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Teachers' Perceptions of the Cultural Literacy Content Related to Sidoarjo in the "Wonderful Insight English" Textbook

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[Page | 1](#)

[2 | Page](#)

[Page | 3](#)

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Abstract. This study investigates teachers' perceptions of the cultural literacy content related to Sidoarjo in the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook. The study was motivated by the Merdeka Curriculum, which promotes global competence while preserving students' cultural identity through the integration of local culture. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three English teachers at SMPN 1 Sukodono, Sidoarjo, and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers expressed favorable perceptions of the textbook because it integrates local cultural elements, including lontong kupang, petis, and udeng pacul gowang. They considered the content relevant to students' everyday experiences and effective in fostering cultural awareness while supporting English language learning. However, teachers also reported challenges in explaining unfamiliar cultural traditions and emphasized the need for additional contextual resources. Overall, the study concludes that integrating local culture into English textbooks strengthens cultural identity, increases student engagement, enriches meaningful language learning, and supports the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords - [cultural literacy](#), [local culture](#), [teachers' perceptions](#), [English textbook](#), [Sidoarjo](#)

1,3



Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi guru terhadap konten literasi budaya terkait Sidoarjo dalam buku teks *“Wonderful Insight English”*. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka yang mendorong kompetensi global sekaligus mempertahankan identitas budaya peserta didik melalui integrasi budaya lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tiga guru bahasa Inggris di SMPN 1 Sukodono, Sidoarjo, dan dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru memiliki persepsi yang baik terhadap buku teks tersebut karena memuat unsur budaya lokal, seperti lontong kupang, petis, dan udeng pacul gowang. Konten tersebut dinilai relevan dengan kehidupan peserta didik serta mendukung kesadaran budaya dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Namun, guru menghadapi tantangan dalam menjelaskan tradisi budaya yang kurang dikenal dan membutuhkan sumber kontekstual tambahan. Integrasi budaya lokal dalam buku teks dapat memperkuat identitas budaya, meningkatkan keterlibatan peserta didik, dan mendukung tujuan Kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata Kunci - literasi budaya, budaya lokal, persepsi guru, buku teks bahasa Inggris, Sidoarjo

I. introduction

In this age of globalisation, educational systems throughout the world work to strike a balance between preserving local identities and developing global capabilities. The Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises the incorporation of local and national cultural identities into English language instruction, symbolises a revolutionary change in educational goals in Indonesia. The program's objective is to cultivate pupils who are fluent in English while maintaining a strong connection to their Indonesian roots. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to promote cultural literacy, pride, and intercultural competency by teaching English to speakers of other languages while including cultural contexts training. This allows students to participate in international relationships while maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity.

Studies, however, continually point out a serious flaw in Indonesian EFL and English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks, which frequently give Western cultural narratives precedence over Indonesia's rich cultural variety. Only 24% of the cultural content in an EFL textbook represented Indonesian culture, with 55% concentrating on Western culture, according to Jayanti and Mustofa. This analysis showed that cultural practices were represented at 17%, perspectives at 5%, and people at just 2%, indicating a shallow engagement with local cultural elements[1]. Similar to this, Hasnah *et al.* , locally created ELT textbooks sometimes overlook cultural viewpoints that are crucial for fostering intercultural competency in favour of emphasising cultural goods like cuisine and monuments[2]. According to Irawan and Daud, students' capacity to make the relationship between learning English and being true to their own culture is hampered by the superficial cultural material included in many Indonesian textbooks and the absence of opportunity for critical cultural evaluation[3].

On the other hand, a different study indicates that adding real-life local stories to English textbooks improves student motivation, engagement, and cultural pride. In a similar vein, Islamic junior high school instructors appreciated textbooks that incorporated regional customs, religious principles, and communal values since they promoted the moral and cultural growth of their pupils. These results highlight how important teacher and student views are in influencing the usefulness and applicability of cultural information in EFL textbooks, according to Putri *et al.* [4]. The views on the presence, absence, or depth of local cultural elements significantly influence engagement with the material and its alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum's goals.

