

# THE REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL CONTENT IN THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR EIGHT GRADE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## A B S T R A K

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengeksplorasi kategori konten budaya dan bagaimana kategori-kategori tersebut direpresentasikan dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggris kelas 8 berjudul "English for Nusantara," yang merupakan bagian dari Kurikulum Merdeka. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi kategori budaya dan tahapan yang terlibat dalam representasi konten budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif untuk menganalisis kategori budaya melalui kerangka kerja yang diusulkan oleh Cortazzi dan Jin (1999). Selain itu, penelitian ini memiliki empat tahapan pembelajaran konten budaya yang dijelaskan oleh Moran (2001). Hasil penelitian ini mencakup 117 poin data tentang kategori budaya, di mana 65% berasal dari budaya sumber, 22% dari budaya internasional, dan 13% dari budaya sasaran. Selain itu, temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa lima bab dalam buku teks ini secara sistematis mengintegrasikan empat tahapan pembelajaran budaya sebagaimana diuraikan oleh Moran. Temuan tersebut adalah sebagai berikut: Siswa secara aktif terlibat dalam tahap partisipasi melalui gambar atau teks pengantar, mengembangkan pemahaman dalam tahap deskripsi, menafsirkan makna budaya secara mendalam, dan merefleksikan pengalaman pribadi dalam tahap respons. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa buku teks bahasa Inggris ini tidak hanya mendukung pembelajaran bahasa tetapi juga meningkatkan kompetensi budaya, kesadaran sosial, dan pengembangan karakter siswa. Terakhir, buku teks bahasa Inggris ini akan lebih baik jika berfokus pada representasi budaya sumber, budaya sasaran, dan budaya internasional untuk mencapai pembelajaran antarbudaya yang lebih komprehensif.

**ABSTRACT**  
*The objective of this study is to identify and explore categories of cultural content and how these categories are represented in the 8th-grade English textbook titled "English for Nusantara," which is part*

**Keywords:** *Representation, Cultural Content, Content Analysis, English Textbook.*

*of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study identified the cultural categories and stages involved in the representation of cultural content. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the cultural categories through the framework proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). In addition, the study has four stages of cultural content learning described by Moran (2001). The results of this study include 117 data points on cultural categories, of which 65% originate from the source culture, 22% from international culture, and 13% from the target culture. In addition, the findings of this study indicate that the five chapters in this textbook systematically integrate the four stages of cultural learning as outlined by Moran. These findings are as follows: Students are actively engaged in the participation stage through images or introductory texts, develop understanding in the description stage, interpret cultural meanings in depth, and reflect on personal experiences in the response stage. Overall, this study concludes that this English textbook not only supports language learning but also enhances students' cultural competence, social awareness, and character development. Finally, this English textbook would be better served by focusing on the representation of the source culture, the target culture, and international cultures to achieve more comprehensive intercultural learning.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Language and culture are two important aspects that are interconnected in the learning process. According to Gao (2006), language and culture learning are interdependent because language reflects the habits of its speakers, while both serve as means of communication. The meaning of the above statement indicates a reciprocal relationship between culture and language, which serves as a useful means of communication in learning. In addition, one of the most important resources for learning and teaching English in the classroom is the textbook. The English textbook serves as the primary source of language learning, which includes cultural content that shapes students' worldviews. As Brown stated, language and culture cannot be separated because language is a manifestation of culture, which means that culture is a main part of language (Baleghizadeh & Shayesteh, 2020). Through this statement, language and culture are a combination that has strength and is necessary in the process of learning English. Cultural diversity in textbooks is a special concern in classroom teaching. The presence of culture in language teaching materials must be able to meet the needs of students. One of the cultural needs of students is communicative competence. The above statement is supported by Arslan (2016, pp. 217-218) who states that communicative competence may require language users to have cultural knowledge.

