

## **DECONSTRUCTION OF LINGUISTICS IMPERIALISM IN INDONESIA'S SCHOOL: OVERSEEING THE ELT TEXTBOOKS**

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### **Abstract**

For over a decade, the unceasing dissemination of English as a global language, consciously or not, has influenced the concepts of the ELT across the world. Some countries persist in the adaptation of the concepts of EFL or ESL in their practical ELT contexts wherein the cultures of the inner-circle countries, like the US and the British, are still dominant in their teaching materials. Others; however, prefer to alternate the ELT concepts to either EIL or ELF in their own teaching contexts in which the cultural contexts in the teaching materials are the integrations of the cultures of the inner-circles, the outer-circle, and the expanded countries or the international cultures along with their own local cultures. This paper aimed to overview the deconstruction of the formulation concepts of the cultural dominance in the ELT textbook in the context of Indonesia's high schools. This review addresses the dichotomies of the concepts of EFL/ESL, EIL and ELF along with the cultural dominances embedded on the conceptual terms. This study is literature -based research when collecting data through extensive and critical reading and analysis of existing academic works related to ELT, cultural representation, and linguistic imperialism. This study draws on existing academic works to explore how the hegemony of English is embedded in English textbooks. The result of this study shows that the linguistics imperialism continues shaping the materials and sources of ELT textbooks in Indonesia. The content and structured of Indonesian ELT textbooks highlight the cultural values and perspective of inner-circle countries. Although EFL concept is still dominated in Indonesian context, there is a growing awareness of the need to shift towards more inclusive curriculum when local content and perspective more embedded. Further, this research elucidates critical reflections on an ideology, economy, and politics of language the linguistics Imperialism, as well as possible recommendation to what possible, applicable concepts should be adjusted to the Indonesia's ELT textbooks.

**Keywords:** Existence, Linguistic Imperialism, ELT Textbook

### **Abstrak**

*Selama lebih dari satu dekade, penyebaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa global yang berlangsung secara terus menerus baik secara sadar atau tidak telah mempengaruhi konsep pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT) di seluruh dunia. Beberapa negara terus mempertahankan konsep pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) atau Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL) dalam praktek proses belajar mengajar mereka, dimana budaya negara*

*lingkar inti seperti Amerika Serikat dan Inggris masih mendominasi materi pengajaran Bahasa Inggris. Akan tetapi negara-negara lain memilih untuk mengubah konsep pengajaran Bahasa Inggris dengan mengadopsi pendekatan Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Internasional (EIL) atau Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Penghubung (ELF) yang disesuaikan dengan konteks pengajaran mereka sendiri. Dalam pendekatan ini, konteks budaya yang terdapat dalam materi pengajaran merupakan hasil integrasi budaya negara lingkaran inti, negara diluar lingkaran inti, negara-negara ekspansi serta budaya internasional dan budaya lokal mereka sendiri. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini bertujuan untuk meninjau dekonstruksi konsep dominasi budaya dalam buku pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di jenjang pendidikan menengah di Indonesia. Kajian ini mengulas dikotomi konsep EFL/ESL, EIL, dan ELF beserta dominasi budaya yang terkandung dalam istilah-istilah konseptual tersebut. Riset ini adalah riset berbasis studi literatur dimana penelitian ini dikembangkan melalui pembacaan dan analisis kritis secara ekstensif terhadap karya-karya akademik yang ada terkait dengan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, representasi budaya, dan hegemoni Bahasa Inggris. Studi ini memanfaatkan karya-karya akademik yang ada untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana hegemoni Bahasa Inggris tertanam dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggris. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa hegemoni Bahasa Inggris terus menjadi bahan dan sumber materi buku pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia. Konten dan struktur buku teks Bahasa Inggris menonjolkan nilai, budaya, dan perspektif negara barat. Meskipun konsep EFL masih mendominasi di Indonesia, terdapat peningkatan kesadaran pentingnya untuk mengembangkan kurikulum yang lebih inklusif dengan menanamkan konten dan budaya lokal pada buku pengajaran Bahasa Inggris. Lebih lanjut artikel ini menguraikan refleksi kritis terhadap ideologi, ekonomi, dan politik Bahasa yang melandasi hegemoni Bahasa Inggris serta memberikan rekomendasi terkait konsep-konsep yang memungkinkan dan aplikatif untuk disesuaikan dengan buku pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia.*

