



Representation of Multicultural Values in Indonesian and English Textbooks for Junior High School

(Representasi Nilai-Nilai Multikultural dalam Buku Teks Bahasa Indonesia dan Bahasa Inggris SMP)

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Abstract: This research is motivated by the need to understand how multicultural values are represented in language textbooks used in junior high schools (SMP) in Indonesia, considering that language education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and social awareness. This study aims to identify and analyze the representation of multicultural values reflected in the text and visuals of Indonesian and English textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method, which views language as a social practice. Research data were obtained through documentation, learning observations, and teacher interviews to gain a contextual understanding of students' interpretations of multicultural values. The results show that both textbooks have presented ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, but the representation is still symbolic and not entirely critical. Multicultural values are more dominant in the visual aspect than in the text, while the integration between the two is still weak. These findings confirm that language textbooks are not merely linguistic learning tools, but also ideological means that shape students' social awareness. Therefore, this study recommends developing textbooks and pedagogical strategies that are more reflective, contextual, and oriented towards multicultural character education.			
Keywords	Critical discourse analysis, English, Indonesian, Junior high school textbooks, multicultural values		
Abstrak: Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kebutuhan untuk memahami bagaimana nilai-nilai multikultural direpresentasikan dalam buku teks bahasa yang digunakan di Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) di Indonesia, mengingat pendidikan bahasa berperan penting dalam pembentukan karakter dan kesadaran sosial peserta didik. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis representasi nilai-nilai multikultural yang tercermin dalam teks dan visual buku Bahasa Indonesia serta Bahasa Inggris terbitan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Fairclough yang memandang bahasa sebagai praktik sosial. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui dokumentasi, observasi pembelajaran, dan wawancara guru untuk memperoleh pemahaman kontekstual mengenai interpretasi nilai-nilai multikultural oleh siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua buku teks telah menampilkan keberagaman etnik, budaya, dan agama, namun representasinya masih bersifat simbolik dan belum sepenuhnya kritis. Nilai-nilai multikultural lebih dominan muncul pada aspek visual dibandingkan teks, sementara integrasi antara keduanya masih lemah. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa buku teks bahasa tidak sekadar alat pembelajaran linguistik, melainkan sarana ideologis yang membentuk kesadaran sosial siswa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan perlunya pengembangan buku ajar dan strategi pedagogis yang lebih reflektif, kontekstual, dan berorientasi pada pendidikan karakter multikultural.			
Kata Kunci	Analisis wacana kritis, Bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Indonesia, Buku teks SMP, Nilai-nilai multikultural		
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INTRODUCTION

As a country with a wide diversity of ethnicities, religions, races, and cultures, Indonesia faces a real challenge in aligning this diversity with a spirit of nationalism and inclusive character education. Without strengthening multicultural values, the potential for interethnic conflict remains a constant in daily life (Pratama et al., 2021). Previous research has shown that language textbooks—both Indonesian and English—often do not optimally represent or accommodate essential multicultural values such as respect for cultural diversity, human rights, and the profound responsibility of global citizenship (Irma et al., 2023). The fact that most research focuses on high school textbooks and fewer examine junior high school textbooks indicates a significant gap, even though junior high school education is the foundation of character for the younger generation, helping them understand multiculturalism from an early age (Pratama et al., 2021). Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by sharpening observations on Indonesian and English textbooks for junior high school students and revealing the extent to which these multicultural values are represented. This closing paragraph emphasizes that through such studies, we can better understand the role of textbooks as strategic media in shaping tolerant citizens who appreciate differences and can contribute at the national and global levels.

