

Between National Identity and Global Mindset: A Cross-Grade Cultural Analysis in Indonesia's State-Endorsed English Textbooks

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Abstract. The present study examined three English coursebooks published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT) for Grades 6, 9, and 12 in 2022. Using a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, cultural occurrences were coded with Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework, and the official documents were analyzed using directed content analysis to interpret and explain the identified cultural patterns. The result found that the source (Indonesian) culture dominated every coursebook, accounting for 97.5% of content in Grade 6, 90% in Grade 9, and 70% in Grade 12. Although the inclusion of target and international cultures increased with grade level, their representation remained limited. Target culture rose from 0% in Grade 6 to 3% in Grade 9 to 19% in Grade 12, and international culture from 2.5% to 7% to 11%. The document analysis showed that this source-culture dominance aligned with the *Merdeka* curriculum's emphasis on preserving national identity and local culture. On the other hand, the absence of target culture at the primary level and the scarcity of both target and international cultures across all three grades contradicted the curriculum's stated objective of developing a global mindset and intercultural competence. The study offers the first cross-grade comparison of cultural representation within a single Indonesian curriculum and recommends a meaningful increase in the inclusion of content on target and international cultures in future state-endorsed English coursebooks in Indonesia.

Keywords: Cultural representation; Coursebook analysis; Intercultural competence; English Textbook

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Introduction

The role of culture in English language teaching has become increasingly important as English is now more frequently used between non-native speakers than between native speakers (Patel, Solly, & Copeland, 2020; Rose, McKinley, & Galloway, 2021). In multicultural settings, learners require not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to navigate cultural differences. This need arises from the English language's plurilingual status, in which it is no longer associated exclusively with any single nation. Although English's global spread is historically linked to British colonization (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008) and the economic, cultural and political influence of the United States (Crystal, 2009), non-native speakers now make up the majority of its users (Graddol, 1997; McKay, 2004). As a result, English functions as a lingua franca that connects people who share neither a first language nor the same beliefs, values, and customs (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Mauranen, 2009).

Globalization has further accelerated this phenomenon by bringing diverse cultures into contact across every aspect of life (Sharifian, 2013), and the internet and social media have played a significant role in this process by serving as catalysts for intercultural communication (Chen, 2012). Digital platforms have enabled individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect and exchange ideas in real time. This, at the same time, has created unprecedented opportunities for cross-cultural engagement to take place on a scale previously impossible. For English learners, this means that English is increasingly encountered through a globalized digital environment (Hidayat, Lee, Mason, & Khaerudin, 2022) that exposes them to a wide range of cultures of English speakers. For English education, the practical implication is clear. Learners must encounter varied cultural norms in their teaching materials (Haerazi & Nunez, 2021), which makes selecting which cultures to include and omit in coursebooks consequential.

Against this backdrop, recent years have seen a notable increase in research on incorporating cultural content into English coursebooks. A consistent finding across this literature is that locally produced EFL coursebooks privilege source (local) culture over target and international cultures. For example, Toledo-Sandoval (2020) found that Chilean primary coursebooks were dominated by local references at the expense of target and international cultures, while Ho (2022) reported similar source-culture dominance in Vietnamese ELT materials. Other studies by Gheitasi, Aliakbari, and Khany (2022) and Aoumeur and Ziani (2022) also yielded the same result in Iranian and Algerian state-produced textbooks. Taken together, these studies suggest that source-culture dominance is a widespread phenomenon in locally produced materials.

In Indonesia, research on cultural representation in EFL coursebooks has largely focused on the country's state-endorsed electronic schoolbooks, known as *Buku Sekolah Elektronik* (hereafter BSE). BSE refers to a collection of free digital textbooks developed and distributed by the Indonesian government to support teaching and learning across school subjects, including English. Several versions of these books exist, as some were produced under the 2013 curriculum, while the more recent ones were developed under the current *Merdeka* curriculum. The existing studies, however, mainly focused on single grade levels or individual textbooks, whether at primary (Aufa & Pusparini, 2024; Mustapidaturrohman, Degeng, & Perdhani, 2022), junior secondary (Santosa, 2015), or senior secondary

level (Ariawan, Nurkamto, & Sumardi, 2022; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). Although these studies offered important findings, none of them examined cultural representation across primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education, nor did they closely examine the curriculum and policy decisions that shape these cultural patterns. This leaves a gap in the literature, as it remains unclear whether the balance among source, target, and international cultures shifts as students move through the education system, and whether the patterns found in the coursebooks reflect the curriculum's intentions.

Addressing this gap is important, especially as the *Merdeka* curriculum currently guides state-published English materials in Indonesia. The curriculum requires English education to both strengthen students' national identity and develop a global mindset (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, 2022a). However, the extent to which these aims are reflected in classroom materials has not been empirically studied. This study therefore analyses three Indonesian state-endorsed English coursebooks from three educational levels, along with the curriculum documents that inform them. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the selected English coursebooks incorporate diverse types of cultural information?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the portrayal of the types of cultural information across the selected coursebooks?
3. What are the underlying reasons for the portrayal of cultures as identified in the coursebook analysis?