For students, learning English through local culture is not only a way to preserve cultural heritage but also a strategy to make language learning more meaningful and relatable. When learning materials are connected to students' daily experiences, traditions, and surroundings, students can more easily understand new vocabulary, concepts, and communicative contexts because they already possess prior knowledge of the cultural content. This contextualized learning approach is particularly relevant for Generation Z students, who tend to prefer authentic, meaningful, and experience-based learning rather than abstract or decontextualized content. As digital natives, Generation Z learners are more engaged when educational materials reflect their identities, communities, and real-life experiences. According to Miqawati *et al.* , Ratri *et al.* , Darma and Cahyani, recent studies have shown that teaching English as a second language with an emphasis on local culture may improve students' interest, engagement, cultural awareness, and fluency because learners are able to connect new language knowledge with familiar cultural contexts[5][6][7]. Therefore, incorporating local cultural content into English learning materials is not merely an effort to preserve culture but also an effective pedagogical strategy that supports meaningful language acquisition among contemporary learners.

In this regard, the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook can be considered an appropriate learning resource because it incorporates local cultural content that is relevant to students’ backgrounds, particularly the cultural heritage of Sidoarjo. The textbook introduces local cultural elements such as *lontong kupang*, *petis*, *udeng pacul gowang*, local tourism destinations, and other regional cultural products, enabling students to learn English through contexts that are familiar to them. By presenting English learning materials through local cultural perspectives, the textbook helps students develop language proficiency while simultaneously strengthening their cultural identity and sense of belonging. This aligns with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which encourages the integration of local wisdom into classroom learning to foster both global competence and cultural awareness. Consequently, the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook is worthy of examination as it represents an effort to bridge English language learning with students’ local cultural realities, making language education more contextual, engaging, and culturally responsive.

East Java, Indonesia's Sidoarjo area has a rich cultural legacy that includes historical tales, traditional arts, and regional traditions. Despite this rich cultural heritage, nothing is known about how much Sidoarjo's local identity—such as the Jayandaru Monument, the Sidoarjo Monument, the Mpu Tantular Museum, and the National Sports Week Monument of Sidoarjo—is reflected in English textbooks like “Wonderful Insight English”. “Wonderful Insight English”, a popular textbook in Indonesian schools, is an important tool in EFL classes, influencing students' linguistic and cultural growth. Furthermore, little study has been done on how teachers see the cultural literacy material in this textbook, especially in light of the local setting of Sidoarjo. Since many young people nowadays are still unfamiliar with their own local culture, it is crucial to incorporate cultural literacy into schooling. In order to increase students' awareness and enjoyment of their regional cultural history, it is crucial to incorporate local cultural material into educational disciplines, including English language study. The portrayal of cultural material in English textbooks has been the subject of several studies, however there are still significant gaps. the uneven portrayal of cultural information, especially the lack of cultural viewpoints, and the lack of investigation into how these resources are seen or used in classrooms, according to Ayu[8]. Few research examine the pedagogical aspects of culture-related activities, including how instructors react to them and whether they promote reflective participation or merely knowledge acquisition, according to Sihombing and Nguyen[9]. Given that intercultural knowledge is still restricted within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, there is a need for more investigation into how cultural material fits with learning objectives, subjects, and activities, according to Astrid *et al.* [10]. The prevalence of Anglophone cultures in Southeast Asian textbooks limits students' ability to communicate across cultural boundaries and fails to take into account their local reality, according to Saemee and Ra[11]. Textbook material was in line with the Merdeka Curriculum, but it ignored localised cultural literacy, such as Sidoarjo's regional identity, in favour of a broad approach, according to Aufa and Pusparini[12].

The current study investigates instructors' opinions on the cultural literacy material pertaining to Sidoarjo in “Wonderful Insight English” in order to bridge these gaps. It looks at how stakeholders view the content's relevance, representation, and efficacy in fostering intercultural competency and cultural pride while evaluating how well it aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives. The study aims to determine if the textbook promotes the growth of culturally responsive learning and how local culture is perceived and understood in EFL classes by emphasising the viewpoints of the instructors.

According to a pre-observation interview conducted at SMPN 1 Sukodono, Sidoarjo, there are six English instructors working there: three for grade VII, three for grade VIII, and an additional teacher who has been teaching for two years since 2023. Teachers typically work 24 hours a week, while some may work more according to the demands of the school. Complete learning resources, such as LCDs, projectors, speakers, and Wi-Fi, are available to the institution. Nonetheless, teachers face difficulties brought on by students' varied skills, interests, and backgrounds, all of which influence English learning outcomes. They distribute questionnaires and do preliminary evaluations of students' learning styles in order to address ability disparities. The results are then jointly analysed with the students. Background differences are addressed through individual methods and conversations that take place in both small and big groups. Project-based projects that prioritise both process and outcome further reinforce learning.