Literature reviews indicate that language teaching theories oriented toward multicultural values have not been fully integrated into language textbook development in Indonesia. Learning models such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which emphasize integrating content, communication, cognition, and culture, have great potential to instill multicultural values in the language learning process (Coyle et al., 2010; Kosasih, 2017). However, recent research has found that most Indonesian and English language textbooks still emphasize linguistic aspects alone, with minimal exploration of the sociocultural context that supports student character development (Rahmawati & Inderawati, 2021; Ahmed & Narcy-Combes, 2011). However, according to Widodo (2016), integrating multicultural values in language learning plays a crucial role in shaping students' identities as empathetic, respectful, and open-minded global citizens. The gap between multicultural teaching theories and textbook development practices remains a significant issue that previous research has not addressed. Therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth study that identifies the textual and visual representation of multicultural values and relates them to the context of character education promoted by the 2013 Curriculum. Thus, this research is expected to enrich scientific discourse in the field of language education and provide theoretical contributions to developing a curriculum with a multicultural perspective.

This study aims to identify and analyze the representation of multicultural values contained in Indonesian and English textbooks for junior high school (SMP) level. Specifically, this study focuses on exploring how the textual and visual aspects in textbooks reflect values such as tolerance, appreciation for cultural diversity, respect for religious differences, and national spirit, which are in line with the principles of character education (Fitriani et al., 2020; Awayed-Bishara, 2015). By analyzing two language subjects that are the primary means of communication, this study assesses the linguistic content and the social values contained in the learning discourse. In addition, this study aims to analyze the relevance between the multicultural values represented in textbooks and the direction and objectives of the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of students who are religious, nationalistic, independent, cooperative, and have integrity. This study also aims to examine the contribution of textbooks as a strategic medium in shaping students' multicultural character, thus serving as a reference in developing and evaluating more inclusive language learning materials in the future (Widodo et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is expected to yield a deeper understanding of the

role of language textbooks as a multicultural educational instrument aligned with the social and global needs of the 21st century.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on multicultural values in textbooks, most previous research has focused on a single language, either Indonesian or English, without conducting in-depth cross-subject comparisons. This creates a significant research gap, as both textbooks serve as primary tools for character development in junior high school students. Research by [Pratama et al., \(2021\)](#) shows that English textbooks in Indonesia do not fully represent multicultural values in a balanced, local, and global way. Meanwhile, [Irma et al., \(2023\)](#) found that Indonesian textbooks emphasize nationalism and religiosity, but do not fully represent the ethnic and cultural diversity contextually. These two findings urge a comparative study that highlights how multicultural values are presented through the texts and visuals of both textbooks. The novelty of this research lies in integrating linguistic, visual, and character value analysis within a holistic framework. Theoretically, this research broadens the understanding of multicultural education in the context of language teaching. In contrast, practically, the research results can be the basis for developing more inclusive textbooks that align with the Independent Curriculum's vision, which emphasizes diversity and the humanization of education ([Suyadi & Widodo, 2022](#); [Darojah, 2021](#)).

This research is expected to make significant theoretical and practical contributions to developing language education and multicultural studies in Indonesia. Theoretically, the results of this study can expand the study of the representation of multicultural values in textbooks by combining content analysis and critical discourse approaches, allowing for an in-depth reading of how texts and visuals convey messages of diversity, tolerance, and humanity ([Fairclough, 2013](#); [Widodo et al., 2021](#)). This approach enriches the perspective of language education, which is oriented not only toward linguistic skills but also the development of students' character as citizens and global citizens who value plurality ([Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum](#)). Practically, this research can serve as a reference for teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers in designing teaching materials that are more inclusive and sensitive to students' ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the results of this study can also support the implementation of multicultural-based character education, which is the focus of the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, in an effort to instill the values of tolerance and social empathy from an early age ([De los Heros, 2009](#); [Kusmana et al., 2025](#)). Thus, this research not only fills an underexplored theoretical gap but also offers concrete solutions for improving the quality of language education in Indonesia, oriented toward humanitarian values and diversity.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method developed by [Fairclough \(2001\)](#). CDA was chosen because it allows researchers to interpret language and visuals as social practices embedded with specific ideologies and values ([Wodak & Meyer, 2016](#)). This approach emphasizes that every text is not neutral, but rather represents a worldview that has the potential to shape students' social awareness. Through CDA, this study analyzes how multicultural values—such as tolerance, respect for differences, and appreciation for local cultures—are explicitly and implicitly represented in Indonesian and English textbooks for junior high school. This approach is also relevant to the objectives of the 2013 Curriculum, which positions language education as a means of developing students' character into religious, productive, and globally aware citizens. Therefore, CDA plays a crucial role in exploring the hidden meanings behind texts and visuals and connecting them to Indonesian education's social, cultural, and policy contexts.

