

English for Nusantara Kids: Local culture in reading texts for young learners

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Abstract. This study examines the representation of local culture in reading texts from the Grade 6 English module *Bahasa Inggris: English for Nusantara Kids*. The research aims to identify cultural themes embedded in the textbook and explore how these themes support English learning for young learners. The study applies Discourse Analysis (DA) to qualitatively investigate how cultural meanings are constructed through narratives, dialogues, and descriptions in the reading materials. The data consist of selected reading passages that reflect everyday activities, social interactions, and cultural practices. The analysis focuses on textual patterns, discursive interpretation, and the broader social context represented in the texts. The findings reveal ten major cultural themes: local food and culinary culture, family interaction and cooperation, health and hygiene education, traditional games and cultural heritage, peer interaction in children's play, extracurricular activities, family communication and achievement, outdoor experiential learning, science and everyday learning, and agriculture and gardening. These themes indicate that the textbook emphasizes familiar cultural contexts and daily experiences. Overall, the study suggests that integrating local culture into English materials can support meaningful language learning while strengthening learners' cultural awareness and identity.

Keywords: cultural representation; discourse analysis; EFL textbooks; local culture; teaching English to young learners

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi budaya lokal dalam teks bacaan pada modul Bahasa Inggris kelas VI *English for Nusantara Kids*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema budaya yang termuat dalam buku ajar serta mengeksplorasi bagaimana tema-tema tersebut mendukung pembelajaran bahasa Inggris bagi pembelajar usia dini. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, penelitian ini menerapkan analisis wacana untuk menginvestigasi bagaimana makna budaya dikonstruksi melalui narasi, dialog, dan deskripsi dalam materi bacaan. Data penelitian terdiri atas teks-teks bacaan terpilih yang merepresentasikan aktivitas sehari-hari, interaksi sosial, dan praktik-praktik budaya. Analisis difokuskan pada pola-pola tekstual, interpretasi diskursif, serta konteks sosial yang direpresentasikan dalam teks. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan sepuluh tema budaya utama, yaitu budaya makanan dan kuliner lokal, interaksi dan kerja sama dalam keluarga, pendidikan kesehatan dan kebersihan, permainan tradisional dan warisan budaya, interaksi antarteman dalam permainan anak, kegiatan ekstrakurikuler, komunikasi keluarga dan pencapaian, pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman di luar ruangan, sains dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, serta pertanian dan kegiatan berkebun. Tema-tema tersebut menunjukkan bahwa buku ajar ini menekankan konteks budaya yang dekat dengan kehidupan peserta didik serta pengalaman sehari-hari mereka. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi budaya lokal ke dalam materi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dapat mendukung pembelajaran bahasa yang lebih bermakna sekaligus memperkuat kesadaran budaya dan identitas peserta didik.

Kata kunci: analisis wacana; budaya lokal; buku ajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing; pengajaran bahasa Inggris bagi pembelajar usia dini; representasi budaya

INTRODUCTION

English has become an important medium for international communication, education, mobility, and intercultural interaction. As English is increasingly used across diverse linguistic and cultural settings, English language education is no longer concerned only with developing learners' linguistic proficiency but also with preparing them to communicate across cultural boundaries. This development has implications for English education in Indonesia, where English is taught within a highly diverse sociocultural environment. Indonesian learners need opportunities to use English for global communication while also developing connections with the cultural identities, practices, and values that shape their everyday lives. Recent discussions of English education in Indonesia increasingly emphasize the importance of connecting English learning with learners' local cultural contexts (Hasnah et al., 2024; Ratri et al., 2025).

This issue is particularly important in teaching English to young learners (TEYL). Young learners encounter language through concrete experiences, familiar situations, and socially meaningful contexts; consequently, learning materials need to be relevant to their developmental and sociocultural environments. Recent research on English for young learners in Indonesia indicates that local cultural contexts can provide familiar situations through which children can understand and engage with English. Ratri et al. (2025), for example, found that integrating local culture into an English syllabus for Indonesian elementary learners can provide familiar contexts for learning English while supporting learners' cultural identities. Similarly, Ratri and Tyas (2022) demonstrated that locally tailored English materials can integrate local cultural contexts throughout primary-level learning materials and provide children with more familiar and meaningful learning experiences. These findings suggest that cultural relevance is not merely an additional feature of TEYL materials but an important consideration in designing English learning experiences for children.

Textbooks are particularly significant in this process because they remain important mediating resources between curriculum, teachers, and learners. They determine, to a considerable extent, the linguistic input, topics, social situations, people, places, and cultural practices that learners encounter through formal English instruction. Consequently, textbooks should not be regarded as culturally neutral collections of language exercises. Their texts and activities can make particular cultural identities, practices, values, and perspectives visible while giving less attention to others. Recent research in Indonesia has consequently examined how cultural content is selected and represented in English textbooks. A synthesis study of Indonesian EFL textbook research identified several continuing concerns, including cultural imbalance, superficial treatment of cultural values, and limited use of intercultural approaches, indicating that the inclusion of cultural content does not necessarily guarantee meaningful or balanced cultural representation (Mustikareni, 2026).