By comparing three English coursebooks within a single curriculum, this study is the first to compare how cultures are represented across grade levels in Indonesia. Unlike earlier research, which rarely explains why textbooks focus on local culture, this study links this pattern to the official documents underpinning these materials.

Literature Review

Teaching culture in EFL classrooms

It is widely agreed that language and culture are inseparable, with language reflecting a community's values, norms, beliefs, and traditions and serving as the medium through which cultural heritage is expressed and preserved (Kramsch, 1993). This interconnection between language and culture has led to a significant shift in the objectives of English language teaching. In EFL contexts, the learning goal is no longer to assimilate learners into native-speaker norms but to develop intercultural competence, which is commonly understood as the capacity to communicate across cultural differences (Haerazi & Nunez, 2021). Equipping learners with this competence has accordingly become central to EFL pedagogy. Empirical studies have reinforced this shift. Liu and Fang (2017) found that Chinese university students regarded intercultural competence as essential for the multicultural environments they expected to enter upon graduation, while Tran and Duong (2018) demonstrated that explicit intercultural instruction helps learners "bridge cultural differences and achieve more harmonious, productive relations" (p.1). Similar perspectives have also been observed among Indonesian tertiary students (Morganna, Sumardi, and Tarjana, 2020). These recent perspectives build on earlier arguments that cultures and intercultural competence are central parts of

language education. As Byram (2008, 2021) and Hilliard (2014) explain, a language cannot be taught without also teaching its culture. As for English, this means preparing learners to communicate with people from many different cultural backgrounds. In the classroom, culture is most often taught through coursebooks, which remain the primary means by which it is presented to students.

Coursebooks as a Key Medium for Teaching Culture

Coursebooks play an indispensable role in EFL education by serving as cornerstones of language learning and classroom instruction. As far as teaching culture is concerned, EFL coursebooks play a multifaceted role. They are not only able to incorporate cultural elements into texts and visuals (Prihatiningsih, Petrus, & Silvhiyany, 2021) but also equip teachers with invaluable "cultural input to teaching" (Risager, 1998, p. 53). Acting as the "visible heart" of the classroom's cultural program (Sheldon, 1988, p. 237), EFL coursebooks provide essential guidance for both teachers and learners throughout the teaching and learning journey. By presenting authentic materials, EFL coursebooks expose learners to meaningful learning experiences that can, in turn, familiarize them with cultural meanings and enhance their understanding of different cultures and how to appreciate them (Kramsch, 1993; Putra, Rochsantiningih, & Supriyadi, 2020). For this reason, incorporating cultural elements into EFL coursebooks is deemed imperative (Munandar & Newton, 2021; Rohmani & Andriyanti, 2022). Empirical studies have demonstrated the extent to which coursebooks shape classroom practice. For example, research in Chile and Indonesia has shown that teachers tend to follow the cultural content of state-sanctioned or locally produced textbooks closely, with limited supplementation (Ariawan, Nurkamto, & Sumardi, 2022; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020). Owing to the vital role coursebooks have in classroom instruction and the close reliance both teachers and learners place on them, coursebooks undeniably serve as a key medium for introducing and teaching cultures. The cultural content the coursebooks represent, therefore, significantly shapes how EFL learners come to learn and understand both their own and other cultures as they learn the language.

Cultural Categories and the Inclusion of Local Culture in EFL Coursebooks

As outlined by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), cultures in EFL classrooms are classified into three categories based on their place of origin. These include source cultures, which refer to learners' cultures; target cultures, which are cultures where the target language is spoken as a first language; and international cultures, which refer to cultures that do not belong to either the source or the target. To illustrate, for an Indonesian student learning English as a foreign language, Indonesian culture will be his source culture, and American and Malaysian cultures will be his target and international cultures, respectively. This framework has been widely utilized, and recent textbook analyses continue to organize their findings using these three categories (Aufa & Pusparini, 2024; Ho, 2022; Mustapidaturrohman et al., 2022; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020; Zhang & Su, 2021).

Integrating cultures in the EFL coursebook, however, is not without challenges. One of the main concerns frequently raised revolves around the dilemma of determining which and whose culture we need to select and present to students. Traditionally, teaching cultures in EFL classrooms has been guided by the old belief that students need to be exclusively exposed to the target-language

cultures (Dürmüller, 2008). Hence, EFL coursebooks were traditionally associated with cultures from English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia (Liu, Zhang, & May, 2022; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). It was customary for English coursebooks to feature distinctive cultural events specific to these countries, including but not limited to Thanksgiving, Cinco de Mayo, and Halloween. While exposing students to such cultural information may enhance their cultural knowledge, an exclusive emphasis on the target-language culture can be problematic. These practices can hinder students' learning about and understanding of cultural diversity. In support of this view, Song (2013) argues that the constant and exclusive use of Native English-speaking cultures in EFL coursebooks will promote a biased cultural perspective among learners, which can lead them to favor the norms of native English speakers in ways that undermine their own cultures.

