




# Breaking Java's Wall: Representation of Local Cultures Manifested in the Indonesian *Kurikulum Merdeka* Textbooks

Tono Viono<sup>1</sup>, Kurnia Azizah<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Mukhlis<sup>3</sup>, Akhmad Tabrani<sup>4</sup>, Sainee Tamphu<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Universitas Islam Malang, Malang, East Java Region, Indonesia,

<sup>5</sup>Yala Rajabhat University, Amphoe Mueang, Thailand

tonoviono@madrrasah.kemenag.go.id

**Abstract.** Learning textbooks should reflect national identity through the diversity of local cultures. So far, learning textbooks only focus on the Javanese socio-cultural context as an introductory learning discourse. This paper aims to identify non-Javanese cultural presentations and analyze the discourse of national identity contained in cultural content within three Indonesian language textbooks based on the Kurikulum Merdeka. The research method applied in this paper is descriptive qualitative with the principle of critical discourse analysis. Various data collection techniques were applied to provide in-depth knowledge related to the discourse and visual semiotics displayed. Grade 7 textbooks show that 40% of texts have cultural content with discourses on cultural tourism and nature conservation, and grade 8 textbooks show 7.69% with cultural content with discourses on inclusion and disability. In contrast, grade 10 textbooks show that 13.2% of texts have cultural content with discourses on digital culture on historical reflection. Local representations have been reflected in all three textbooks and contribute to national identity. Further studies need to be conducted on using textbooks in actual learning.

**Keywords:** Indonesian Language, Kurikulum Merdeka, Multicultural Education, Textbooks

## 1 Introduction

The Gestalt paradigm in national development during the New Order era was entrapped in monism and national unification, characterized by Java as the center [1, 2]. Education, an essential instrument of human development, can't be separated from this scheme. As a result, textbooks as a concrete derivative of the curriculum revolve around the Javanese context as the introductory discourse of learning [3, 4]. This paper aims to analyze the presentation of cultural content in Indonesian language textbooks that use the Kurikulum Merdeka.

In the Indonesian context, national culture is identified by the diversity of local cultures, traditions, ethnicities, and ethnic groups. The construction of a national cultural

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A. Ambarwati et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Language, Literature, and Cultural Education (ICON-LLCE 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 796,

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-144-9\\_23](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-144-9_23)

identity does not seek to create a new culture but to provide a sense of unification and respect for existing local traditions [5]. Based on the perspective of Purwanta [6], the discourse narrated in the educational sphere in the 1975-2008 period found that national identity replaces local identities and must be criticized because it will legitimize national identity penetration into local identity.

Based on Setyawan and Budiman's findings [7], Indonesia's post-New Order educational journey was an attempt to get out of a centralized, Java-centric, and gender-biased system. Efforts to develop learning materials have been carried out a lot. However, local identities displayed both as discourse texts still indicate an unbalanced representation [8, 9]. In visual semiotics, discourse on local identity is shown more in ethnic groups, which make up the majority, and gender issues are biased into practical societal roles [10].

Textbook is a vital instrument for language learning [11–13]. As a learning resource, the material in the Textbook must lead students to the learning objectives. A person's language skills are directly proportional to metacognition about culture; thus, they can act and communicate appropriately in every social communication [14]. For this reason, the perspective of multicultural education is to be built into educational practice as a response to the challenge [15–18]. Multicultural education seeks to foster and educate the ability to learn to live together in differences and conduct cultural overseas, have cross-cultural understanding, and develop social justice, among others [19, 20].

Extensive studies have been conducted in assessing multicultural values depicted in textbooks, but none have been applied in the context of the Merdeka curriculum. Therefore, this study will focus on ethnic representation through discourse text and visual semiotics depicted in Indonesian Language Books for Junior High School 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, as well as grade 10 middle high school published by the Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan (Puskurbuk). This comparative study will analyze the presentation of cultural content, especially non-Javanese regions, in the text and visual graphics. The findings will represent local identity concerning national culture. Based on these objectives, two research questions were raised: 1.) How many texts display cultural content from non-Javanese areas? and 2.) What is the representation of national culture drawn from the discourse of local identity within the multicultural education framework?

## 2 Method

This descriptive qualitative study applied Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodological focus for text analysis [21]. CDA plays a significant role in dissecting the meaning of discourse in the text to discover the ideological state apparatus carried in the Kurikulum Merdeka textbook [22]. CDA is interpretive and provides a multidisciplinary view in unpacking the meanings and values contained in texts and images in Indonesian language textbooks. This research focuses on multicultural values presented through geographical aspects, culture, and local perspectives and then examines the concepts connected to the unity in diversity paradigm [23].

Various techniques were used to provide a broad comparative study of the findings. The primary data sources were three Indonesian textbooks issued by Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan (Puskurbuk). They are for Junior High School in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade [24, 25] and for Middle High school in 10<sup>th</sup> grade [26]. Furthermore, qualitative data was

collected to provide an in-depth understanding of the values of multicultural education depicted in those textbooks. Qualitative data analysis was used to answer the previously stated research questions.

