesian 3rd-grade English textbooks. Examining the

presented content will allow us to understand how Indonesian culture is represented through language, literature, and visual aids. This analysis will shed light on the aspects of Indonesian identity that are deemed essential to share with young learners through the English language lens. The final step of this thesis involved drawing comparisons and contrasts between the identified cultural content in Korean and Indonesian textbooks. The researcher delved into the types of cultural elements emphasized, the approaches used to present them, and the potential messages conveyed. This comparative analysis will highlight similarities and differences in how these two Asian countries utilize English language education as a tool for cultural transmission and understanding.

Ultimately, this exploration of cultural content in Korean and Indonesian English textbooks for the 3rd-grade level serves a twofold purpose. First, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of language education in promoting intercultural understanding. By examining the specific cultural messages embedded within these textbooks, the researcher gain valuable insights into how educational systems shape young minds' perceptions of other cultures. Secondly, to identify areas where these textbooks could be enriched or enhanced to foster a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity. Through this comparative study, the researcher expects to contribute to developing English language teaching methods that encourage inclusivity, respect, and appreciation for different cultural perspectives.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How are the cultural contents presented in Korea and Indonesia's EFL for the 3rd-grade secondary school English textbooks?
2. What cultural elements are presented in Korea and Indonesia's EFL for the 3rd-grade secondary school English textbooks?

C. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the primary objective of this study was to: The purposes of this study are:

1. To examine the cultural background and values reflected in the textbooks for 3rd-grade secondary school students in Korea and Indonesia
2. To explain the elements of culture presented in EFL textbooks for 3rd-grade secondary school students in Korea and Indonesia

This study highlights the importance of integrating cultural content into English textbooks in Indonesia and Korea so that the benefits provided to English textbook authors potentially spark further innovation in integrating cultural content. Additionally, it would equip teachers with better tools to enhance students' intercultural competence. Ultimately, incorporating cultural aspects into learning materials is crucial for students to grasp the target language effectively. In other

words, good English textbooks should showcase cultural content to address the issue of intercultural competence.

Comparing cultural contents from Korean and Indonesian English textbooks holds significant practical and theoretical implications. From a practical perspective, the comparison can help identify cultural biases and stereotypes in the textbooks, influencing students' perceptions and understanding of other cultures (Samsudin et al., 2021). By analyzing the representation of cultural values in these textbooks, educators can develop more inclusive and culturally sensitive materials that promote mutual respect and understanding between the two cultures (Samsudin et al., 2021; Riadini & Cahyono, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, the comparison can contribute to intercultural communication and language education. By examining the cultural content in these textbooks, researchers can gain insights into how each country's educational system represents its own culture and the culture of others (Samsudin et al., 2021). The insights-lead to a better understanding of the role of language and the importance of fostering intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among language learners (Mandarani et al., 2021).

Moreover, the comparison can help identify the extent to which local culture is integrated with the target culture in the teaching materials, which is important for promoting a balanced and inclusive representation of cultures in language education (Samsudin et al., 2021). The results can contribute to developing more culturally

relevant and appropriate teaching materials, ultimately promoting mutual understanding and respect between the two cultures (Kim & Paek, 2015).

D. Operational Definition

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) refers to the ability to understand and appreciate different cultures, engage in intercultural communication, and apply one's linguistic and cultural knowledge in diverse contexts (Byram et al., 2013).