Data Sources and Objects of Study

The objects of this study were Indonesian and English language textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, used in junior high schools throughout Indonesia. These two books were chosen because they are primary instruments in forming students' character values and

cultural awareness (Rahmawati & Inderawati, 2021). Each lesson unit was analyzed to identify texts and visuals containing multicultural values, such as ethnic, religious, and gender diversity, and appreciation for local and global cultures. The analysis also included the sociocultural contexts underlying the writing of the books by the government and contributors. Visual data, such as illustrations, clothing, skin color, and social activities, were analyzed based on Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar theory, which views images as a form of social communication loaded with ideological meaning. By combining textual and visual analysis, this study seeks to illustrate the extent to which multicultural values are balanced in two textbooks representing the context of language education in Indonesia.

Data Collection Technique

Data was collected through documentation studies and content analysis of the two textbooks that served as the research objects. Each text and illustration representing multicultural values was recorded, classified, and grouped based on key themes such as ethnic diversity, religion, gender, and respect for local and global cultures. The researcher used a categorization table to facilitate the coding and interpretation of meaning (Miles et al., 2018). To strengthen the validity of the data, the researcher cross-checked with two language education experts to ensure consistency of analysis and avoid subjective bias. Secondary sources such as journals, curriculum policies, and multicultural theory were used to interpret the context of the emerging values. This procedure ensured that the analyzed data were relevant to the research objectives and provided a comprehensive picture of how textbooks reflect multicultural values in the context of character education for junior high school students.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis used Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional CDA framework: text analysis, discourse practice, and social practice. Researchers examined linguistic aspects such as diction, sentence structure, and metaphor in the text analysis stage to uncover hidden values and ideologies. The discourse practice stage focused on text production and consumption processes, namely, how book authors construct multicultural messages and how students interpret those texts. The social practice stage explored the ideological and social contexts underlying the emergence of multicultural value representations in education (Widodo et al., 2021). For visual data, Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal semiotic analysis was used to understand the relationship between images, text, and the social meanings they construct. This combinatory approach allows for interpreting layered meanings that connect linguistic and cultural dimensions.

Research Procedures and Validity

The research procedure includes five main stages: (1) selecting textbooks as data sources; (2) identifying texts and images containing multicultural values; (3) classifying data based on value categories; (4) analyzing texts and visuals using CDA and multimodal semiotics; and (5) triangulating the findings with previous theories and research. The validity of the results is maintained through theoretical triangulation by comparing the analysis results with multiculturalism and language pedagogy theories (Banks, 2019). In addition, the researcher uses intra-rater reliability to maintain consistency of analysis between text units. All stages are carried out reflectively and systematically. Hence, the research results describe the representation of multicultural values descriptively and explain how these values are internalized through language education practices in Indonesia (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Indonesia and Curriculum Objectives

Indonesia is a multicultural country consisting of diverse ethnicities and languages. Differences in ethnicity, religion, and race (SARA) are often sensitive issues and trigger inter-ethnic conflict.

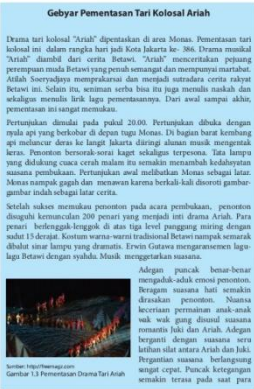
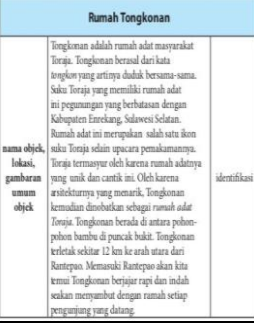

Therefore, multicultural values in language textbooks can function as character education to equip students to become good citizens and global citizens in accordance with the objectives of the 2013 curriculum in Indonesia, as [Widodo \(2016\)](#) notes that the 2013 ELT Curriculum aims to prepare Indonesians to become citizens who are religious, productive, innovative, and passionate, as well as who can contribute to societal, national, and global civilizations.