**Kata-kata kunci:** Eksistensi, Imperialisme Linguistik, Buku Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris

## INTRODUCTION

English play a central role as a global language not only for communication but also becoming the language of education, media, science, technology, and international cooperation. The global spread of English has transformed English not only a tool for learning and interaction but also a medium that shapes how individual and societies view the world. As English becomes increasingly global, it is no longer confined to inner-circle countries such as United States and United Kingdom. Instead, it is actively learned and used by millions of people in non-native countries for various purposes. This expansion, however, comes with challenges especially related to the cultural content embedded in English Language Teaching (ELT).

One major concern is the cultural dominance of native countries in ELT materials. Despite the growing diversity of English users, many textbooks and teaching resources presented in Western content particularly American and British cultures as the standard. This can be seen in the themes, names, lifestyle, values, and worldviews included in textbooks even

in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (Yuen 2011). While these materials enable learners understand the native speaker's norms, they can also marginalize local cultures and limit students' sense of identity and ownership in the learning process. This result in what Phillipson (1997) calls *linguistics imperialism*, where the spread of English carries with its power and ideology of English-Speaking countries. Consequently, learners are not just acquiring a language, but also absorbing a cultural framework that may not reflect their own local values and identities.

Across the world, efforts have ben made to address this issue. In some Western and Asian Countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, there has been growing interest adopting more inclusive approaches to ELT. These include concepts like English as an International Language (EIL), and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which promote English not as the property of native speakers but as a shared global resource. These models encourage the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives both global and local in the learning process (Matsuda, 2012). They recognize that English belongs to everyone who uses it and that cultural representation should reflect this diversity.

In Indonesia, where English as taught as a foreign language, these issues are especially relevant. English becomes the part of national curriculum and textbook that play an important role in English proficiency development and cultural content to students. However, research shows that many Indonesian ELT textbooks still reflect Wester-centric perspectives particularly the inner-circle countries (Widodo, 2018). This can limit the students' engagement with the language in cultural context. It will also reflect a form of linguistics and cultural imbalance that deserves critical attention.

Henceforth, this research aims to analyse the English curriculum textbook and its linguistics or cultural imperialism. This study is acknowledged from the reading materials, particularly when discussion the curriculum, the education indoctrination, and cultural influences on the curriculum textbooks. The urgency lies in the need to make ELT more culturally relevant, inclusive, and empowering for learners. Furthermore, this research is study literature research when focusing on deconstructing cultural dominance in textbooks through the lens of linguistics imperialism, while also exploring alternative models like EIL and ELF that can better serve the needs of Indonesian students. By doing so, the research can contribute to ongoing discussion on how to balance global language learning with local identity and cultural values.

## **METHOD**

The research belongs to literature-based approach as described by Creswell (2014) who emphasizes the qualitative inquiry can be used to explore complex social and educational issues by interpreting existing texts. This research analyses how linguistic and cultural imperialism is reflected in Indonesian English curriculum textbooks. Despite doing data collection, this research is developed through extensive and critical reading and analysis of existing academic works related to ELT, cultural representation, and linguistic imperialism. This study draws on existing

academic works to explore how the hegemony of English is embedded in English textbooks. The key concepts of linguistic imperialism presented by Phillipson (1992) form the foundation of the analysis.

