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The representation of multicultural values in the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture-Endorsed EFL textbook: a critical discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT

In transcultural and transnational communication settings, English learners have to be able to communicate with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For this reason, English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks, for instance, not only promote Anglo-American and British cultures but also include both EFL learners' home and international cultures. The present discourse study looks at the cultural content of a nationally adopted EFL textbook in Indonesia. It particularly investigates multicultural values represented in the EFL textbook geared for senior high school students. Findings of the study reveal that four themes of multicultural values emerge from the textbook, such as: (1) respect for cultures of different ethnic and religious groups; (2) respect for cultures of indigenous people; (3) conflict avoidance and peace with all forms of life and nature; and (4) appreciation of creative cultural products. The implications of this textual study suggest that as English plays an increasingly important role as a global lingua franca, multicultural materials from outer and expanding circle countries need to be added to English language teaching (ELT) textbooks. Therefore, English teachers should creatively teach multicultural aspects and use multimodal materials to engage students in culturally laden language-learning tasks.

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Introduction

During the last 14 years, studies on English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks have examined how multicultural content is represented in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks (Ahmed and Narcy-Combes 2011; Awayed-Bishara 2015; Dinh and Sharifian 2017; McConachy 2018; Su 2016; Tajeddin and Teimournezhad 2015; Weninger and Kiss 2013). This body of research has been mostly situated in Asia (e.g. Israel, Iran, Pakistan, Taiwan) and in Europe (e.g. Hungary). Even though EFL curricula in a number of Asian countries (e.g.

Pakistan, Israel, Iran, China, Korea) place emphasis on intercultural communication, the findings of previous studies show that there is a gap between curricular goals and multicultural content represented in ELT textbooks (Kusumaningputri and Widodo 2018).

To extend empirical research on the evaluation of English textbooks situated in multicultural EFL settings, a critical study of cultural depiction in EFL textbooks in Asian contexts, such as in Indonesia needs to be undertaken. The contribution of this study is that findings in such contexts can be a catalyst for language textbook writers to design and develop multiculturally sensitive language materials to promote multicultural understandings of differences (Ruiz-Cecilia 2012). Another contribution of this study is to provide a better understanding of multicultural value representation in a nationally adopted EFL textbook situated in a country where different languages and cultures co-exist. Thus, this study aims to examine multicultural values portrayed in a nationally used EFL textbook, approved by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (henceforth, MONEC), and to analyse how these values help students become aware of multicultural diversity (Kusumaningputri and Widodo 2018). Two research questions guiding this study were:

- (1) What multicultural values are represented in the English textbook endorsed by the MONEC?
- (2) How does the English textbook provide EFL learners with opportunities to enhance their intercultural knowledge and awareness?

Value education in Indonesia

In 2013, the MONEC introduced the 2013 Curriculum emphasising the affective domain of education (Widodo 2016). Therefore, the attitudes and character dimensions expected of English learners to learn and instil are explicitly spelled out across the curriculum (see Widodo 2018). Widodo (2016) notes that the 2013 ELT Curriculum aims to prepare Indonesians for becoming citizens who are religious, productive, innovative and passionate, as well as who can contribute to societal, national and global 'civilisations.' School graduates are expected to be global citizens who respect religious, social and cultural values; enjoy working hard; and think creatively to make contributions at both national and international levels. The 2013 Curriculum emphasises national education qualities in order to equip individuals with both hard and soft skills (e.g. English skills and values).

Textbooks have always placed an important role in the implementation of a new curriculum. Guided by textbooks, teachers can manage teaching materials and utilise them in in-class and out-of-class activities. From a value perspective, appropriate textbooks are required to meet Indonesian standard norms/values

and avoid including pornographic content, radicalism, violence, ethnic-religious-racial sentiments and gender stereotypes. In short, textbooks have to ideologically support values depicted in the Five Pillars of Indonesian Ideology: (1) religiosity, (2) humanism, (3) pluralism, (4) democracy and (5) social justice. Particularly in the implementation of the 2013 ELT curriculum, all schools have been instructed to use the mandated English textbook, *Bahasa Inggris* (the English Language) published by the MONEC. This textbook series aims to strengthen character education as the main feature of the 2013 ELT Curriculum. Inasmuch as Indonesia is known as a multilingual and multicultural country (Widodo and Fardhani 2011), respecting and appreciating cultural diversity have been placed at the core of character education.

