IREELL
Indonesian Review of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature
P-ISSN: 3025-2369 I E-ISSN: 3021-8101
https://jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/ireel/index

Cultural Literacy Gaps in English Learning: An Ethnolinguistic Study of Curriculum, Teaching, and Materials

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ABSTRACT

This study maps gaps in Grade 10 students' cultural literacy by examining the alignment among students' competencies, the English curriculum, classroom practices, and learning materials in Banten. A convergent mixed-method design was employed involving 64 students and three English teachers from two senior high schools in South Banten. Data were collected through questionnaires, classroom observations, teacher interviews, and analyses of curriculum documents and the nationally prescribed textbook. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through content analysis and integrated using a joint display. The findings showed that students' overall cultural literacy was categorized as high (M = 3.42); however, 51.6% remained at the moderate level. Students demonstrated strong attitudes toward cultural diversity (M = 4.09), but their ability to communicate culture in English was limited (M = 2.80), particularly in selecting cultural vocabulary (M = 2.50). The curriculum provided opportunities for cultural integration, yet local culture, intercultural communication, and cultural literacy assessment were not explicitly operationalized. Learning materials predominantly represented national and international cultures, while local cultural content and ethnolinguistic meanings remained limited. The study recommends localized materials, ethnolinguistic scaffolding, progressive productive tasks, and authentic cultural literacy assessment.

Keywords: cultural literacy, ethnolinguistics, English language teaching, local culture, curriculum alignment.

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Introduction

English language learning aims not only to develop linguistic and grammatical skills (Hossain, 2023) but also to develop the ability to understand and communicate culture (Wang, 2023). Language is a product of culture. The two are closely intertwined, so mastering the language without understanding the culture risks causing miscommunication. As a lingua franca, English can bridge international communication and cross-cultural collaboration (Atasheva, 2024; Bhandari & Ghimire, 2025). This role is transforming the way individuals from diverse backgrounds interact in a borderless digital world.

However, the globalization of the English language also presents its own challenges. These include cultural dumbing down, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural stereotypes, which digital algorithms further exacerbate (Hultgren, 2020; Kalugina, 2025). Therefore, effective intercultural communication competencies are necessary to navigate sociocultural meanings and ideological forces. These forces encourage students not only to strengthen their identities but also to become effective intercultural communicators on the global stage (Takagi & Moeller, 2022; Thu, 2024). Overall, English language learning serves a dual purpose: not only to foster linguistic proficiency but also to instill cultural literacy.

Based on the results of preliminary observations conducted at two high schools in Banten, it was found that students' knowledge of local culture remains limited. Generally, students can only recognize cultural forms, such as food, traditional clothing, arts, and traditions. Their understanding of cultural values, meanings, and social contexts remains very limited. This lack of understanding becomes even more apparent when students are asked to explain local culture in English; they struggle to do so. This occurs because their vocabulary is limited, and they are not yet accustomed to providing explanations.

Furthermore, teaching practices prioritize mastery of language structure and problem-solving over cultural understanding. Cultural material is often presented as simple factual information, without activities designed to help students understand, compare, and reflect on culture. Assessments of cultural literacy are rarely conducted in the classroom. As a result, students' level of familiarity with local culture is increasingly low. This stands in stark contrast to their level of familiarity with foreign cultures, which frequently appear in English language materials.

The role of the curriculum in English language learning at high schools in Banten needs to be analyzed through the interrelationship between learning objectives, learning outcomes, and the demands of language use in various social and cultural contexts. This can be traced to the integration of local culture into a curriculum centered on student-centered learning, contextual learning, and communication (Ratri et al., 2024; Samsudin, 2025). Students are guided to understand, produce, and respond to pedagogical texts related to identity, social environment, traditions, diversity, and cultural experiences (Darvin, 2022). Furthermore, strengthening students' profiles and fostering a character of diversity serves as a strong foundation for respecting differences and developing cross-cultural communication skills (Suratmi & Hartono, 2024).

Therefore, curriculum analysis is insufficient if it relies solely on the conclusion that local culture can be incorporated into learning. More than that, it requires specific identification of learning outcomes, objectives, communication contexts, and learning activities. This enables local culture to serve as a source of texts, presentation materials, and discussion topics, and to support the development of English language skills (Nambiar et al., 2020). This framework is then compared with actual learning processes in the classroom. This helps determine whether contextual learning and the reinforcement of cultural identity have been effectively incorporated into the materials, activities, and assessments.

Findings from the field indicate that English language materials in high schools in Banten are still dominated by general, national, and even global foreign cultural content. Meanwhile, the proportion of local cultural content remains insufficient—or is even absent. Often, the cultural content presented is limited to superficial aspects. These include food, dance, traditional clothing, and tourist attractions, without deeper discussion of identity, local terminology, and the community's worldview. This problem is exacerbated by learning activities that do not yet optimally encourage students to interpret, compare, and reflect on culture in English, both orally and in writing.