In order to vary education, teachers really use a variety of media, such as video, Quizziz, games, listening audio, and library-borne textbooks, in addition to digital platforms like Quizziz. Pupils actively embrace these approaches, showing notable advancement in accordance with their unique abilities. In order to improve their pedagogical and subject-matter expertise, teachers also often participate in Saturday training sessions. Rubrics that include peer and instructor evaluations are used for learning assessment. Teachers use individualised ways to identify the challenges faced by pupils who lack motivation, then modify media and procedures accordingly. Despite these initiatives, SMPN 1 Sukodono's English language instruction still needs to be improved in terms of both institutional facilities and teacher abilities.



This study provides important insights into the incorporation of localised cultural literacy—specifically, Sidoarjo into English instruction by combining the examination of textbook material with the lived reality of the classroom. How do educators feel about the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook’s use of Sidoarjo-related cultural literacy content? The goal of the study is to investigate how teachers view the inclusion of Sidoarjo-related cultural literacy content in the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook, specifically with regard to its choice, application in the classroom, cultural representation, applicability to the local context of the students, implementation difficulties, and recommended enhancements. The findings should make it easier for educators, curriculum designers, and decision-makers to assess how well current resources are fostering students’ intercultural competency and feeling of cultural pride. It also emphasises how crucial instructors’ perspectives are to developing relevant and culturally sensitive EFL instruction.

II. Method

Due to the lack of numerical data, this study used a qualitative descriptive method. In language education research in particular, a qualitative technique is highly appropriate for investigating individual perceptions and interpretations within unique contextual circumstances, according to Budianto[13]. The approach is explained in detail in this chapter, with a special emphasis on the use of semi-structured interviews as the main technique for gathering data.

The study was conducted at SMPN 1 Sukodono, Sidoarjo, East Java, because of the area’s rich cultural heritage and the absence of academic attention on regional representation in English language instruction. Sidoarjo’s unique cultural setting makes it necessary to examine how local culture is incorporated into educational materials, according to Zahra[14]. Three English teachers were interviewed for the study in order to respond to the question. Three English were selected as the participants of this study because the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook is exclusively used in Grade 8. At SMPN 1 Sukodono, only three English teachers teach Grade 8 classes; therefore, all of them were included as research participants. This selection ensured that the study captured the perceptions of the entire population of teachers who actively use the textbook in their teaching practices. The data was collected via semi-structured interviews, which allow participants to freely express their perspectives while also providing some framework while yet being in line with the goals of the study, according to Ruslin *et al.* [15]. This method works especially well for gathering complex viewpoints on cultural representation in educational settings. In order to ensure clarity and relevance to the experiences of the participants, interview questions were carefully crafted based on literature about the integration of local culture in English language teaching. The necessity of creating culturally sensitive questions that reflect the learners’ home surroundings and promote cultural awareness in EFL settings, according to Miqawati *et al.* [5]. The purpose of the questions was to find out how instructors felt about the textbook’s incorporation of Sidoarjo-related cultural features and how they affected students’ learning.

With the participants’ consent, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Member-checking, in which participants examined the transcripts to verify their correctness and authenticate the researcher’s interpretations, was used to improve the quality of the data, according to Kullman and Chudyk[16]. This procedure made it possible to guarantee that the data fairly represented the opinions of the participants.

By gathering information from the teachers, triangulation was used to increase the findings’ trustworthiness. This method ensured a thorough grasp of the study subject by facilitating cross-verification of views, according to Ediyanto *et al.* [17]. Additionally, according to Schürmann *et al.* , to reduce researcher bias and improve transparency, reflective journaling and peer debriefing were maintained throughout the data gathering procedure[18]. These procedures made sure that the interpretations were based on the facts and weren’t too impacted by the researcher’s presumptions.