In response to this concern, a noticeable shift has emerged over recent decades that challenges the prevailing dominance of native-speaker norms in English language teaching (Modiano, 2001). This shift is also accompanied by a growing demand to revise cultural preferences depicted and ingrained within coursebooks and to incorporate more diverse cultural representations (Jenkins, 2014; Nguyen, 2011; Tien, 2023). Emphasis has been placed on integrating students' source cultures, based on the belief that including local culture in textbooks is conducive to students' classroom engagements by making learning materials more relevant to and resonating more closely with their lived experiences (Parlindungan, Rifai, & Safriani, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2003). The inclusion of local culture is also posited to enhance students' comprehension of the target language, particularly in the development of reading skills (Andersson & Barnitz, 1984). Given the status of English as a global lingua franca, it is imperative to also incorporate international cultures into EFL coursebooks. The incorporation of cultures from diverse nations is particularly essential in EFL contexts, where students are more likely to travel to other EFL countries and to interact with non-native speakers than with native speakers (Ho, 2022; Nguyen, Marlina, & Cao, 2021).

Method

The Nature of the Research

The present study adopted a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), which combined a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative document analysis. This design was deemed appropriate because the study's questions address two distinct yet complementary types of inquiry. Research questions 1 and 2 are quantitative and focus on identifying the extent to which each cultural category is represented in the selected coursebooks, as well as revealing how the distribution of the identified cultural occurrences differs across educational levels. Research question 3, on the other hand, is qualitative and attempts to identify the possible rationale for the identified cultural distributions. The questions were answered sequentially: questions 1 and 2 were addressed before the current study proceeded to research question 3.

The Selection of English Coursebooks and Policy Documents

The present study opted for state-endorsed coursebooks, or BSE published by the MoECRT of Indonesia, for the quantitative analysis stage. The study selected the latest version of the BSE coursebooks, published in 2022, for two reasons. First, they are state-endorsed and freely distributed English material in Indonesia. Therefore, they are among the most widely used textbooks in schools across the country. Second, these latest versions of the BSE coursebooks were developed under the current *Merdeka* curriculum framework, making them the most policy-aligned English materials available in Indonesia.

The present study focused on coursebooks specifically used for 6th-, 9th-, and 12th-grade students. The grade levels were selected because they represent the final years of each stage of schooling in Indonesia. The final-year grades were selected because the current study is based on the belief that students at this educational level have accumulated cultural exposure that previous grades provide, and thus make the current study able to track how cultural themes might expand or change as students progress through their education. Details of the selected coursebook are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Overview of the Selected Coursebooks

No.	Book Title	Grade Level	Publisher	Publication Year
1.	My Next Words	6 th Grade	MoECRT Indonesia	2022
2.	English for Nusantara	9 th Grade	MoECRT Indonesia	2022
3.	Bahasa Inggris: Life Today	12 th Grade	MoECRT Indonesia	2022

The present study selected two policy documents for the qualitative stage. The first document is the *Merdeka* curriculum policy, specifically the *Capaian Pembelajaran pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar, dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah pada Kurikulum Merdeka* (Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood, Basic, and Secondary Education in the Merdeka Curriculum), hereafter referred to as the CP document. This document was selected because it articulates the operational learning objectives for English education at each level of schooling in Indonesia. The second policy document analyzed in this study is the *Dimensi, Elemen, dan Subelemen Profil Pelajar Pancasila pada Kurikulum Merdeka* (Dimensions, Elements, and Sub-elements of the *Pancasila* Student Profile in the *Merdeka* Curriculum), hereafter referred to as the PPP document. This document was chosen because it highlights the philosophical foundation that underpins the *Merdeka* curriculum across all subjects, including English in Indonesia. Together, these two documents represent the framework for educational policy in Indonesia under which the selected coursebooks were developed.

Data Collection

To answer research questions 1 and 2, the current study gathered data from various coursebook sources, including texts, dialogue scripts, quotations, and visual materials such as pictures, comic strips, and illustrations. Front matter and back matter, such as contents pages, answer keys, and references, were excluded. For the subsequent qualitative stage, data were drawn from the CP and PPP documents.