One source of learning materials in the classroom is the culture of textbooks. In the context of English, textbooks are used by teachers as media containing learning

materials in the form of words, sentences, and texts. Lund (2006) defines that textbook play an important role in providing valuable input to introduce students to new cultural expressions and cultural diversity. In other words, the cultural context of textbooks is important because it serves as teaching material that promotes intercultural understanding. Rohmana (2023) explains that literary texts containing cultural elements as reading material also train cultural understanding. With cultural content, students will be more sensitive to cultural differences presented in various contexts of stories in English textbooks. In addition, Bao (2006) states that incorporating cultural elements into textbooks can help students communicate effectively and help them become tolerant and open to other cultural values. This is in line with the statement regarding the existence of cultural content that enables students to gain knowledge about certain cultures, develop positive attitudes towards society, and become more tolerant of other cultures (Nguyen, 2017). Therefore, textbooks become a medium that presents cultural categories and elements as teaching materials necessary for students' learning needs.

The analysis of ESL/EFL textbook content is one of the main issues in applied linguistics and English language teaching today, according to Hall & Hewing (in Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012). This theory also emphasizes the issue of presenting cultural context in English textbooks. Arslan (2020) states that incorporating cultural components into the curriculum and textbooks is very important because it helps students understand the world of cultural values present in student's environments. Research by Khoeriah et al. (2024) shows that the "*Work in Progress*" textbook for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Merdeka Curriculum represents Moran's (2001) cultural dimensions with the highest frequency in products, followed by practices, people, perspectives, and communities. In addition, Chao's (2011) cultural categories are dominated by international culture, source culture, intercultural universality, target culture, and interculturalism. However, previous findings reveal a gap in the form of a lack of analysis of the depth of meaning in the representation of cultural categories, particularly ideal intercultural values in English language teaching.

Furthermore, this study fills the gap in the representation of intercultural values by explaining the level of balance of cultural categories proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) at the junior high school level, as well as the stages of cultural content presentation consisting of four main stages in English teaching that play a role in students' holistic understanding of cultural values in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum pedagogy. Thus, the novelty of this study expands the scope of analysis to different levels of education, enriches insights into the effectiveness of cultural representation in English textbooks entitled "*English for Nusantara*," and builds the intercultural competence of 8th grade junior high school students through a more contextual multimodal approach.

The significance of this research can be understood from the fact that culture and language are part of the learning curriculum and have been integrated into educational teaching materials. The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has formulated a policy on educational innovation as a foundation for integrating culture and language into learning through the Merdeka Curriculum. This policy aims to improve the quality and character of high-caliber human resources. The policies in this curriculum are based on the ideals of Ki Hajar Dewantara, who emphasized that education must be oriented toward flexibility, independence, context, cooperation, and the development of noble character (Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). This policy aims to help students build noble character and cognitive talents.

Furthermore, this study examines gaps in the representation of intercultural values by analyzing the balance of cultural categories proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Moran's (2001) explanation, which states that the representation of cultural content categories in English textbooks for language learning can occur through four stages involving such cultural content in accordance with the pedagogy of the Merdeka Curriculum. Moreover, the uniqueness of this study expands the scope of analysis to various levels of education, enriches insights into the effectiveness of cultural representation in the English textbook titled "*English for Nusantara*," and builds the intercultural competence of eighth-grade junior high school students through a more contextual multimodal approach. The above theories form the basis of this study, which was conducted to discover three categories of culture in depth and explore the stages of cultural content categories found in the 8th grade English textbook (2022) entitled "*English for Nusantara*" published by the Center for Curriculum and Textbooks, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, by Ika Lestari Damayanti and other main authors.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) divide the categories of cultural content in English textbooks into three main categories, namely source culture, target culture, and international culture. Source culture refers to the culture of origin of students or learners (for example, Indonesian culture for Indonesian students), which makes learning materials relevant and motivating. Target culture refers to the culture of the native speakers of the target language (such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia), which focuses on the context of using English as a first language. International culture encompasses the global cultures of various countries outside the source and target cultures (e.g., Japanese or Indian traditions, or global cultural issues), which are neutral and inclusive in nature to develop cross-cultural competence in EFL teaching.