Based on several previous studies related to the representation of cultural topics in ELT, five main trends have been identified. First, the representation of culture in textbooks presents an unbalanced portrayal of culture and is oriented toward factual knowledge. Activities that encourage critical interpretation and intercultural interaction remain limited. This pattern appears in both international textbooks and those used in Indonesia (Shin et al.,

2011; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Putra et al., 2020). Second, the development of culture-oriented instructional materials merely incorporates traditional foods, arts, customs, and folktales to make learning appear more contextual. Most of these efforts still focus on the appropriateness of the content or the instructional materials themselves (Azizah et al., 2020; Azhary & Fatimah, 2024). The development of instructional materials is rarely linked to curriculum outcomes and students' levels of cultural literacy.

A third trend is that the assessment of intercultural competence is often limited to changes in attitudes, knowledge, communication skills, and awareness following the implementation of such models. Tran & Duong (2018) found improvements in intercultural competence and language proficiency after implementing Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching. However, these studies did not analyze the alignment between students' competencies, teacher practices, the curriculum, and instructional materials. Fourth, studies on the needs and perceptions of students and teachers regarding culturally-infused English language materials have shown positive results (Azizah et al., 2020; Alexon et al., 2024; Rohmani & Andriyanti, 2022). However, these findings are largely based on questionnaires and interviews and have not always been verified through curriculum analysis, classroom observations, or analysis of instructional materials. Finally, the integration of culture into learning demonstrates that local culture can be used to contextualize target cultures and global cultures (Marwa et al., 2021; Azhary & Fatimah, 2024). However, research on this topic remains limited to the practices of a select number of teachers, specific classes, or particular instructional materials.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that previous studies remain fragmented. This is because cultural representation in textbooks, intercultural competence, the development of instructional materials, and teaching practices are more often examined as separate entities. Conceptually, previous research has also largely relied on frameworks of cultural representation and intercultural competence. Consequently, the relationship between local terminology, language choices, local identity, cultural meaning, local knowledge, and community worldviews has not yet been adequately analyzed from an ethnolinguistic perspective. Methodologically, the dominance of document analysis and perception measurement remains largely separate. Consequently, triangulation capable of revealing gaps

among the intended curriculum, existing materials, implemented instruction, and students' cultural competencies has not yet been possible.

In the analyzed research corpus, studies have largely focused on national textbooks or local cultures outside of Banten. Consequently, empirical evidence regarding English language learning in high schools grounded in Banten's local language system, values, and cultural identity remains very limited. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of students' cultural literacy, teachers' instructional practices, the English curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching practices. All of these elements are analyzed through a triangulation of questionnaires, observations, interviews, and document analysis using an ethnolinguistic perspective. This strategy does not merely identify the presence of cultural elements. Rather, it assesses how language can represent the values, meanings, local knowledge, and cultural identity of Banten. This serves as the foundation for formulating contextual English language learning that is globally oriented without abandoning cultural identity.

This study aims to analyze the state of cultural literacy among tenth-grade high school students, examine cultural content in the English language curriculum, and identify forms of cultural representation in English language learning materials. Additionally, this study aims to map gaps between students' literacy needs and abilities, teachers' instructional practices, curriculum requirements, and instructional materials to inform ethnolinguistic integration in English Language Teaching (ELT). In line with these objectives, this study addresses the following main research questions:

1. How is the state of cultural literacy among 10th-grade high school students in English Language Teaching (ELT)?
2. To what extent does the English curriculum accommodate the development of cultural literacy?
3. How is culture represented in English materials for 10th-grade high school students?
4. What gaps exist between students' proficiency levels, curriculum requirements, teaching practices, and the materials used?

Methods

This study used a convergent mixed-methods design with a descriptive approach based on needs analysis and document content analysis (Deressa et al., 2021). The study was

conducted at two high schools in the South Banten region, representing schools in both urban and rural areas. The schools were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) representing different geographical contexts, namely urban and rural settings; (2) implementing the national English curriculum; and (3) providing access to English learning activities, instructional materials, and relevant curriculum documents. The study selected classes, teachers, and students based on their direct involvement in the English learning process. Participants consisted of 64 students and 3 English teachers from the two high schools in Banten. The participants represented both urban and rural school contexts, with 32 students and 1 English teacher from the urban school and 32 students and 2 English teachers from the rural school.

The researchers collected primary data through questionnaires, classroom observations, and document analysis. Secondary data included learning outcomes, learning objective sequences, textbooks, teaching modules, instructional materials, worksheets, learning media, and assessments. Instruments included student literacy and needs questionnaires, teacher understanding and needs questionnaires, observation sheets, teacher interviews, curriculum analysis sheets, and instructional material analysis sheets. The student cultural literacy questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The mean scores were interpreted using predetermined category intervals. The interval width was calculated using the formula: maximum score – minimum score/number of categories. Based on this calculation, the mean scores were categorized as follows: very low (1.00–1.80), low (1.81–2.60), moderate (2.61–3.40), high (3.41–4.20), and very high (4.21–5.00).