The structure of the analysis follows four stages. First, this study discusses English curriculum reformation and its philosophical underpinning. Then followed by the analysis of dichotomy of English curriculum related terms and cultures that interact in the curriculum context. The third section explores the role of linguistics imperialism in shaping textbook narratives. Finally, the study offers critical reflection and recommendations to develop more locally and grounded ELT materials.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *1. English Curriculum Reformation and its Philosophical Underpinning*

Since the post-colonial era (before the reformation), the Indonesian government started to pay much attention to education reformation through curriculum development, including the English curriculum and its textbooks. English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum, which the Dutchman spelt out then, has vividly formed a direction of language learning. In Indonesian schools, ELT has become one of the compulsory subjects in the curriculum, and even it has been used tested in the final school exams. Notwithstanding, the ELT curriculum aims at enabling the students to encounter English communicative competencies (Smith, 1991). According to Yulia (2014), there needed to be a more approach to the ELT to reach the intended competencies. At that time, there were two standard methods; Grammar Translation Method (known as GTM) and Audio-Lingual Methods (known as ALM). Even in the early reformation era, the model of ELT remained the same, which was depicted in the in the 2004 and 2006 Curricula, the School-Based Curriculum.

If we observe much deeper, the ELT curriculum, along with its teaching method, was the teacher-centred approach. The students needed more time to practice English and to support the ELT curriculum objectives. If we refer to the philosophy of Paulo Freire, this model of learning is called the banking system. The banking concept emphasises embarking lots of information and knowledge into the students' minds (Freire, 1974). Dewey (1986) also opposed such concepts of traditional learning, which only emphasises transferring information and skills. Referring to this Dewey's standpoint, the learning model as relatively docilely receptive rather than active. In other words, the students are prone to be the objects of the learning, not the subjects who directly consciously experience the learning processes.

However, after receiving numerous inputs from many parties for over a half-decade, in 2013, the central government again tried to implement the other new curriculum, which emphasises the "Project-Based and Scientific Approach", which is now familiar with the 2013 Curriculum. Herein, the students, the centre of the learning processes, freely demonstrate their ability and no longer memorisation on subject matters. This will subsequently enable them to have a more rapid change in the classroom (OECD, 2015). The

idea of this curriculum for all subjects is in line with what Dewey called the philosophy of positivism or progressivism. Herein, the progressive education concept is yet to respond to the current issues people face. Dewey (1986) argues that learning should relate to the education and student's personal experience, within, by and for, despite some unrelated course topics. However, the learning should be based on empirical and experimental philosophy. To understand the empirical concept, Dewey (1986) suggested that learning must be through education-related experience, leading to the student's personal growth and creativity.

Furthermore, Freire (1974) asserted that the evolution of knowledge and life experience through the 2013 curriculum critical pedagogy would force students to change and develop their ideas for structures or institutions. Further, Freire (1974) also argued for the concept of learning which should view the teacher and students as dialectical to create playful learning. The learning materials should be contextually designed to create a higher interest in active learning. To attain significant impact, Freire alluded that the teachers should consciously emerge as the dialogue makers and co-communicators in the dialogue. They should show the students that life problems, such the incompetency in communicating English, have concrete solutions, and those are from their own prior experiences, which could be consistently enriched through relevant topic discussions, regardless of the limits. By this concept, the teachers, through the ELT curriculum textbook, should enable the students to expose themselves to learning. Moreover, to understand this, it is necessary to analyse the term dichotomy and its shifting paradigm of the ELT Curriculum.

## *2. English Terms Dichotomy Analyses along with interacted Cultures*

To understand what the ELTS Curriculum should be like, it is pivotal to understand what terms are related to the curriculum itself. There are at least three terms which are closely related to the ELT Curriculum textbook; EFL (English as a Foreign Language), EIL (English as an International Language), and ELF (English as a Lingua Franca).

The term EFL (English as a Foreign Language) has been widely used and taught at schools in many countries (Humberson, 1997). If we perceive English as the EFL in Indonesia, we accept its norms, including the contents of cultures in the curriculum textbooks. According to Kramsch (1998), to study one language means to study its culture as a whole. In other words, the language and its norms and cultures, which are intertwined, cannot be separated (Byram (1988). Consequently, when it comes to the EFL curriculum or textbook, the norms and cultural contents should be embedded in its teaching. Alptekin (1993) asserted that it is hardly possible not to teach cultures of the target language since the cultures become the significant EFL features in language teaching. Furthermore, without embedding the native cultures in the formal nuance, Alptekin noted that it is virtually useless.

