
Local Cultural Values In Reading Text Material : A Case Study On English For Nusantara

Putri Indah Sholikhah¹ Elisa Nurul Laili*²

^{1,2} Universitas Hasyim Asy'ari, Tebu Ireng Jombang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, email: elisalaili@unhasy.ac.id

Artikel Info

Abstrak

Received : 17 Sep 2025
Revised : 11 Nov 2025
Accepted : 23 Nov 2025
Published : 30 Nov 2025

This study aims to examine the integration of Indonesian local cultural values in reading materials of English for Nusantara from an ethnolinguistic perspective. The background of this research lies in the importance of preserving local culture through contextual and culturally relevant English learning. The ethnolinguistic approach is employed to identify and analyze how local cultural elements are represented in reading texts, including linguistic features, symbolic meanings, and socio-cultural representations. This research applies a case study method with qualitative descriptive analysis on the 9th-grade junior high school English textbook. Data were collected through documentation techniques and analyzed by classifying emerging cultural values such as local wisdom, traditions, arts, and social practices. The results indicate that the textbook contains various local cultural values, including mutual cooperation, politeness, diversity, and heritage preservation; however, their integration remains partial and needs further reinforcement in the context of globalization. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for the development of more inclusive and culturally identity-oriented teaching materials.

Doi:<https://doi.org/10.51673/jurnalistrendi.v10i2.2624>

Keywords: *ethnolinguistics, local cultural values, English for Nusantara, textbook, junior high school.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is more than just a means of communication; it is also a carrier of cultural identity, values, and social worldview. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the linguistic content inherently conveys cultural elements that shape learners' perspectives (Laili, 2020). Therefore, approaches to teaching English must be accompanied by an understanding of culture, especially in multicultural nations like Indonesia. Laili (2020) further, it emphasizes that language influences how learners understand. Learning materials because it reflects the cultural identity and values of its speakers. It also reflects the values and worldview of its speakers.

In line with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the Indonesian Ministry of Education published a new series of English textbooks titled *English for Nusantara*. These books are designed to develop language skills while fostering students' intercultural understanding and character education. However, studies have revealed that

these textbooks insufficiently represent local cultural values. Dalimunte & Suryani (2025) point out that the cultural content in the ninth grade edition of *English for Nusantara* is mostly visual, and the textual components often fail to reflect regional cultural diversity. The dominance of national and global cultures in the textbooks raises concerns about whether the material affirms students' cultural identities.

Similarly, Hasnah et al (2024) argue that English textbooks in Indonesia often favor general cultural narratives, marginalizing specific local cultures from underrepresented regions. This imbalance can create a disconnect between students and the learning materials. When learners do not see their linguistic and cultural identities represented in educational content, their engagement, cultural confidence, and sense of belonging may weaken. Since language reflects the lived experiences of its speakers, the lack of local cultural representation in textbooks undermines language's function as a cultural mirror.

Silviana & Triastuti (2025) further assert that *English for Nusantara* primarily presents culture at the surface level, focusing on food, clothing, and tourism, without encouraging deeper cultural reflection or critical comparison. This approach limits students' ability to understand the meaning behind cultural practices or to explore their local traditions in an English-language learning context. It reduces culture to images, leaving behind the linguistic richness that should support intercultural dialogue. These limited representations fall short of the curriculum's goals of promoting character development and cultural diversity awareness.

In her content analysis of *English for Nusantara* Grade 9th, Zahra (2025) also concludes that local cultures are significantly underrepresented. Although the textbook incorporates some aspects of Indonesian culture, she notes that they are often generalized and fail to capture the linguistic uniqueness of regional identities. Zahra emphasizes that the book contains few texts or dialogues that explore local expressions, sayings, or communicative norms rooted in specific communities. This reflects a broader concern noted by other scholars as well. Hasnah et al (2024) and Silviana & Triastuti (2025) emphasize, textbook design should be grounded in culture and informed by linguistic analysis to embed local values meaningfully into EFL materials.