The research instruments underwent expert validation by experts in instructional materials and curriculum. Furthermore, the consistency of document analysis was assessed through inter-rater agreement. Two raters independently reviewed six documents, consisting of two English textbooks, two teaching modules, and two learning documents. The agreement between the two raters was calculated using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, resulting in $\kappa = 0.81$, which indicates almost perfect agreement. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and score categories based on predetermined intervals. Qualitative data were obtained through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The results from both sources were integrated through a joint display to compare

student conditions, teacher perspectives, curriculum requirements, and material availability, thereby producing a learning gap map. The validity of the findings was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, peer discussion, document audits, and inter-rater agreement.

Result and Discussion

The Condition of Cultural Literacy Among 10th-Grade High School Students in ELT

The analysis included 64 10th-grade students from two high schools in the South Banten region. The cultural literacy instrument consisted of 28 questions and demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.860. This indicates that the instrument is sufficiently reliable to describe students' cultural literacy in English language learning. The data show that students' cultural literacy scored an average of 3.42 with a standard deviation of 0.37 and a 95% confidence interval of 3.32–3.51. This score falls into the "high" category based on the score interpretation criteria. However, this average is only slightly higher than the lower limit of the high category, which is 3.41. The percentage of positive responses also reached only 46.7%, indicating that cultural literacy has not yet developed strongly and evenly across all measured aspects.

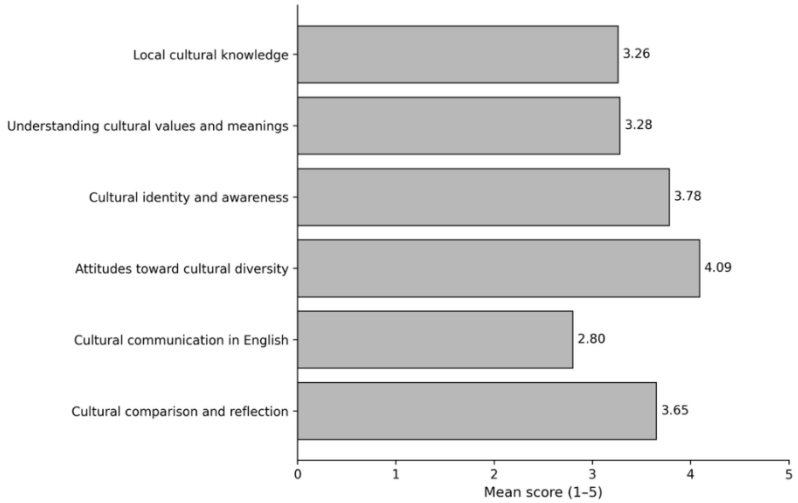
Table 1

Profile of student cultural literacy

Dimension	Mean	Positive Response	Category
Local culture knowledge	3.26	42.2%	Moderate
Understanding cultural values and meaning	3.28	37.8%	Moderate
Cultural identity and awareness	3.78	62.5%	High
Attitudes toward cultural diversity	4.09	78.9%	High
Cultural Communication in English	2.80	15.4%	Moderate
Cultural comparison and reflection	3.65	62.1%	High
Overall Cultural Literacy	3.42	46.7%	High

Figure 1

Profile of 10th-Grade Students' Cultural Literacy in ELT



The distribution of individual scores shows that 33 students (56.1%) fell into the moderate category, 29 students (45.3%) fell into the high category, and 1 student each (1.6%) fell into the low and very high categories. No students fell into the very low category. Although the average score indicates a very high result, the majority of students individually still fall into the moderate category. This situation indicates that the development of cultural literacy is not yet evenly distributed among students.

Based on the dimensional analysis in table 1 and figure 1, the highest achievement was in attitudes toward cultural diversity with an average of 4.09, followed by cultural identity and awareness at 3.78, and cultural comparison and reflection at 3.65. Meanwhile, knowledge of local culture scored 3.26, and understanding of cultural values and meanings scored 3.28. This pattern indicates that aspects of attitude, appreciation, and cultural awareness are relatively stronger compared to the ability to understand the social functions, values, meanings, symbols, and reasons why a tradition should be preserved. The dimension with the lowest average score, at 2.80, is the ability to communicate about culture in English.

Table 2

Indicator of the ability to communicate culture in English

Indicator	Mean	Positive Response
Naming cultural object	2.84	9.4%

Indicator	Mean	Positive Response
Describing local culture	2.95	21.9%
Explaining the function or meaning of tradition	2.66	7.8%
Writing a cultural text	2.91	21.9%
Selecting cultural vocabulary	2.50	12.5%
Presenting local culture	2.97	18.8%

Based on the indicators in table 2, this situation indicates a gap between students' cultural literacy capital and their productive skills in ELT. Students possess positive cultural attitudes but do not yet have adequate linguistic tools to communicate them in English. This gap is the most prominent feature of students' cultural literacy in ELT.