The problem is particularly relevant to the representation of local culture. Indonesia is characterized by substantial cultural diversity, including different ethnic traditions, languages, social practices, forms of knowledge, beliefs, and community values. Consequently, incorporating Indonesian culture into English materials involves more than inserting names of Indonesian foods, tourist destinations, traditional clothing, or cultural celebrations. Cultural representation may also involve everyday practices, interpersonal relationships, community life, values, beliefs, and perspectives. However, previous research suggests that these dimensions are not always represented equally. Hasnah et al. (2024), for example, found that locally produced Indonesian EFL textbooks contained considerable local cultural content, but cultural products received greater representation than cultural perspectives. This finding is important because an emphasis on visible cultural products may introduce learners to

cultural artifacts without necessarily exposing them to the meanings, values, and social practices underlying those artifacts.

Research focusing specifically on young learners has identified similar concerns. Nurhayati et al. (2023), in their analysis of an international English textbook used with young learners in Indonesia, found that although local cultural elements were present, their representation was limited and lacked sufficient variety. Their findings indicate that the mere inclusion of Indonesian references in an English textbook does not necessarily ensure a comprehensive representation of local culture. Likewise, research on Indonesian elementary-level textbooks has shown that cultural and multicultural content can be represented through textbook discourse, while also indicating the need to examine how such representations contribute to learners' intercultural understanding (Dalimunte & Suryani, 2025). These studies demonstrate that the question is no longer simply whether culture occurs in English textbooks, but which cultural elements are represented, which dimensions receive greater visibility, and how cultural meanings are constructed for learners.

Recent studies have also examined Indonesian government-endorsed English textbooks. For example, research on *English for Nusantara* and other locally produced EFL materials has demonstrated the growing presence of Indonesian cultural content in nationally oriented English textbooks (Hasnah et al., 2024; Mustikareni, 2026). Research has also examined cultural representation in Indonesian English textbooks using cultural categories such as products, practices, perspectives, and persons (Astrid et al., 2024; Ulfa & Astuti, 2022). More recently, studies of elementary English textbooks have employed critical discourse analysis to investigate how multicultural values are constructed through textbook discourse (Dalimunte & Suryani, 2025). Collectively, these studies have established that Indonesian English textbooks are important sites for examining the relationship between language education and cultural representation.

Nevertheless, an important gap remains. Existing research has not sufficiently examined how local culture is represented specifically in the reading texts of *English for Nusantara Kids*, particularly at the Grade 6 level. This gap is significant for two reasons. First, *English for Nusantara Kids* is designed specifically for primary-school learners, making its cultural representations directly relevant to TEYL rather than to secondary or general EFL contexts. Second, reading texts offer extended linguistic and discursive contexts in which learners encounter cultural information. Unlike isolated vocabulary items or illustrations, reading texts can represent cultural practices, people, places, values, relationships, and perspectives through interconnected narratives and descriptions. Examining these texts can therefore provide a more detailed understanding of what forms of Indonesian culture are made visible to young learners and how those forms are constructed through language.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the representation of local culture in the Grade 6 *English for Nusantara Kids* reading texts. Rather than treating cultural representation simply as the presence or absence of Indonesian cultural references, the study investigates the types and dimensions of culture represented in the texts and the meanings constructed through those representations. To categorize cultural content, the study draws on Moran's (2001) framework, which conceptualizes culture through products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. Although Moran's framework is foundational, it remains useful for systematically distinguishing visible cultural artifacts from less tangible cultural practices, values, social groups, and individuals. Its application in recent Indonesian textbook studies demonstrates its continuing relevance for examining cultural content in English learning materials (Ulfa & Astuti, 2022).

The study also draws on discourse analysis to examine how cultural meanings are constructed within the reading texts. From a discourse perspective, textbook language is not simply a neutral vehicle for transmitting information; textual choices can foreground particular people, practices, places, values, and ways of understanding the world. Recent Indonesian research has demonstrated the usefulness of critical discourse analysis for examining cultural and multicultural representations in elementary English textbooks (Dalimunte & Suryani, 2025). In the present study, discourse analysis therefore complements cultural-content categorization by allowing the analysis to move beyond identifying cultural items toward considering how those items are presented and contextualized in the texts.

Accordingly, this study asks: (1) What dimensions of local culture are represented in the Grade 6 *English for Nusantara Kids* reading texts? and (2) How is local culture represented and constructed through these reading texts? By addressing these questions, the study extends previous research on Indonesian textbooks in two ways. First, it focuses specifically on a primary-level English textbook developed for young learners, an area that remains less extensively examined than secondary-level EFL materials. Second, it shifts attention from merely identifying the presence of local cultural content toward examining the range and construction of cultural representations within reading texts. The study contributes empirical evidence for evaluating culturally responsive TEYL materials and offers implications for the development of English textbooks that can connect language learning with Indonesia's cultural diversity while preparing young learners for communication in broader intercultural contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative discourse analysis (DA) to examine how local cultural meanings are constructed and represented through language in the reading passages of English learning materials for young learners. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to interpret the meanings, cultural themes, and contextualized representations embedded in textbook reading texts rather than measure their occurrence statistically alone. Discourse analysis was considered appropriate because textbook texts are not culturally neutral; linguistic choices, narrative structures, descriptions, and representations can construct particular understandings of people, practices, values, and social contexts. Thus, discourse analysis enables the study to move beyond identifying the presence of cultural content to examining how cultural meanings are constructed and contextualized within the texts (Fairclough, 2013b; Gee, 2011).

The study specifically employed Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to DA, which conceptualizes discourse through textual, discursive, and social dimensions (Fairclough, 2013b). This framework was selected because it provides an analytical basis for connecting linguistic and thematic features of textbook texts with the broader cultural and social meanings represented through them. To provide a systematic classification of the cultural content identified in the texts, the analysis was complemented by Moran's (2001a) framework, which categorizes culture into five dimensions: products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. Combining these approaches enabled the study to identify what cultural elements were represented and examine how those elements were constructed within the textbook discourse.

