# Cultural Content in English Textbook
## *Visual Grammar Analyis*

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Keywords:     Cultural content, English as international language, visual grammar.

Abstract:     This study was a qualitative descriptive study, which investigated how target culture and source culture were visually communicated through pictures taken from English textbook for second grade of secondary school. The data of this study were collected from an English textbook for second grade that implemented the 2013 curriculum entitled "Passport to the World A Fun and Easy English Book (for Grade VIII of Junior High Schools", published by *Tiga Serangkai)*. The data were collected in the form of pictures taken from each unit of the textbook and were analyzed using The Grammar of Visual Design by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and the analytical framework for the cultural content was proposed by Xiao (2010). The study found that source culture contents dominate other cultural representation. The book was classified into Source Culture materials based and the criteria of source culture covered Geographic, Architecture, Education, Lifestyle, Art, Costumes, Values, Gesture and Body language and Foods. The book was prepared the learners to talk about their own culture to foreigners rather than be prepared to encounter their cultures.

## 1   INTRODUCTION

Culture carries cultural perspective and values of the language users, and rarely be learner without addressing the cultural background and context in which it is used (Rafieyan, Majid, and Siew Eng, 2013; Xiao, 2010). In this case, English textbooks that highlight the uses of source culture and target culture need to carefully deliberate the appropriateness of their representations.

Xiao (2010) had put new grounds on the same research that Cortazzi and Jin (1999) initiated; Xiao (2010) believed that the English textbook based on its origin is divided into three different categories. They are source culture materials, target culture materials, and international culture materials textbook. Source and Target culture materials is the most possible fit textbook for EFL students whose goals are to write, read, listen and speak in English. Lastly, the International target culture materials involve a wide variety of cultures set in English-speaking countries or in countries where English is not a first or a second language but is used as an international language. This book belongs to the learners whose needs and goals are EIL as it is suggested by McKay (2002) and Xiao (2010), which the primary aim is to enable people to share their thoughts and ideas with other people from other cultures successfully.

Pictures as visual aids in textbook are able to give realistic portrayals of all cultures, including facts, up to date information and nonverbal language (Xiao, 2010). Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of how the cultures in the Target Language (TL) and Source Language (SL) are visually communicated through pictures taken from an English textbook for secondary school. The analysis was undertaken within the framework of visual grammar as outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), as well as the concept of cultural content proposed by Xiao (2010) and other supporting theories which are relevant.

## 2   VISUAL GRAMMAR AS ANALYTICAL TOOL

The Grammar of Visual Design is believed to describe the way in which depicted element, such as people, places and things to combine in visual statements (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). There are three metafunctions of linguistics that can be extended to visual communication.

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## 2.1 Representational meaning

Representational meaning demonstrates between the represented participants in the image and involved interactive participants and represented participants (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

The Actor is the participant from which the vector comes, while the Goal is where the participant at which the vector points meanwhile Transaction is something done by the Actor to a Goal (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

The Representational meaning then is divided into two major processes, Conceptual and Narrative processes.
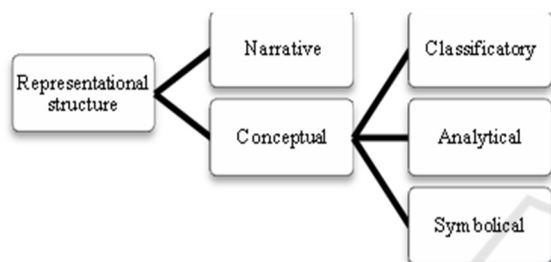


Figure 1: Main type of visual representation structure. (Adopted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.59).

The Narrative process is a process of doing something which is connected by the vector (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The first process is the Action process. The Action process occurs when there are vectors and action formed by the represented participant (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Secondly, there is a process where the vector is formed by the eyeline or by the direction of the glance without creating the transaction and this process is called Reactional process.

The Conceptual representation represents the visual structures which the participants are illustrated to be more generalized, more or less stable and timeless. Similar to Narrative process, the Conceptual process is divided into different kinds as well.

First process is the Classificational process and the analytical process. This process relates participants in terms of a part-whole structure, the whole is called the Carrier and the parts are called Possessive Attribute (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The in-depth analysis and elaboration of representational meanings in the textbook (Djatmika et al,. 2014) presented in the followings.



Figure 2: At canteen. (Djatmika et al., 2014).