Another related ELT term is EIL. It is believed that the EIL concept refers to the use of English to communicate among people across the globe. Hino (2014) contended that the EIL involves ELT and global education. It is widely viewed as the means of communication either between natives and non-natives or among the non-natives. Herein the EFL concepts of inner-

circle, outer-circle or expanded countries are ignored because the ELT aims at communicative competence (Hino, 2014). The EIL tries to promote different views in language teachings in the curriculum textbook. If we discuss this much further, the cultural contents of the EIL are not dominant to a specific country (Smith, 1981b, as cited in Hino, 2014). In other words, the EIL curriculum concept accommodates diverse cultural backgrounds, whether global or local. The EIL strategically engages people to share their ideas and cultures inside a global society.

The other term is ELF (English as a Lingua Franca). According to Jenkins (2006), the ELF concept differs from the concepts of EFL or EIL. Jenkins (2009) added that the ELF is perceived as a communication means among non-native English speakers; meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, the EIL concept refers to English as a communication means between the native speaker group and the non-natives. Non-native countries want to use English in the ELF concept to represent their countries (Crystal, 2003). In other words, English as a Lingua Franca is traditionally linked to language usage among people whose mother tongues differ (Baker, 2009). However, if we scrutinize both ELF and EIL concepts in the curriculum, the contents of the two concepts are similar. According to Canagarajah (2005, as cited in Baker, 2009), cultures are globally viewed as diffuse, deterritorialized and hybrid. If we refer to the curriculum textbook, the students study the language in local and global cultural contexts (Baker, 2009). Hence, we can argue that teaching ELF needs to be comprehensively viewed as “a perception of fluidity and mixing of languages, cultures, and identities (Baker, 2009, p. 21).”

### *3. Linguistics Imperialism in English Curriculum Textbooks*

Does the Linguistic Imperialism or Indoctrination exist in the English curriculum textbook?

Theoretically, imperialism in linguistics refers to the use of one language more over others (Philipson, 1997); meanwhile, indoctrination refers to focusing on the contents of what is taught and the methods used to teach the contents (Bailey (2014). Linguicism (linguistic imperialism) is probably conscious or unconscious since Linguicism reflects dominant attitudes, values and hegemonic beliefs about what purposes a particular language should serve or about the value of certain pedagogic practices (Philipson, 1997). Education, in this point, has become the medium of social and linguistic reproductions and skill inculcation (Philipson, 1997). The language, along with its culture in the context of education curriculum contents, becomes the centre of the control of ideology. Although the inventory of modern technology is mostly used in English, its language has become a part of language dissemination (Crystal, 2003).

The existence of linguistic Imperialism is never separated from foreign policy in order to maintain the imperial power of native English-speaking countries. Canagarajah (1999b) affirmed that there is a hidden agenda in English dissemination across the globe, whether or not English is willed to be adopted in the school curriculum in the last time (Phillipson, 1992). Moreover, in preserving power and the used dominancy of English, the US and England tremendously perennially imposed English dissemination. We could argue that the usage of



TOEFL or IELTS as the accepted international English standard proficiency is an instance of Linguistic Imperialism, and this is how the native English people maintain English dissemination around the world (Phillipson, 2008). This standpoint is under what Crystal (2003) confirmed there must be a nation that has the power to preserve the existence of English as a global language. Apart from this, the ELT is hoped to increase the people's desire to read books, talk and study about ways of life in Britain.

The US, on the other hand, has strategically adopted the same agenda. Chomsky (1982, as cited in Yusny, 2013) asserted that the USA initiated to proclaim strategy for their political stability through being a world leader and creating a strategy for world hegemony. Phillipson (1992) argued that it is a vividly intelligibly global strategy in language promotion. Philipson noted that offering short and long-term scholarships and book promotions are the two ways of raising foreign student numbers from around the world. We dared to narrate that hundreds of Indonesian students are annually offered non-degree or degree programs. ILEP (the International Leaders in Education Program) and AMINEF are the two programs which provide study in either formal or non-formal US institutions. The ILEP, in particular, aims to empower the teachers' ELT pedagogies. The participants were unconsciously influenced by their ideology, especially in language education.