Research Object and Data

The object of the study was the reading material in the Grade 6 *English for Nusantara Kids* module developed for Indonesian elementary school students (Damayanti et al., 2024). The module was selected because it is specifically designed for young Indonesian learners and provides reading materials designed to develop English language skills within contexts relevant to Indonesian learners.

The corpus consisted of 19 reading texts identified in the Grade 6 module. The texts included short stories, comic strips, dialogues, and descriptive passages as listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Grade 6 Module Content

Chapter	Short stories	Comic strips	Dialogues	Descriptive Passages	Total Number of Reading Texts
1	1	1	1	2	5
2	1	1	-	1	3
3	1	1	-	-	2
4	-	3	1	-	4
5	-	1	1	1	3
6	1	1	-	-	2
TOTAL					19

The texts varied in genre and length but shared the function of providing contextualized English input through characters, events, descriptions, and social interactions. The unit of analysis was the textual segment containing a cultural representation, which could take the form of a word, phrase, sentence, dialogue, description, narrative episode, or a larger textual passage when the cultural meaning could not be interpreted adequately at a smaller level.

Rather than limiting the corpus to texts explicitly labelled as cultural materials, the study examined all reading texts in the module and identified segments containing representations of local cultural products, practices, perspectives, communities, or persons. This procedure was adopted to avoid overlooking implicit or less visible forms of cultural representation embedded in otherwise ordinary narratives and descriptions.

Data Collection

The data were collected through systematic document analysis of the Grade 6 *English for Nusantara Kids* module. The researchers reviewed all reading materials and classified them according to their location, title or topic, genre, and general content. The texts were then reread to identify segments representing Indonesian or local culture. Relevant segments were extracted and recorded in a data corpus containing the text/unit number, page number, title or topic, textual segment, preliminary cultural interpretation, Moran's cultural category, and discourse-related observations. The inclusion criterion was the presence of recognizable local cultural representations in the form of products, practices, perspectives, communities, or persons (Moran, 2001a), while segments without identifiable cultural relevance were excluded. To ensure contextual interpretation, each selected segment was analyzed together with its surrounding text rather than as an isolated linguistic item.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed iteratively through repeated reading, coding, and interpretation. First, the selected texts were re-read to identify relevant cultural representations, which were coded according to

Moran's (2001a) five cultural dimensions: products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. The coded segments were then analyzed using Fairclough's (2013b) three-dimensional discourse analysis framework, focusing on textual, discursive-practice, and social-practice dimensions. At the textual level, the analysis examined vocabulary, expressions, descriptions, dialogue, and thematic patterns used to represent culture; at the discursive-practice level, it examined how cultural meanings were constructed through narrative organization, character interactions, and the contextualization of cultural elements; and at the social-practice level, it interpreted these representations in relation to broader Indonesian cultural and social contexts. Finally, the findings were compared and synthesized, with Moran's framework used to categorize the types of cultural representation and Fairclough's framework used to interpret how these representations were constructed through discourse.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the researchers used repeated readings, systematic data recording, and contextual interpretation of each cultural representation. Coding decisions were checked against the complete textual context and the definitions of Moran's cultural categories. The researchers also revisited the coded data during the discourse-analysis stage to ensure consistency between the identified cultural categories and their subsequent interpretations. In cases where a textual segment could plausibly be assigned to more than one cultural dimension, the surrounding narrative and the intended cultural meaning were examined before the final categorization was determined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Themes in TEYL Reading Texts

The analysis of reading texts in *Bahasa Inggris: English for Nusantara Kids* for grade 6 reveals a range of cultural themes embedded in everyday narratives and dialogues. Through thematic coding informed by discourse analysis, ten major cultural themes emerged: (1) local food and culinary culture, (2) family interaction and cooperation, (3) health and hygiene education, (4) traditional games and cultural heritage, (5) peer interaction in children's play, (6) extracurricular activities, (7) family communication and achievement, (8) outdoor experiential learning, (9) science and everyday learning, and (10) agriculture and gardening. These themes are illustrated in Figure 1, which presents a conceptual mind map of cultural representations identified in the reading materials.

These themes illustrate how cultural meanings are constructed through linguistic choices, narrative structures, and everyday contexts. From a discourse perspective, language in the textbooks does not merely convey linguistic forms but also reflects particular social practices and cultural values (Fairclough, 2013; Gee, 2011). The cultural representations found in the analyzed texts provide insights into how educational materials introduce young learners to both linguistic and cultural knowledge. The following sections discuss the identified themes and their implications for TEYL.

Local Food and Culinary Culture

One prominent theme identified in the reading texts is local food culture, represented through discussions of traditional dishes, ingredients, and everyday eating practices. For example, a short narrative dialogue introduces vegetables such as spinach and bean sprouts as essential ingredients in preparing *pecel*, a traditional Indonesian salad served with peanut sauce (see Figure 2).

