

## A STUDY OF CULTURAL ASPECTS IN ARABIC TEXTBOOKS FOR MADRASAH ‘ALIYAH IN BANTEN

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### ABSTRACT

The teaching of culture is considered to be an important part of teaching foreign language i.e. Arabic, since one major aim of language teaching is to increase the understanding and tolerance between cultures. As a result, it is very reasonable to say that learning a language is also learning culture of native speakers. Teaching a new language will accordingly inevitably involve teaching a new culture. Only through introducing and developing understanding of the culture of the target language will a language learner be able to function properly in the target language. In teaching Arabic as Foreign Language (AFL), textbooks play an important role in today's school world since most of Arabic teachers of SMA/MA in Indonesia use them as the most important tool and teaching resources. The purpose of this research are (1) to describe authors' awareness to insert cultural elements into the selected textbook of Bahasa Arab (BA) X, XI and XII and *تعليم اللغة العربية* Pelajaran Bahasa Arab (PBA) X, XI, XII as materials for teaching and learning Arabic, (2) to identify what cultural aspects are included in the Arabic textbooks currently used by Madrasah Aliyah in Serang, (3) to identify the patterns of insertion of these cultural aspects in the Arabic textbooks used. As the method of research, the researcher used content analysis. The data is selected textbook of *تعليم اللغة العربية*, **Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Madrasah Aliyah Kelas X, XI, XII** written by Dr. D. Hidayat, Published by PT Karya Toha Putra, Semarang Indonesia, 2013 and **Pelajaran Bahasa Arab untuk SMA Kelas X, XI, XII** written by Darsono and Sururi Abdul Jalal, published by Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2011 by using Byram (1994:51-52) and Risager (1994: 52-53) criteria i.e. Social identity and social groups, Social interaction, Belief and behavior, Socio-political institutions, Socialization and the life-cycle, National history, National geography, National cultural heritage, Stereotypes and national identity, International and intercultural issue, and Point of view and style of the textbook author (s). The result of this research are that (1) the authors have awareness to insert cultural aspects into the textbook, (2) of the eleven criteria only three of them are not inserted into the textbooks i.e. Social identity and social groups, Social interaction, Belief and behavior, National geography, National cultural heritage, Stereotypes and national identity, International and intercultural issue, and Point of view and style of the textbook author (s), (3) the patterns of insertion of these cultural aspects in the Arabic textbooks are both writings and pictures.

**Key words :** *Cultural aspects, AFL, textbooks, Cultural insertion*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In many ways, the relationship between language and culture plays a key role in education. Classroom across the world are increasingly populated by students and teachers of diverse language and cultural backgrounds and can therefore be understood as contexts for intercultural communication

It is undeniable that learning a new language is also learning a new culture of native speaker. When people learn a new language e.g. Arabic, they, at the same time should learn other things through language i.e. the culture of the native Arab. In this sense, language is a shared meaning potential, it is a medium to understand other social reality i.e. culture. As a result, language is one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture<sup>1</sup>. Language become a medium to share experiences, to understand each other and to exchange information. It expresses many things related to social reality, social structure and social system. In the most concrete level, when people learn a certain language, they should also learn the culture of the target language. Understanding the culture of native speaker practically makes the communication more meaningful and effective. Only through the introducing and developing understanding of the culture of the target language will a language learner be able to function properly in the target language.

Communication and learning a new language involves learning how to use words, rules and knowledge about language and its use in order to communicate with speakers of the language. This understanding of language sees a language not simply as a body of knowledge to be learnt but as a social practice in which to participate<sup>2</sup>. Language is something that people do in their daily lives and something they use to express, create and interpret meanings and to establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships. For this reason, understanding culture of native speaker become very important not only for the a new language learner but also language teacher.