Figure 2 illustrates the canteen, defined by the simple dining tables and a variety of foods displayed. Forshee (2006) mentions this place in this place as *warung*, a place to buy meals, sweets, and any other treats while having a sit to enjoy the snacks. The realistic impression which is made by color the differentiation eases the viewers to recognize each of the tiny elements such as the *bakso* or Indonesian meatball and *mie* or noodle.

This picture has five represented participants; four are students claimed by the possessive attributes in uniforms of white and blue they wear and the other participant is the shopkeeper who stands inside the *warung* whose job is to serve the customers. The hair of the female participants in this picture is depicted in short hair or long hair with ponytail which giving the viewers a representation of how Indonesian students in their uniform. It is typical Indonesian secondary school uniform and its regulation.

The vector made by the represented participant as the Actor lend to the food he eats as the Goal with the smile depicted on his face indicated that he is enjoying his meal a bowl of *mie bakso*. The other smile is also depicted by the shopkeeper as the Reaction of the vector formed by the eyeline to the customer as the Phenomenon who serving her offering the act of friendliness.

In terms of information value, the students eating on the table are referred as the New. Therefore, the topic being discussed in this picture is the activity at the canteen.

This picture may not the visual aids for initiating conversation since Transaction or Bidirectional process is not made, instead it gives information and ambiance about canteen from Source culture that is useful for English descriptive text. The picture is emphasizing its meaning in the Representational process as it is aiming on offering information and

representing the participants from SL culture as the item of descriptive text.
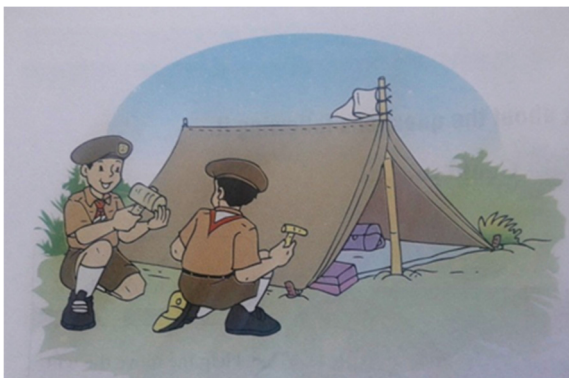


Figure 3: Boy Scout. (Djatmika et al., 2014).

Figure 3 represents several salient elements, which are the two Boys Scout, a tent and two different sizes of hammers.

In visual grammar, the terms 'represented participants' are meant for the objects or elements represented in the image. Therefore, the two Boys Scouts in the image are the represented participant; however, their roles will be decided by the type of vector they formed. The vector is formed by the represented participant on the left, since he is the only participant who has visible eyes and facial expression. However, if this process was translated into; He is building a tent together, then it would be inaccurate.

Each of the participants is holding a hammer as their Symbolic attributes, but in different sizes. In this case, the attributes do not define their identity, but it is explaining the activity that they are doing. Then, the attributes are translated into; they are building a tent.

The participant on the right form a gesture towards the Actor creating Bidirectional Transaction, it means that the participant who is earlier acted as the Actor then changed to Goal. They are not explaining or describing their activities but creating the format of interaction. The representational meaning itself is interpreted into; He offers/asks the (bigger) hammer to him.

To offer such information, the eye contact with the viewers is unnecessary. Medium long shot enables viewers to recognize the setting and also the relief of each object, this kind of frame also creates distance for the viewers to see the participants as common people in general. Eye-level camera's high shoot also demand viewers to see them equally.

In conclusion, this picture gives the idea to the viewers about representational meaning in how the interaction process in English is demonstrated.

## 2.2 Interactive meaning

Interactive meaning is the "visual communication resources for constituting and maintaining interaction" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 114).

The first communicative function is the image act and gaze. This process occurs when represented participants look directly to the viewers. When the participant's gaze goes toward to the viewers, it labelled as a 'Demand'. On the other hand, all images which do not contain human or quasi-human participants looking directly at the viewer are identified as 'Offer'.

The second function is the size of frame and social distance. The matter of the depiction of the object and the choice of distance suggests different relations between the represented participants and the viewers.



Figure 4: Tari Baris Bali. (Djatmika et al., 2014).

In figure 4, the represented participant wears a traditional costume full of colors. The image producers put color differentiation in large scale to the use of a varied palette in order to give a realistic impression to the viewers. This dance is known as *Tari Baris* which originally comes from Bali, Indonesia. The placement of the participant is symmetrically placed at the center, formed no vector, and directly addressed his eyes to the viewers, then the participant is no longer Actor but Carrier.