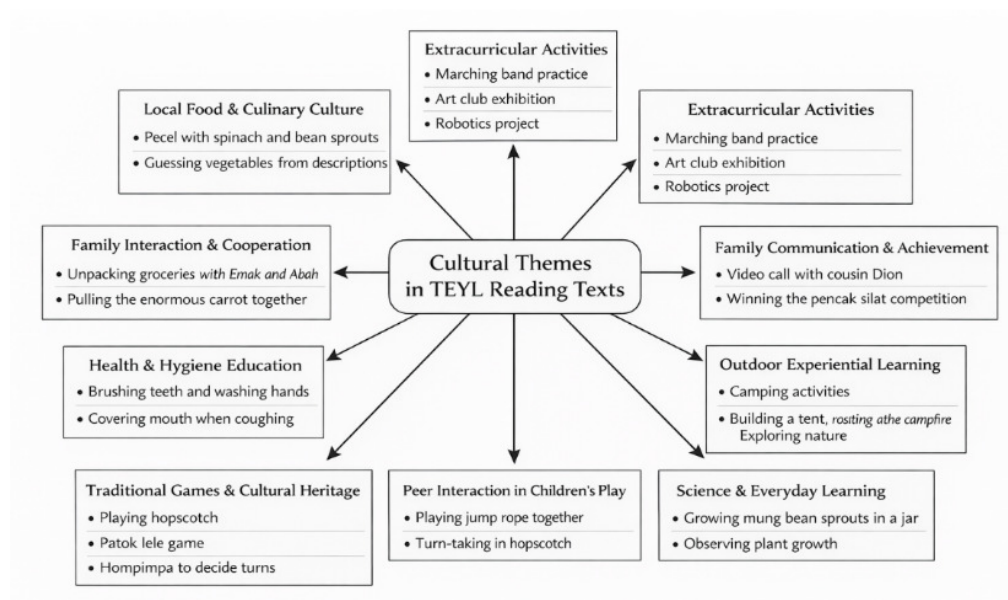


Figure 1 Cultural Themes in *English for Nusantara Kids* for Grade 6

Little Red Hen

Once upon a time, in a peaceful village, there lived Little Red Hen and her friends, Goat and Duck.

On a bright sunny day, Little Red Hen went to the garden to plant some vegetable seeds. Little Red Hen said to herself, "I have some bean sprout seeds here. I like bean sprouts. Oh, I have some snake bean and spinach seeds, too. I like snake beans and spinach, too. Goat, Duck, and I can plant the seeds and make *pecel* from the bean sprouts, snake beans, and spinach. Goat and Duck will like the *pecel*."

Then Little Red Hen said to Goat and Duck, "I have some bean sprouts, snake bean, and spinach seeds. Who will help me plant the seeds?"

"Not I," said Goat.

"I don't like bean sprouts, snake beans, or spinach."

Figure 2 A Narrative Story Featuring Traditional Food "*Pecel*"

Another reading activity encourages learners to identify different vegetables by interpreting descriptive clues, thereby reinforcing both vocabulary development and cultural familiarity. These examples demonstrate how the textbook incorporates elements of learners' daily lives into English-language instruction. Such representation aligns with Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) concept of source culture, which emphasizes the inclusion of learners' own cultural background as the primary context for foreign language learning. Rather than relying exclusively on target-language cultures, the textbook draws on familiar local experiences, enabling learners to connect new linguistic forms to concepts already meaningful in their social and cultural environment.

This approach is particularly appropriate in the context of TEYL. Young learners tend to acquire language more effectively when new vocabulary and expressions are presented through concrete, familiar, and meaningful experiences (Cameron, 2001). Their cognitive development is still closely tied to observable objects and everyday situations, making contextualized learning especially beneficial. By introducing vegetables, traditional dishes, and local culinary practices, the textbook provides authentic contexts that facilitate vocabulary retention and comprehension. Students are therefore able to associate English lexical items with foods they regularly encounter at home or in their communities, reducing cognitive demands while strengthening meaningful language learning. At the same time, these representations affirm learners' cultural identity by recognizing local knowledge as a legitimate and valuable component of English education.

The inclusion of local food culture aligns with previous studies on cultural representation in EFL materials. Research indicates that culturally relevant content enhances learners' motivation, engagement, and reading comprehension because students can connect new language with familiar experiences (Alshenqeeti, 2020; Liu, 2024). In the Indonesian context, locally developed English textbooks increasingly integrate cultural elements—including traditional foods, clothing, customs, and festivals—to promote culturally responsive pedagogy and preserve national identity within English language education (Hasnah et al., 2024). [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) Such integration reflects broader educational policies that encourage contextualized learning while maintaining cultural relevance.

From the ICC perspective, the representation of local food culture also contributes to learners' ability to communicate their own cultural identity in English. Byram (1997) argues that successful language learners should not only understand other cultures but also develop the knowledge and skills necessary to explain and represent their own culture to international audiences. By learning English through descriptions of traditional dishes such as *pecel* and familiar local ingredients, students acquire the vocabulary and communicative resources needed to introduce Indonesian culinary traditions to people from different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the textbook does more than teach vocabulary; it positions English as a medium for expressing local cultural knowledge and fostering intercultural dialogue. This pedagogical orientation supports the development of learners who are linguistically competent while remaining rooted in and confident about their own cultural heritage.

Family Interaction and Cooperation

Another recurring theme in the reading texts is family interaction and cooperation. Several narratives depict children interacting with family members in everyday activities. For instance, one text describes a child helping parents unpack groceries at home, while another story tells the tale of an enormous carrot that requires collective effort from multiple family members to pull from the ground, as seen in Figure 3.