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.K Halliday, *Language as Social semiotic*, (New York: Routledge, Chapman and HALL, Inc., 1993),p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Kramsch, C. *Context and Culture in Language Learning*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).p. 54

## **Research problem**

This paper is written based on the inconclusive results of a research study conducted in Madrasah Aliyah in Serang Banten Province. The study based on the following problems ; (1) do the authors insert cultural aspects into the textbook of Bahasa Arab Kelas X, XI, XII and *تعليم اللغة العربية* Pelajaran Bahasa Arab kelas X, XI, XII as materials for teaching and learning Arabic (2) what cultural aspects are inserted in the Arabic textbooks currently used by *Madrasah Aliyah* students in Serang, (3) what patterns of insertion of these cultural aspects in the Arabic textbooks used.

## **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is (1) to describe whether the authors insert cultural aspect into the textbook of Bahasa Arab Kelas X, XI, XII and *تعليم اللغة العربية* Pelajaran Bahasa Arab kelas X, XI, XII as materials for teaching and learning Arabic, (2) to identify what cultural aspects are included in the Arabic textbooks currently used by Madrasah Aliyah students in Serang, (3) to identify the patterns of insertion of these cultural aspects in the Arabic textbooks used.

## **LITERATURE**

### **Language and multicultural education**

Understanding the nature of the relationship between language and culture is central to the process of learning another language. Lyons states that *إلى أن اللغة جزء من الثقافة نظرا لكونها موروث ثقافي*<sup>3</sup>. In actual language use, it is not the case that it is only the forms of language that convey meaning. It is language in its cultural context that creates meaning: creating and interpreting meaning is done within a cultural framework. In language learning classrooms, learners need to engage with the ways in which context affects what is communicated and how. Both the learner's culture and the culture in which meaning is created or communicated have an influence on the ways in which possible meanings are understood. This context is not a single culture as both the target language and culture and the learner's own language and culture are simultaneously present and can be simultaneously engaged. Learning to communicate in an additional

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<sup>3</sup> Zabidah binti Muhammad Khair, *اللغة الأجنبية والهوية الثقافية للناشئة في عصر العولمة*, article, Jamiah Ummul Qura, 2009, p.2

language involves developing an awareness of the ways in which culture interrelates with language whenever it is used. Thus, it is clearly stated that language and culture are strongly related to each other. Sapir & Whorf quoted by Zabidah:

تنبيه العلماء قديما إلى وجود علاقة بين لغة الأمة و ثقافتها أو فكرها و أخذوا ينظرون في حدود هذه العلاقة, فمنهم من اشتط و قال أن اللغة تحدد صيغ الفكر و أنماطه, و من ثم فتفكيرنا في شيء ما لا يكون إلا من خلال تصنيفاته التي تزودنا بها اللغة<sup>4</sup>

According to Byram and Esarte-Sarries, language is the main medium for expressing other phenomena, including culture. It expresses the values, beliefs and meanings and it also refers to the objects of a given culture.<sup>5</sup> In accordance with this clause ‘Aqil says that معظم العلماء اليوم يُعرّف اللغة بوعاء الثقافة<sup>6</sup>. Byram and Esarte-Sarries emphasize that language become a way of defining certain culture with specific features of a given word or expression.<sup>7</sup> In other words, language and culture have strong relationship in term of psychology, sociology as well as politic. Native people use it as a way to express their cultural backgrounds to other people. For this reasons, it could be inferred that teaching and learning particular foreign language e.g. Arabic is fundamentally related to the culture of native speaker.

Despite in reality language and culture are often taught separately, Kramsch (1993) suggests that culture should not be considered a separate skill like speaking, listening, writing and reading, since it is always presented as the background of the context.<sup>8</sup> However, culture is often not seen as a feature of language but as information caused by the language. If language would be seen as a social practice, culture would become the center of language teaching and an essential part of language proficiency. Furthermore Byram points out that if language and culture are not taught together, pupils may assume that the foreign language is similar to their own language and it can be used the same way in the same situations as their first language, which of course is not always the case.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.,p.2