As above mentioned, the ILEP participants' experience during the training will consciously be applied in our classroom activities. They would include many cultures of the US in the curriculum textbook to get a deeper understanding of American English, especially when teaching students planning to attend the TOEFL test. If not, the students would not be familiar with the contents of the tests. Another similar influence was applied to the Philippines during the occupation. At that time, the US introduced English as a language of instruction and promoted American textbooks for learning language and ways of life. In turn, the Philippines is dependent on the language, ideology, and the USA's political and economic interests (p.153). Interestingly, England does quite similar agendas through formal and informal education programs (Phillipson, 1992).

Notwithstanding, the idea mentioned above of Language Imperialism was argued against by Rajagopalan (1999), who stated that the notion affects the feeling of insecurity and guilt amongst ELT practitioners or teachers, especially in the outer and-expanded countries. On the other hand, Seaton (1997) contended that the current English dissemination is not due to Imperialism or an ELT industry of inner-circle countries. However, it is due to 'the six world' issues. These include transnational companies; internet communication; scientific research; youth culture; international goods and services; and news and entertainment media. Crystal (2003) was convinced that the "six world" aspects of language spreads were incepted during the industrial world. It has happened throughout the centuries. Hence, in other words, linguistic Imperialism is not too impactful if we distinguish it from the "six worlds" Canagarajah (1999a, & 1999b).

*How have these concepts shifted in the ELT Curriculum textbook? The explanation of the shifting paradigm is as follows.*

#### **4. Understanding the Shifting Paradigm of the ELT Curriculum**

The ELT curriculum textbook amongst linguists is still becoming a controversial issue these days. Some of them question the existence of the practical, theoretical paradigms if we observe a considerable impetus on the ELT curriculum paradigm shift. According to Jenkins (2000), the primary reasons for the shift are that the rising percentage of people from different backgrounds communicate in English as their second or foreign language. It is also noted that the total number of speakers from non-native countries has exceeded that of native speakers (Ketabi, 2008 & Crystal, 2003). A plethora of non-natives use English as a means of communication among themselves. Considering this view, the curriculum paradigm should be shifted into ELF. This, according to Jenkin (2009), can be intelligibly used up since the shifting fundamentally aims to “make adjustments to our local English variety for the benefit of our interlocutors (p. 2).”

Nevertheless, concerns about the socio-politics of the native models still exist in the ELT curriculum textbook across the world (Philipson, 1992). This cannot be denied that the curriculum textbooks are not only commercially distributed in Indonesian national and international benchmark schools but also culturally embedded in the native norms. This notion can be noted as part of linguistic Imperialism. Notably, the ELT is believed to be best delivered to monolingual and or native speakers of English (Phillipson, 2003). Some argue that this standpoint makes the status of English as linguistics privileged. While Jenkins (2000), the ELT should be shifted to the ELF concepts since it shares common rational and local discrepancies. Further, Shomossi (2008) contended that the main goal of the ELF paradigm is to intelligibly international among non-native speakers of English rather than imitate the styles of native speakers. If it is, the ELT should be able to accommodate the contextual students’ needs (Crystal, 2003) because the cultural contents and the norms are neither from the inner- circle countries (Shomossi, 2008).

#### **5. Critical Reflection**

Ideologically, the current ELT curriculum textbooks are different from the education philosophical foundation of the Indonesian; that is Pancasila (the five state principles). As mentioned earlier, the analyses have shown that Indonesia’s ELT curriculum textbook for high school levels is dominantly represented in the Native English countries. If we refer to the national English curriculum (2013 Curriculum), the purposes of English teaching are not merely to enable the students to master communicative competence along with its cultures, yet it is highly expected that the students can study and apply the knowledge based upon the ideology of Pancasila. One of the primary foci in the curriculum textbook is Character Building. It can be argued that the curriculum textbooks are expected to present local/national cultural contexts by the Ideology of Pancasila. In other words, the curriculum textbook's



contents should not be indoctrination (Imperialism) since it is inappropriate for a modern, liberal and democratic society (Bailey, 2014).