In addition, Moran (2001) explains that the categories representation of cultural content in English textbooks for language learning can be viewed through four cultural stages that consist of participation (Knowing How), description (Knowing About), interpretation (Knowing Why), and response (Knowing Oneself). In the context of English textbooks, these stages demonstrate how culture is not merely presented as information, but is also processed through learners' engagement, observation, interpretation, and response. The above theories form the basis of this study, which was conducted to discover three categories of culture in depth and explore the stages of cultural content categories found in the 8th grade English textbook (2022) entitled "*English for Nusantara*" published by the Center for Curriculum and Textbooks, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, by Ika Lestari Damayanti and other main authors.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is designed as a qualitative descriptive study in presenting the data obtained. Qualitative descriptive is used because it focuses on investigating the quality of relationships, activities, situations, and materials (Frankel et al., 2012). In line with Sugiyono (in Irawan, 2020, p. 26) defines that the qualitative descriptive method is a research method used to examine a natural object by studying something as thoroughly as possible with the aim of describing, explaining, and answering in detail the issues being studied.

The data in this study is based on Sugiyono's (2016:14) definition that data can be in the form of words, sentences, diagrams, and images. The data in this study is presented word by word and accompanied by images. This is also supported by Maleki (2007, p. 67), who states that the content of research data consists of facts, explanations, principles, definitions (knowledge), skills, and processes, as well as values that are compiled into a codified whole. Therefore, it is stated that the data written down are facts that occurred and were collected in words arranged into sentences and also derived from images found in the research object.

This study also has data sources as the origin of the data obtained. Maryadi, et al (2011: p.13) claim that data sources are places where data that is the object of research is obtained, or it can be said that data sources are the origin or initial basis of the data being studied. The above statement is also in line with Arikunto (2010: 129), who states that the data source lies in the subject from which the data can be obtained. The data source obtained in this study came from an 8th grade English textbook (2022) entitled "*English for Nusantara*" published by the Center for Curriculum and Textbooks, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, Merdeka Curriculum.

This instrument takes the form of a coding checklist and analysis protocol presented in a table to collect relevant data. Furthermore, these instruments are described as having the purpose of ensuring that the qualitative approach to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting is based on tools for targeted sampling, focused data collection, text or image analysis, presentation of information through diagrams and tables, and subjective interpretation of findings (Creswell, 2009). This study uses data collection techniques to discover categories that represent cultural content and explore the process of cultural content meaning presented through texts, images, and tasks.

In this study, the first data collection technique was conducted using content analysis, which is a research technique for the subjective interpretation of text data content through a systematic process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). In addition, content analysis is also supported by Harmer's (2007) statement that visuals such as images clarify abstract language and engage learners, while texts provide a contextual structure for skills such as vocabulary and grammar. In addition, according to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a research technique for drawing replicable and valid conclusions from texts or other meaningful materials such as images and tasks in the context of their use. Therefore, content analysis in this study explore cultural content categories in English language textbooks for language learning can occur through four stages.

Therefore, this study uses the data analysis technique from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) which divides qualitative data analysis into three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification, which take place from data collection to the end of the research. This process is applied to the analysis of cultural content from the English textbook "*English for Nusantara*" for grade 8 of the Merdeka Curriculum in the following manner. This process is applied to the analysis of cultural content from the English textbook "*English for Nusantara*" for grade 8 of the Merdeka Curriculum in the following manner.

### 1. Data Condensation

Data condensation is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus of the data collection. This process involves selection through data checklists, simplification, and transformation of raw data such as text, images, or activities related to cultural categories and representing cultural content in English textbooks.

### 2. Data Display

Data display is information that is organized and compressed to facilitate drawing conclusions and taking action. Data that has been organized in the form of matrices, tables, graphs, or structured narratives to facilitate understanding of the cultural content contained in the data obtained. Then, the presentation of data results presented in a checklist table can be done using a percentage formula in this study based on Arikunto (2010). The formula below is the calculation method used for data found through data sources.

Formula:	Description:
$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$	P (Percentage)
	F (Frequency)
	N (Total number of values)
	100% (Formula constant)

The following is an explanation of the components in the above formula, namely.

- P (Percentage), the P value indicates the proportion of a part (frequency) to the whole (total value), expressed as a percentage. If the P value is high, it means that the frequency (numerator) is close to the total number (denominator). If the P value is low, the frequency is much smaller than the total number.
- F (Frequency), this is the number of occurrences or the amount of data that is part of the calculation of the percentage (numerator).
- N (Total number of values), this is the total number of all data or the sample size used as a comparison (denominator).
- 100% (Formula constant), this is a fixed value or multiplier used to convert the fractional value of the division of F and N into a percentage format.