Operationalising multicultural values in ELT materials

Multicultural values stem from the concept of pluralistic ideology, which appreciates the existence of cultural differences of peoples from different ethnic, religious, socio-economic and geographic backgrounds. Multiculturality concurs with the goal of teaching English as a lingua franca (e.g. to prepare EFL learners to become global and intercultural citizens) (Baker 2012; Hajisoteriou and Angelides 2016). Multicultural values are defined as ones that recognise the cultures of people from different sociocultural and geographic backgrounds.

To categorise the aspects of culture in the English textbook, this study uses 'products' (Big C), 'practices' (little c), 'perspectives' (subjective culture) and 'persons' (National Standards in the Foreign Language Education Project, cited in Yuen 2011). Big C refers to formal culture that consists of formal institutions (social, political, economic institutions), the great figures of history, and the products of literature, fine arts and sciences. Culture with a symbol (little c) deals with the way of life of a particular group of people (daily living studied by sociologists and anthropologists), such as housing, clothing, food and patterns of behaviour that members of a culture regard as necessary and appropriate. Perspectives as a subjective culture (more conceptual) refer to the worldview held by the members of a group or society, such as values and beliefs. Persons as well-known icons or individuals we know can represent other cultural aspects (i.e. Pele and Neymar who represent the different inter-generational cultures of Brazil).

Textbooks contain collections of different texts selected purposefully to meet policymakers' and writers' intentions and agendas as well as curriculum goals. In selecting texts and developing tasks, textbook authors are heavily influenced by a curriculum ideology to some extent. For this reason, textbooks canalise ideologies embedded in an official curriculum (van Dijk 2001), transmit ideas and values to shape learners' identities (Awyed-Bishara 2015; Widodo 2018), and instil universal and community-specific values in learners

(Gebregeorgis 2017). In short, ELT materials (e.g. textbooks) teach both language and different hidden cultural agendas and values.

Previous studies on cultures in ELT textbooks

Most previous studies have shown that the cultures of inner circle countries (e.g. USA and British cultures) are predominantly represented in ELT textbooks. Contrastingly, the cultures of outer circle countries (international cultures) are scantily exposed and insufficiently portrayed in ELT textbooks. To begin with, Shin, Eslami, and Chen (2011), who examined the cultural perspectives of EIL in internationally distributed ELT textbooks, found that even though cultural aspects were proportionally diverse in each textbook series, inner circle cultural content still dominated most of the textbooks. In a similar vein, a study by Ahmed and Narcy-Combes (2011) reported that the representation of target language people's culture in Pakistani EFL textbooks was more dominant than the exposure to the home culture. The dominant representation of foreign cultures in secondary school English textbooks in Hong Kong and Korea, respectively, was also reported in Yuen's (2011) and Su's (2016) case studies. A textbook study by Song (2013) explored the portrayal of different cultures and the depiction of cultural biases in Korean EFL textbooks. Song found unequal cultural representations in the textbooks as well as cultural biases with the dominance of Anglo male representations.

Another relevant study by Weninger and Kiss (2013) analysed texts, images and tasks in EFL textbooks, written by and for Hungarians, to delve into cultural meanings created in them. Informed by social semiotic analysis, learners' understanding of cultural meanings was guided and facilitated through the presence of texts, images and tasks. The findings indicated that the two textbooks, 'Bloggers and Steps,' depicted passages about famous people of various nationalities, festivals from around the world, and particularly in Bloggers, characters and voices from around the world. Although such overt or factual culture lessons are important, they are not enough, especially because such segments are rarely paired with tasks that prompt students to reflect on cultural values.

Awayed-Bishara's (2015) textual study in Israel also revealed that the culture and traditions of Palestinian Arab minority in the English textbooks were marginalised. Different from other previous studies, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2015), investigating cultural content in local English textbooks, reported that most of the cultural elements in the local textbooks were neutral (not clearly depicting any particular culture); only a few of them were based on the target language and other cultures. A recent textbook analysis by Dinh and Sharifian (2017) looked into a textual and visual reading section in *English 11*, locally designed for Vietnamese high-school students. The findings showed that the unit portrays the notion of Vietnamese Lunar New Year culture/Tet as an event for gathering, happiness, expectation and reawakening of plants, animals and relationships, appropriate with what has been described in Vietnamese cultural studies. Using the localised

EFL textbooks from the outer circle countries (Singapore and the Philippines) and the expanding circle countries (Vietnam and Indonesia); Alcoberes (2016) investigated the author-initiated discourses of the selected English textbooks. This study looked at discourse features and the characteristics of WE pedagogy in the selected English textbooks. The findings indicated that the local and foreign lexis (e.g. *fiesta*, Spanish word; *Serangoon Road*, a local road in Singapore) and discourse features promoting local heritage (e.g. Filipino culture and values, a story about Singapore) are integrated into the author-initiated discourses. This indicates a strong influence of the local cultures of non-native English-speaking countries.