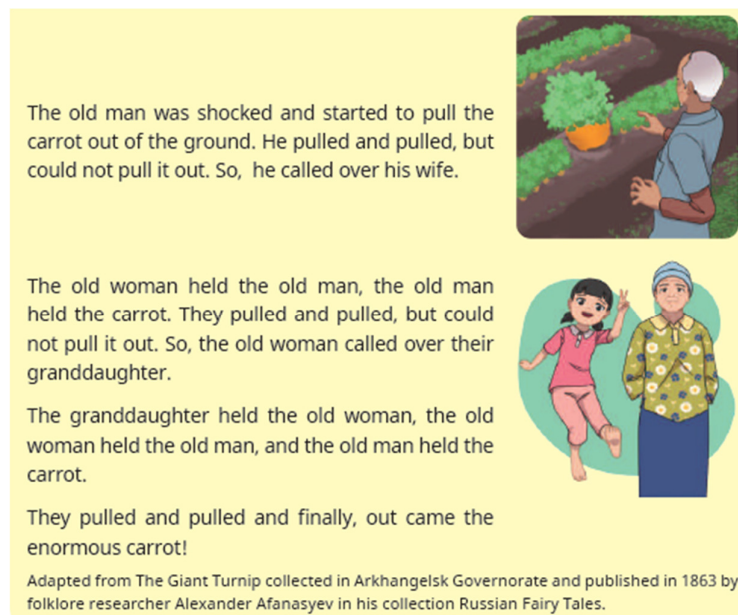


Figure 3 Part of A Story Incorporating Collaboration

These representations highlight cultural values of family solidarity and cooperation, which are central elements of many Indonesian social contexts. From a discourse-analytic perspective, such narratives construct specific social roles and relationships within the family structure. Fairclough (2013a) argues that discourse shapes how social relationships are understood and reproduced in society. In this case, the texts portray family life as collaborative and supportive.

The story of the enormous carrot is particularly illustrative of collective action. The narrative structure emphasizes repeated cooperation among family members until the problem is solved. This repetition not only supports comprehension for young learners but also reinforces the moral lesson that cooperation leads to success.

Values such as cooperation and collective responsibility are also frequently embedded in children's literature and educational materials worldwide. According to Moran (2001b), cultural learning involves understanding the practices, perspectives, and values associated with everyday interactions. By presenting family cooperation as a common practice, the textbook communicates cultural perspectives about social relationships.

Additionally, these narratives reflect the pedagogical importance of storytelling in TEYL contexts. Stories are widely recognized as effective tools for language learning because they provide meaningful contexts for vocabulary and grammar while also conveying cultural messages (Cameron, 2001).

Health and Hygiene Education

Another prominent cultural theme identified in the reading texts is health and hygiene practices, which are represented through everyday routines and behaviors that promote personal well-being. Several reading passages and dialogues include instructions and conversations about brushing teeth, washing hands before eating, bathing regularly, and covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, such as in Figure 4.

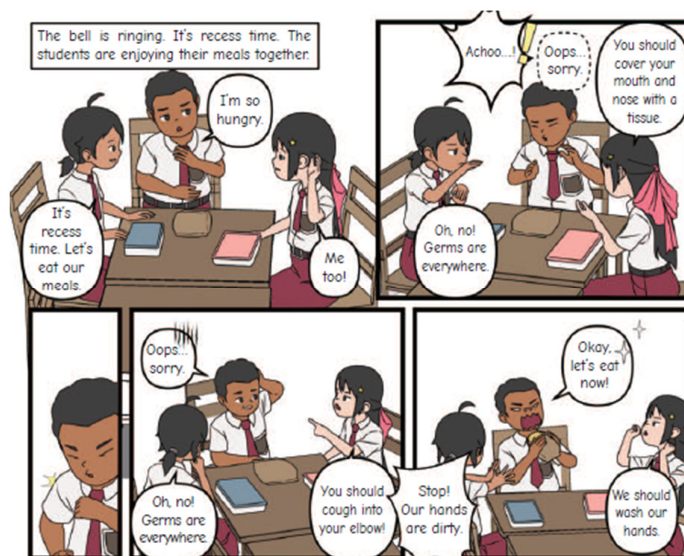


Figure 4 Comic Strips about Hygiene

These health-related practices are typically presented through interactions among children discussing their daily activities, making the content relatable and meaningful for young learners. Rather than treating health education as a separate subject, the textbook integrates these messages into English-language learning, allowing students to acquire new vocabulary and grammatical structures while simultaneously developing awareness of healthy living. Such representations reflect broader educational objectives that extend beyond language acquisition. In many national curricula, language textbooks are expected not only to develop learners' linguistic competence but also to cultivate positive attitudes, healthy habits, and responsible citizenship.

From a discourse perspective, the language in these texts constructs learners as individuals responsible for maintaining their own health and contributing to the well-being of others. The frequent use of imperative forms and modal expressions, such as *wash your hands*, *brush your teeth twice a day*, or *cover your mouth when coughing*, positions hygiene practices as expected and socially appropriate behaviors. According to Gee (2011), discourse functions not merely as a means of communication but also as a mechanism for transmitting social values, identities, and norms. Everyday language serves to socialize learners into culturally accepted patterns of behavior. In this textbook, the repeated emphasis on cleanliness and personal hygiene reflects societal expectations regarding responsible conduct and demonstrates how linguistic choices simultaneously convey moral and social meanings.

The integration of health and hygiene practices is particularly appropriate within the context of TEYL. Young children are still developing daily routines and lifelong habits, making school an important setting for reinforcing healthy behaviors alongside academic learning. Cameron (2001) argues that young learners benefit most from language instruction that is grounded in familiar experiences and meaningful contexts. Daily routines such as washing hands, brushing teeth, and maintaining personal cleanliness are concrete experiences that children encounter both at home and at school. Presenting these activities in English enables learners to connect new vocabulary with actions they already perform, thereby supporting vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and long-term retention. At the same time, students learn to use English to describe routines that are directly relevant to their everyday lives, increasing the authenticity and communicative value of classroom activities.