The Carrier is depicted to represent what he wears to a certain community which is traditional costumes of Bali. The participant's look addressed directly to the viewers' eyes indicates that the vector is formed by the eyeline. This process creates a connection between the participants and the viewer. The smile curved in his face defines happiness, the picture is trying to give the impression that participants like to dance.

The muted setting implies the represented participant in the picture is the item of descriptive information. It is emphasized on the description about what he likes and represents it to the viewers about what he wears, what he does, and other description regarding to the dance or probably its origin.



Figure 5: Salsa has a black backpack. (Djatmika et al., 2014).

The image above is depicting a girl named Salsa who carries a red and black backpack. The image producers seem consistent to create the characters of students in the textbook; the participant in this picture also wears uniform of white and blue to tell the viewers that she is also a secondary school student. She is the only participant in this picture, so there is no vector formed. Moreover, the participant is placed symmetrically at the center and addressed directly to the viewers. In Analytical process, the participant is called Carrier which conveys for interaction and emotion with the viewers.

The eye contact made by the participant with the viewers creates Demand. Additionally, the backpack she carried is the most salient element in this picture since the backpack is placed on the foreground, has more details, sharp focus, large size and dominance by the color. Accordingly, the demand that the represented participant wants from the viewers is to pay more attention to the backpack she carried, since the information will be about the backpack.

Medium close shot visualizes the participant from the head to the waist. It means, the focus is led not only to the object but also the relationship that the participant conducted. In this close personal distance, the represented participant is inferred to be close to the represented participant as if she is the one who gives the descriptive information about the bag. Thus, this picture is created to fulfill the Interactive meanings, where the represented participant creates an imagery relation with the Interactive participant to present or transfer descriptive text in English.

# 3 CULTURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Learning a language together with the culture helps to develop students' awareness and improve their cultural learning and intercultural communicative competence. English language learning should focus on improving the learners' ability to understand cultures, including their own and to communicate with people even from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

According to the distribution of cultural content by Xiao (2010), the textbook (Djatmika et al,. 2014) contains the cultural content which includes the source and target culture. The elaboration of the distribution for each category of cultures is presented in order. First, the distribution for the category of SL cultural content of little "c" is mostly emphasized on geography, education, architecture and art, while little 'c' is lifestyle, hobbies, values, gesture and body language and foods. Moreover, English teaching materials usually adopt English names to present Target culture (Xiao, 2010); instead, this textbook upholds common local names like Budi, Utami, Rini, and Yanti, the names which are very common and familiar among Indonesians.

The educational cultural content of Source culture is represented through the use of school uniform in the most representative participants and the regulation system of the school. This book also inserts architectural contents which features travel destinations and city landmarks in SL culture. In order to preserve culture and encourage learners to appreciate their own, the big 'C' culture of Art is also distributed; this textbook provides learners with traditional art and dance.

SL cultural content is also communicated in the little "c" cultures through lifestyle, values, body language and foods. First, lifestyle in the way of a person or group of people lives and works, including daily routine schedules, etiquette in eating, and activities in leisure time. Textbook by Djatmika et al,. (2014) contains both categories of Target culture in big "C" culture and little "c" culture. However, appearance of native speakers of TL in the textbook (Djatmika et al,. 2014) is rarely presented.

By seeing the fact that source culture gets more attention than the others and dominates the other cultural content presentation, the textbook by Djatmika et al,. (2014) is designed intentionally to introduce EFL to the language learners in beginner

level in familiar topics, so as to ease the SL learners to connect with the language use in appropriate context. In conclusion, the images in this textbook are categorized to Source Culture materials which prepare the learners to talk about their own cultures to foreigners rather than prepare them to encounter other cultures.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study is sought to investigate how SL and TL cultures are visually communicated through selected pictures in an English textbook, 'Passport to the World' (Djatmika, Priyanto and Dewi, 2014) for secondary schools. This study employed two frameworks; the visual grammar theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and the concept of cultural contents by Xiao (2010).

The pictures in 'Passport to the World' (Djatmika, Priyanto and Dewi, 2014) as visual aids provide the learners realistic portrayals of TL, SL and international cultures. The pictures also provide examples of communicative action for learners to take on roles and to understand the feelings, values, attitudes and interaction of the represented participants from each culture. The SL culture presented in the textbook helps the learners in understanding their own culture. While the TL culture, international and free culture helps the learners to increase learners' cultural awareness.

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