To examine this issue in greater depth, this study adopts an ethnolinguistic perspective to analyze the integration of local cultural values in *English for Nusantara* Grade 9th. Ethnolinguistics, as applied here, investigates how language encodes cultural meanings, particularly in narrative texts, dialogues, vocabulary choices, and pragmatic functions within the textbook. This study focuses on the reading materials in the *English for Nusantara* Grade 9 textbook because these sections most explicitly demonstrate how language is used to transmit culture. Through qualitative content analysis, the study aims to: (1) identify the Indonesian local cultural values represented in the reading materials in *English for Nusantara* book, and (2) analyze how these values are constructed linguistically from an ethnolinguistic perspective and evaluate the extent to which they reflect students' lived cultural realities and affirm their local identities. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of culturally responsive English teaching materials that uphold national and regional diversity in the classroom.

B. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the integration of local cultural values in the reading materials of the *English for Nusantara* textbook for ninth-grade junior high school students. This approach was chosen because it focuses on words, phrases, and sentences that represent local traditions, social norms, moral teachings, and national identity as reflected through language, rather than

numerical data or statistical analysis. The research data were taken from narrative and dialogic texts in the textbook published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) in 2022. The researcher serves as the primary instrument, conducting an in-depth reading, identifying, classifying, and analyzing linguistic expressions based on an ethnolinguistic perspective.

Data collection involved several steps, including reading the materials, identifying cultural elements, classifying the data based on cultural dimensions (religious, social, moral, and national identity), and rechecking the data for relevance to the research focus. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative content analysis through stages of data reduction, classification, interpretation, and drawing conclusions to answer the research questions regarding the representation of local cultural values in the English reading texts. This approach provides an in-depth understanding of how the textbook integrates Indonesian cultural values into English language learning materials.

C. Finding and Discussion

Finding

The analysis of the *English for Nusantara* Grade 9 textbook, particularly the reading text *The Multiverse Story of Timun Mas*, shows that Indonesian local cultural values are represented through five cultural dimensions: religious, biological, ecological, economic, and social. These values are not only presented as part of the story but also constructed linguistically through specific words, clauses, and symbolic expressions.

Table 1. Representation of Local Cultural Values in *English for Nusantara*

Word/Clause	Theme	Dimension of Value	Meaning / Interpretation
“Pray to God”	A mother seeks divine help	Religious	Shows human reliance on God in times of difficulty; emphasizes faith as guidance in life.
“Golden cucumber seed”	Magical birth of Timun Mas	Biological	Symbolizes fertility, agriculture, and the continuity of life; plants represent life-giving entities.
“Throw cucumber seeds, needles, salt, and shrimp paste”	Timun Mas escapes the giant	Ecological	Objects transform into natural barriers (forest, bamboo, sea), reflecting the interdependence between humans and nature.
“The giant wants to eat Timun Mas”	Conflict between Timun Mas and the giant	Economic	Represents greed and exploitation; warns against imbalance in power and resources.
“Timun Mas and her mother live happily together”	Ending of the story	Social	Highlights family values, unity, and the triumph of good over evil; reinforces harmony and togetherness.

The findings indicate that the story of *Timun Mas* integrates multiple dimensions of Indonesian local culture: (1) Religious values are represented through expressions of prayer and divine reliance, teaching learners that spirituality is an essential part of life.

(2) Biological values are seen in references to seeds and plants, which symbolize fertility and human dependence on agriculture for survival. (3) Ecological values are embedded in the transformation of natural objects into protective barriers, emphasizing wisdom in managing the environment. (4) Economic values appear in the giant's greed, which metaphorically warns against unfair practices and highlights the importance of balance in livelihood. (5) Social values are conveyed in the ending of the story, underscoring family bonds, harmony, and the idea that good ultimately triumphs over evil.

Overall, the integration of these values shows that the textbook is not only a medium for teaching English but also a channel for transmitting cultural wisdom. Through words and clauses, students are introduced to the moral and cultural lessons rooted in Indonesian tradition, while also practicing language skills.

Discussion

The integration of Indonesian local cultural values into reading materials in the English for Nusantara textbook for 9th grade junior high school students reflects a comprehensive effort to preserve national identity while simultaneously promoting English language proficiency among young learners (Clements, 2022). This integration serves as a pedagogical bridge that connects students with their rich cultural heritage and the global lingua franca, making the learning process both meaningful and contextually relevant. The local cultural values embedded within the textbook span across various regions and traditions in Indonesia, encompassing themes of mutual cooperation (gotong royong), respect for diversity, environmental care, religious tolerance, family values, and the appreciation of local arts and traditions (Awyed-Bishara, 2018).