Furthermore, the inclusion of health-related content reflects broader trends in values-based and culturally responsive language education. Previous studies have shown that EFL textbooks frequently integrate moral, social, and character-building themes alongside linguistic objectives to support learners' holistic development (Prihatiningsih et al., 2021; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). In the Indonesian educational context, such integration aligns with curriculum goals that emphasize character education, healthy lifestyles, and responsible citizenship as essential learning outcomes. From an ICC perspective, these representations also provide learners with the language needed to discuss universal health practices while recognizing that hygiene behaviors may be expressed differently across cultures. Consequently, the textbook not only promotes English language proficiency but also encourages learners to develop healthy habits, social responsibility, and the communicative ability to discuss everyday health practices in both local and intercultural contexts.

Traditional Games and Cultural Heritage

Traditional games constitute one of the most culturally distinctive themes in the analyzed texts. Several dialogues mention games such as hopscotch, *patok lele*, and *hompimpa*, which are commonly played by children in Indonesia (see Figure 5).

Ferdinand is asking about his mom and dad's childhood favorite game.

Ferdinand : What is your childhood favorite game, Mom?

Mom : My childhood favorite game is hopscotch. It's fun to play.

Ferdinand : I know how to play hopscotch. You have to 1) **throw** / **catch** the token and 2) **run** / **hop** to the square.

Mom : Yes, you are right.

Ferdinand : How about you, Dad? What is your childhood favorite game?

Dad : I played many games when I was a kid. I liked to play *patok lele*.

Ferdinand : *Patok lele*? I have not heard about that game before. "How did you play it, Dad?"

Dad : It's so easy. You have to 3) **throw** / **put** a small branch and your friends will 4) **tag** / **catch** it.

Mom : How about you, son? What game do you like to play?

Ferdinand : Well, I rarely play traditional games, but last week my friends and I played blindfold tag at school. It was fun. I had to 5) **put** / **catch** a blindfold over my eyes and 6) **look** / **run** for my friends.

Figure 5 Dialogue Mentioning Traditional Games

These games function as cultural artifacts that connect language learning with cultural heritage. According to Kramsch (1998), language and culture are inseparable because language reflects the symbolic systems through which cultural meanings are communicated. When learners read about traditional games in English, they encounter their own cultural practices expressed through a global language.

The representation of traditional games also highlights the importance of preserving local culture in educational materials. Studies on EFL textbooks have shown that globalization sometimes leads to the dominance of foreign cultural content, potentially marginalizing local traditions (Zhang & Nordin, 2025). By including traditional games, the textbook balances global language learning with local cultural representation.

In addition, traditional games encourage interactive learning and physical activity, which are particularly beneficial for young learners. TEYL pedagogy often emphasizes learning through play

and movement (Cameron, 2001). Therefore, integrating games into reading texts supports both cultural learning and pedagogical effectiveness.

Peer Interaction in Children's Play

Another important cultural theme identified in the reading texts is peer interaction in children's play, which is closely connected to the representation of traditional games. Several dialogues and comic strips (see Figures 5 and 6) portray children playing activities such as jump rope and hopscotch together, inviting friends to join, negotiating turns, encouraging one another, and responding to successes or mistakes during the game.

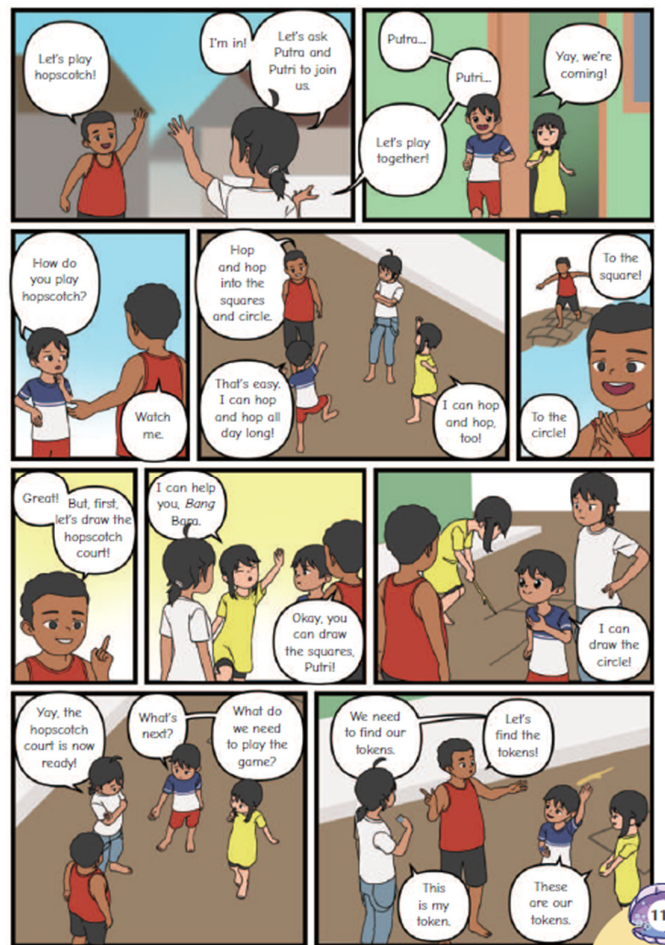


Figure 6 Comic Strips Incorporating Peer Interactions

These interactions reflect the collaborative nature of children's play within Indonesian communities, where games often serve not only as recreational activities but also as opportunities for developing social relationships, cooperation, and communication skills. By embedding these familiar social experiences into English-language reading texts, the textbook presents language as a practical tool for everyday interaction rather than merely as an academic subject. The dialogues reflect authentic situations that young learners are likely to encounter in their daily lives, making language learning more meaningful and contextually relevant.