The previous studies presented above show how Anglo and home or local cultures of respective and other countries are depicted in ELT textbooks. To extend this scholarship, the present study attempts to contribute to a critical evaluation of multicultural content depicted in ELT textbooks in the context of Indonesia as a multicultural site. It also aims to enhance a critical awareness of how EFL textbook writers and English teachers include multicultural texts in textbooks to equip students with intercultural competence (Widodo, Wood, and Gupta 2017).

The study

The present study adopted critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine multicultural values depicted in the nationally adopted English textbook in Indonesia. CDA is an interdisciplinary study of discourse that views language as social practice (Fairclough 2001) and takes into account the context of language use (Wodak 2001). Halliday (1978) argues that a discourse as text is both a process and a product, created, embedded and interpreted in a specific social context. Therefore, CDA scholars maintain that the choice of language users make reflects their intentions, ideologies and thoughts (Widodo 2018).

CDA best elucidates how a text represents and constructs social realities contextually tied to a specific ideological (values) system through the manifestation of covert and overt messages (Widodo 2018). Additionally, CDA uncovers how this ideological system is (re)shaped by texts and social practices that marginalise or privilege particular values in society (de Los Heros 2009). To examine such ideologies, Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) can provide an applicable and serviceable tool through a lexicogrammatical analysis or a micro-language analysis. This analysis looks into linguistic and visual choices in texts as a discourse conveying multi-layered meanings (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Widodo 2018).

For this study, the text for analysis was an ELT textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA Kelas XII [English for Senior High School Grade XII]*, published by the MONEC in 2015. The textbook was authored by a team of ELT textbooks writers who are familiar with ELT practices in Indonesia. Because the textbook



is nationally used, it is easily accessible and can freely be downloaded from the MONEC website. To guarantee the quality of the textbook, it was also peer-reviewed by a panel of Indonesian experts in ELT. These readers are also university faculty members who are familiar with ELT contexts in Indonesia. The textbook was claimed to adopt a genre-based approach to ELT. It was organised into 16 chapters or lesson units addressing contemporary issues in the twenty-first century and representing sociocultural phenomena in a variety of geographical locations.






The focus of the analysis was placed on multicultural values gleaned from the MONEC-approved EFL textbook (Bahasa Inggris for Senior High School Grade XII). This textbook was chosen as a unit of textual analysis based on the following justifications:

- (1) The textbook is widely used throughout the country. This choice could enhance readership validity because textbook users, teachers and students, come from different geographical locations in Indonesia.
- (2) This textbook is a curricular artefact of the 2013 ELT curriculum. This could increase content validity because we analysed one of the current curriculum materials that both English teachers and students are currently using;
- (3) It contains multicultural values represented in visual and non-visual texts. It attempts to include different representations of ethnic and cultural groups in Indonesia and outside the country;
- (4) The incorporation of multicultural values into this textbook needs to be critically assessed because the textbook is a curricular product that is ideologically laden from a cultural perspective; and
- (5) The textbook writers place emphasis on multicultural values (e.g. respecting others, care, and peace) as stipulated in learning objectives in the beginning of each chapter. This indicates attitudes or values as one of the pedagogical foci in ELT in the Indonesian context.

Analysis and discussion

In this analysis, we focus on multicultural values represented in the English textbook and in what ways the English textbook provides EFL learners with opportunities to enhance their intercultural knowledge and awareness. In the textbook, the writers present multicultural values through a series of visual depictions. Visually, pictures, photographs and other visual artefacts portray multicultural values that both teachers and students need to realise, but these often go unnoticed, or they take those visual artefacts for granted. Uncovering these values is intended to build and enhance teacher and student awareness

Table 1. The representation of multicultural values in the textbook, *Bahasa Inggris for Senior High School Grade XII*.