<sup>5</sup> Byram, M. and V. Esarte-Sarries. 1991. *Investigating cultural studies in foreign language teaching: a book for teacher*. (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991), p.5.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Aqil quoted indirectly by Zabidah binti Muhammad Khair, اللغة الأجنبية والهوية الثقافية للناشئة فى عصر العولمة, article, Jamiah Ummul Qura, 2009, p.1

<sup>7</sup> Op.cit., p.13

<sup>8</sup> Kramsch, C.. 1993. *Context and Culture in Language Learning*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993),p.1, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Byram, op.cit.,p.18

Douglas Brown states that the main principle of multi-culture-based education is the presence of cultural differences, which also constitutes a basic issue in the foreign language teaching and learning<sup>10</sup>. Brown asserts ‘whenever you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting’<sup>11</sup>. In other words learning second language implies some degree of learning of a second culture. Hence, it could be said that fundamentally, language and culture play two complementary roles in educational process. As all human activities are linguistically and culturally mediated, language and culture enable and organize teaching and learning. To apply the concept of multicultural education effectively need to involve all the components related to the teaching and learning process, including the curriculum, teachers, students, and other aspects such as teaching and learning methods and materials.

## **Context and Concept**

### **Intercultural teaching and textbooks**

According to Buttjes, several research disciplines have acknowledged the need to teach culture as a part of language learning and teaching. The psychological concern of language learners’ cultural identities is a rather new argument for the teaching of culture. More pragmatic reasons, such as travelling and commerce, are perhaps more traditional and well known reasons for teaching culture since cultural knowledge is obviously needed for international contacts and communication<sup>12</sup>. Buttjes (1991:8) continues that the educational motive for teaching culture was only discovered later. Nowadays, it is thought that the knowledge of one’s own and foreign cultures widens one’s worldview and in general enriches one’s life by providing access to new cultures.<sup>13</sup>

According to Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991: 5), language teaching always means the teaching of both, language and culture.<sup>14</sup> In other words, intercultural interaction

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<sup>10</sup> Douglas Brown, *Principle of Language Teaching*, (UK: Prentice Hall, 2001), p.82.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Brown, quoted by Jack C. Richard and Willy Renandiya, *Methodology in Language Teaching : An Anthology of Current Practice*, (Cambridge : Cambridge Press, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Buttjes, D. *Mediating languages and cultures: The social and intercultural dimension* restored. In D. Buttjes and M. Byram (eds.), *Mediating languages and cultures*, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 9

<sup>14</sup> Byram, *op.cit.*, p.5

makes language learning meaningful and vital. However, because other goals of EFL – teaching (e.g. grammar, vocabulary) demand so much time, it is possible that there is not enough time for intercultural teaching. The teacher in this case should be very care of inserting cultural understanding within the process of teaching and learning. One aim of intercultural teaching is therefore to practice the understanding of diversity: while learning foreign languages, one also has to change one's views of the world and develop new levels of consciousness. This new way of thinking enables pupils to understand other cultures better and develop their sense of justice further. According to Kramsch, the problem in the previous approaches on culture has been the promotion of facts over meanings instead of enabling the learners to understand foreign attitudes and values<sup>15</sup>.

According to Corbett, the aim of the intercultural approach is to gain an *intercultural communicative competence*. Intercultural communicative competence means the ability to understand the language and behavior of the target culture and the ability to act like a diplomat between one's own culture and the target culture. In an intercultural approach, achieving the intercultural communicative competence is considered to be a more important aim than achieving native-like speaker proficiency<sup>16</sup>. Corbett continues that the purpose is not in any way to overestimate the importance of the language development and linguistic studies, but to point out that intercultural understanding should be considered an equally important aspect of language learning.<sup>17</sup>

Textbooks in this context play an important role in today's school world, as it is mostly considered to be the target of action instead of being just a tool of teaching. In addition, textbooks are generally considered to be the major source of the teaching materials, they are used for disseminating cultures or cultural elements in the teaching and learning process. Richards and Schmidt, state that the use of modules allows for flexible organization of a course and can give learners a sense of achievement because objectives are more immediate and specific<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Kramsch, *op.cit.*, p.24

<sup>16</sup> Corbett, J. *Languages for intercultural communication and education*, 7: *Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching* [online]. (16.11.2010), p.3

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4

<sup>18</sup> Richard, J. C. & Schmidt, R. 2002. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics 3rd Edition*. (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), p.339.