English Curriculum Accommodates Cultural Literacy Development

An analysis of the English curriculum documents for Grade 10, Phase E, shows that the development of cultural literacy has been incorporated into the curriculum. However, the extent to which it is incorporated is not yet uniform. Cultural content depends heavily on the characteristics of the material and the recontextualization carried out by teachers. In general, the curriculum has provided opportunities through the use of descriptive, recount, procedural, and narrative texts, as well as other multimodal materials. Cultural content is also evident in the topics "Indonesian Cultural Diversity," "Art and Cultural Issues," and the "Global Diversity" dimension. In addition, several learning objectives guide students to analyze, evaluate, design, and present texts related to Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Table 3

Synthesis of cultural literacy content in the Phase E English curriculum

Aspect	English Curriculum	Findings
Space for cultural integration	Implied through text types and explicit through Indonesian culture and arts and culture issues	Available, but not evenly distributed
Competency requirement	Focus on language skills and Analysis and production of cultural texts	Culture remains the context for language learning
Nature of the content	A half implicit and explicit	Not yet consistent across all learning objectives
Culture	General/national	Requires contextualization by the teacher
Indicator and Assessment	Still general and language-based	Cultural literacy has not yet been specifically measured

Based on table 3 above, cultural integration remains general in nature and is situated at the national cultural level. Sports, health, food, and fragmented stories still dominate

learning topics. Local culture has not yet been explicitly included. Students' local identity, intercultural communication, cultural comparison, and critical reflection have not yet been formulated as specific and operational activities. Thus, it can be said that the Phase E English curriculum accommodates cultural literacy only partially. Its implementation still requires the recontextualization of materials, the strengthening of local culture, and the development of assessments that specifically measure students' cultural understanding and communication.

Overall, the English curriculum has provided a strong foundation for the development of receptive and productive skills. However, cultural literacy has not yet been formulated as a comprehensive and measurable learning outcome. Assessment also remains focused on linguistic performance and text comprehension. There are no indicators that assess the accuracy of cultural information, the interpretation of cultural values, the ability to communicate culture, or attitudes toward diversity. Thus, while the curriculum has opened up space for cultural integration, it has not yet established cultural literacy as a measurable learning outcome. Further development is needed through the localization of content, the use of local ethnolinguistic terms, cultural reflection, and assessments that encompass cultural knowledge, communication, and attitudes.

Cultural Representation in 10th-Grade English Curriculum Materials

An analysis of the nationally published English textbook *Work in Progress* for 10th-grade students in senior high schools (SMA), vocational high schools (SMK), and Islamic senior high schools (MA) reveals that culture is represented primarily through national and international cultures. Of the 12 units analyzed, national culture appears in 8 units, including through Indonesian athletes, pencak silat, regional cuisine, Indonesian graffiti, and the story of Malin Kundang. International culture appeared in 6 units through Cristiano Ronaldo, the Paralympics, and Red Riding Hood. Meanwhile, the target culture of English appeared in only 1 unit. Local culture, by contrast, was represented by only one folk tale from a specific region. These representations were conveyed through text, images, audio, video, dialogues, exercises, projects, and assessments. Thus, the presentation format was quite multimodal.

Table 4

Cultural Representation

Aspect	Main Finding
Cultural Type	Amount of International culture, national culture (local culture is represented by certain local culture)
Forms of representation	Text, images, audio, video, dialogues, exercise, projects, and assessments
Cultural depth	Surface-level and interpretive approaches dominate; critical discussions focus on graffiti and folklore
Ethnolinguistic aspect	Local term are available, but their sociocultural meanings are rarely explained
Activities	Identification, description, comparison, reflection, evaluation, and production of multimodal texts
Gaps	Local culture are underrepresented, intercultural communication is not yet explicit, and cultural literacy assessments are not yet tailored

Based on table 4, the depth of cultural representation is not yet uniform. Of the 12 units, 3 are at the surface-level cultural stage, 5 at the imperative level, 3 at the deep level, and 1 contains no specific cultural elements. Surface-level representation is exemplified by *pencak silat* and regional cuisine, which are generally presented as images, labels, or facts. A more in-depth discussion is concentrated in Chapters 5 and 6 through debates on graffiti as art or an act of vandalism, as well as comparisons of Malin Kundang and Red Riding Hood from different perspectives. Ethnolinguistic elements remain limited; for example, the terms *pencak silat*, *gado-gado*, *tinutuan*, and *pempek* lack adequate explanation. The text does not mention their origins, social functions, or cultural meanings.

Learning activities have encouraged students to identify, describe, compare, interpret, reflect on, and produce multimodal products. However, intercultural communication has not been explicitly designed, and descriptions of local culture have not been systematically developed in English. It can therefore be concluded that the materials are sufficiently robust in terms of communicative learning and critical reflection. However, cultural representation is still dominated by international cultures and certain national cultures. The main gaps lie in the lack of local culture, the lack of ethnolinguistic explanations, and the absence of activities that connect language, identity, and local cultural practices.