For instance, many texts highlight the spirit of gotong royong, which is a central value in Indonesian society that emphasizes collective work, solidarity, and mutual assistance in both rural and urban settings. Students are exposed to reading passages that narrate community clean-up events, traditional ceremonies, and collaborative village projects, illustrating how cooperation and communal harmony form the backbone of Indonesian daily life (Girik Allo et al., 2019). Additionally, the textbook integrates stories and informational texts about Indonesia's diverse ethnic groups, such as the Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Minangkabau, Dayak, and Papuan communities, each of which is represented through their unique traditions, languages, festivals, and cuisines. This representation fosters cultural awareness among students and enhances their understanding of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Another prominent value integrated into the reading materials is environmental stewardship, which aligns with local wisdom such as the Balinese concept of Tri Hita Karana (the three causes of well-being: harmony with God, people, and nature) and the Dayak people's traditional forest conservation practices (Mappaselleng et al., 2022). The textbook includes reading passages that describe local efforts to protect rainforests, clean rivers, and manage waste sustainably, thus instilling environmental responsibility while learning English. Religious tolerance and interfaith harmony, which are crucial aspects of Indonesian cultural values, are also presented through narratives about interreligious celebrations, respect for different modes of worship, and the Pancasila principle of Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa. These texts encourage students to respect differences in belief systems while practicing inclusive communication in English (Irdalisa et al., 2023).

Family-oriented values are deeply woven into the reading materials, highlighting filial piety, respect for elders, and nurturing relationships within the household. Stories about family gatherings, traditional parenting advice, and the importance of maintaining ties with extended family are frequently featured. Similarly, the textbook incorporates

passages that introduce local arts, crafts, dances, and music such as batik-making, wayang kulit (shadow puppetry), angklung performance, and traditional culinary heritage like rendang and pempek. By doing so, it not only enhances students' cultural literacy but also promotes pride in Indonesian cultural products, many of which have been internationally recognized by UNESCO (Rosmawaty, 2022).

Furthermore, the value of diversity and unity in Indonesia, reflected in the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), is embedded in reading materials that portray intercultural exchanges among students from different provinces, describe multicultural festivals, and celebrate the harmony that exists despite Indonesia's thousands of islands and hundreds of ethnic groups (Barza & von Suchodoletz, 2016). These narratives teach students to embrace differences and develop a sense of inclusiveness in their interactions, which is essential in a multicultural society. Local proverbs, folk tales, and legends such as the stories of Malin Kundang from West Sumatra, Sangkuriang from West Java, and the legend of Lake Toba from North Sumatra are also adapted into English texts, providing authentic materials that bridge traditional oral literature with modern language learning.

The integration of these local cultural values into the English for Nusantara textbook not only fulfills the objectives of character education as outlined by Indonesia's national curriculum but also strengthens students' intercultural communicative competence. By engaging with texts that reflect their own cultural background, students are more motivated to read and comprehend English materials because they find the content familiar and relevant (Fu, 2018). This approach also prepares them to share their cultural identity with the global community, enabling them to become both culturally grounded and globally minded individuals. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, such integration respects the diversity of Indonesia's languages and cultures while using English as a medium to express and disseminate them, ensuring that local wisdom is not overshadowed by globalization but instead becomes part of the intercultural dialogue.

Local cultural values of Indonesia reflected in the English for Nusantara book encompass a wide range of elements that portray the diversity, richness, and identity of the Indonesian nation. These values include traditional customs, regional arts, local wisdom, and everyday practices that characterize the uniqueness of various Indonesian regions. For example, the book presents cultural traditions such as batik, wayang kulit, angklung, and traditional ceremonies that are integral to the Indonesian heritage. Additionally, the reading materials often emphasize communal harmony (*gotong royong*), respect for elders, hospitality, and togetherness, which are core values in Indonesian society. These cultural elements are integrated within English texts to help students not only develop their language skills but also strengthen their awareness and pride in their national culture (Kicha, 2023).