### **Criteria for evaluating cultural content in Foreign Language textbooks**

Byram et al. state that learners should be taught both taken-for-granted routine knowledge and conscious knowledge of the target culture. The aim of intercultural learning is that pupils would get alternative interpretations of the world and that they could compare their own culture with the foreign cultures. Pupils should get enough opportunities to analyze the complex values and meanings of the different cultures and be able to get to know e.g. literature, film, history and political parties of the target cultures<sup>19</sup>. According to Corbett learners may not want to adopt the practices or beliefs of the target culture, but they should be able to understand them if they want to achieve a high proficiency in the target language. In order to understand how a community uses language it is necessary to also understand the community.<sup>20</sup>

Byram et al. suggest the following eleven criteria for analyzing and evaluating the content of cultural learning. These criteria are thought to be a minimum content of cultural knowledge, which textbooks should also include<sup>21</sup>.

1. *Social identity and social groups*: groups within the nation-state, including social class, regional identity, ethnic minority and professional identity. These criteria are the basis for other than national identity and they illustrate the complexity of individual's social identities.
2. *Social interaction*: conventions of verbal and non-verbal behavior in social interaction.
3. *Belief and behavior*: routine and taken-for-granted actions within a social group (either national or sub-national). The moral and religious beliefs as well as the routines from daily life belong to this section.
4. *Socio-political institutions*: institutions of the state (e.g. health-care) and their meanings and values. How do they characterize the state and its citizens?
5. *Socialization and the life-cycle*: Institutions of socialization, e.g. families, schools, employment offices, religion and military service. What are the expectations and shared interpretations in these cases?

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<sup>19</sup> Byram, *op.cit.*, p.50.

<sup>20</sup> Corbett, *op.cit.*, p.19-20

<sup>21</sup> Byram, *op.cit.*, p. 51-52

6. *National history*: periods and events, both historical and contemporary. What is their significance in the material and for the learning process?
7. *National geography*: geographic factors. Which of them are significant for the members of the culture and which are important for outsiders in intercultural communication?
8. *National cultural heritage*: the cultural artefacts, which are known to the members of the nation, such as Shakespeare in Britain.
9. *Stereotypes and national identity*: what is typical for the target culture (both historical and contemporary)? Symbols of national identities, e.g. famous monuments and people.

Byram et al. do not, however, suggest that culture course should be history, sociology or geography course. What they want to achieve with their proposal is to increase understanding of importance of these factors when learning about a new culture. The image of particular culture has to be founded in the reality of contemporary life. These issues, however, can be presented in many different ways. The stories and images may be either fantastic or realistic when they just refer to reality. It is important that enough representations of a certain topic are given. Furthermore, Byram et al. are interested in whether the content provides the opportunity to promote intercultural learning.<sup>22</sup>

Risager (1991: 182-183, 188) has also created criteria, or categories, for evaluating cultural content in textbooks. Her four criteria are as follows :

1. The micro level-phenomena of social and cultural anthropology : the social and geographical characters, situations of interaction, interaction and the subjectivity of character: feelings, attitudes, values and perceived problems.
2. The macro level-social, political and historical matters: broad social facts about contemporary society, sociopolitical problems, e.g. unemployment and pollution.
3. International and intercultural issues: comparison between the target culture and the pupil's won country, mutual representations, images, stereotypes, relations, culture power and dominance, co-operation and conflict.

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<sup>22</sup> Byram, op.cit.,p 52-55.



4. Point of view style of textbook author : expression of attitude (positive, negative, critical) towards the country and the people.