The Gap Between the Curriculum, Course Content, and Students' Cultural Literacy

Table 5

Gap Analysis Map

Component	Finding	Gaps	Learning Need
Student Profile	High level of openness to diversity, but knowledge of cultural values and communication in English remains low	Affective capital has not yet translated into conceptual and productive skills	Cultural vocabulary, text models, and progressive speaking and writing exercises
Curriculum	Provides opportuinities ti explore Indonesian culture, multimodal text, analysis, and presentations	Local culture, intercultural communication, relfection, and cultural indicators are not yet operational	Specific and measurable learning objectives for local culture
Materials	A wide range of national and international cultural content; communicative and multimodal activities are available by A wide range	Local culture is limited to specific cultural contexts, and local terms and sociocultural meanings are not sufficiently explained	Expand the cultural content, include an ethnolinguistic glossary, and provide credible cultural sources.
Structured Activities	Discussions, projects, comparisons, presentations, and text production	Productive tasks are not yet accompanied by sufficient language and cultural support	Scaffolding, sample products, guided practice, and feedback
Assessment	Assessment focuses on language comprehension and performance	Accuracy of information, values, communication, and cultural attitudes have not yet been measured	A cultural literacy rubric that covers knowledge, language, reflection, and attitudes

Based on table 5, triangulation of the results from the questionnaire, curriculum analysis, and materials analysis indicates that there is a mismatch between students' abilities and the available learning support. Students' cultural literacy scored an average of 3.42, but 51.6% of students still fall into the moderate category. Students' strengths are evident in their attitudes toward diversity and awareness of identity. Meanwhile, their knowledge of local culture, understanding of cultural values, and ability to communicate culture in ELT remain limited. The cultural communication dimension scored only 2.80, with positive responses at 15.4%. The ability to explain the functions and meanings of traditions stood at 7.8%, and the ability to select cultural vocabulary at 12.5%. These findings indicate that students possess the affective readiness to study culture. However, this is not yet supported by adequate conceptual knowledge and linguistic tools.

In the English language curriculum, culture has been incorporated through the topic of Indonesia's cultural diversity. This is particularly evident in pedagogical text genres such as

narrative texts and descriptive texts, as well as in activities involving the analysis and production of other multimodal texts. However, this space has not been consistently translated into learning objectives that encompass local identity, interpretation of values, cultural comparison, intercultural communication, and critical reflection. Local culture still depends on teacher initiative. A similar gap was also found in English language materials. The local cultures highlighted are still representations of only certain cultures and remain dominated by international cultures.

Furthermore, local cultures are presented only in the form of images, labels, and simple facts without explanations regarding their origins, social functions, and cultural significance. The materials do include discussions, presentations, projects, and reflections. However, they do not include specific activities for intercultural communication or support for local cultural vocabulary. The main gaps lie in content, depth, productive skills, and assessment. Students need a cultural context that is relevant to their own environment, whereas the curriculum and materials still focus on Indonesian culture in general. Students also need explanations of cultural values and meanings, while the materials often present culture only at a superficial level. At the same time, the curriculum and textbooks require students to produce texts, engage in discussions, and present ideas. However, students still struggle to choose the right vocabulary, translate local terms, and explain their culture in English.

The Gap Between Students' Affective Capital and Productive Abilities

The results show that 10th-grade students' cultural literacy of 10th-grade students falls in the high category, with an overall average of 3.42. However, this achievement is only slightly above the lower threshold of the high category and does not yet indicate uniform mastery. A total of 33 of 64 students, or 51.6%, remain in the moderate category. Therefore, the "high" category in the overall score cannot be directly interpreted as a sign that cultural literacy has developed optimally. Data across each dimension actually reveal an unbalanced profile of cultural literacy among the affective, conceptual, and productive aspects.

The dimension of attitudes toward cultural diversity achieved the highest score with an average of 4.09, followed by cultural identity and awareness at 3.78 and the ability to compare and reflect on cultures at 3.65. These findings indicate that students have demonstrated openness to diversity and a positive awareness of cultural identity. This

condition constitutes an important affective foundation for the development of intercultural communication competencies. However, this affective foundation has not yet fully translated into the ability to understand and communicate culture. This is evident from the low scores in local cultural knowledge (3.26), understanding of cultural values and meanings (3.28), and the ability to communicate culture in English (2.80).

This pattern reveals a gap between students' willingness to appreciate culture and their ability to represent culture through English. Cultural literacy is not only related to the acceptance of differences but also involves the ability to understand, explain, negotiate, and reflect on cultural meanings in interactions. Fathi et al. (2023), through a study of 601 English language learners, found that intercultural communication competence is one of the key predictors of learners' willingness to communicate. These findings indicate that a positive attitude alone is not sufficient if students lack the cultural knowledge and linguistic tools necessary for real-world communication.