Unit	Theme	Sample Visual Artefact	Description	Location/ page	Multicultural values
Chapter 1	Let's Visit Seattle!		A female teacher character wears a semi-formal dress with straight hair without a hijab.	p. 7	Respect for diversity of ethnic groups
		#1			
Chapter 1	Let's Visit Seattle!		A male teacher character wears semi-formal attire and spectacles with moustache, curly hair, and darker skin.	p. 13	Respect for diversity of ethnic groups
		#2			
Chapter 3	Have a Look at Life Underwater		A male teacher character wears semi-formal attire with glasses, straight hair, and lighter skin.	p. 29	Respect for diversity of ethnic groups
		#3			
Chapter 4	I Can't Believe it!		A female teacher wears a long dress with a hijab.	p. 46	Respect for diversity of religious groups
		#4			
Chapter 13	It's Garbage In Art Works Out		One male student with straight hair and bright skin stands between his peers, one with curly hair and dark skin (male), and the other one (female) has bright skin and long and straight hair.	p. 180	Respect for diversity of ethnic groups
		#5			

of multicultural values represented in the textbook because the textbook is a value-laden curriculum document (Widodo 2018).

Visual representation of multicultural values

For this study, the selected textbook portrays visual representations of multicultural values as listed below (see Table 1). Due to space limitations, only relevant visual presentations to lesson themes were selected for a corpus of multicultural values discourses and for in-depth analysis.

To begin with, four examples of visual artefacts #1 (p. 7), #2 (p. 13), #3 (p. 29), and #5 (p. 180) are textbook characters portraying female and male English teachers and students with different physical characteristics



(appearance). Picture #1 in Chapter 1 is a female teacher wearing a brown semi-formal dress with glasses, and she has short straight hair. Picture # 2, also depicted in Chapter 1, is a male teacher putting on semi-formal attire with spectacles, moustache, curly hair, and darker skin, while Picture #3 presented in Chapter 3 refers to a male teacher dressing up semi-formally and with glasses, straight hair, and brighter skin. Finally, Picture #5 in Chapter 13 is a picture of three students; one male student attributed to have straight hair with bright skin standing between two students, a female student with long hair and white skin and a male student with curly hair and dark skin.

As a social semiotic resource, characters' illustrations, such as dressing up semi-formally for teachers and wearing a school uniform for students, as well as the attributes of having straight and curly hair, bright and dark skin, must be interpreted contextually in reference to real-life conditions of school communities in Indonesia, which are built upon the heterogeneity of Indonesian population. In Indonesian school contexts, the recruitment of staff and students is open to all Indonesian citizens capable of meeting standard requirements regardless of their ethnic origin, religious adherence and gender. Legally, all Indonesian citizens have equal rights and opportunities. Therefore, generally, in public and private school contexts, teachers, administrative staff and students stem from diverse ethnic backgrounds, as illustrated in the textbook characters. Thus, the hidden message conveyed through the depiction of characters in the textbook is accepting pluralism in Indonesia in terms of acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity.

The next analysis focuses on Picture #4 (p. 40) depicting a female Muslim teacher who wears a long dress with the hijab. In contemporary Indonesia, wearing a hijab semiotically as an institutional dress code or as Halal fashion is prevalent among Muslim girls and adult women. Institutionally in public and private primary and secondary schools as well as universities in Indonesia, female Muslim students may wear a hijab as a personal choice of a dress code. However, in Indonesian Islamic schools and universities, female Muslim students have to wear a hijab as an institutional dress code. This religious dressing practice is protected by law. As Halal fashion, these days, there is a phenomenon called the Hijabers. The discourse of the Hijabers (those who wear a hijab) in the context of Indonesia is popular among career Muslim women working in the public and private sectors of education, banking and tourism, to name a few. This also becomes the locus of female Muslims' religious identity (Benham and Mozaheb 2013).

To summarise, the characters' portrayal in the textbook depicts sociocultural phenomena associated with Indonesian people's lives. A female Muslim teacher character with a hijab and without a hijab in the textbook, the images of male teachers portraying attributes of particular ethnic groups, as well as diverse attributes of male and female student characters, are reconstructed from the sociocultural life of Indonesian society (ideology), transformed by the ELT

textbook writers in the textbook. Appreciating pluralism and cultural diversity and accepting religious and ethnic tolerance among different religious affiliations and ethnic groups are the issues implicitly manifested through characters' images that the textbook writers, teachers and students go unnoticed or take for granted. Thus, the discourse of male and female characters in the textbook encourages textbook readers and senior high school students to embrace pluralistic ideology by appreciating cultural diversity and accepting racial and religious tolerance. This is a crucial vision laying a strong foundation for the existence of Indonesia as a multi-ethnic and multicultural country.