Language and content are mutually supportive. This aligns with the development of language teaching theory in Europe and America, namely Content-Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL emphasizes four essential elements to sharpen the understanding of language competence: content, communication, cognition, and culture ([Kosasih, 2017](#)).

[Zulfadhli et al., \(2024\)](#) examined national insight into compulsory Indonesian language course material. Using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, they analyzed Indonesian language texts. The results showed national insight in the texts about paying taxes, a citizen's obligation, and an indicator of love for the homeland.

Multicultural Values in Indonesian Language Books

Table 1
Representation of Multicultural Values in Indonesian Language Textbooks


Unit	Theme	Visual Display	Description	Page	Multicultural Values
1	The language structure of descriptive text		Ariah Colossal Dance Performance Text	P 15	Ethnic cultural diversity
2	Language Structure of Descriptive Text		Text of the Traditional Toraja House Tongkonan	P 18	Ethnic cultural diversity
3	Fantasy story		Fantasy Story: Harry Potter and the Moon Child	P 43	global and local cultural diversity

<p>Fantasy Story</p>		<p>Students wearing and not wearing the hijab</p>	<p>P 59</p>	<p>Respect for religious groups</p>
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Sumber: Foto pribadi
Gambar 2.4 Menceritakan secara berantai

<p>4 Procedural Text</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cara Memainkan Angklung</p>  <p style="font-size: small;">Foto: https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angklung Gambar 3.3 Para siswa sedang memainkan angklung</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Angklung merupakan warisan seni tradisional Indonesia. Sebagai warisan seni yang sangat berharga, kita hendaknya belajar memainkan angklung. Berikut cara memainkan angklung.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pegang angklung dengan tangan kiri. Pegang angklung dengan cara memegang simpul pertemuan dua tiang angklung vertikal dan horizontal (yang berada di tengah), sehingga angklung dipegang tepat di tengah-tengah. 2. Pegang dengan genggaman tangan dan telapak tangan menghadap ke atas atau pun ke bawah. 3. Posisikan angklung yang dipegang tegak dan sejajar dengan tubuh. Jarak angklung dari tubuh sebaiknya cukup jauh (siku tangan kiri hampir lurus) agar angklung dapat digetarkan dengan baik dan maksimal. 	<p>Traditional Angklung Music</p>	<p>P 83</p>	<p>Appreciation of cultural products</p>
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<p>5 Procedural Text</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cara Melakukan Gerakan Tari Tor Tor</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Tari Tor Tor merupakan salah satu tari tradisional dari Sumatera Utara. Cara menarikannya cukup sederhana dengan gerakan tangan dan kaki jinjit-jinjit. Gerakan salah satu jenis Tari Tor-tor dilakukan berikut!</p>  <p style="font-size: x-small;">Sumber: https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tari_Tor_Tor Gambar 3.5 Tari tradisional perlu dikuasai oleh generasi muda.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Putar lagu dari daerah Sumatera Utara yang sesuai. 2. Ambil posisi kedua kaki rapat. Kaki kanan agak maju sedikit. 	<p>Tor Tor Traditional Dance</p>	<p>P 85</p>	<p>appreciation of cultural products</p>
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<p>6 Observation Report Text</p>		<p>Illustration of white and black students</p>	<p>P 124</p>	<p>Diversity of ethnic groups</p>
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Ariah Colossal Dance Performance

The colossal dance drama "Ariah" was performed at the National Monument (Monas) area in commemoration of Jakarta's 386th anniversary. The musical "Ariah" is based on a Betawi story. It tells the story of a young Betawi female warrior full of spirit and dignity.