The semi-structured interview data was the only focus of the analysis. To fully comprehend the viewpoints of the participants, every interview was verbatim transcribed and read several times. By finding recurrent concepts, patterns, and meanings across the interviews, the researcher used theme interpretation rather than a thorough coding process. In order to identify parallels and contrasts in the instructors’ perceptions of the cultural components of the textbook, this interpretative method placed a strong emphasis on carefully comparing participant narratives. The recognised criteria of trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were used to lead the analysis in order to guarantee rigour, according to Ahmed[19]. As suggested in previous methodological reflections, techniques like peer debriefing and reflective discussion were used to lessen researcher bias and improve interpretative clarity, according to Dahal[20]. Thus, in line with modern methods of qualitative interview analysis, the themes that arose were based on participant narratives and sought to capture the common and

distinctive elements of the instructors' experiences, according to Komor and Grzyb[21].

Throughout the whole study process, ethical issues were given top priority. Pseudonyms were used in the transcripts and reports to safeguard the teachers' identities, and participants gave their informed agreement. Only the study team had access to the safely preserved audio recordings. Participants were informed that they might discontinue the research at any moment without facing any issues, according to Arifin[22].

Although it permits in-depth investigation, the emphasis on semi-structured interviews may restrict how broadly the results may be applied. The range of viewpoints from various areas or educational environments could not be adequately represented by relying just on participants from one Sidoarjo school. The utilisation of techniques including triangulation, participant validation, and meticulous data analysis helped guarantee the validity and dependability of the findings despite some constraints.

The interview questions used in this study were adapted from Kanyarat Saemee and Jung Joo Ra, who investigated teachers' perceptions of cultural content in English language textbooks used in multicultural classrooms[11]. The interview protocol consisted of nine semi-structured questions focusing on teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of the Wonderful Insight English textbook, particularly in relation to the representation and integration of cultural literacy content associated with Sidoarjo. The questions explored several aspects, including teachers' selection and use of the textbook, challenges encountered in presenting cultural content, the relevance of the cultural representations to students' local context, and suggestions for the improvement of the textbook, especially regarding the inclusion of Sidoarjo-related cultural content. The interview questions are presented as follows:

1. Were you able to choose the Wonderful Insight English textbook as your teaching material?
2. How do you use the Wonderful Insight English textbook when planning each lesson?
3. To what extent do you rely on this textbook in your teaching? Do you always use it or combine it with other sources? Why?
4. Do you experience any difficulties when using this textbook? If yes, what kinds of difficulties, especially those related to cultural content?
5. What are your general thoughts about the cultural representations in the Wonderful Insight English textbook?
6. How do you present and explain the cultural literacy content found in this textbook to your students?
7. Do you face any difficulties in understanding or explaining cultural content or images presented in the textbook? If yes, could you give an example?
8. In your opinion, to what extent does the cultural content in this textbook relate to the cultural context of students in Sidoarjo? Are there any parts that specifically reflect Sidoarjo's local culture?
9. What improvements or developments would you suggest for the Wonderful Insight English textbook, particularly regarding the integration of Sidoarjo-related cultural content?

III. findings and discussions

A. Findings

Sukodono, Sidoarjo, SMPN 1. The purpose of the interviews was to find out how the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook, which is used in English language training, incorporates Sidoarjo cultural literacy. The reasons for choosing the textbook, how teachers use it in lesson planning, how much they rely on it, how they perceive cultural representation in the textbook, the relevance of cultural content to students' local context, the difficulties teachers encounter when teaching cultural material, and their recommendations for improving the textbook are just a few of the important themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts.

The next subsections provide a detailed description of these findings.

1. Reasons for Selecting the “Wonderful Insight English” Textbook

The interviews revealed that teachers selected and used the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook because it contains cultural literacy content related to Sidoarjo and because its implementation is supported by institutional policies. The teachers perceived that the textbook differs from many other English textbooks because it integrates local cultural elements into English learning materials. This integration allows students to learn English while simultaneously becoming familiar with their local cultural identity.

Teacher 1 explained that the presence of local cultural content was one of the main reasons for preferring the textbook. According to the teacher, the book introduces various cultural elements that are closely related to Sidoarjo, including traditional foods, local products, and traditional clothing. The teacher believed that these cultural representations provide opportunities for students to learn about their own cultural heritage while studying English.