The verbal and visual materials in the textbook

In addition to the visual portraits that reflect multicultural values in the textbook, the writers present verbal texts (sometimes accompanied with visual texts). Semiotically, verbal texts are both spoken text and written text (Widodo 2015). In this textbook analysis, the verbal texts relate to written text. For an analysis of how multicultural values are promoted, two factual reports, a song and a news report are briefly examined.

The first text is a passage text in Chapter #10 about the Baduy People (BP). The text tells us about the traditional life of indigenous people living in West Java, who reject modern technology in their lives. It is part of a factual report, which aims to provide information about a social phenomenon (e.g. the Baduy people). The following are text segments taken from the textbook (due to space limitations, paragraphs # 2, 3, 4 and 5 have been intentionally removed):

Text 1: Baduy People (Three pictures accompany this text)

Little more than three hours away from Jakarta there is a **traditional community** that has **turned their back away from modern technology**. They don't own phones, use the Internet, wear shoes or listen to the radio. Living in voluntary isolation, they are a secretive group who turn away outsiders. This group lives close to **the city of Banten** and they are known as the **Baduy people**.

...

If we're thinking about **what to do** when we come here, then we need not worry because there is **lots on offer**, like enjoying the **true relaxing times** and the **feeling of being isolated from modern technology** and **man-made things**. One favorite thing to do might be **observing communal life** in the settlement. It is a **very relaxing experience** and sometimes visitors find themselves **missing the simplicity and beauty of the place**. (Compiled and

adapted from: <http://discoveryourindonesia.com/baduy/> and <http://www.globalingonesianvoices.com/11598/baduy-travel/>

Reading about the life of the BP, a traditional community in Indonesia, reminds readers of the distant past when people still relied heavily on natural resources to survive. Conceptually, the lexico-grammar (e.g. sensing verbs: *enjoy, feel, think*) of a description text (Knapp and Watkins 2005) can arouse readers' emotionality. For example, readers can experience or feel the atmosphere of the distant past through information presented in the text. By reading the text about BP, senior high school students and teachers can feel proud of and appreciate the cultures of indigenous people in terms of their perspectives (beliefs), behaviours (customs, habits) and products (home-made products) (National Standards in the Foreign Language Education Project, as cited in Yuen 2011). English teachers can use such texts to promote multicultural values. In the context of ELT, exposing senior high school students to the cultures of indigenous peoples is expected to broaden students' knowledge about cultural diversity and their acceptance of cultural diversity in Indonesia. By discussing BP, students can learn about local 'wisdom,' relating to a strong work ethic, personality and integrity, for instance. Knowledge about various cultures in one's own country is crucial when EFL learners try to communicate interculturally with native speakers and non-native speakers of English from expanding circle and outer circle countries (Liu and Fang 2017). Valuing the different perspectives and daily living practices of the BP, a minority ethnic group in Indonesia, is the parcel of a democratic society. Regarding the importance of recognising the rights of indigenous peoples, textbook writers need to prepare learning materials that encourage students to value the rights of minorities and indigenous citizens. This can promote humanistic values, so that people can appreciate each other in multicultural encounters.

The second text to be analysed is entitled 'Teenage Bullying,' in Chapter #8 (p. 111). It tells us about bullying and its effects. This text belongs to a factual report aiming to provide information about teenage bullying. The first paragraph of the text contains some general information about this phenomenon. The next paragraphs contain detailed descriptions about bullying (*What is it? What does it look like? What special features/characteristics does it have?*). The following are some text segments taken from the textbook (Paragraphs # 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 have been intentionally removed due to space limitations).

Text 2: Teenage Bullying

Bullying includes *behaviors* that focus on *making someone else feel inadequate*, or focus on *belittling* someone else. Bullying includes **harassment, physical harm, repeatedly demeaning speech and efforts** to **ostracize** another person. Bullying is done with the intention of **bringing another person down**. It is important to realize that there are different kinds of bullying.

...