Atilah Soeryadjaya directed this Betawi folk tale. The performance captivated the audience. It began with a flame not far from the National Monument (Monas). Fireworks were then released into the Jakarta sky, accompanied by loud music.

The audience was captivated and applauded. The National Monument (Monas) looked magnificent, repeatedly highlighted by beautiful images that served as background for the story.

After successfully captivating the audience at the opening ceremony, the audience was treated to the appearance of 200 dancers who formed the centerpiece of Ariaah's drama. The dancers swayed on three stage levels tilted at a 15-degree angle. Colorful traditional Betawi costumes appeared vibrant under dramatic lighting. Erwin Gutawa arranged Betawi songs with soulfulness. The music electrified the atmosphere. The climax truly stirred the audience's emotions.

The cheerful atmosphere of the children's game of wak wak gung is followed by the romantic atmosphere of Juki and Ariaah. The scene changes to the exciting atmosphere of silat training between Ariaah and Juki. Male dancers carry replicas of torches depicting the atmosphere of the peasants' resistance against the colonial government. The atmosphere of forced cultivation, accompanied by the cruelty of the landlords, who are detrimental like loan sharks, is visualized with full feeling. The performance closes with a tragic event. A heartbreaking rhythm closes the performance of the tragedy that befell Ariaah. The lights dim. The night wind blows quite cold as if to feel Ariaah's grief. This colossal musical dance drama performance of Ariaah is magnificent and fantastic. Based on local Betawi culture, this artistic performance succeeded in presenting a spectacular performance. Thunderous applause accompanied the end of the performance.

Table 2
Multicultural Values in English Textbooks

Unit	Theme	Visual Display	Description	Page	Multicultural Values
1	Greeting Sentences		Illustration of straight and curly-haired races	p 1	Diversity of ethnic groups
2	Greeting Sentences		Illustration of Teacher and Student Wearing Hijab	P 12	Diversity of religious groups

I can count on you like 4, 3, 2
And you will be there
Because that is what friends are supposed to do, oh yeah
Ooooooh, ooooohh yeah, yeah
[Verse 2:]
If you are tossin' and you are turnin'
And you cannot fall asleep
I will sing a song beside you
And if you ever forget how much you really mean to me
Every day, I will remind you
Oooh
We find out what we are made of
When we are called to help our friends in need

Multicultural Values in Indonesian Language Books

The discussion is conducted on selected data due to space limitations. On page 15 of the Indonesian language book, there is a descriptive text of the Arian Colossal Dance Performance. This text tells the story of Arian in the Dutch colonial period. The performance was held on the 386th anniversary of the city of Jakarta. The musical drama Arian originated from Betawi. The author of the book shows and introduces the diversity of ethnic cultures through the heroic story of Arian. Each region in Indonesia has a prominent story. On page 18, the descriptive text describes the traditional Toraja house, Tongkonan. The descriptive text material is conveyed, and the introduction of ethnic culture and appreciation of cultural products as part of multicultural values is also accommodated. The implication is that students are increasingly familiar with ethnic diversity and cultural products in Indonesia. By understanding diversity, students will realize that Indonesia is a multicultural and multiethnic country, so that differences must be addressed with the value of tolerance and living together can be safe and peaceful.

Two texts in the fantasy text lesson are sourced from local culture (Anak Rembulan) and global culture (Harry Potter). Anak Rembulan tells the story of a boy who can travel back in time (the Dutch colonial era) and the time when the legend of Mount Kelud emerged with the characters Mahesuro and Lemburo. The author of Anak Rembulan combines history, myths, and local legends into an exciting adventure. Local culture stories in Indonesia intersect with legends of influential people such as Mahesuro and Lemburo. The name of the leader of the thieves, Semut Hitam, comes from the characters of the Pandawa Lima story, namely Kangka (Yudistira), Jagal (Bima), Jlamprong (Arjuna), Pinten (Nakula), and Tangsen (Sadewa). Critical students and teachers who inspire students can explore local stories that show heroic values, good and evil characters.