Data Analysis

This study employed the framework developed by Cortazzi & Jin (1999) to address research question 1. The framework classifies cultural information into three different types: source, target, and international cultures. Each cultural occurrence identified in the coursebooks was coded into one of these three categories. These data were subsequently converted into numerical format and tabulated into percentages based on predefined cultural information categories. Typically, a single instance of the text, a dialogue script, a set of comic strips, or a set of pictures representing a single type of cultural information is counted as one occurrence or recording unit of cultural representation. For instance, if a text discusses Indonesia's most dangerous animal and includes an accompanying illustration, these sources are treated as one cultural appearance. However, if a text compares food in Indonesia and America, it is recorded as two cultural appearances: one for the source culture and one for the target culture. In addressing research question 2, the study analyzed and compared numerical and percentage data on cultural content across the three selected coursebooks to identify differences and similarities in their portrayals of cultures.

To answer research question 3, the CP and PPP documents were examined through document analysis. The analysis used a directed content analysis approach, enabling the current study to read the documents according to the preselected categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach was deemed appropriate, as the current study sought to explain the identified cultural occurrences in light of the stated goals of English education at each predefined grade in Indonesia. By examining the pedagogical objectives and ideological goals set out in the selected official documents, the study analyzed how current national policies shape the representation of culture in ELT materials.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was addressed in both the quantitative and qualitative stages by following Nowell et al.'s (2017) guidance. In the quantitative stage, the categories and decision rules were first tested on the opening chapter of each selected coursebook. Afterward, a second coder, an experienced English lecturer, recoded all cultural occurrences across the three coursebooks to maintain consistency. Following O'Connor and Joffe (2020), any disagreements that arose during the coursebook analysis were resolved through discussion. In the qualitative stage, the study used official, publicly available policy documents, applied the predetermined categories transparently, and kept the interpretation closely tied to the patterns identified in the quantitative stage to maintain trustworthiness.

Findings and Discussion

Cultural Representation in the Grade 6 Coursebook

The analysis of the English coursebook for sixth grade revealed a notable finding concerning cultural representations. Among the 80 cultural occurrences identified, approximately 97.5% were dedicated to the source culture, with 78 instances reflecting Indonesian culture. In comparison, only 2.5% of the representations, or two occurrences, pertained to international culture. Notably, there were no cultural depictions associated with target cultures (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Cultural Representations in the English Coursebook for Sixth Grade



Instances of source cultures appeared in all 11 chapters of the 6th-grade coursebook. Examples of local cultural inclusion in the coursebook included the use of Indonesian-sounding names such as Made, Retno, Cici, and Neneng; the incorporation of texts about tourist spots in Indonesia; depictions of Indonesian local dances; and representations of distinctive Indonesian school uniforms.

Figure 2. Indonesian uniforms, names, and tourist spots in the sixth-grade coursebook



The prevalent inclusion of local culture is likely to facilitate positive classroom activities to take place. It is argued that employing language-learning materials that are relevant and relatable to students will provide them with a more engaging and meaningful language learning experience (Morganna et al., 2020). Incorporating local cultures into EFL classrooms is not a novel concept in English

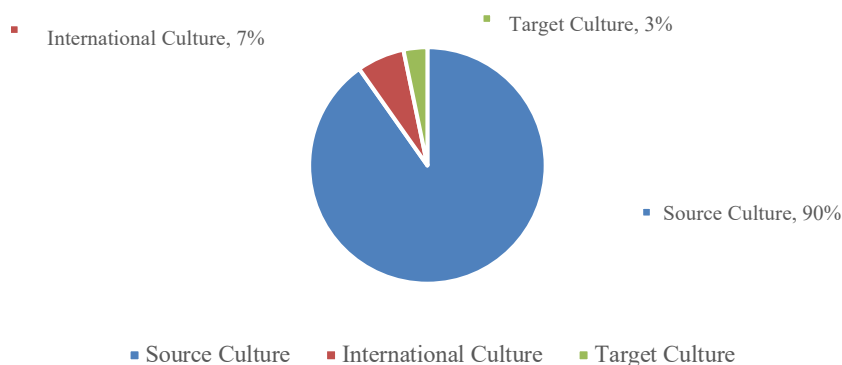
education. Culture and language are inseparable (Kramsch, 1998), and material that connects to learners' own experiences enhances their motivation (Keller, 1987). Building on these principles, incorporating local cultures alongside others in EFL classrooms and materials is considered crucial because it can enrich students' language-learning experiences, increase their awareness of cultural differences, and foster a sense of connection that allows them to relate their experiences to classroom materials (Ratri et al., 2025; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020).

The representation of international cultures, by contrast, was limited to only two instances across the eleven chapters of the book. International cultures in the selected sixth-grade textbook included brief references to those of South America, France, and Saudi Arabia. These cultural representations, however, were superficial, as they merely listed countries' names and depicted a few popular landmarks. This approach arguably falls short of enabling interactive opportunities for both teachers and students to engage in insightful cultural learning. Such brief references to cultural information not only lack context and depth but are also unlikely to provide students with an accurate and meaningful understanding of culture (Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012). Even more disconcerting is the complete omission of the target language culture from the book. There is no trace of the cultures of English-speaking countries identified across the pages. The dominance of source cultures and the provision of little to no space for other cultures in English coursebooks for young learners in primary grades has also been observed in previous studies (see, for example, Maulana & Singh, 2026; Mustapidaturrohman et al., 2022). This omission may suggest that the coursebook's authors fail to recognize the importance of including English-speaking cultures for EFL learners. From the perspective of intercultural competence, this is important because such a pattern of cultural inclusion may put learners at risk of having few opportunities to compare their own cultural practices with those of English-speaking communities, which is a key part of learning to engage with cultural differences (Byram, 2008).