The most evident gaps in this study were found in the ability to select cultural vocabulary, with an average score of 2.50, and the ability to explain the function or meaning of traditions, with an average score of 2.66. The low scores on these two indicators reveal two interrelated obstacles. First, students do not yet possess sufficient English vocabulary to name and describe local cultural objects, traditions, or practices. Second, students lack an adequate conceptual framework to explain the reasons, values, social functions, and worldviews embedded in a cultural practice. Thus, the problem is not only limited in translating words but also a limitation in constructing cultural explanations that people from different backgrounds can understand.

From an ethnolinguistic perspective, local terms do not always have direct equivalents in English. Terms referring to traditions, cultural objects, social relationships, or community practices may carry specific knowledge, values, and identities that are not fully represented through literal translation. Therefore, instruction should guide students not merely to find word equivalents but also to produce paraphrases, contextual descriptions, and explanations of the social functions of these terms. The framework for assessing local cultural awareness developed by Fan et al. (2025) also identifies the ability to express and apply cultural knowledge as a key dimension, in addition to cultural knowledge and attitudes. Although this framework was developed in the context of higher education, its dimensional structure is

relevant for illustrating that cultural literacy must be manifested in communicative performance and not merely in cultural recognition.

Accommodating Cultural Literacy in the English Language Curriculum

A curriculum analysis shows that Phase E English language learning has provided opportunities for cultural integration through descriptive, recount, procedural, and narrative texts, as well as various multimodal products. Topics related to Indonesia's cultural diversity, as well as issues in art and culture, can also serve as entry points for developing students' cultural knowledge and communication skills. However, these opportunities remain largely untapped and have not yet been consistently formulated as operational and measurable cultural literacy outcomes.

Culture in the curriculum tends to function as a context for practicing language skills, rather than as a competency that needs to be specifically understood, communicated, and assessed. Consequently, learning objectives place greater emphasis on identifying information, understanding text structure, using linguistic elements, and producing texts. Accuracy in cultural knowledge, the ability to explain values, the use of local terms, cultural mediation, and critical reflection have not yet been formulated as explicit learning indicators. This situation means that the implementation of local culture relies heavily on teachers' abilities and initiatives in recontextualizing the curriculum.

This finding aligns with Ratri et al. (2024), who emphasize the need for a locally-based English curriculum to preserve students' identities while building cultural competence. However, simply including local culture as a topic is insufficient unless it is aligned with learning objectives, activities, language support, and assessments. Learning objectives should be structured progressively; for example, students should be able to identify elements of local culture, describe cultural practices, explain the social functions and values embedded within them, compare them with other cultures, and present them to a cross-cultural audience.

The findings of Lee et al. (2023) indicate that integrating intercultural communication competencies into an eight-week English language course can support the development of intercultural competencies, motivation to learn a second language, and language proficiency among high school students. Meanwhile, Liao and Li (2023) found that culturally responsive instruction can increase students' openness to different perspectives and their ability to

construct meaning critically. These findings show that culture should be an integral part of well-planned instructional design, rather than merely an illustration or interlude in language materials.

Thus, cultural accommodation in the Phase E English curriculum can be categorized as partial accommodation. The curriculum has provided space for it but has not yet provided full operational guidance. Alignment is needed between learning outcomes, learning objectives, activities, materials, and assessments. Cultural literacy needs to be formulated as a learning outcome that includes, at a minimum, cultural knowledge, the interpretation of values, the use of language to explain culture, the ability to compare perspectives, and an open attitude toward diversity.

Cultural Representation and Ethnolinguistic Depth in the Material

An analysis of the *Work in Progress* textbook shows that the material uses a variety of media, including text, images, audio, video, dialogues, exercises, projects, and assessments. This diversity of media is a strength because it provides students with opportunities to receive and produce information in various forms. However, multimodality does not automatically guarantee depth in cultural representation. This study contributes to culturally responsive English language learning by providing triangulated evidence from students, teachers, curriculum documents, and instructional materials to strengthen the integration of local cultural identity into English learning contexts.

This finding aligns with Mulyani et al. (2024), who found that tasks in Indonesian high school English textbooks do not yet balance the facilitation of cultural representation with students' critical engagement. Yonata et al. (2024) also noted that international English textbooks tend to feature cultures from "inner circle" countries more frequently, while cultures from "outer circle" and developing contexts are underrepresented. Agustina and Kencana (2023) identified an imbalance in cultural representation within both global and local textbooks used in Indonesian EFL classrooms. The similarity of these patterns suggests that the dominance of certain cultures is not merely a matter of quantity but also of which groups are given space to represent their experiences and identities in language learning.

In the books analyzed, cultural elements such as food, martial arts, folklore, and visual arts were introduced. However, some of these elements were still presented through images,

names, labels, or general facts. Such presentations constitute "surface culture" because students are directed more toward recognizing cultural products than understanding the underlying perspectives. Hasnah et al. (2024) also found that cultural products tend to be more dominant in locally produced English textbooks, while cultural perspectives, values, and beliefs receive less explanation. If this pattern is not further developed, students may learn the names of certain cultures without understanding the reasons for their emergence, their social functions, the values they pass down, and the changes they have undergone within society.