### 3. Conclusion/Verification

Based on the results of the data display, the researcher drew conclusions about the depth of cultural content representation presented through text, images, and exercises from the English textbook entitled "*English for Nusantara*" for eighth grade in the Merdeka Curriculum.

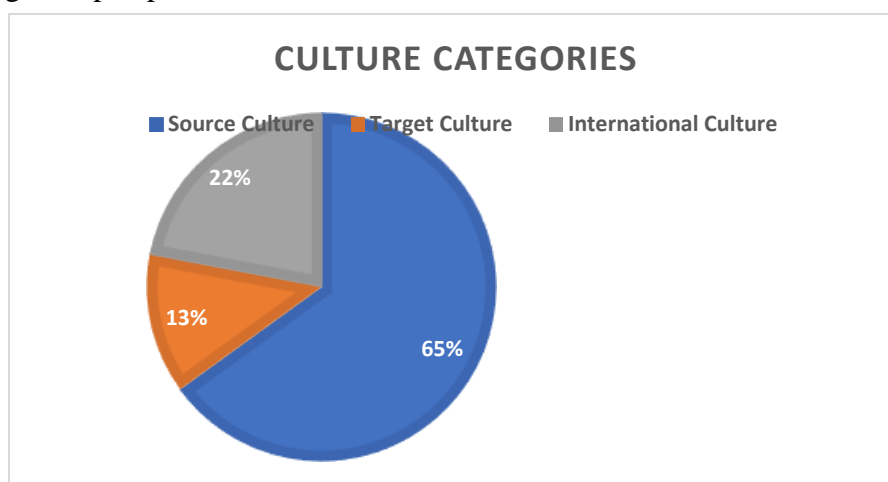
## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher used checklists and percentage calculations as data collection instruments. The first data analysis in this study was based on previous research; specifically, the researcher used predefined categories adopted from Cortazzi and Jin (1999), while the second research question referred to Moran (2001), who outlined the stages of cultural content representation, including the cultural categories present in English textbooks. Both of the above data analyses were used to identify categories of cultural content and to explore how the stages of cultural content are represented in English textbooks. The research data collected from the 8th-grade English textbook (2022) titled "*English for Nusantara*" using the aforementioned qualitative descriptive method was analysed by following the stages proposed by Miles, Huberman, and

Saldaña (2014), which include data condensation, data display, as well as drawing conclusions and verification.

**The Categories of Cultural Content in “English for Nusantara” for 8th grade junior high school students.**

This study examined cultural representations in the grade 8 English textbook “English for Nusantara” (2022) using the cultural categories framework proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), namely source culture (Indonesian source culture), target culture (countries where English is the primary language), and international culture. The total cultural data amounted to 117 culture categories derived from scanning every chapter across the identified English textbook. The percentage distribution revealed a dominance of source culture at 65% (76 data points), followed by international culture at 22% (26 data points), and target culture at 13% (15 data points). These findings reflect the national curriculum strategy which prioritises local identity whilst broadening global perspectives.



Based on the diagram, this study has identified cultural categories that represent the cultural content in English textbooks. These findings confirm that the textbooks are dominated by source culture categories, which aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum’s emphasis on local relevance (65%). However, the low proportion of target culture (13%) indicates a lack of exposure to authentic British culture, although international culture (22%) effectively balances the global perspective. The above findings were verified through content triangulation to ensure accuracy, with a recommendation for a balanced presentation of cultural diversity particularly regarding target and international cultures in the revised edition to achieve optimal cultural learning materials. These findings contribute to an understanding of cultural representation in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia.