Cultural Representation in the Grade 9 Coursebook

The coursebook analysis of English for Nusantara for grade 9 highlighted the significant variety of cultural representations. Local or source cultures collectively accounted for 90% of cultural representations, with 83 instances across six chapters. In contrast, international and target cultures were minimally represented,

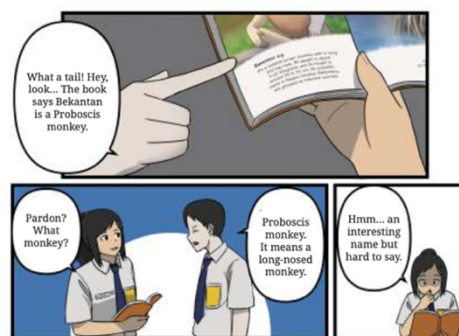
Figure 3 Cultural Representations in the English Coursebook for Ninth Grade



making up only 7% (6 appearances) and 3% (3 appearances) of the cultural content, respectively. The figure below illustrates the result of the analysis.

The cultural representation analysis of the selected Grade 9 coursebook revealed a striking predominance of local cultural depictions. Extensive use of Indonesian cultural elements was evident throughout the book, both in the text and in the visuals. On pages 25-29, for instance, the coursebook employed a comic strip as a pedagogical tool to introduce proboscis monkeys as native to Indonesia. What is interesting about this comic is the use of *Bekantan* as the Indonesian word for the monkey, as shown in Figure 4. The inclusion of Indonesian words alongside their English equivalents arguably aims to improve Indonesian learners' linguistic proficiency by expanding their conceptual understanding of the English word. In addition, the use of the word *Bekantan* appears to convey cultural relevance. It fosters a sense of connection, which allows Indonesian learners to link English words to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Figure 4 "Bekantan" and its English equivalent in the ninth-grade textbook

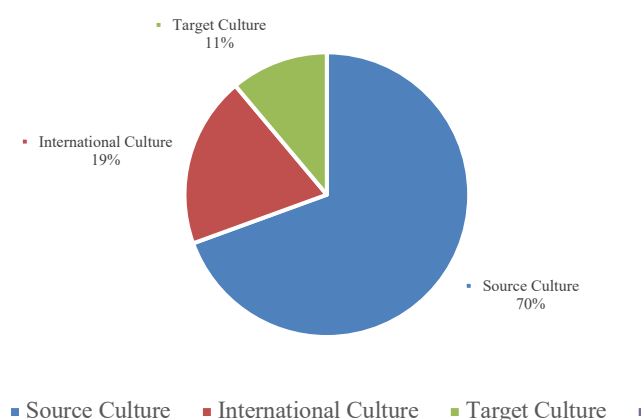


Despite the abundant depiction of the source culture, the portrayal of the target culture in the book was comparatively limited, with only 3 instances observed. Eastern Australia, for example, was briefly mentioned in one of the textbook's chapters. Some pages also provided Indonesian learners with information on philanthropic traditions in the United Kingdom and on a famous figure from the United States. International cultures faced a similar limitation, with only 6 instances distributed throughout the textbook. Instances of international cultures in the coursebooks appeared mainly through references to the origin of animals, for example, Africa as the natural habitat of gorillas. The representations also included brief facts about other countries, such as the Arabic origin of the word "bazaar" and the early use of snorkels by sponge farmers on the Greek island of Crete.

Cultural Representation in the Grade 12 Coursebook

The analysis of the coursebook identified 36 instances of cultural representation, with a predominant focus on local cultures. Local cultures were represented 25 times, accounting for 70% of all cultural representations. In comparison, depictions of target cultures were relatively limited, comprising only 7 instances and accounting for 19% of the total cultural content. International cultures were even less featured, with only four occurrences, representing 11% of the total cultural instances. The outcomes of the analysis are summarized in the following figure.

Figure 5 Cultural Representatio in the English Coursebook for Twelfth Grade



The incorporation of local culture in the selected 12th-grade EFL coursebook was evident in the inclusion of 25 cultural references. The utilization of Indonesian-sounding names was prevalent throughout dialogues, short texts, sentences, examples, and exercise questions, with characters consistently given names such as Siti, Jihan, and Ilyas. The use of local names appears to be a powerful linguistic tool for representing the identity of the Indonesian people. Indonesian students using the book as their learning material are expected not only to acquire linguistic knowledge and improve their language proficiency but also to relate personally to the content and to cultivate cultural pride and awareness. The act of instilling Indonesian culture was also achieved through visual depictions, such as the portrayal of Indonesian school uniforms. Similar to the use of Indonesian-sounding names, the portrayal of local uniforms is likely to be driven by the intention to provide Indonesian students with relatable content.