### 3 Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1 Local Culture Representation Depicted on Text of Indonesian Textbook

Table 1 shows the cultural content that explicitly appears in the text. Generally, there are 30 texts in the 7<sup>th</sup>-grade Indonesian Textbook with a distribution of 8 genres. Indonesian Textbook has used multimodal texts such as pamphlets, comics, and infographics as literacy resources. There are 12 presentations of non-Javanese cultural content and six from around Java's region.

**Table 1.** Non-Java's Local Culture Content Depicted on Text Grade 7

Text Title	Genre	Type	Ethnic Community	Culture Content
Pantan Terong yang Instagrammable	Description	Text	Aceh	Geographic
Misteri Terowongan Kereta	Novel	Text	Sumatera Selatan	Behavior
Jelajah Wae Rebo	Description	Text	NTT	Social Interaction
Jelajah Rasa di Lampung	Description	Text	Lampung	Life Cycle
Mantra Melayu Sriwijaya	Folklore	Text	Sumatera Selatan	Belief
Saatnya Melirik Hutan Kalteng yang Rapuh	News	Text	Kalimantan Tengah	Nat-Geographic
Selamatkan Bumi dari Kerusakan	News	Transcript	Bangka Belitung	Nat-Geographic
Muncul Awan Seperti Gelombang Tsunami	News	Text	Aceh	Nat-Geographic
Waspada! Bendungan Bili-Bili Siang Ini Melewati Angka Normal	News	Text	Sulawesi Selatan	Nat-Geographic
Bili-Bili Berstatus Waspada, Bupati Gowa Ingatkan Potensi Banjir	News	Text	Sulawesi Selatan	Nat-Geographic
Itam dan U	Illustrated Story	Text	Simeuleu (Aceh)	Belief
B,J. Habibie, Perpaduan Kecerdasan dan Kekuatan	Biopic	Text	Sulawesi Selatan	History

The 8<sup>th</sup>-grade textbook has 26 texts with a distribution of 8 text genres. Table 2 shows that the number of texts containing cultural content is only two texts representing the locality of non-Javanese regions and two texts representing the locality of Java's region. This finding is reasonable because the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade textbook has not yet been implemented in the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation scheme.

**Table 2.** Non-Java's Local Culture Content Depicted on Text Grade 8

Text Title	Genre	Type	Ethnic Community	Culture Content
Bendi di Kota Padang	Observation Result Report	Text	West Sumatera	Life Cycle
Rendang Lezat	Advertising	Illustration	West Sumatera	Identity

The 10<sup>th</sup> Middle High School level textbook has 53 texts with 12 text genres. Table 3 shows local content culture from non-Javanese regions in 7 texts. Multimodal texts, such as videos via QR Code printouts in textbooks, are mostly displayed.

**Table 3.** Non-Java's Local Culture Content Depicted on Text Grade 10

Text Title	Genre	Type	Ethnic Community	Culture Content
Mollo	Book	Text	NTT	Behavior
Hikayat Sa-Ijaan dan Ikan Todak	Hikayat	Text	South Sulawesi	Behavior
Hikayat Si Miskin	Hikayat	Text	Riau	Behavior
Biografi I Gusti Ngurah Rai	Biopic	Text	Bali	History
Cut Nyak Dhien: Pejuang Perempuan dari Aceh	Biopic	Film	Aceh	History
Bung Hatta tidak Mudah Terkadang Harta	Biopic	Text	West Sumatera	History
Memetik Keteladanan dari Frans Kaisiepo	Biopic	Text	Papua	History

### 3.2 National Culture Discourse Based on Local Cultural Content

Based on these findings, text fields are interrelated in forming a primary national discourse. In the 7<sup>th</sup>-grade textbooks, the texts with the most dominant local cultural content that appeared were descriptive and news texts. The discourse in the descriptive text relates to local geography, art, architecture, and gastronomy with tourism value [27, 28]. Intentions for ways to appreciate cultural products or local attractions that have tourism value are shown in descriptive texts at this grade [29].

The social function of descriptive text is to describe objects or events through the perception of the perceiving tools. Through the learning activities of descriptive text in the Kurikulum Merdeka, students are directed to be able to describe an object or local event using a presentation approach. As mentioned in the rationalization of Indonesian learning outcomes, presenting is a productive skill that needs to be mastered by students. Enacting this teaching material can connect students with social life and promote the academic environment [30]. This presentation approach also seems more modern and underneath the current digital era.

The point of view of the indigenous cultural actors is only shown in the text "Jelajah Wae Rebo." In this text, the narrator is a tour guide who presents the architecture of Mbaru Niang's house. Using the cultural actors' point of view can increase the sense of pride in one's own culture, especially for the indigenous people who are the learning targets (NTT students). This point of view is also essential because it can relate real cultural experiences to language learning to get better learning outcomes [10]. In the texts "Pantan Terong yang Instagrammable" and "Jelajah Rasa di Lampung," tourism material is an entry point to various tourism languages.

