



LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND SOCIETY

LANGUAGE
LITERATURE
& SOCIETY

with an Introductory Note by
Sri Mulyani, Ph.D.

Editor
Harris Hermansyah Setiajidi

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS,
FACULTY OF LETTERS,
UNIVERSITAS SANATA DHARMA
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Religion Representation in Indonesian e-Textbooks: A Visual Content Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the visual images used as illustrations in the English electronic textbooks for grades ten, eleven, and twelve in Indonesia. Qualitative visual content analysis was employed as the methodology of the research. The analysis focused on whether these e-textbooks accommodated the religious diversity of the students. Cultural diversity that influenced students learning in Indonesian contexts was crucial to examine because the students were so diverse as a result of the geographical conditions and historical background of Indonesia. Religious identity is a dimension of self, as an individual and as a group member. It forms, develops, and emerges from membership in a particular religious group. The documents analyzed in this study were the visual images found in the English e-textbooks designed for 10th, 11th, and 12th graders in Indonesia. The document analysis procedure included document selections, protocol development, data collection, data coding and organization, and data analysis. Corresponding to the research question, the visual images were analyzed to determine whether they represented religious diversity of the students impartially. Eight English e-textbooks were examined. The result showed that certain religions were under represented in all English e-textbooks examined. Due to the fact that the some religious groups were significantly less represented in numbers, they were also considerably underrepresented in roles. The range of roles of the underrepresented religions depicted in the English e-textbooks were very limited.

Diversity of Indonesia

Indonesia is a large country covering an area of 5,193,250 square kilometers, out of which 2,027,087 square kilometers are land and the remainder is water. The Indonesian population is estimated to be 220,953,634 people. It is fourth in the world for its population density. According to the data from the Central Bureau of Statistics the number of school children is 25,389,000 (*Biro Pusat Statistik* or The Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). These school children represent the diversity of the Indonesian population. The most notable diversity in Indonesia includes ethnicity, religion, gender, and social economic status.

Geographically, Indonesia consists of more than 15,000 Islands. Administratively, it is divided into 33 provinces (See Figure 1.1). The population of Indonesia is 220,953,634 people from more than 1000 ethnic groups with more than 700 different languages (Davies, 2010; Parker, 2010; Suryadinata, Arifin, & Ananta, 2005). In terms of religious diversity, the Indonesian government officially acknowledges six religions, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Indonesia with a population of 220 million Muslims has become the nation with the

largest Muslim population in the world. Each of the four aspects of cultural diversity will be discussed in the next sections.

Religion in a broad sense refers to any pattern of beliefs, emotions, practices, and organization that derive from perceptions of the ultimate significance of the human and natural worlds (Beckford, 2010). In Indonesia everyone has the right to follow a religion of his or her choice but the government only recognizes six religions namely, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Confucianism. Islam is the dominant religion in Indonesia with 88% (around 220 million) of the population being Muslim. This makes Indonesia the largest Muslim country in the world. Other religions include Protestantism (6%), Roman Catholicism (3%), Hinduism (2%), Buddhism (1%), and other smaller religions. In general Muslims fall into two categories, Javanese traditionalists who often align with Nahdatul Ulama (Charismatic Islamic Scholars) and modernist Muslims who align themselves with Muhammadiyah, a mass-Muslim organization with a more religiously orthodox but progressive social outlook.

Constitutionally Indonesia is a secular state but religion, in this case Islam, exists in most affairs (World Trade Press, 2010). Some Islamic groups have been trying to establish an Islamic state that adopts Sharia law in Indonesia. Aceh, the western most province, has adopted Sharia law completely. However, most Muslims in Indonesia strive for a moderate Islam that has a strong commitment to tolerance and pluralism (Hefner in van Wichelen, 2010). Although ultraconservative or more hard-line tendencies exist within Islamism in Indonesia, moderation is the norm and demonstrates how Islam and democracy are compatible (van Wichelen, 2010). Aligning Islamic traditions with globalization forces of consumerism played a central role in shaping middle class Muslims, for example, by turning the modes of veiling into commodifiable accessories of identity and/or lifestyle (van Wichelen, 2010).