The target and international cultures in the coursebook, however, were underrepresented for 12th-grade students. With only seven cultural instances scattered throughout the book, it is obvious that the target culture was allocated a rather limited space. Even more minimal was the inclusion of international cultures, which appeared only four times in the analysis. Despite the limited representation, the topics of target and international cultures utilized in the book were diverse. One illustrative example appeared on page 57, where the book profiled a renowned figure from the USA, Laszlo Hanyecz. This inclusion is

potentially carried out to serve a twofold purpose: to offer cultural insights into a prominent personality from an English-speaking country and to broaden Indonesian learners' general knowledge.

Figure 6. Screenshot of a book page depicting a renowned figure from an English-speaking Country



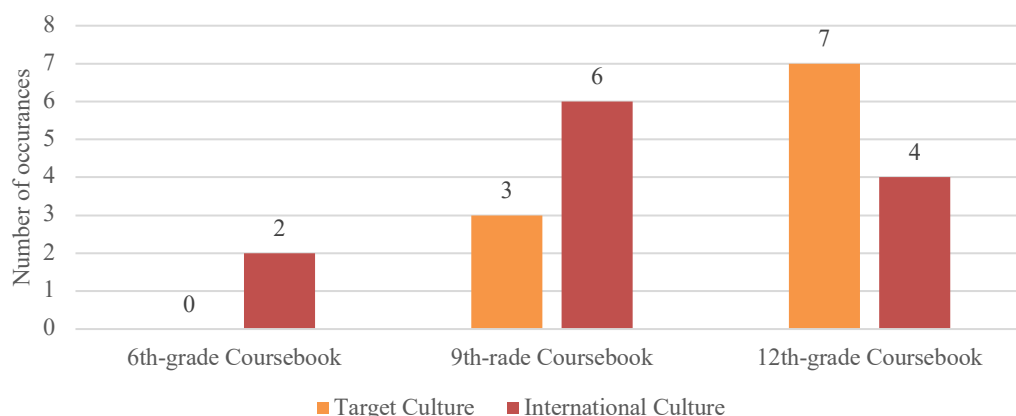
On another occasion, the inclusion of the target culture was done by featuring perspectives from professors or academics from English-speaking countries, such as the United States. On page 94, for example, an opinion from a university professor was featured to provide insight into a cashless society. Regarding international culture, representation was achieved by presenting information about influential figures from diverse countries, such as Malawi, and by describing societal conditions in places like Singapore and the Netherlands, particularly in relation to teenagers' internet use.

Similarities and Differences in Cultural Portrayals Across the Selected Coursebooks

A notable similarity in the cultural representation across the three selected coursebooks is the consistent emphasis on Indonesian culture. The allocation of local cultures across the selected coursebooks for three educational levels shows consistently significant proportions. Indonesian local names appear frequently throughout the coursebooks and arguably serve as a linguistic tool to represent Indonesian identity to the coursebooks' users. Additionally, the portrayal of local school uniforms on the depicted characters is evident. The study argues that the depiction of the Indonesian uniform is intended to make the selected coursebooks more relatable to Indonesian students. In addition to visual and naming representations, all three coursebooks consistently underrepresent target and international cultures. The total combination of local and international cultures never exceeds 30% across the three coursebooks. The practice of prioritizing local cultures in locally authored and published English coursebooks has indeed been widely reported in the prior literature, especially in countries where English serves as a foreign language (for example, Ariawan et al., 2022; Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020)

Despite the prevalence of Indonesian cultural content in textbooks, there is a noticeable underrepresentation of other cultures, particularly those categorized as target and international. Although both target and international cultures are underrepresented, their respective proportions across the three textbooks differ. The figure below illustrates the variations in the representation of target and international cultures across the three English coursebooks.

Figure 7 The Representations of Target and International Cultures across the three coursebooks



As depicted in the chart, while the 6th-grade book entirely omits target language cultures, the 9th- and 12th-grade books show a gradual increase in their inclusion. In the selected middle school coursebook, three instances of target cultures and six instances of international cultures were identified. At the high school level, target cultures increased to 7 occurrences, while international cultures slightly decreased to 4 occurrences. Overall, however, the number of target and international cultures identified in the selected middle and high school textbooks was greater than that in the elementary school textbook.