“Personally, I like using that book because there are several kinds of cultural content in it. In Grade 7 or Grade 8 there was black sticky shrimp paste, shrimp paste, cultural food or products processed from products in Sidoarjo. In Grade 8, there is udeng pacul gowang and so on, which reflect their culture so they can know the results of their own culture.” (Teacher 1)

Similarly, Teacher 2 emphasized that the textbook was chosen because it includes local cultural content that is rarely found in other English textbooks. The teacher stated that many textbooks focus primarily on national or international topics, whereas “Wonderful Insight English” introduces cultural aspects that are directly connected to students’ local environment.

“Because compared to other books, only “Wonderful Insight English” contains local culture from Sidoarjo. From what I have seen so far, the others do not have it, so that is why I chose “Wonderful Insight English.” (Teacher 2)

In contrast, Teacher 3 explained that the use of the textbook was determined by educational authorities. The teacher stated that the textbook had already been selected by the local education office and therefore became the primary instructional material used in schools. However, teachers were still allowed to use additional materials to enrich classroom learning.

“The English book has already been determined by the education office, so we as subject teachers follow the regulations from the office. Only for enrichment do we take from other sources.” (Teacher 3)

These findings indicate that the selection of the textbook was influenced by two major factors. First, teachers appreciated the inclusion of local cultural content that reflects students’ sociocultural backgrounds. Second, institutional policies from the education office played an important role in determining the use of the textbook in schools. Therefore, both pedagogical and administrative considerations contributed to the adoption of the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook.

2. The Use of Textbook in Lesson Planning and Classroom Instruction

The findings revealed that the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook plays a significant role in teachers’ lesson planning and classroom instruction. All participants indicated that the textbook serves as the primary reference for organizing learning activities, determining instructional objectives, and preparing teaching materials. However, teachers also reported that they adapt and modify the activities provided in the textbook to better suit students’ learning needs and classroom conditions.

Teacher 1 explained that the textbook contains a variety of topics and learning activities that can be utilized as the basis for classroom instruction. According to the teacher, the activities available in the textbook provide sufficient guidance, but teachers still need to develop and adjust them to make learning more engaging and appropriate for students’ abilities.

“There are various topics there, and also various activities. We just need to develop how to make them more interesting for the students, and the tasks can be adjusted to their level of ability.” (Teacher 1)

Similarly, Teacher 2 stated that the textbook already provides structured activities that support different language skills. The teacher explained that the organization of activities helps teachers prepare lessons more efficiently because the learning sequence has already been arranged in the textbook.



"In the book, each activity is already provided—for example, to test listening there is a listening activity, and there is also reading for literacy." (Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 also emphasized the importance of the textbook in planning instructional activities. The teacher explained that lesson plans, assessments, and student worksheets are developed based on the content presented in the textbook.



"Its use follows the lesson plan (RPP) that we prepare for the week. For example, if the material is about clothes, then the lesson plan and student worksheet style must already be complete along with the rubric and assessment." (Teacher 3)

These findings indicate that teachers view the textbook as a practical guide for organizing teaching and learning activities. Although the textbook provides a structured framework, teachers continue to modify and enrich the activities to ensure that instruction remains relevant and effective for students.

3. Teachers' Reliance on Textbook

The interviews revealed that teachers do not depend entirely on the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook. While the textbook serves as the main instructional resource, teachers frequently combine it with additional materials to provide more comprehensive explanations and learning experiences.

Teacher 1 explained that the textbook alone is not sufficient to meet all instructional needs. The teacher stated that some cultural topics are presented only briefly, requiring additional information from other sources.



"As the main material and the only source—no, certainly not. There must be other sources, because even though there are some parts that reflect Sidoarjo culture, sometimes they are not detailed enough." (Teacher 1)

The teacher further explained that supplementary resources are often necessary to provide students with deeper understanding.



"So we may need to add more from the same topic, or sometimes I combine materials from various other teaching platforms." (Teacher 1)

Likewise, Teacher 2 described the textbook as a guideline rather than the sole source of instruction.



"For this book, I use it only as a guideline—for example, Chapters 1 to 7 are adjusted to the learning sequence." (Teacher 2)

The teacher also mentioned the use of multimedia resources to support language instruction.



"We certainly combine it with other sources, such as from YouTube or existing PowerPoint presentations." (Teacher 2)

Similarly, Teacher 3 explained that the textbook is regularly integrated with other learning materials and media.