The Harry Potter fantasy story is a worldwide story about magic and the education of wizards. Harry Potter and his friends represent good characters fighting evil antagonists. The theme of good triumphs is also a theme of the Harry Potter story, as is the case with legends in local cultures. The message of both local and global stories provides multicultural content, emphasizing that goodness can be conveyed through stories, fairy tales, legends, and myths.

On page 59, several students are visually visible, some wearing hijabs. The multicultural value is a respect for religious groups. The hijab is a garment worn by Muslim women/girls. In government schools, the hijab is not regulated by the school, but in Islamic religious schools, female students must wear it. The hijab also identifies Muslim women/girls. The choice to wear the hijab or other clothing that complies with school standards is protected by law.

The traditional musical instrument angklung is shown on page 83 of the Indonesian language textbook in junior high school. Angklung is made of bamboo. Angklung is shaken to produce sound. Each angklung has one note, so collaboration of several angklungs is needed to produce the various notes needed to play a song. The procedural text theme teaches students how to shake the angklung to produce the desired note. Angklung is a traditional Sundanese musical instrument recognized by

UNESCO. The selection of this traditional musical instrument to be displayed as a cultural artifact in the Indonesian language textbook represents an appreciation for cultural products. Thus, students know modern musical instruments and appreciate traditional ones such as the *angklung*.

Another procedural text concerns how to dance the *Tor Tor*, a traditional Batak dance from North Sumatra. This text contains multicultural values that appreciate cultural products in the form of traditional dance. This dance is performed in various dynamics of Batak life, both in happy and sad situations. The author chose this type of traditional Batak dance because of its rhythmic rhythm with minimal, repetitive movements as learning material for procedural texts.

On page 124, the text of the observation report shows several students discussing the text. One student has white skin and straight hair, while the other has curly and dark skin. The multicultural value presented through the students' visualization is ethnic diversity, similar to the multiethnic situation in Indonesia.

Multicultural Values in English Books

The first page shows a boy with curly hair and a boy with straight black hair. The greeting theme visualizes ethnic diversity, demonstrating its multicultural value. Following the same theme, page 12 shows teachers and students wearing hijabs. This visualization accommodates the real-life situation in Indonesia, which consists of various ethnicities: some with black skin, some with curly hair, some wearing school uniforms and hijabs, and some wearing only school uniforms without hijabs.

On page 39 of the introductory theme, three students are shown: a black student, a light-skinned student with slanted eyes, and a light-skinned student with large eyes. Ethnic diversity is demonstrated visually in the introductory theme. The repetition of multicultural values of ethnic diversity encourages students' appreciation of multicultural values and their efforts to reflect on how their friends differ. However, these differences are not a problem because friends must help, cooperate, and respect each other.

On page 41, three students are seen flying kites, demonstrating appreciation for creative cultural products such as traditional games. Under the theme "telling the time," "Students are seen working together to fly kites.

Page 91 shows a visualization of praying before meals with an environmental theme. A mother and daughter are seen wearing hijabs. The multicultural value promoted is the diversity of religious groups.

On page 99, with the theme of expressing feelings, six students are seated close together. The male student in the middle is black, while the other male and female students are light-skinned. One of the female students is wearing a hijab. Ethnic cultural diversity is demonstrated by tolerance between ethnicities and even between races.

The lyrics of the song *Count on Me* were chosen because they contain the value of true friendship according to the song lyrics.

If you ever find yourself stuck in the middle of the sea
I will sail the world to find you
If you ever find yourself lost in the dark and you can not see
I will be the light to guide you
We find out what we are made of
When we are called to help our friends in need

*Jika suatu saat Anda terjebak di tengah laut
Aku akan mengarungi dunia untuk menemukanmu
Jika Anda tersesat dalam kegelapan dan tidak dapat melihat
Aku akan menjadi cahaya yang membimbingmu
Kami tahu jati diri kami
Ketika kami terpanggil untuk membantu teman yang membutuhkan*

A friend will always help a friend in difficult times. The song reflects the value of peace with all forms of life and nature. The author of the English book attempted to incorporate the noble values of friendship through an appreciation of Count on Me.