Furthermore, as the analysis identified, there was increasing complexity and depth in target and international cultural information as the level of education increases. The cultural information moves from mere depictions of landmarks in the 6th-grade book to more complex discussions, such as internet use in the Netherlands or opinions of global academics in the 12th-grade coursebook. The present study argues that this progression may occur to align with students' cognitive development. Drawing on Piaget's (1972) theory of cognitive development, simple recognition of other countries' cultures may be appropriate for elementary students, whereas exposure to more complex cultural discussions may be appropriate for middle and high school students, who are able to process abstract concepts and multiple perspectives. This reasoning aligns with Zhang and Su (2021), who argue that the limited cognitive readiness of younger learners suits surface-level cultural content at the elementary level, with more complex representation appropriate at higher levels.

The Underlying Reason Behind the Identified Cultural Portrayal: Preserving Local Culture or Cultivating Global Mindset?

Preserving National Identity and Local Culture and Instilling the Value of *Pancasila*

The examination of the selected three coursebooks, as previously discussed, reveals a dominant trend in the representation of local cultures. The study argues that this pattern likely reflects the core principles of English education in the country, as delineated in the national curriculum. As set out in the CP document, one of the primary goals of English education in Indonesia is to help students "develop a deep understanding of Indonesian culture and strengthen their identity" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Indonesia, 2022a, p. 150; authors' translation). Exposure to the diversity of Indonesian cultures is expected to facilitate Indonesian students in developing an appreciation of differences and cultivating a sense of tolerance toward the diversity they may encounter in real life. This is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where encounters with cultural differences are frequent in daily life. Given Indonesia's cultural heterogeneity, it is understandable that one of the government's goals in education is to nurture understanding, respect, and unity among the country's people. The selected coursebooks, thus, appear to actively support this goal by integrating representations of different cultures, ethnicities, and traditions in Indonesia.

Moreover, as stated in the PPP document, it is significant for education in Indonesia, including English classes, to instill and integrate the values of *Pancasila* (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, 2022b). As the nation's philosophical foundation, *Pancasila* plays a key role in all aspects of Indonesian life, including shaping the educational regulations and policies. Within the PPP framework, it is articulated that the processes of teaching and learning in Indonesian schools aim to produce students who are critical, creative, and independent. At the same time, they need to raise awareness of the importance of respecting and preserving local cultures. The framework expects Indonesian learners to "maintain their noble culture, locality, and identity (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2020, p. 11; authors' translation).

Reflecting on the English education goals and broader national education objectives in Indonesia, the predominant inclusion of local cultures in the selected textbooks suggests a strategic effort by the Indonesian government to cultivate a generation of young learners who uphold the spirit of national character and remain rooted in their own cultures and customs. By prioritizing the publication and use of English coursebooks rich in local culture, the Indonesian government appears to ensure that English teachers in the country are well equipped with resources to foster Indonesian multicultural values. At the same time, this initiative facilitates students' learning about diverse cultures across Indonesia. It is posited that through intensive exposure to diverse cultures, students will gain a deeper understanding of diversity and enhance their pride in their own culture (Setyono & Widodo, 2019), all while providing a relatable and meaningful context for English language acquisition (Ratri et al., 2025).

Cultivating a Global Mindset in the Coursebooks with a Limited Representation of Other Cultures

While the official documents mention the educational goal of preserving Indonesian identity and local culture in English classrooms, they also highlight the importance of cultivating a global mindset in Indonesian education, including

English. The Indonesian government explicitly articulates its desire to cultivate a global mindset and intercultural competence among students in English classrooms, where they can proactively communicate and participate as global netizens (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, 2022a). Through learning English, as the document states, students are expected to be exposed to both local and foreign cultures and develop an awareness of the current interconnected world and their inevitable role in global society (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, 2022a). As the analysis revealed, however, the selected coursebooks indicate a rather limited alignment between the government objectives and the practical reality. While the coursebooks designed for ninth- and twelfth-grade students present a minimal inclusion of target cultures, the sixth-grade coursebook is particularly noteworthy for its complete omission of the target culture. The absence of the target culture in the 6th-grade coursebook raises questions as to why this occurs.

A closer examination of past language education policies in Indonesia may help explain this phenomenon. In 2012, the Ministry of Education issued a directive removing English from the list of compulsory subjects in public elementary schools nationwide. The decision was based on concerns that introducing English at an early stage might interfere with learners' acquisition of Bahasa Indonesia, the country's national language. Musliar Kasim, who was then the Deputy Minister, stated that many elementary students had not yet fully grasped Bahasa Indonesia and that exposure to a foreign language could only further hinder the mastery of the national language (The Jakarta Post, 2012). This directive was then officially implemented through the introduction of the 2013 curriculum. This introduction marked a turning point in English language instruction at the primary level in Indonesia. Under this curriculum, English was removed from the list of compulsory subjects in public elementary schools and was reclassified as an extracurricular activity. This move drew criticism from educators and the public, including parents who strongly argued that it would significantly reduce classroom time for English instruction and limit students' exposure to the language (Arif, 2015).