"We combine it according to the material to be used and learned in class, so it is developed with other books or other learning media." (Teacher 3)

These findings demonstrate that teachers adopt a flexible teaching approach. Rather than relying solely on the textbook, they utilize various supplementary resources to enrich instruction, clarify concepts, and provide students with more diverse learning experiences.

4. Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Representation in Textbook

The findings showed that teachers generally have positive perceptions of the cultural representation presented in the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook. The participants agreed that the integration of local cultural content contributes positively to students' understanding of their cultural identity.

Teacher 1 viewed the textbook as an important medium for reintroducing local cultural knowledge to students. The teacher believed that many students are not fully familiar with local cultural traditions and therefore benefit from learning about them through English lessons.



"In my opinion, it is good. It tries to reintroduce the existing local wisdom." (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 also expressed a positive opinion regarding the representation of Sidoarjo culture. The teacher noted that the textbook introduces various cultural elements that are closely associated with the region.



"It is already sufficient in presenting Sidoarjo culture itself, introducing what the typical foods of Sidoarjo are—petis, lontong kupang, and also tourist places." (Teacher 2)

However, the teacher suggested that additional cultural topics could be incorporated in future revisions.



"Maybe more could be added, because Sidoarjo is not only that; there must be many more details." (Teacher 2)

Similarly, Teacher 3 believed that the textbook effectively promotes cultural awareness among students.



"In general, it is very good because it can introduce students to the culture and tourist attractions in Sidoarjo." (Teacher 3)

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers perceive the cultural representation in the textbook as meaningful and beneficial. The inclusion of local cultural content is considered valuable for helping students recognize and appreciate their cultural heritage.

5. The Relevance of Cultural Content to Students' Local Context

The interviews revealed that the cultural content included in the textbook is highly relevant to students' daily lives and sociocultural environment. Teachers agreed that the topics presented in the textbook are familiar to students because they are closely connected to local traditions, foods, clothing, and community practices.

Teacher 1 explained that many cultural elements found in the textbook are part of students' everyday experiences.



"Almost all of them, from clothing aspects, traditional Sidoarjo clothing, maybe in Grade 8 there is udeng pacul gowang." (Teacher 1)

The teacher further stated that these cultural elements help students recognize their own cultural identity.



"Students are told, 'This is your culture.' It is also sometimes used in Javanese language learning." (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 emphasized that the textbook content is aligned with school activities designed to preserve local culture.



"Every Saturday at the beginning of the month there is a program called TURISAWA (SaTU HaRI BerbaSA JaWA)." (Teacher 2)

The teacher explained that students participate in cultural activities that are directly related to the cultural topics discussed in the textbook.



"Students must also wear traditional clothing—usually Sidoarjo traditional attire with the udeng. So it is already quite aligned between what is in the book and what they do at school." (Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 also highlighted the relevance of the textbook content.



"We know more deeply about the culture in Sidoarjo through the book." (Teacher 3)

These findings indicate that the cultural literacy content is strongly connected to students' real-life experiences. Because students are already familiar with many of the cultural topics presented, the content becomes more meaningful and easier for them to understand.

6. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching Cultural Content

Although the teachers generally held favorable perceptions of the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook, several challenges emerged regarding the teaching of cultural content. The primary challenge involved limited knowledge of specific local cultural topics.

Teacher 1 explained that even teachers who are native residents of Sidoarjo may not possess detailed knowledge about all aspects of local culture.

”Sometimes we do not really know our own culture. Maybe we only know it superficially but not in detail.” (Teacher 1)

The teacher provided a specific example.

”For example, distinguishing between shrimp paste and black sticky shrimp paste—I myself, as a Sidoarjo native, did not know.” (Teacher 1)

As a result, the teacher needed to conduct additional research before teaching the topic.

”I had to search from various other sources, read more, and find out whether the production process is different.” (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 faced similar challenges due to coming from another region.

”I am not originally from here—I am from Pekalongan, Central Java.” (Teacher 2)

The teacher admitted being unfamiliar with some traditional foods discussed in the textbook.

”For example, in the book there is a discussion about lontong kupang. What ingredients does it use and so on—I had to find out first.” (Teacher 2)

In contrast, Teacher 3 reported relatively few difficulties.

”There are no difficulties, because it tells about Sidoarjo traditions or icons.” (Teacher 3)

These findings suggest that cultural literacy instruction may require teachers to continuously expand their own cultural knowledge. Additional resources and cultural references are often necessary to ensure accurate explanations in the classroom.