Findings regarding terms such as pencak silat, gado-gado, tinutuan, and pempek indicate that ethnolinguistic explanations do not always accompany the inclusion of local terms. These terms are listed as names of objects or cultural practices, but their social context, origins, meanings, and usage have not been adequately explained. This risks treating local culture as an exotic object that is merely visually recognizable, rather than as a system of knowledge that needs understanding. Setyono and Widodo (2019) point out that multicultural representations in textbooks need critical analysis because the selection of texts, images, and activities can shape how students understand identity and diversity.

The integration of ethnolinguistics into instructional materials can be achieved by providing a cultural glossary that goes beyond simply listing local terms and their translations. Each term should be accompanied by a description, contextual meaning, social function, inherent values, usage contexts, and guidance on how to explain it to English speakers. Instructional materials should also draw on credible cultural sources, such as community documentation, local government publications, research findings, narratives from cultural practitioners, and interviews with community leaders. In this way, culture becomes not merely reading material but a source of knowledge that can be analyzed and communicated.

Strengthening local culture does not mean replacing national and international cultures. Rather, local culture can serve as a foundation for understanding other cultures. Students can begin their learning with the culture closest to their own lives, then compare it with national culture, the culture of English-speaking countries, and global culture. These comparisons should focus on identifying similarities, differences, socio-historical reasons, and shifts in perspective—not on determining which culture is "better." This approach allows local identity and a global orientation to develop simultaneously.

Aligning Instructional Practices, Language Support, and Assessment

The triangulation of student conditions, the curriculum, and the instructional materials indicate that the gaps identified in this study are systemic. The curriculum expects students to analyze and produce texts, while the instructional materials provide activities such as discussions, presentations, projects, and multimodal production. However, these productive demands are not accompanied by adequate support in the form of vocabulary, text models, performance examples, guided practice, and feedback. Thus, low levels of cultural communication skills are not solely a shortcoming of students but also reflect the mismatch between learning demands and available support.

Learning practices can be developed through a progressive sequence of tasks. The initial stage focuses on observing and identifying cultural elements. The next stage guides students to describe cultural forms, actors, places, and processes with the help of vocabulary and sentence structures. Afterward, students are trained to explain social functions, values, symbols, and cultural meanings. In more complex stages, students compare cultures, explain their culture to people from different backgrounds, respond to cultural misunderstandings, and produce critical reflections or multimodal products.

Esmaeili and Kuhi (2023) demonstrate that pedagogical tasks based on critical incidents can enhance English language learners' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and intercultural awareness. In the context of this study, a critical incident can be a situation in which someone from outside a community misunderstands a local tradition or term. Students are then asked to explain the cultural context, choose language that the audience can understand, and prevent generalizations or stereotypes. Such activities are more meaningful than simply memorizing cultural names because they train students to become cultural mediators.

A systematic review by Zhou et al. (2024) shows that collaborative tasks, oral presentations, simulations, role-playing, video analysis, and projects can support the development of cross-cultural competencies when accompanied by clear objectives and facilitation. Therefore, multimodal activities in textbooks can retain their multimodal nature, but they need to be designed more explicitly to foster intercultural interaction. For example, students can create cultural explanation videos, bilingual descriptive texts, digital stories, virtual cultural tours, or presentations aimed at an international audience. These products

require stages of vocabulary planning, verification of the accuracy of cultural information accuracy, delivery practice, and feedback.

The teacher's role is crucial in this recontextualization process. Rohmani and Andriyanti (2022) indicate that teachers' beliefs and positive attitudes toward teaching culture are not always fully realized in classroom practice. This may be influenced by limitations in time, materials, cultural knowledge, authentic resources, and teaching strategies. Meanwhile, Alexon et al. (2024) found that teachers and students generally hold positive perceptions of using local content in English textbooks. Thus, the primary need is no longer merely to foster acceptance of local culture but to provide tools that help teachers integrate it academically and pedagogically.

Assessments of cultural literacy also need to be developed more specifically. Assessments that measure only grammar, general vocabulary, reading comprehension, or speaking fluency cannot adequately reflect students' ability to communicate culture. An analytical rubric could cover four domains: accuracy of cultural information; depth of explanation of values and social functions; mediation skills in English; and the quality of cultural comparisons and reflections. An attitude of respect for differences can also be assessed by how students respond to other perspectives, avoid stereotypes, and acknowledge diversity within a single cultural group.

These assessments should not rely solely on perception questionnaires. Questionnaires need to be supplemented with performance tasks, such as cultural presentations, writing assignments, cross-cultural communication simulations, digital projects, and reflective portfolios. This combination will help distinguish between what students believe about their abilities and what they are actually capable of doing. The framework proposed by Fan et al. (2025) can serve as a reference for developing the dimensions of knowledge, attitudes, and cultural expression and application tailored to the characteristics of high school students and the local culture of Banten.