Religion plays a significant role in Indonesian society. The Indonesian constitution mandates that all persons have to be religious. People have to choose one of the six religions acknowledged by the government. This religion is included on national identity cards and other formal documents. In reality there are many people who practice traditional belief systems such as animism although they are officially registered as members of certain religious groups (Parker, 2010).

Conflicts and tensions between Christians and Muslims exist in areas where the number of the populations is almost the same. In areas where one religious group is a minority one-way conflicts occur. Radical Muslim clerics and aggressive Christian missionaries contribute significantly to these conflicts even inciting them in some cases. Some politicians take advantage of these situations to gain power. (Haryatmoko, 2010; Warta, 2011).

Religious education is a compulsory subject at all education levels from elementary school to university. According to the 2003 law of National Education System schools and universities should provide teachers of each religion for the students. This policy is challenging for religious-based schools. Public schools often segregate students with different religions to make scheduling easier. This approach has been criticized as creating tensions among students with different religions rather than promoting inter-religious understanding (Kelabora, 1979; Zuhdi, 2005; Soejadmoko, 2009; Haryatmoko, 2010).

Similar to ethnicity, religion diversity in the classrooms reflects the diversity in the society. In some areas public schools might consist only of students from one religious group but in some others they might consist of students from many different religions. Religions and religious education as a compulsory school subject play important roles in shaping the students' views about inter-religious relationships in the society.

Textbook Evaluation

Materials evaluation is an attempt to measure the value of materials (Tomlinson, 1998). It can predict whether the materials will promote and facilitate the learning process of the students. Learning materials are relevant to and useful for the students when they are of learners' interests and related to tasks which learners need to perform in real life. Including cultural aspects and local contexts with balanced representation will increase students' motivation which in turns will help them to engage with the learning materials that might increase to learners' chance to succeed in learning. Studying English teaching materials through visual content analysis is important in an Indonesian context because it could contribute to the development of better learning materials that are designed to cater to a very diverse population.

This study is crucial because Indonesia is a very diverse nation in terms of religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Suryadinata et al., 2005). It is even more crucial because the e-textbooks are intended for all students around the country. Textbooks play an important role in the Indonesian education system. School teachers rely on textbooks as the predominant source of information for teachers and students. There has been no systematic study of e-textbooks used in Indonesian high schools in terms of their gender, socio-economic, religious and ethnic representation. Through the use of visual content analysis, the researcher will attempt to determine whether, and to what extent, gender, socio-economic, religious and ethnic diversity are represented in English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia.

This study is expected to encourage English textbook writers and publishers to deal with more balanced representations of gender, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status and improve English language teaching (ELT) in Indonesia by including local contexts and thereby decreasing the domination of English speaking countries such as, the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia which are often referred to as the center circle countries in ELT (Kachru, 1996).

Learning materials play an important role in teaching and learning activities in the classrooms. Textbooks are often the only if not the main sources of learning in Indonesia. Indonesia with a population of more than 200 million is a diverse country in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, and socio-economic status (SES). Publishing any learning materials for schools should take diversity into account in order that the materials cater to the learning needs of students with different ethnic, language, religion, and socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to promote learning, materials should be culturally relevant and inclusive, accommodating the many cultural differences of the students. Culturally relevant teaching materials should include students' culture in order to maintain it and to avoid misinterpretations other cultures (Ladson-Billing, 2009). Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum on their own right (Ladson-Billing, 2009a, p. 20).

Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2010) recommended criteria for evaluating and selecting culturally relevant learning materials for school and classroom libraries. These criteria include authentic depiction of the cultural experience from the perspective of that group; accuracy of cultural details in text and illustrations; positive images of minority characters; balance between historic and contemporary views of groups; and adequate representation of any group. Similarly, Campbell (2010) put forward fifteen minimum qualitative criteria to align or choose textbooks to make sure that they are culturally relevant to the students. The first criterion is that the learning materials are unbiased and non-stereotypical. Secondly they should have a

comprehensive, complete, and inclusive view of society and its history. They should also have diverse viewpoints. They should not only represent the culture of the majority group. Good learning materials should build on and extend students' experiences. And finally, they should help students analyze and comprehend how real-life situations.