7. Teachers' Suggestions for Improving Textbook Quality

The interviews also generated several recommendations for improving the “Wonderful Insight English” textbook. Although teachers expressed favorable opinions about the textbook, they believed that certain aspects could be further developed.

Teacher 1 suggested expanding the range of cultural topics represented in the textbook.

”There are still many other cultures that could be included.” (Teacher 1)

The teacher also recommended providing more detailed explanations.

”More details could also be provided so the explanation becomes more comprehensive.” (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 focused on improving classroom activities.

”There should be more discussion about culture, how to respond to it, how to develop and introduce it more to students.” (Teacher 2)

The teacher believed that students should be encouraged to engage more actively with cultural issues.

”The activities could be made more interesting.” (Teacher 2)

Meanwhile, Teacher 3 suggested integrating more digital and interactive features into the textbook.

”The student worksheet (LKPD) should generally be more interactive and follow current developments.” (Teacher 3)

The teacher proposed incorporating online learning opportunities.

The results of the study show that because of the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook's distinctive incorporation of Sidoarjo's local culture, English instructors at SMPN 1 Sukodono have a favourable opinion of it. Teachers value the book for presenting local icons like *lontong kupang*, *petis*, and *udeng pacul gowang*, even though its use is impacted by institutional demands. This portrayal is seen to be an essential tool for exposing pupils to their local heritage, assisting them in maintaining their cultural identity while improving their English language skills.

In actuality, this textbook functions as an organised framework for instruction that aids instructors in planning sessions and guaranteeing the methodical improvement of language proficiency. Nonetheless, educators continue to take a flexible approach by customising exercises to meet the requirements of their students and adding outside digital resources like PowerPoint and YouTube to the curriculum. These adaptations are often necessary to provide deeper explanations of cultural topics that are only briefly covered in the text.

The relevance of cultural content is a significant strength, as it aligns with students' daily lives and school programs like TURISAWA. Nevertheless, teachers face challenges when they lack detailed knowledge of specific local traditions, requiring them to conduct additional research before teaching. To improve the textbook, teachers suggest expanding the variety of cultural topics and incorporating more interactive, digitally-friendly student worksheets and multimedia elements to enhance student engagement.

B. Discussions

1. Reasons for Selecting the "Wonderful Insight English" Textbook

The findings revealed that teachers selected the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook because it incorporates local cultural elements of Sidoarjo, such as traditional foods, cultural products, and traditional attire. Although one teacher explained that the use of the textbook was mandated by the local education office, all participants appreciated the inclusion of local culture in the textbook.

This finding is consistent with Agustina and Drajati, who argued that integrating local cultural content into English textbooks supports students' intercultural communicative competence while maintaining their local identity[23]. Similarly, Hasnah et al. found that locally produced EFL textbooks containing regional cultural values help learners connect language learning with their own cultural background[2]. The present study extends these findings by showing that teachers value textbooks that specifically represent Sidoarjo culture because such content is perceived as more meaningful and relevant to students' daily lives.

2. The Use of Textbook in Lesson Planning and Classroom Instruction

The findings showed that teachers use the textbook as the primary guide for lesson planning and classroom instruction. The textbook provides organized learning activities that support the development of reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills. However, teachers also modify and adapt activities according to students' needs.

These findings support the study by Ratri et al., which emphasized that English textbooks function as instructional frameworks that help teachers organize learning objectives and activities systematically[24]. Furthermore, Budianto found that teachers generally perceive culturally enriched textbooks as useful teaching guides, but they still need to adapt the materials to suit classroom conditions[13]. Therefore, the current findings indicate that the textbook serves not only as a source of content but also as a pedagogical framework that supports instructional planning.

3. Teachers' Reliance on the Textbook

The findings indicated that teachers do not rely solely on the textbook. Instead, they combine it with digital resources such as YouTube videos, PowerPoint presentations, and additional references to provide more comprehensive explanations.

This result is in line with Prihatiningsih *et al.*, who reported that teachers frequently supplement textbook materials with additional resources to enrich cultural understanding and improve learning effectiveness[25]. Similarly, Saemee and Ra found that teachers in multicultural classrooms often adapt textbook content by incorporating external materials that better address students' needs and contextual realities[11]. Therefore, the current study confirms that

textbooks function as a foundation rather than the only source of learning materials.

4. Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Representation in the Textbook

The teachers expressed favorable perceptions of the cultural representation contained in the textbook. They believed that the inclusion of local cultural elements helps students become more familiar with Sidoarjo's heritage while simultaneously learning English.

This finding supports Perangin-angin *et al.*, who argued that the representation of Indonesian cultural elements in English textbooks contributes significantly to students' cultural awareness and identity development[26]. Likewise, Mustikareni concluded that local cultural representation in EFL textbooks encourages learners to appreciate their own cultural heritage while developing language proficiency[27]. Compared with previous studies, the present research specifically demonstrates how Sidoarjo cultural content contributes to preserving local identity within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

5. The Relevance of Cultural Content to Students' Local Context

The findings revealed that the cultural content presented in the textbook is highly relevant to students' daily experiences. Students are familiar with many cultural elements included in the textbook, such as traditional foods, traditional clothing, and local cultural practices. Teachers also explained that some textbook content aligns with school programs such as *TURISAWA*.

These findings are consistent with Darma *et al.*, who found that integrating local culture into English language teaching increases students' engagement, participation, and positive attitudes toward learning[28]. Furthermore, Miqawati *et al.* argued that learning materials reflecting students' local environment create meaningful learning experiences because students can easily connect classroom content with their real-world experiences[5]. Therefore, the relevance of cultural content contributes positively to students' motivation and comprehension.

6. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching Cultural Content

Although the teachers generally held favorable perceptions of the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook, they also reported difficulties in explaining some cultural topics due to limited knowledge about specific local traditions and cultural products.

This finding aligns with Fitria, who emphasized that successful integration of local culture in English language teaching requires teachers to possess sufficient cultural competence[29]. Similarly, Sihombing and Nguyen found that teachers often face challenges when cultural content is introduced without adequate supporting information or professional preparation[9]. The present study confirms that cultural integration in textbooks alone is insufficient unless teachers are equipped with adequate cultural knowledge and resources to support instruction.

7. Teachers' Suggestions for Improving the Textbook

The findings showed that teachers suggested expanding the variety of Sidoarjo cultural topics and incorporating more interactive and digital-based learning activities. Teachers believed that richer cultural content and multimedia-supported activities would increase student engagement.

This finding is supported by Ratri *et al.*, who argued that culture-based English teaching should incorporate interactive activities that encourage students to actively explore and discuss cultural issues[30]. Likewise, Aufa and Pusparini noted that cultural representation in textbooks should move beyond simple descriptions and provide opportunities for active learner participation[12]. Therefore, the teachers' suggestions indicate a need for more comprehensive and technologically integrated cultural learning materials that are aligned with the learning characteristics of contemporary students.

IV. conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that English teachers at SMPN 1 Sukodono generally have favorable perceptions of the cultural literacy content related to Sidoarjo presented in the "Wonderful Insight English" textbook. Teachers appreciate the inclusion of local cultural elements such as *lontong kupang*, *petis*, and *udeng pacul gowang* because





these elements help students learn English through contexts that are familiar to their daily lives. The textbook is also considered relevant to the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, as it supports both language learning and the preservation of local cultural identity. Although the textbook serves as the primary instructional resource, teachers frequently complement it with digital media and additional materials to provide more comprehensive explanations. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding teachers' limited knowledge of certain local cultural topics and the need for more detailed cultural information within the textbook.

The findings of this study have several important implications. For English language teaching, the results suggest that integrating local cultural content into learning materials can make language learning more contextual, meaningful, and engaging for students. For textbook developers, the findings highlight the need to provide broader cultural representations, more detailed cultural explanations, and interactive learning activities that encourage students to explore their local heritage. Furthermore, educational institutions and policymakers should support teachers through professional development programs that strengthen their understanding of local culture, enabling them to deliver cultural literacy content more effectively. The study also demonstrates that the integration of local cultural literacy supports the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum by fostering students' cultural awareness, cultural identity, and global competence.

This study is limited because it only explored teachers' perceptions through qualitative interviews conducted at one school. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, include students' perspectives, and employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to examine the impact of local cultural content on students' motivation, language achievement, cultural awareness, and intercultural communicative competence.

Conflict of Interest Statement:

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.