Discussion

This study found that Indonesian and English textbooks for junior high school students contain various representations of multicultural values, such as respect for ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity; gender equality; and recognition of local and global cultural products (Momang, 2021). Through documentation of illustrations and texts, such as the representation of white and dark-skinned students in visuals in English textbooks and the description of traditional Tongkonan houses in Indonesian textbooks, the values of ethnic diversity and cultural products have emerged. Based on teacher interviews and classroom observations, students appear to be aware of ethnic and cultural differences in the textbook material (Putra, 2023; Safi'I et al., 2022). However, teachers acknowledged that explicit discussion of tolerance or global citizenship values is still minimal. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) showed that language choices in the texts—for example, the use of the term “we are different but together” or visuals that highlight one ethnic group as “superior”—carry ideological content that does not always explicitly convey balance between groups. Thus, this study identified that textbooks contain multiculturalism, but this representation is still asymmetrical and does not fully actualize a comprehensive multicultural character for junior high school students.

Compared with previous research, such as that conducted by Maulidiah et al., (2023), which showed that Indonesian language textbooks at the middle and high school levels predominantly displayed multicultural values in terms of religion, culture, and ethnicity, the results of this study add insight by showing that at the junior high school level (which is often less researched) similar values also emerge, but with different visual and textual representation characteristics (Maulidiah et al., 2023). In addition, research by Setyono & Widodo (2019) highlighted that English language textbooks approved by the government tend not to be balanced regarding international-local culture, particularly not highlighting foreign or global culture (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). The strength of this study lies in the combination of multimodal analysis of text and visuals (images) in Indonesian and English textbooks at the junior high school level, supported by interview data and classroom observations, so that not only 'what is written' but 'how students understand' the representation. Thus, this research is more in-depth in the context of character and multicultural education levels, which are the mission of the 2013 Curriculum in Indonesia.

Reflection on the research results shows that although multicultural values have emerged in textbooks, asymmetrical or less explicit representation can challenge student character development that critically and actively values differences. For example, in classroom observations, it was found that students referred to the text “hijab-wearing and non-hijab-wearing students” as merely a visual illustration, without being accompanied by teacher discussion about the meaning of tolerance or religion as part of diversity, so the potential for character transformation was not maximized (Saragih et al., 2022; Su, 2016). This shows that the presence of values in textbooks alone is not enough; how teachers facilitate and how students interpret them is also important—something that reflects the need for textbook material to be complemented by pedagogy that supports the internalization of values. Therefore, this study indicates that the function of textbooks as a medium for multicultural-oriented character education requires appropriate content and a learning context that allows students to reflect on and relate values to their daily experiences actively (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015).

The results of this study have significant implications for various stakeholders: textbook authors, curriculum makers, teachers, and schools. First, textbook authors and publishers must consider the representation of multicultural values that is normative and contextual—presenting ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity in an active and inclusive sense, not simply as static illustrations (Yunidar et al., 2024). This study suggests that visuals featuring students from different ethnicities must be accompanied by narratives that encourage reflection or dialogue in the classroom. Second, for curriculum makers, these findings underscore the need for stronger integration between

Indonesian and English textbooks with the 2013 Curriculum's goal of developing tolerant and innovative citizens and global citizens. Third, teachers as facilitators need to be trained to utilize multicultural representations in textbooks to support character-based learning, for example, through assignments that stimulate cross-cultural discussions or student reflection (Yunidar et al., 2024). Thus, this study goes beyond identifying values, but also proposes concrete directions for more synergistic textbooks and pedagogy in supporting multicultural education in junior high schools.