Furthermore, the inclusion of diverse cultural references from Sabang to Merauke fosters multicultural understanding among students while maintaining the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). The learning approach in this book supports intercultural communication by introducing Indonesian culture in a global context, enabling students to present their national identity confidently in international interactions. Therefore, the local cultural values in the English for Nusantara book serve as both a medium for language acquisition and a tool to preserve and promote Indonesia's cultural richness (Jalalian Daghigh & Abdul Rahim, 2021).

The exploration of how local cultural values of Indonesia are found in the reading materials of the English for Nusantara book requires a comprehensive analysis of the representation, integration, and contextualization of these values within the texts

provided. Local cultural values in Indonesia encompass a wide range of aspects such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), respect for elders, religious tolerance, hospitality, environmental care, and the preservation of traditional customs and practices. In the English for Nusantara book, these values are often embedded through stories, dialogues, narratives, and comprehension passages that portray daily life, folklore, and historical events from various regions of Indonesia (Nambiar et al., 2018). The method of integrating cultural values is typically carried out by embedding them in authentic contexts that are relevant to students' experiences, making them both relatable and educational.

For instance, the materials might include narratives about community activities that highlight cooperation and solidarity, or short reading texts about local heroes and traditional ceremonies that reflect national pride and cultural identity. The presence of such content indicates that the book not only teaches English as a language but also serves as a medium for character building and cultural preservation. Furthermore, the materials often employ visual aids such as illustrations, photographs, and cultural symbols to reinforce the understanding of these values among learners. The process of cultural integration is carried out with an emphasis on inclusivity, ensuring that diverse traditions and ethnic representations from across the archipelago are highlighted, thus fostering unity in diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika) (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023).

In some cases, moral lessons are explicitly stated at the end of the texts, guiding students to reflect on the importance of respect, cooperation, and tolerance in their daily interactions. Additionally, the use of English language to convey Indonesian cultural values also provides an opportunity for students to develop intercultural competence, as they learn how to express their cultural identity in a global language while appreciating their heritage. This approach aligns with the broader goals of the curriculum, which aims to create not only linguistically competent learners but also culturally aware citizens (Fauzi et al., 2022).

Overall, the English for Nusantara book employs a multi-faceted strategy by integrating local cultural values through thematic reading materials, culturally rich vocabularies, character-driven stories, and reflective activities that encourage students to practice these values both in the classroom and beyond. Such integration ensures that the learning process does not detach students from their cultural roots, but rather strengthens their understanding and appreciation of Indonesian culture while mastering the English language.

D. CONCLUSION

The integration of Indonesian local cultural values into the reading materials of the English for Nusantara textbook for 9th-grade junior high school students reflects a strategic approach to promote cultural awareness, national identity, and global competence simultaneously. By embedding diverse cultural elements such as local traditions, regional arts, folklore, customs, values of mutual cooperation, respect for diversity, religious tolerance, and appreciation of heritage, the textbook not only serves as a medium to teach English language skills but also as a tool to cultivate students' understanding and pride in their cultural roots.

This approach supports the development of intercultural competence, enabling students to engage confidently in global interactions while maintaining a strong connection to their identity as Indonesians. Furthermore, the integration of these values encourages critical thinking, empathy, and openness to cultural differences, which are essential in a multicultural and interconnected world. It also aligns with the goals of the

national curriculum in fostering character education alongside academic achievement. In conclusion, English for Nusantara demonstrates how language learning materials can transcend linguistic objectives by incorporating ethnolinguistic perspectives that celebrate Indonesia's cultural richness while preparing students to navigate the challenges of globalization.