In terms of the structural content, if the ELT curriculum textbooks adopt the EFL concepts, there must exist American or England Linguistic Imperialism. Linguistic Imperialism has shaped teachers' and students' mindsets to use the standardized linguistic format. However, if we refer to the aims of the national English curriculum, which reads, "upon the completion of the study, the students are expected to use standard English (2013 Curriculum)". Then we question to which standard of English? EFL, EIL or ELF? Smith (1991) mentions the EFL concepts that we can affirm to refer to the standards of the USA and England. Thus, it is inevitable through what the researchers, as mentioned earlier, have gained related to the curriculum textbook that the Linguistic Imperialism of westerns has culturally impacted the contents. Notwithstanding, the central governments revise the contents of English curriculums based on national education objectives. Thus far, there is little attention to the cultural contexts represented and taught in the ELT classroom teachings, especially in international standardized schools.

The fact shows that Linguistic Imperialism (and/or indoctrination) in Indonesia's ELT curriculum textbooks would probably remain persisting. However, the term English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Asians is rising. Nevertheless, how could teachers dominantly teach English based on the local or national cultural contexts, whilst at the same time, there are some in country higher institutions (for example, Barawijaya University, Gajah Mada University, the University of Indonesia, University of Padjajaran, and IIU) offer international classes for undergraduate or master studies which usually require the candidate to meet standard English scores of the TOEFL ITP or iBT certificate (the US product) or IELTS (the British and Australian joined product)? Consciously or not, the schools will prepare their students to succeed in such tests by designing the ELT curriculum textbooks. Therefore, the tendency to refer to the ELT curriculum textbook cultures remains to the Western due to the standpoints mentioned above.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of the existence of linguistic Imperialism, the cultural diversifications depicted in the ELT textbooks should be contextually entrenched and mirrored wherever the perspective inherent in the EIL. The assimilation of the learners' various ethnic and cultural backgrounds is highly anticipated, given the essence of Indonesian culture. It is thought that by allowing students to utilize other languages to communicate their own cultures and personal experiences, they can build and increase their language proficiency (Shin & Chen, 2011). Given that they can directly use the functional language, this means that when presenting the ELT materials, they must expose students more to local/national cultures than to cultures of other languages.

Another fundamental reason is that the learners in classroom teaching and interaction interact dominantly with their teachers and peers from the same cultural background and hardly ever with a native speaker of English. In EIL contextual settings, Jenkins (2006, as cited in Shin

& Chen, 2011) mentioned that communications in most current cases occurred amongst non-native speakers. In addition, Kirkpatrick (2008) has noted that English learners in Indonesia tend to use English as they are discussing their own local (national) cultural information with native speakers. It is possible to reduce the dominance of the inner-circle cultures from the curriculum textbooks. Learners' cultures must be validated within the teaching materials and instructional practices. Regarding sociocultural theory, the learners' local contexts have legitimacy, and their status should not be marginalized (Shin & Chen, 2011).

When students interact with professors and peers from the same cultural background, English-native speakers are infrequently present in educational settings. This is a significant element. Jenkins (2006, as cited in Shin & Chen, 2011) observed that non-native speakers were involved in the majority of recent communication incidents in EIL situations. Kirkpatrick also notes that English language learners in Indonesia regularly speak in English with native speakers on regional (national) cultural issues (2008). As a result, it is possible to reduce the effect of inner-circle cultures in curriculum texts. However, it is also important to legitimize learners' cultures in the teaching materials and instructional methods employed.

Students must also be exposed to other cultures because English is becoming a Global Language (GL), International Language (EIL), or serving as a Lingua Franca worldwide. This will let students face themselves with confidence (Crystal, 2003). Additionally, Indonesia is now a part of the free trade world; thus, whether or not Indonesians are interested, cross-cultural understanding is essential to the program's success, especially among students. Therefore, the local, national, and worldwide cultures should simultaneously be included in the ESL curriculum texts. While international cultural representation educates students about other cultures, local/national representation protects the residents' cultural life.

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