Contributions, Implications, and Limitations of the Study

The main contribution of this study lies in the integrated mapping of students' cultural literacy, the curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching practices. Previous research has more often examined cultural representations in textbooks, the perceptions of teachers and

students, or the effectiveness of a particular instructional model in isolation. This study demonstrates that issues of cultural literacy cannot be explained by a single component alone. Students' affective readiness will not develop into productive skills unless the curriculum operationalizes cultural competencies, instructional materials provide an in-depth exploration of local culture, teachers receive pedagogical support, and assessments measure cultural communication.

An ethnolinguistic perspective broadens the analysis because it does not view culture solely through the lens of food, art, clothing, or folklore. The analysis also focuses on the relationships between local terms, social meanings, values, identity, local knowledge, and how communities understand their lives. Thus, the recommended development of instructional materials cannot be achieved merely by adding images or readings about Banten culture. The materials need to enable students to explain how language is used to preserve, construct, and pass down cultural knowledge.

The practical implications of this research can be summarized in five interrelated components: content localization, the provision of ethnolinguistic support, gradual development of productive tasks, cross-cultural comparison, and authentic cultural literacy assessment. These five components can serve as the foundation for developing modules, worksheets, digital media, cultural glossaries, and rubrics for English language learning based on the local culture of Banten. This approach allows students to develop their English language skills without relinquishing their cultural identity and knowledge.

This study has limitations regarding the number of participants, geographical scope, and the sources of material analyzed. The study involved only 64 students and three teachers from two high schools in South Banten and focused on the curriculum and the main textbook used in 10th grade. Therefore, the study's findings cannot yet be generalized to all high schools in Banten. Data on student literacy were also largely obtained through self-perception instruments, so they do not fully reflect students' performance in authentic cultural communication situations.

Future research should involve schools with more diverse geographic and social characteristics, a larger number of participants, and a wider variety of learning materials. The questionnaire instrument should also be supplemented with speaking and writing performance tests, cultural mediation tasks, and analysis of students' multimodal products.

Experimental or longitudinal studies could test the impact of ethnolinguistics-based instructional materials on the development of students' cultural knowledge, English communication skills, identity awareness, and intercultural competence.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the main challenge in students' cultural literacy does not lie in low acceptance of diversity, but rather in the underdeveloped ability to transform cultural knowledge and identity into meaningful English communication. The curriculum has created space for cultural integration, but this space needs to be realized through more in-depth local content, systematic language support, intercultural communication activities, and measurable assessments. Cultural literacy in ELT ultimately needs to be understood not merely as the ability to recognize culture, but as the ability to accurately represent, explain, negotiate, and reflect on local culture in global communication.

Conclusion

This study reveals that Grade 10 students' cultural literacy in English language teaching (ELT) in Banten is generally high; however, development of cultural literacy remains uneven across dimensions. Students demonstrate strong appreciation of cultural diversity and awareness of cultural identity. However, they still struggle in understand cultural values, interpret local cultural meanings, and communicate cultural knowledge in English. The most prominent gap lies between students' positive cultural attitudes and their limited ability to represent local culture in English, particularly in selecting cultural vocabulary and explaining the social functions and meanings of traditions.

The analysis of curriculum, classroom practices, and learning materials indicates that cultural integration has been accommodated in English learning. However, it has not been fully operationalized as a measurable learning outcome. Although the curriculum provides opportunities to explore cultural topics through various text genres and multimodal activities, it still insufficiently emphasizes local culture, intercultural communication, and cultural literacy assessment. Similarly, English learning materials contain diverse national and international cultural representations. However, local cultural elements and ethnolinguistic meanings remain limited and are often presented at a surface level, without deeper exploration of values, identities, and social contexts.

Therefore, developing cultural literacy in ELT requires stronger alignment among students' competencies, curriculum objectives, teaching practices, learning materials, and assessment systems. Local cultural content should be integrated through ethnolinguistic approaches that emphasize not only cultural recognition but also the ability to explain, interpret, compare, and communicate cultural meanings in English. The implementation of localized materials, structured language support, progressive productive tasks, and authentic cultural literacy assessment can support students in becoming competent intercultural communicators who can maintain local identities while participating in global communication.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the Early-Career Faculty Research Grant (BIMA-PDP) from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology through the Directorate of Research and Community Service, Directorate General of Research and Development, under Grant Nos. 94/DST/C/AL.04.02/2026, 283/C3/DT.05.00/PL-BARU/2026, 1586/LL4/PG/2026, and 09/PP-MONO/LPPM-UNMA/2026. The authors obtained research permission from the Kanekes Village Government and participating schools. All participants joined voluntarily after receiving information about the study. Research involving the Baduy Indigenous Community followed consultation procedures and respected local cultural norms. The authors thank the Baduy community, participating teachers and schools, and Universitas Mathla'ul Anwar for their support and collaboration throughout the research process.

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