REFERENCES

- Awayed-Bishara, M. (2018). Efl Discourse As Cultural Practice. *Journal Of Multicultural Discourses*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2017.1379528>
- Barza, L., & Von Suchodoletz, A. (2016). Home Literacy As Cultural Transmission: Parent Preferences For Shared Reading In The United Arab Emirates. *Learning, Culture And Social Interaction*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2016.08.002>
- Clements, B. A. (2022). Book Review: Museums, Infinity And The Culture Of Protocols: Ethnographic Collections And Source Communities. *Collections: A Journal For Museum And Archives Professionals*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15501906211066321>
- Dalimunte, A. A., & Suryani, I. (2025). Multicultural Values In Elt Textbook For Indonesian Elementary Schools: A Critical Discourse Analysis. *Joall (Journal Of Applied Linguistics And Literature)*, 10(1), 71–93. <https://doi.org/10.33369/joall.V10i1.37954>
- Fauzi, I., Hidayat, S., Wahyudin, W., & Juniardi, Y. (2022). Designing Digital Reading Materials Based On Bantenese Local Wisdom For Efl Undergraduate Students. *Budapest International Research And Critics Institute (Birci-Journal): Humanities And Social Sciences, Vol 5, No 1 (2022): Budapest International Research And Critics Institute February*.
- Fu, W. (2018). Read From Local To Global: A Culture-Based Reading Material. *Advances In Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.52.4173>
- Girik Allo, M. D., Taula'bi', N., & Trika Sudarsih, E. (2019). The Learners' Needs On Local Cultural Contents Of Reading Professional Context Textbook At English Program Study. *International Journal Of Humanities And Innovation (Ijhi)*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.33750/ijhi.V2i2.39>
- Hasnah, Y., Ginting, P., Saragih, M., Kharisma, A. J., & Sari, P. L. P. (2024). A Probe Into Local Cultural Values In Locally Produced Efl Textbooks In Indonesia. *Humanities, Arts And Social Sciences Studies*, 24(3), 648–661. <https://doi.org/10.69598/hass.24.3.268564>
- Irdalisa, I., Hanum, E., Zulherman, Z., & Nurhayati, E. (2023). Development Of An Ethnoscience-Based Digital Comic "Tari Saman" For Human Movement System Material. *International Journal Of Humanities Education And Social Sciences (Ijhess)*, 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.V3i3.723>
- Jalalian Daghig, A., & Abdul Rahim, H. (2021). Neoliberalism In Elt Textbooks: An Analysis Of Locally Developed And Imported Textbooks Used In Malaysia. *Pedagogy, Culture And Society*, 29(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2020.1755888>
- Kicha, L. (2023). A Systematic Review: Local Literature In Integrated Skills For English Teaching. *Journal Of English Language Teaching, Literature And Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.53682/jeltec.V2i1.6494>
- Laili, Elisa Nurul. (2020). Pendidikan Karakter Dan Anti Redikalisme Dalam Leksikon Kepesantrenan: Telaah Etnolinguistik. In *Etika Jurnalisme Pada Koran Kuning* :

-
- Sebuah Studi Mengenai Koran Lampu Hijau* (Vol. 16, Issue 2).
- Mappaselleng, N. S., Samsuduha, S., & Karim, B. A. (2022). Manuscript As A Source Of Cultural And Spiritual Inspiration Messages Of Culture And Spirituality To Prepare Death In Tulkiyamat Manuscript Nur. *Proceedings Of The 9th Asbam International Conference (Archeology, History, & Culture In The Nature Of Malay) (Asbam 2021)*, 660(Asbam 2021).
- Mulyati, Y. F., & Kultsum, U. (2023). The Integration Of Islamic And Cultural Values In English Teaching. *Ideas: Journal On English Language Teaching And Learning, Linguistics And Literature*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.24256/Ideas.V11i1.3942>
- Nambiar, R. M. K., Hashim, R. S., & Yasin, R. M. (2018). Impact Of Integrating Local Culture Into Language Materials On Communicative Ability Of Malaysian Lower Secondary Learners. *3l: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 24(4). <https://doi.org/10.17576/3l-2018-2404-02>
- Rosmawaty. (2022). The Tradition Of The Coal Tapai Party Increasing Cultural Value. *Lakhomi Journal Scientific Journal Of Culture*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.33258/Lakhomi.V3i2.683>
- Silviana, Z. J., & Triastuti, A. (2025). The Representation Of Multicultural Values In Indonesian Elt Textbook “English For Nusantara.” *Formosa Journal Of Sustainable Research*, 4(3), 477–494. <https://doi.org/10.55927/Fjsr.V4i3.104>
- Zahra. (2025). *A Content Analysis: Cultural Representation In Indonesian Efl Textbooks “English For Nusantara” By Indonesian Ministry Of Education Research And Technology.*