From a discourse perspective, these dialogues illustrate how language functions within specific social contexts to accomplish interpersonal purposes. According to Gee (Gee, 2011), discourse analysis examines not only the linguistic forms used in communication but also how language constructs relationships, identities, and patterns of social interaction. In the textbook, conversational exchanges among children include common speech acts such as inviting others to play, asking for permission, taking turns, expressing agreement or disagreement, offering encouragement, and responding politely to peers. Expressions such as *Let's play together*, *It's your turn*, or *Good job!* represent everyday communicative practices that children naturally use while interacting with friends. These linguistic patterns demonstrate that communication is inherently social and collaborative, allowing learners to understand how English functions in authentic interpersonal situations rather than as isolated grammatical structures or vocabulary items.

The inclusion of peer interaction is particularly valuable within the context of TEYL because social interaction plays a central role in children's cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development. Young learners acquire language most effectively when they participate in meaningful communication that involves cooperation, shared experiences, and active engagement with others (Cameron, 2001). Dialogues based on children's games provide familiar and enjoyable contexts in which learners can observe and practice functional language used for real communication. Instead of memorizing disconnected vocabulary, students learn expressions that enable them to initiate conversations, negotiate meaning, respond appropriately, and maintain social relationships. These communicative functions are essential for developing both language proficiency and social competence.

Extracurricular Activities

Another prominent cultural theme identified in the reading texts is extracurricular activities, which are represented through descriptions of school clubs and student participation in various enrichment programs. Several texts introduce activities such as the marching band, art club, robotics club, and *pencak silat* training, often highlighting students' involvement in competitions, performances, exhibitions, or other school events, as seen in Figure 5. These texts portray extracurricular activities as an integral part of students' educational experiences rather than as optional additions to academic learning. By incorporating these activities into English reading materials, the textbook reflects the broader culture of Indonesian schools, where students are encouraged to develop their interests, talents, and character through participation in both academic and non-academic programs. The representation of extracurricular activities presents school as a dynamic environment that supports holistic student development.

From the discourse-analytic perspective, these texts construct students as active, capable, and achievement-oriented individuals. According to Gee (2011), discourse not only communicates information but also shapes identities and social roles. The reading passages frequently position learners as participants who collaborate with peers, develop specialized skills, solve problems, and contribute to school communities. Descriptions of students participating in robotics competitions, performing in marching band events, creating artwork, or practicing *pencak silat* communicate values such as perseverance, teamwork, creativity, discipline, and personal responsibility. Through these representations, the textbook implicitly conveys social expectations regarding what it means to be an engaged and successful student. Rather than presenting education solely as classroom-based instruction, the texts emphasize learning as a multifaceted process that extends into extracurricular experiences and community participation.

The inclusion of extracurricular activities is particularly valuable in the context of TEYL because it situates language learning within authentic and meaningful educational settings. Cameron (2001) argues that young learners learn language more effectively when instructional content relates to their everyday experiences and interests. School clubs and extracurricular programs are familiar aspects of children's lives, providing rich contexts for introducing vocabulary related to hobbies, interests, achievements, teamwork, and future aspirations. Reading about familiar school activities enables learners to connect English with experiences they encounter both inside and outside the classroom, thereby enhancing motivation, comprehension, and communicative relevance. Furthermore, texts describing collaborative projects and competitions expose learners to functional language associated with cooperation, encouragement, goal setting, and achievement, all of which are important components of communicative competence.

From a broader cultural perspective, the diversity of extracurricular activities represented in the textbook reflects contemporary educational values that recognize multiple forms of intelligence and talent. The inclusion of activities such as robotics illustrates the growing importance of science, technology, and innovation within modern education, while the presence of *pencak silat* demonstrates the continued appreciation of Indonesian cultural heritage. This combination of traditional and modern activities portrays education as a balance between preserving cultural identity and preparing learners for future societal challenges. Previous research has similarly observed that educational materials often represent students as active participants in school life by emphasizing teamwork, creativity, leadership, and academic achievement (Hidayah & Zahro, 2025).

Meanwhile, from the perspective of ICC, these representations also enable learners to describe their school experiences, interests, and achievements in English while sharing aspects of Indonesian educational culture with people from different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the representation of extracurricular activities not only supports language learning but also promotes positive learner identities, lifelong learning, and the ability to communicate local educational experiences in intercultural settings.

Family Communication and Achievement

Another theme identified in the analysis is family communication and achievement, illustrated through a dialogue in which a student congratulates a cousin who has won a *pencak silat* competition (see Figure 5). This interaction demonstrates how language is used to express support, encouragement, and pride within family relationships. Expressions of congratulations and admiration serve as examples of pragmatic language functions.

From an intercultural perspective, these dialogues also highlight how cultural values related to achievement and family pride are communicated through language. Byram (1997) emphasizes that intercultural competence involves understanding not only linguistic forms but also the social meanings associated with communication.

Outdoor Experiential Learning

Outdoor experiences such as camping, building tents, collecting twigs, and roasting corn around a campfire appear in several reading texts. These activities emphasize exploration, teamwork, and engagement with nature. Outdoor learning experiences provide meaningful contexts for language use. By describing real-life activities, the texts encourage learners to connect English expressions with practical experiences. Experiential learning is widely recognized as an effective approach in TEYL

contexts. Young learners benefit from activities that involve exploration and discovery, as these experiences make language learning more engaging and memorable (Cameron, 2001).