For the purpose of analysis, the researcher take two of these criteria i.e. International and intercultural issues, and Point of view style of textbook author

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research used content analysis as a method of research. According to Klippendorf (2004: 18), content analysis provides new insights and increases the understanding of the studied phenomena. The data is selected textbook of *تعليم اللغة العربية*, ***Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Madrasah Aliyah Kelas X, XI, XII*** written by Dr. D. Hidayat, Published by PT Karya Toha Putra, Semarang Indonesia, 2013 and ***Pelajaran Bahasa Arab untuk SMA Kelas X, XI, XII*** written by **Darsono and Sururi Abdul Jalal**, published by Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2011. To achieve the goals of this research, the researcher analyzed the cultural content in the selected textbooks by using Byram (1994:51-52) and Risager (1994: 52-53) criteria (*Social identity and social groups, Social interaction, Belief and behavior, Socio-political institutions, Socialization and the life-cycle, National history, National geography, National cultural heritage, Stereotypes and national identity, International and intercultural issue, and Point of view and style of the textbook auhtor (s).*

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### ***f.1. Social Identity and social group :***

Based on the analysis, the researcher finds the author includes many names of *‘ulama-l-muslimin* e.g. Ar-Razi, Ibn Husyaim, Al-Bairuty, Ibnu Nufais (PBA XII, p.1) as social group in every unit/ *الدرس*. The name of *ulama* varies according to their expertise, e.g. on unit 3 the author inserts name of *Imamu-l-muhadditsin*—Al-Bukhari. Besides, the author inserts names of caliph or *khalifah* like Umar ibn Khattab. Caliph is a leader of an Islamic society, regarded as a successor of Muhammad and by tradition always male.

## f.2. Social Interaction

The researcher finds that every unit of the textbook consists of dialog or المحادثة أو الحوار which lead student to have understanding and take into practice communicating e.g. the *hiwâr* of two or three persons about something, introduction to each other and responses to many expression. On page 65 (BA XII p.65) for instance, the author includes the dialog or *hiwâr* between two people. The dialog leads student to know what to say and to response e.g. when they say أهلا وسهلا the response would be أهلا بك, while the expression شكرا the response would be عفوا and so forth. In addition, the author deeply presents in almost every unit examples and exercise how to use these *ahruf* i.e. الهمزة, هل أنت مدرس؟ and many other *asma'* like كيف, كم, ما, من and other *dhuruf* i.e. أين, متى, أي, حين, أيان, أي. The author also visualized some interaction in the textbook like viewed in the figure. For these reasons, the researcher conclude that the author considers including this aspect of culture—social interaction.



Figure : social interaction (B.A. XII)

## f.3. Believe and behavior

It is about believe and behavior which is taken-for-granted actions within a social group (either national or sub-national). The moral and religious beliefs as well as the routines from daily life belong to this section. Some aspects of culture i.e. believe included in the textbook like موسم الحج, or pilgrimage. This giant yearly event occurs in Makah as religious activity which is taken for granted as one of the *arkânu-l-Islam*. After analyzing the textbooks the author could not find consistence insertion in every unit. In addition, the author has also included various information and knowledge about

the religion of the Arabs e.g. Islam. Arab countries are religiously and ethnically diverse with Islam being the dominant religion in most countries. The Arab world stretches from Morocco across Northern Africa to the Persian Gulf. The Arab world is more or less equal to the area known as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Although this excludes Somalia, Djibouti, and the Comoros Islands which are part of the Arab world. For the detail the author include the maps of Arab (PBA X, p 4-5).

#### **f.4. National geography**

The author includes this content—national geography through either national map of Arab e.g. p.4-5 PBA XII or using expression in the sentences or *hiwar* like الرياض, ص. القاهرة, مكة, المدينة المنورة, 14 etc. The map of Arab like viewed below is one the example of national geography insertion into the textbooks.