To analyze the visual images from the specified e-textbooks a qualitative approach was employed. First, the frequencies of all categorized visual images were counted. The images were categorized using the four cultural aspects namely, religion, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Secondly, descriptions of all visual images were made. Finally, interpretations of all visual images were developed based on critical pedagogy theory.

Human Images Representing Religions

Only Islam and Catholicism were represented in some of the e-textbooks examined. Six e-textbooks contained human images whose dresses symbolized the Muslim religion. One e-textbook had human images that represented Catholicism.

Table 1 summarized the frequency of human images that represented the six official religions in Indonesia. There were twenty-one images of people who represented Muslims in e-textbook one for grade ten. All of them were women and were categorized into the Muslim category because they were wearing the hijab. Muslim men were not represented in e-textbook one. E-textbooks two, three, four, and seven also depicted Muslim women. They were identified as Muslim because of the dresses they wore. There was only one Muslim man depicted in the English e-textbooks studied. The image of a Muslim man was found in e-textbook four. He was categorized into the Muslim group because he was depicted as wearing a white Muslim cap.

The only human image that represented Catholicism was found in e-textbook eight. A woman was depicted among the crowd of people in a rally opposing abortion. She was classified as representing Catholicism because she was holding a rosary. Other people in the crowd were not classified as representing Catholicism because there were no symbols on them that related them directly as being Catholics. Table 1 showed that the number of human images representing religions was relatively small, only fifty images, compared to 1782 human images in all e-textbooks examined.

Table 1. Human Images that Represent Religion.

	E-textbook								TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Mu	21 6.9%	5 2.4%	1 0.6%	6 1.7%	0	7 3.2%	9 2.7%	0	49 2.7%
P	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 0.84%	1 0.05%
H	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cf	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Un	282 93.1%	205 97.6%	161 99.4%	340 98.3%	87 100%	210 96.7%	329 97.3%	118 99.2%	1732 97.2%
	1782								

Mu: Muslim
P: Protestantism
C: Catholicism
H: Hinduism

Cf: Confucianism
U: Undetermined
B: Buddhism

Animal and Object Images Representing Religions

There were no animal images in the English e-textbooks examined that represented or symbolized the six official religions in Indonesia. However, it was interesting to note the presence of dogs and pigs, which are often considered to be animals to avoid due to religious reasons in Islam. Camels were found in e-textbook five for grade eleven. They were originally from the Middle East and are often associated with Saudi Arabia where Islam was founded. However, they are not related to Islam as a religion.

Table 2 showed that the English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia represented four religions Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism by images of objects in their illustrations. Eight images of objects represented both Protestantism and Catholicism. I classified them as to belong to both religions because they were found in both religions. They were images of burial coffins and Easter eggs. I found two images of coffins in e-textbook one for grade ten. I categorized them as representing Protestantism and Catholicism because only Christians use coffins for purposes of burial. Muslims are wrapped with white cloths when they are buried. Buddhists and Hindus are normally cremated in Indonesia. I found three images of painted eggs for Easter in e-textbook three for grade eleven. I considered them to represent both Protestantism and Catholicism because they were found in the traditions of these religions. E-textbook four for eleven graders also had three images of Easter eggs.

The writer used one image of a goddess statue as an illustration in e-textbook one. I considered it as representing Hinduism because such images were often found in Hindu temples in Indonesia. E-textbook two for tenth graders represented Buddhism by showing one image in its illustration. It depicted Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world. It represented Buddhism, although it was used as an example of a tourist destination in the e-textbook, the temple was still used as a place of worship by Buddhists.

Table 2 showed that most objects were put into undetermined category due to the fact that they did not depict any features that symbolized the six official religions acknowledged by Indonesian government.