*Hai, Teman-teman! Kalian tahu, kali ini aku berada di mana?"*

*"Ya, tepat sekali! Kali ini aku berada di sentra keripik pisang Lampung, di Jalan Pagar Alam, Kota Bandar Lampung yang terkenal dengan sebutan Gang PU. Kalau kalian lihat nih, di sisi kiri kanan jalan ini, hingga dua kilometer ke depan, ada ratusan penjual keripik pisang aneka rasa. Ada rasa coklat, keju, stroberi, melon, cappuccino, sapi panggang, rumput laut,*

*Hmm ... rasa apa lagi, ya? Daripada penasaran, ayo langsung kita coba!"*

*Jelajah Rasa di Lampung, [25]*

The text shows tourism discourse with the 'sentra' sentence, persuasive meaning, and detailed taste description. The character in the text is given the role of a food vlogger traveling to Lampung City to taste the various flavors of banana chips at the sales center. Thus, the production of vocabulary, sentences, and text shows a variety of tourism [31]. Much vocabulary in the "Pantan Terong yang Instagrammable" text is generally found in tourism feature texts [27].



**Figure 1.** Visual Illustration on Pantan Terong yang Instagrammable [25]

The illustration shows a representation of a female character not wearing a headscarf. Acehese society uses Sharia (*syariah*) rules that require all tourists to wear a cloth or headscarf to cover their heads. The female character in the text illustration should use a head covering to respect the cultural conditions in Aceh so that there is no particular sentiment towards things that have become regulations in the area.

The news texts in the 7<sup>th</sup>-grade Textbook feature the urgency of nature and biology conservation, which has become a national problem in recent years. Students are expected to avoid conflict and maintain peace with nature through ecological texts. Ecological disasters often hit Indonesia due to a lack of respect for nature and local culture. "Saatnya Melirik Hutan Kalteng yang Rapuh" shows the deforestation in Central Kalimantan, which caused a haze disaster several years ago. This ecological issue is helped by presenting the text "Selamatkan Bumi dari Kerusakan," which offers a social movement to protect nature by local communities [32].

Discourse on disaster management is also displayed through local culture in the form of Smong folklore that lives as a belief of the people of Simeuleu, Aceh, in protecting nature and themselves from tsunami disasters. Geographically, Simeuleu is one of the outer islands directly adjacent to the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the Smong culture becomes a belief mechanism to protect the community from the threat of tsunami disaster. The original manuscript of Smong displayed fragmented comics followed by Indonesian meanings in the text.

The 8<sup>th</sup>-grade textbook has fewer texts with cultural content. There are only two text presentations with West Sumatran cultural content. Based on the author's profile, one of the book's authors is of West Sumatran descent. An exciting finding can be interpreted from how the identity of people with disabilities is shown in this Textbook. Public advertisements and popular scientific articles show the discourse on appreciation and respect for people with physical or mental illness.

Moral and ethics becomes the primary identity to be represented in this Textbook. The teaching materials and visualizations teach students how to respect physical and mental differences by coexisting in the same cultural situation. Multicultural education has a universal role in providing inclusive access to all students to develop themselves without barriers of ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural differences. Since the World

Declaration on Education for All and the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education has become a significant focus in every discussion on world education. Followed by The Dakar Framework for Action and Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, inclusive education provides a legal framework for multicultural education to become an object of study in the academic realm, which is then accompanied by educational policies that are practiced to give access to all students equally [33, 34].

The 10<sup>th</sup>-grade Textbook has local texts with varied cultural content spread from west to east in Indonesia's hemisphere. A strong representation of multicultural values is found in the fragment of the text entitled "Mollo."

*Orang Mollo tak akan menebang pohon madu karena diibaratkan sebagai kulit dan rambut, apalagi madu yang dihasilkannya memberikan banyak manfaat. Lebih jauh, orang Mollo memperlakukan pohon madu dengan penghargaan yang sangat tinggi. Mereka mengibaratkan lebah madu sebagai Feotany atau anak perempuan raja.*

Mollo, [26]

In the text, there is an intersection between the local Mollo community and nature, represented by honey bees. How do the Mollo people protect their natural surroundings by mitigating surrounding natural objects that come into direct contact with the community? In several Indonesian local cultures, this modification pattern is often made to remind and guard the natural surroundings. This strategy and learning material provide insights, skills, and attitudes to learning material based on environment and community needs [35].

National issues in the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade textbook center on utilizing cultural values such as mythification, folklore, and historical stories concerning the fast-growing digital information flow [36]. For this reason, this Textbook has a printed version and audiobook as a delivery modality for students. In addition, the text in this book is equipped with a QR Code that makes it easy for students to access internet links through their smartphones/gadgets.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on research results, the 7<sup>th</sup>-grade Indonesian textbooks contain 40% text with cultural content. Production of primary discourse that contributes to national culture, namely the concentration of local cultural and geographical products that can advance the tourism sector. The emerging national cultural discourse is an attitude towards a digital culture that reflects local stories and struggles. The three textbooks have demonstrated an essential position in learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka and its relevance to cultural communities. National cultural identity is expected to reflectively build local culture to respond to changes due to economic development and globalization. This research has confirmed the gap between the multicultural values contained in Indonesian language textbooks. As a recommendation, future studies should be conducted to investigate using textbooks in authentic learning situations or case studies.

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