Figure : Map of Arab inserted into the textbooks

It is inserted in almost every textbook for the different purpose e.g. PBA XII p. 17 the insertion of Arab map or خريطة to help student understand reading text ( الرحلة و الثقافة ) الإسلامية). Like in many other units, the author concerns very much to insert figure according to the context of texts and or topic of unit/درس.

Cities also get some attention in the textbooks e.g. Madinah al-Munawarah and Makah the most popular cities visited by muslim from all over the world. Other big cities mentioned are Egypt, Riyadh, Jiddah, and Mina (PB XI p. 14, 15 and 16)

#### **f.5. National cultural heritage**

The cultural artifact (known to the most of Arabian such as Abu Bakar As-Siddiq) found in the textbooks are presented in subunit/درس e.g. figure of المسجد النبوى , كبة

برج القاهرة, المطار الملك عبد العزيز , The learners get to know the great event of pilgrimage/ موسم الحج. Even it can be seen in every subunit of the selected textbooks.



Figure : Masjidil Haram and Masjid An-Nabawi

The learners also get to know Arabs civilization, past and the present e.g. text of الحضارة الإسلامية بين الأمس واليوم PBA XII, p 5. The author presents Arab (Islam) heritage—*holy Qur'an*, the holy book of muslims. In addition, they also find the ancient monument of Egyptian pyramids—huge structures built of brick or stone, some of which are among the world's largest constructions (PB XII, p.48)

#### **f.6. Stereotypes and national identity**

The author has also inserted stereotypes and national identity e.g. figure of Arabians with their casual and formal dress. Although it is not at all inserted in every subunit, but the author atleast has awareness to insert cultural content to the textbooks. On page 34 BA XI the student learn stereotype and national identity of Arabians.

#### **f.7. International and intercultural issues:**

Comparison between the target culture and the pupil's own country, mutual representations, images, stereotypes, relations, culture power and dominance, co-operation and conflict. The author present in their books some example of learners' culture e.g. in PBA XII p.55 and 39 it will be seen the figure of المطار سوكرنو هتي بجاكرنا. The insertion of local culture will have positive understanding to the comparison between target language culture and learners' one. The authors, in one hand, inserts the name of

Saudi Arabia Airport, المطار الملك عبد العزيز, and the other hand they insert the name of Indonesia's International Airport—Soekarn-Hatta. Thus, the researcher finds some intercultural understanding between the learners and the culture of target language.

#### **f.8. Point of view style of textbook author :**

expression of attitude (positive, negative, critical) towards the country and the people.

Almost all the selected textbooks for the purpose of this research concerns very much to the teaching of Islamic values i.e. building students' moral, character and religious understanding. The analysis focus on every text, story, dialog and language used in the selected textbooks. Having analyzed the entire texts of the selected textbooks, the researcher finds that authors are very concerns with student character and religious understanding e.g. the insertion of examples for language focus/Arabic grammar, on page 9 PBA XII the author presents Arabic grammar of المرفوع و المنصوب, look at the example below :

تحبين أن تتفكرى فى خلق الله  
الكسلاء لن ينجحوا فى أعمالهم  
إذا قرئ القرآن فاستمعوا له

The examples below shows that the author like to internalize Islamic values to the students through the teaching of Arabic.

Insertion on Arab Cultural Aspects:

| <b>Cultural Criteria</b>                      | <b>Picture</b> | <b>Writing</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Social identity and social groups</i>      | 12             | 8              |
| <i>Social interaction</i>                     | 7              | 18             |
| <i>Belief and behavior</i>                    | 5              | 8              |
| <i>National geography</i>                     | 5              | 6              |
| <i>National cultural heritage</i>             | 4              | 7              |
| <i>Stereotypes and national identity</i>      | 6              | 8              |
| <i>International and intercultural issues</i> | 3              | 10             |
| <i>Point of view style of textbook author</i> | 8              | 3              |

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis it can be concluded that (1) the authors have awareness to insert cultural elements into the textbook of textbook of *تعليم اللغة العربية , Pelajaran*

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