Another problem is **retaliation**. In some cases, bullied teens have violent fantasies of attacking their bullies. There are instances in which these **teens become violent**. They turn to their classmates in order to get revenge. This can be a cause of heartbreak and difficulty (Adapted from <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/teenage-bullying.html>)

The text about *Teenage Bullying* informs readers about the meaning of bullying, its various types and its effects. As stated in the text, bullying can range from recurrent demeaning speech, harassment, to physical harm. To arouse readers' emotionality, the text writers use action verbs (such as *make someone else feel inadequate, kick, punch, tear down somebody's self-image, hurt a person's feelings, get someone else to feel isolated, use social networks to humiliate and embarrass others*). The text mentions that all four types of bullying (e.g. physical, verbal, emotional, and cyber bullying) can have adverse effects (e.g. *physical problems and injuries, depression, drug use, inhibited social development, and revenge*). The text about bullying and its negative impact on the psychological well-being of senior high school students can help students gain a better understanding of the negative effects and consequences of bullying. English teachers can use this text and similar texts to teach such issues to senior high school students to develop their awareness of this sensitive issue and to find ways to address and overcome such social problems.

Another text refers to a song entitled 'Heal the World' (pp. 232–233) by Michael Jackson. This song talks about the destruction of our world and asks all world citizens to rebuild our world to make it a better place for all. It contains the following lyrics: *Heal the world, make it a better place, for you and for me, and the entire human race. There are people dying, if you care enough for the living, make it a better place, for you and for me.* This song also encourages readers to get rid of sorrow from our world: *And if you really try, you'll find there's no need to cry. In this place, you'll feel there's no hurt or sorrow.* The next stanza ensures us that there are many ways we can restore our world: *There are ways to get there, if you care enough for the living.* The song can promote students' awareness of the fact that irresponsible human beings are threatening the world in various ways (e.g. illegal logging and natural resource exploitation). It can trigger discussions among senior high school students about the importance of values such as world peace, love and tolerance.

Let's visit Seattle in Chapter 1 (pp. 2–4) (accompanied by photographs of tourist attractions) shows how attractive Seattle is, as a city with both modern and natural elements. The text attempts to foster appreciation for the creative energies of a society in another country. The implicit message in the text is that students should

appreciate cultural artefacts. The selection of Seattle can serve as a catalyst for discussing a world-class multicultural city, situated in an English-speaking country.

By including multicultural representations, language textbooks can serve as a starting point for multicultural dialogue. To serve this purpose, language textbook writers and teachers need to develop learning tasks that promote a discussion of creative cultural products designed by people and communities with different cultural backgrounds. This can be a catalyst for enhancing the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of students.

Conclusion

The present study examined multicultural values, as portrayed in the officially endorsed English textbook written for Indonesian EFL students and how those values might contribute to senior high school students' intercultural competence (e.g. intercultural awareness/sensitivity). The findings revealed that four values could be identified, such as respect for pluralism, respect for the rights of indigenous people, finding peace with nature and with all forms of life, and appreciation of cultural products. Even though there are more multicultural topics in the textbook, cultural materials from certain parts of the world, such as Asian and African countries, are underrepresented. In line with the globalisation of the English language (EL), there has been a paradigm shift in how culture is taught in EFL/ESL contexts. This paradigm shift, which conceptually considers the inclusion of local English varieties and multicultural aspects, supporting intercultural communicative competence, has been accepted by ELT practitioners and English educators worldwide. The present study shows how multicultural values are depicted in the ELT textbook published by the government in a country where English is positioned as a foreign language. The textbook analysed articulates a multicultural ideology by appreciating and respecting various traditions of different ethnic groups in Indonesia.

Although the textbook writers seem to be aware of the multicultural diversity present in Indonesia and elsewhere, English teachers, textbook users, may be unaware of this. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how English teachers themselves use the cultural references contained in textbooks in their teaching. To extend the present study, more critical textbook studies are needed to analyse moral and religious values and gender-related values whether implicitly or explicitly represented in other ELT textbooks, published by different publishers in other countries where English is learned as an international language. Methodologically, other approaches to CDA (e.g. multimodality, critical morality, post-feminism) should be the next research agenda for extending studies on textbook analysis probing into ideological, socio-political, sociocultural and historical agendas. Finally, because textbooks portray and promote cultural, moral and religious values, the instructional prompts and tasks/activities in ELT textbooks need to be more closely examined in future studies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

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Handoyo Puji Widodo has published extensively in refereed journals and edited volumes. He has been actively involved in a wide range of (teacher) professional development activities (e.g. joint research projects & peer mentoring programs) in Indonesia and overseas. His areas of specialisation include TESOL methodology, language curriculum and materials development, SFL in language education, and teacher professional development. His work has been grounded in socio-semiotic, socio-cognitive, sociocultural and critical theories of language pedagogies.

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