In addition, Diana’s (2021) study examined cultural elements in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks designed for 11<sup>th</sup> grade high school students in Indonesia. The analysis covered 166 data points in the form of text and images from 11 chapters. The results of this study indicate that 76 items, or 45.8% of the total, constitute cultural content, while 90 items contain no cultural content at all. Among these 76 cultural elements, source culture (Indonesia) dominates, with 14 items (18.42%), increasing to 20 items (26.3%) when combined with elements from the target culture or international culture. Moreover, Riadini and Cahyono examined cultural representations in the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture’s English textbooks

for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. This study applied the framework developed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Byram (1993) to 15 chapters, identifying a total of 1,202 items. The source culture (Indonesia) dominates with 58.32%, the target culture (English speakers) accounts for 39.85%, and international culture lags far behind at only 1.83%. Wahid et al. (2023) classified cultural content in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook titled *"English for Junior High School/MTs Grade 7"*. These results indicate an uneven distribution. Source culture dominates in terms of frequency with 60 examples (60%), surpassing target culture, which totals 25 (25%), and international culture, which totals 15 (15%). This imbalance indicates a strong emphasis on local elements, which may limit exposure to global perspectives, although it reinforces familiarity with the Indonesian context in language learning.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous research. This study found that cultural representations in English textbooks, specifically the cultural categories depicted in the textbook *"English for Nusantara"* (2022) for eighth-grade junior high school students, were dominated by source culture (65%), followed by international culture (22%) and target culture (13%). These findings reveal that the textbook's content aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's orientation by emphasizing local contexts while broadening global perspectives. The presence of source culture, such as school life practices and Independence Day celebrations, plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of meaning and strengthening students' national identity. However, the limited proportion of target culture indicates a lack of exposure to English-speaking cultures to support intercultural competence. Meanwhile, integrating global issues into international culture contributes positively to raising students' awareness of global challenges. Therefore, efforts are needed to balance cultural content so that language learning is not only contextual but also capable of broadening perspectives and enhancing readiness for intercultural communication.

#### **The Stages of Cultural Content Categories represented in the *"English for Nusantara"* for 8th grade junior high school students.**

The second finding is the five chapters in the textbook consistently reflect the application of Moran's four stages of culture. In the first stage, participation, students are encouraged to engage actively by observing pictures, playing games, participating in discussions, and engaging in creative activities. Second, the description stage emerges in activities involving the identification of information, text comprehension, and the recognition of cultural elements in different contexts. The interpretation stage occurs when students are asked to interpret the meaning behind events, moral values, or customs they have learned. This stage guides students to recognize the importance of cooperation, environmental awareness, and mutual respect. Meanwhile, the final stage involves responding to the material through self-reflection, writing about personal experiences, creating works, and applying values in daily life. Therefore, this textbook not only provides language instruction but also comprehensively builds students' cultural competencies. This integration demonstrates that learning English can be an effective means of instilling cultural values, enhancing social awareness, and shaping students' character to become reflective and sensitive to cultural contexts in students' real life.

The main theory in this study draws on the concept of cultural representation proposed by Moran (2001), who divides cultural learning into four main stages consist of participation (knowing how), description (knowing about), interpretation (knowing why), and response (knowing oneself). The first stage is participation, which aims to

emphasize students' direct involvement in cultural activities and gaining real-world experience through practice. Additionally, the description stage focuses on students' ability to recognize and understand facts, information, and characteristics of the cultural categories presented through text, images, or audio. Furthermore, the Interpretation stage guides students to uncover the deeper meanings of cultural practices, including the values, reasons, and social contexts behind them. The final stage is Response, which encourages students to reflect on their learning experiences and connect the learning material to their daily lives, thereby fostering awareness and attitudes toward culture. These four stages are interrelated and form a comprehensive framework for cultural learning because they focus not only on knowledge but also on students' personal experiences, interpretations, and reflections within the context of English language learning.

Based on this theoretical framework, the five chapters in this book describe the gradual and contextual integration of various stages in cultural learning. Chapter 1 focuses on the celebration of Indonesian Independence Day, which involves students in various activities. These activities range from observing and understanding information to interpreting the experience of a competition, culminating in reflection through interviews and the creation of comics. Furthermore, Chapter 2 explores folktales and fables as tools for understanding character, moral values, and diversity. The material is then connected to students' personal experiences through storytelling and role-playing activities. Chapter 3 features cultural content emphasizing environmental issues, such as cleanliness and waste management. This learning material encourages students to understand the facts, the importance of these actions, and to reflect on daily habits. Moreover, this process also occurs in Chapter 4 of the textbook. This material expands the environmental theme into social and global contexts, including disasters, marine pollution, and shared responsibility. Students can observe, understand the material, interpret it, and conclude with the creation of posters and action plans. Finally, Chapter 5 focuses on personal character development related to self-confidence, hard work, and personal reflection through learning experiences and social interactions.