A critical analysis of the research findings reveals several reasons why the representation of multicultural values in textbooks remains suboptimal. First, textbook production in Indonesia is often top-down and nationally standardized, potentially lacking sensitivity to local contexts and the fundamental dynamics of schools on the ground. Visuals or text may appear generic or symbolic (Dalimunte & Suryani, 2025). Second, classroom teachers sometimes use textbooks solely as a source of material without linking them to value discussions or reflection activities, as interviews revealed that some teachers felt limited time or lacked training to manage multicultural values learning. Third, the national education ideology, which emphasizes unity and equality, often directs multicultural materials toward "diversity within a framework of unity" without exploring critical dimensions such as injustice, marginalization, or the rights of minority cultures thus, even though textbooks contain multicultural values, the production process, learning implementation, and educational ideology at a macro level influence how these values are presented and understood by students.

Based on the findings of this study, several concrete actions need to be taken immediately to ensure that the representation of multicultural values in language textbooks in junior high schools has a tangible impact on student character. One approach is to develop pedagogical guidelines for teachers that use textbooks as a medium for multicultural dialogue—for example, cross-cultural assignment modules, student reflections on book illustrations, and collaborative projects between students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, textbook publishers and authors should reconstruct visual and narrative designs that better balance local and global cultures, as well as majority and minority groups, and provide space for students to recognize and appreciate differences critically (Sinaga, 2024). Schools and education offices should also hold workshops and training for Indonesian and English language teachers to be more sensitive to textbooks' value dimensions and connect them to students' everyday experiences. Finally, further research can be conducted to observe how implementing multicultural learning materials in the classroom takes place and its impact on student attitudes and behavior. Thus, these actions will support the transformation of textbooks from mere media for conveying language skills to strategic instruments for developing citizens and global citizens who value diversity.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study presented surprising results: Indonesian and English textbooks at the junior high school level actually contain multicultural values more broadly than previously assumed, but their representation remains fragmented and not entirely critical. Critical discourse analysis shows that ideological meanings shape students' perspectives on differences behind the seemingly simple texts, from ethnic visualizations to diction choices that contain certain biases toward dominant groups. Another interesting fact is that the diversity presented in the books' visuals is often more substantial than the values implied in the text, indicating a gap between linguistic and visual aspects in instilling multicultural awareness. Through interviews and observations, it was also found that teachers interpreted these representations in various ways, some considering them sufficiently inclusive, while others felt they did not yet awaken students' critical awareness. Thus, this study shows that language textbooks are not neutral; they are ideological arenas that subtly negotiate values, identities, and cultures in the educational space.

This research makes important theoretical and practical contributions to developing language education and multiculturalism studies. Theoretically, this research broadens the understanding of how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be adapted to analyze textbook texts and visuals as a single, multimodal meaning. This approach emphasizes that ideologies and values are constructed

through language and visual representations that function as discursive devices (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These findings enrich language education theory by positioning textbooks as a medium for social construction, not merely a linguistic instrument. Practically, this research provides an empirical basis for curriculum developers, textbook authors, and teachers to re-examine textbooks' role in forming multicultural character. The results can serve as a reference in developing pedagogical guidelines that integrate the values of tolerance, equality, and respect for diversity into language learning activities. Furthermore, this research inspires a new direction: language education should teach communication skills and a just and civilized sociocultural awareness.

The limitations of this study lie in the data's focus on two government-published textbooks and the learning contexts in several sample schools. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all of Indonesia. However, this limitation opens up opportunities for further research to expand the analysis to different levels of education, different publishers, or the latest versions of textbooks in the Independent Curriculum. Future studies could also combine discourse analysis with a classroom ethnography approach to better understand how teachers and students interpret multicultural values interactively in the learning environment. Furthermore, further research could explore the digital dimensions of textbooks—such as e-books or online learning media—which increasingly influence the formation of students' multicultural identities. Therefore, this limitation is not a weakness but a reflective foundation for developing further studies that will enrich the discourse on multicultural language education in Indonesia and the global context.

DECLARATIONS

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