In support of the revised curriculum, the Indonesian government also launched *Buku Sekolah Elektronik* (BSE), which refers to a collection of free, government-issued electronic textbooks for school subjects in Indonesia. These digital materials were designed to align with the curriculum's objectives and be accessible to students and teachers across the country. In practice, these state-developed materials placed a strong focus on Indonesian cultural identity to reflect one of the core principles of the curriculum, which is strengthening students' character and sense of national identity (Santosa, 2015). Although the 2013 curriculum began to be replaced by the Merdeka curriculum in 2022 (Monaliza & Marta, 2024), the status of English in primary education remained relatively unchanged. In terms of cultural content, the development of new state-endorsed coursebooks followed the same pattern as the previous coursebooks, as the current study's findings revealed. While the *Merdeka* curriculum document notes the need for Indonesian students to develop the cultural competencies and skills to live and survive in diverse global environments, it appears that the Indonesian government prioritizes fostering a strong national identity by removing target cultures from English coursebooks at the primary level.

While prioritizing local culture in the selected coursebooks is not inherently bad, this practice runs counter to the English-learning objectives outlined in both chosen official documents. It is clearly stated that English classrooms should allow students at all levels of education to explore and learn “other cultures and their interactions with Indonesian culture” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, 2022a, p. 163, authors' translation). If the target language is missing from classroom materials, it raises questions about how teachers and students are expected to engage in intercultural talk and discussion. How are Indonesian students supposed to cultivate a global mindset and intercultural competence in a classroom utilizing coursebooks with limited representation of other cultures?

Conclusion

The present study sought to investigate and map the cultural representation in three EFL coursebooks endorsed and published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. It attempted to identify similarities and differences in cultural patterns across the textbooks and to identify the rationale behind these patterns. The findings indicate that cultural representations in the three selected coursebooks were dominated by the source culture, leaving little room for the target and international cultures. The findings suggest that across three coursebooks used at three educational levels, the source culture dominated cultural representation. The prevalent representations of local cultures are arguably motivated by the Indonesian government's attempts to build and strengthen students' national identity and to foster awareness of the importance of preserving local cultures. In addition, the finding revealed a rather obvious contradiction between the actual classroom material and the national curriculum's stated vision of cultivating a global mindset and intercultural competence. Despite what is outlined in the official document regarding the country's effort to cultivate global mindsets in students through English education, target and international cultures are underrepresented in the three coursebooks, especially at the primary and secondary levels. This reality runs counter to what the Indonesian government has set out to achieve in the country's English classrooms. Limiting students' exposure to foreign cultures will likely lessen their opportunities to learn and discuss other cultures in the classroom. Since communication across cultures is now easier than ever, exposing students to different cultures is inevitably important.

The current study offers three sets of implications. For policymakers and curriculum developers in Indonesia, the findings suggest that the current *Merdeka* curriculum's cultural mandate to preserve national identity and local cultures and to cultivate a global mindset is not operationalized in a balanced way throughout the selected English coursebook. It is thus suggested that cultural content guidelines be created for state-endorsed English coursebooks across all levels to align the cultural content with the curriculum's stated goals. For Indonesian English textbook writers, the findings reveal the reality of the cultural representations in local English coursebooks in the country. While state-endorsed coursebooks should indeed include source cultures to preserve national identity, this should not be confused with omitting other cultures entirely. Instead of using exclusively local-sounding names for all characters in the coursebooks, coursebook authors can, for example, add names specific to other cultures. By

doing so, textbook users will have space to discuss cultures from other countries, which will hopefully spark their curiosity to explore those cultures further. For English educators, this study indicates a lack of representation of diverse cultures in local English coursebooks in Indonesia. They should, therefore, be able to provide supplementary materials to ensure that the teaching and learning culture can take place in English classrooms.

The present study contributes to the literature by providing the first cross-level analysis of cultural representation in Indonesian state-endorsed English coursebooks. It traced how source, target, and international cultures were distributed from primary to secondary education. By doing so, the study offers a more complete picture of the cultural content students in Indonesia encounter through their education. It also extends the current state of cultural content analysis in EFL coursebooks by showing that the proportion of cultural representation tends to shift across grade levels. The present study, however, has some limitations. First, it analyzed only three coursebooks, one for each terminal grade level. Although these books represent the entire population of state-endorsed coursebooks for those grades, the findings may not apply to books used in other grades or to materials published outside the government program. Second, the study examined the coursebooks themselves and did not examine how teachers use cultural content in classrooms. Teachers may extend, supplement, or reinterpret what the books present, so the actual cultural exposure students receive could differ from what the pages show. For this reason, future research should cover a wider range of coursebooks and observe how teachers handle cultural content in their classrooms. This way, future studies can show not only what cultural content the books offer but also how that content reaches students in practice, and whether teachers fill the gaps found in this study or leave them unaddressed.

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