Table 2. Object Images that Represent Religion

	E-textbook								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Mu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P	2	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	8
	3.8%		4.3%	3.3%					1.6%
C	2	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	8
	3.8%		4.3%	3.3%					1.6%
H	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1.9%								0.2%
B	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		2.2%							0.2%
Cf	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Un	50	45	66	89	32	97	77	43	499
	94.3%	97.8%	95.6%	96.7%	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%
	509								

Mu: Muslim

P: Protestantism

C: Catholicism

H: Hinduism

B: Buddhism

Cf: Confucianism

Un: Undetermined

Religious Diversity in Indonesian E-textbooks

Indonesia officially acknowledged six religions in its constitution. Religious diversity was a common phenomenon in everyday lives and at schools. There were public school holidays for each religion in the national curriculum calendar. Including religious topics in learning materials was viewed as showing reality of everyday lives and making the materials contextual.

The English e-textbooks examined included topics related to some religions. The visual images used as illustrations also depicted people and objects representing certain religions. Some visual images were used to provide illustration for texts related to topics about certain religions. Some other images were used as illustrations for texts, which were not about religions. However, not all six religions acknowledged by Indonesian government were represented.

Throughout the eight English e-textbooks examined only Islam and Christianity were represented by human images. There was no animal image that represented religions. Images of objects found in the English e-textbooks series only represented Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Confucianism was not represented by either human or object images.

Most images that represented religions were not used to illustrate texts about religions. They were used to illustrate texts on unrelated topics. The image of Borobudur temple in e-textbook one, which represented Buddhism for example, was used to provide illustration for a text on tourism. The statue of a Hindu goddess from the same e-textbook was used as an illustration of a text about legend and folk tales. Another example of an image representing religion used as an illustration for non-religious text was the image of a woman holding a rosary. It was used as an illustration of a text about an anti-abortion protest. The images of women wearing hijab, which represented Islam, were also used as illustrations of common activities such as cooking, career, and sports. The only images used as illustrations of texts related to religions were the Easter eggs. They accompanied texts about Easter traditions.

Including visual images related to religion would be ideal to show the reality of religious life in Indonesia. Integrating topics about religions in the learning materials other than learning materials for religious education promoted inter religious understanding among Indonesian students (Haryatmoko, 2010; Kelabora, 1979; Parker, 2010). However, balanced representations and accurate depictions of all religions should be made to develop inclusive learning materials that in turn would promote students' learning motivation. Imbalanced representations and inaccurate depictions of any religion would disfranchise certain group of students and demotivate them. Religion is an important cultural aspect in Indonesia, discounting it from instructional materials could have detrimental effect on students (Ladson-Billing, 2009a).

Previous studies showed that religious education failed in promoting inter religion understanding among students because of its segregate nature (Haryatmoko, 2010; Kelabora, 1979; Parker, 2010; Putranta, 2005; Soedjatmoko, 2009). Creating balanced and accurate religion representation through the use of visual images may promote mutual understanding among students with different religions. In the long run it could minimize the existing tensions and conflicts between different religious groups which have not been fully resolved in Indonesia (Haryatmoko, 2010).

Concluding Remarks

The English e-textbooks for high school in Indonesia did not reflect the reality of the existing religions in Indonesia. The images of human beings represented Islam and Christianity but left out Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Religion is a sensitive issue and played an important role almost in all aspects of life in Indonesian society. It even often causes tensions and conflicts that have not been properly resolved. The

religious education has failed in promoting inter religion understanding because of its segregate nature. Balanced representation and accurate depiction of the reality of religious life in Indonesia in instructional materials other than the instructional material for religious education could promote inter religious understanding and in the long run would reduce the tensions and conflicts between different religious groups.

The results of the study showed that there were imbalanced representations of religion in the English e-textbooks examined. Developing guidelines for cultural representation was suggested to improve the quality and inclusiveness of English instructional materials. It is expected that the results of this study inform teachers, textbook writers and publisher.

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