Science and Everyday Learning

Another interesting theme is science and everyday learning, illustrated through a simple experiment involving growing mung bean sprouts in a jar. The dialogue describes the process of soaking beans and observing their growth over several days. This activity introduces basic scientific concepts while simultaneously developing language skills. Integrating science topics into language learning reflects interdisciplinary educational approaches that encourage curiosity and inquiry.

The representation of everyday science is also consistent with Moran's (2001b) framework of cultural learning, which includes understanding how people interact with their environment and everyday practices.

Agriculture and Gardening

Finally, agriculture and gardening emerge as another significant cultural theme in the reading texts, such as in Figure 3. This theme is represented through a narrative describing the process of planting and harvesting carrots. The story follows an elderly man as he prepares the soil, plants carrot seeds, waters the crops, and patiently waits for them to grow. Eventually, the carrots become so large that he requires the assistance of his family members to harvest them successfully. Although presented as a simple and engaging story for young learners, the narrative introduces students to fundamental agricultural practices while emphasizing the values of patience, cooperation, and appreciation for nature. By incorporating farming activities into English reading materials, the textbook connects language learning with experiences that remain familiar to many Indonesian children, particularly those living in rural and agricultural communities. This representation demonstrates how local livelihoods and everyday experiences can serve as meaningful contexts for language acquisition.

From a discourse perspective, the narrative constructs agriculture as a collaborative and purposeful activity that strengthens relationships between individuals, families, and their natural environment. According to Gee (2011), discourse not only communicates events but also reflects social values and cultural identities embedded within everyday practices. The sequence of actions in the story—from preparing the land and planting seeds to nurturing crops and harvesting the produce—positions farming as a process requiring responsibility, perseverance, and cooperation. The involvement of family members in harvesting the giant carrot further reinforces the importance of collective effort and mutual support, values that are commonly emphasized within Indonesian society. Rather than portraying agriculture merely as an economic activity, the narrative presents it as a shared cultural practice that fosters family solidarity and respect for the environment.

The inclusion of agricultural themes is particularly appropriate in the context of TEYL because young learners benefit from language instruction that is grounded in concrete experiences and familiar contexts (Cameron, 2001). Many Indonesian children, especially those living in rural areas, are familiar with gardening, farming, or observing agricultural activities within their communities. Presenting these experiences through English reading texts enables learners to acquire vocabulary related to plants, vegetables, gardening tools, seasons, and farming processes while connecting new language with prior knowledge. Such contextualized learning supports vocabulary retention, reading comprehension, and meaningful language use because students can easily visualize and relate to the situations described in the text.

Implications for TEYL and Cultural Learning

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the analyzed textbook integrates a wide range of cultural themes related to everyday life, family relationships, social interaction, and local traditions. These representations align with the view that language education should include cultural knowledge alongside linguistic competence (Kramsch, 1998; McKay, 2002).

By incorporating familiar cultural contexts, the textbook supports young learners' comprehension and engagement. At the same time, presenting local culture in English encourages learners to develop intercultural communication skills. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the importance of cultural representation in EFL textbooks. For example, Setyono and Widodo (2019) found that Indonesian EFL textbooks often include multicultural values that promote tolerance and cultural awareness. More recent research also emphasizes the need for balanced representation of local, national, and global cultures in language materials (Ningtiyas et al., 2025; Zhang & Nordin, 2025).

From a discourse-analytic perspective, the language used in the texts constructs specific cultural narratives about family cooperation, healthy living, cultural heritage, and experiential learning. These narratives shape learners' understanding of social values and practices.

Ultimately, the integration of cultural themes in TEYL reading texts reflects the broader goal of language education: enabling learners not only to communicate effectively in English but also to understand and express their cultural identities within a global context.

CONCLUSION

This study examined cultural representations in the reading texts of *Bahasa Inggris: English for Nusantara Kids* for Grade 6 through a discourse-oriented analysis. The findings reveal that the textbook integrates diverse cultural themes that reflect everyday experiences familiar to young learners. Ten major themes were identified: local food and culinary culture, family interaction and cooperation, health and hygiene education, traditional games and cultural heritage, peer interaction in children's play, extracurricular activities, family communication and achievement, outdoor experiential learning, science and everyday learning, and agriculture and gardening. These themes indicate that cultural content in the textbook is predominantly grounded in local and everyday life contexts.

The representation of these themes suggests that the textbook attempts to connect language learning with learners' sociocultural environments. Activities such as playing traditional games, helping family members, participating in school clubs, and exploring nature present English as a language used to describe familiar practices and experiences. Such contextualized representations are particularly beneficial for young learners, as they provide meaningful and relatable situations in which new vocabulary and expressions can be understood and practiced.

Moreover, the integration of local cultural elements in English-language materials highlights the importance of balancing global language learning with local cultural identity. By presenting Indonesian cultural practices and everyday activities through English, the textbook enables learners to articulate aspects of their own culture while developing language proficiency. This approach supports the broader goal of English education as a means of communication rather than cultural replacement.

Overall, the findings indicate that the textbook provides a culturally grounded learning environment that supports both linguistic and cultural development. Future research may extend this study by examining other components of the textbook, such as visual images, listening materials, or classroom tasks, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural meanings are constructed and conveyed in English language teaching materials for young learners.

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