In addition, there are some studies that relevant to the research namely the first study, conducted by Khoeriah et al. (2024), showed that cultural representations in the Work in Progress textbook were dominated by product and practice aspects, while other dimensions such as perspective, community, and individual were not represented in a balanced manner. This suggests that cultural learning often focuses on visible and concrete elements referring to cultural objects or activities, without fully engaging deeper meanings. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Anggraini and Rohmah (2024) identified differences in cultural representation between two textbooks, namely Work in Progress and Pathway to English. The textbook titled Work in Progress was assessed as more balanced in presenting local, foreign, and international cultures. In contrast, Pathway to English was dominated by foreign cultures. This imbalance in cultural content impacts the formation of students' cultural identity, particularly when exposure to local culture is limited. From Moran's (2001) perspective, this situation can hinder the development of the "*self discovery*" phase (self-awareness). Third, a recent study by Hakim and Wahyuni (2024) reveals that the English for Change textbook is dominated by Indonesian local culture, with a relatively smaller percentage devoted to international culture and its target audience. This finding indicates a trend contrary to previous research, where the focus of learning was more directed toward strengthening local cultural identity. Although this approach aligns with character-building objectives, the

dominance of local culture has the potential to limit the development of students' intercultural competencies. Within Moran's (2001) framework, this situation allows the participation and description phases to develop effectively, as students are already familiar with the cultural context being studied. However, limited cultural diversity can hinder the interpretation and response phases, particularly in understanding cultural differences and developing a global perspective.

The findings of this study differ from those of the three previous studies, which placed greater emphasis on the distribution and dominance of cultural types. The findings of this study indicate that English textbooks in the Merdeka Curriculum for junior high schools have integrated the stages of cultural representation in a more systematic manner. These findings align with Moran's (2001) framework, which notes that each chapter demonstrates a clear progression from participation, description, and interpretation toward response through various activities such as observation, text analysis, discussion, reflection, and creative production. These findings indicate that cultural instruction does not focus on types of cultural content. Additionally, this teaching also focuses on the process students undergo in understanding and interpreting that culture. As a result, students not only gain a superficial understanding of culture but are also able to interpret the values embedded within it and relate them to their personal experiences. This finding confirms that a phased approach contributes more comprehensively to the development of students' cultural competence, and these phases provide students with the opportunity to clearly recognize cultural categories as the content of cultural learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The objective of this study is to identify the categories of cultural content represented in the "English for Nusantara" textbook, designed for 8th-grade students under the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings indicate that the textbook highlights local culture as the primary foundation of learning. This emphasis on local culture reflects the curriculum's goal of strengthening national identity while ensuring its relevance to students' lived experiences. Additionally, the integration of international cultural categories contributes to the development of students' global awareness, particularly through the inclusion of global environmental themes. However, the representation of target cultures remains relatively limited, thereby restricting students' exposure to the cultures of Englishspeaking communities. Despite these limitations, the integration of narrative elements and universal values facilitates the promotion of intercultural understanding. Overall, this textbook demonstrates that cultural categories allow students to become familiar with cultural characteristics, although further enrichment of cultural balance is needed to achieve a more comprehensive cultural representation.

Additionally, the study focuses more on the stages of presenting cultural content in the English textbook entitled "English for Nusantara" for Year 8 students in lower secondary school. The findings of this study indicate that the textbook systematically integrates cultural learning through four main stages: participation, description, interpretation, and response. Each chapter is designed to develop students' cultural understanding in a progressive manner, beginning with active engagement in learning activities and progressing to deeper personal reflection. This is achieved through a variety of topics such as national celebrations, folklore, environmental issues, and character education. Students not only develop their language skills but also gain meaningful and contextual learning experiences. This process enables students to

understand cultural values, meanings, and social contexts, whilst connecting them to their daily lives. Finally, English language learning serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of character development, social awareness, and the enhancement of students' cultural competence.

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