

PRIORITIZING MINANGKABAU CULTURAL FEATURES FOR CONTEXTUAL ENGLISH MATERIALS: AN ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' NEEDS ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Curriculum promotes early English proficiency in elementary school students. However, learning English as a foreign language is still difficult for young learners, especially in terms of acquiring the vocabulary and understanding the basic language abilities. Therefore, English teaching materials should be contextualized with content relevant to students' social backgrounds. Despite the growing focus to the integration of local culture into English language education, only a few research have indicated which cultural aspects for English material development in elementary schools should be given priority. This study identified and prioritized Minangkabau cultural traits for elementary school teachers' contextual English material development to meet their needs. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used to collect data from elementary school teachers in Lengayang District, West Sumatra, where Minangkabau culture is strongly rooted in students' daily lives. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate quantitative data and theme analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The results demonstrated that the integration of Minangkabau culture into English learning materials was strongly supported. The most emphasized cultural attributes were traditional games, folktales, traditional clothes, and traditional meals, as they were believed to enable vocabulary learning, boost student engagement, promote cultural awareness, and assist meaningful language use. The study concluded that the emphasis on culturally relevant content can be useful in developing contextual and culturally responsive English materials for students in elementary schools.

Keywords: Minangkabau culture; contextual materials; elementary education; needs analysis; English learning

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential language for international communication, education, science, and technology. English language competence is being more recognized as a crucial competency for students to possess in order to participate in academic and professional situations (Escala et al. 2025; Latifa et al. 2025). This recognition comes as globalization continues to exert its effect on a variety of facets of life. In response to this desire, the education system in Indonesia has consistently worked to strengthen the role that English plays in our educational institutions. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum further emphasizes meaningful learning experiences and the development of students' competencies through contextualized learning (Irsyad et al., 2024; H. Latifa et al., 2023). It is anticipated of students that they will have core English skills by the time they reach the elementary school level (Irsyad et al., 2024; Marsevani et al., 2026). These skills include the ability to master vocabulary and basic conversant skills (H. Latifa et al., 2023; Octaberlina, 2023). For this reason, English instruction ought to be crafted in a manner that is pertinent, interesting, and significant for students of a younger age category.

English language instruction continues to be difficult for elementary

school students in Indonesia, despite the fact that it is an essential subject. The majority of students learn English as a foreign language, which means that they have limited opportunities to interact with the language outside of regular classroom settings (Laila et al., 2023). Young learners often experience difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, comprehending learning materials, and using English in meaningful contexts (Oktavia et al., 2022). It is possible that these difficulties will bring down on the students' motivation and participation during English classes (Sánchez Franco & Pérez Ortega, 2024). Previous studies have reported that vocabulary acquisition is one of the most fundamental yet difficult aspects of foreign language learning among young learners (Leona et al., 2021; Prayudha, 2023; Roque et al., 2025). Students may have difficulty developing other language abilities, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, if they do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge (Ahmad, 2021). Consequently, there is a need for learning materials that can facilitate students' understanding by connecting English language learning with familiar contexts.

Contextualized language learning is a strategy that has garnered a significant amount of attention in recent years. Based

on the contextual learning hypothesis, students are able to acquire new information more efficiently when it is connected to their previous experiences and the sociocultural situations in which they find themselves (Mubarok et al., 2022; Mustapa, 2025). Similarly, culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into classroom instruction (Fauzi et al., 2025; Roque et al., 2025). The use of contextualized materials in language education enables students to make connections between linguistic concepts and real-life events, which in turn increases students' comprehension, involvement, and memory of the content (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020). The cognitive burden that is placed on young learners may be reduced by the use of culturally relevant learning materials (Nambiar et al., 2020). This is because students are able to concentrate on comprehending language forms through concepts that they are already familiar with (Kostikova et al., 2018; Sumartias et al., 2020). As a result, integrating local culture into English language learning has been widely recommended as a strategy for creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

There have been a number of educational settings that have investigated

the possibility of incorporating local culture into the instruction of the English language. It has been demonstrated in previous research that the inclusion of local cultural content can have a beneficial impact on the language learning outcomes of students (Alwasilah, 2024; Ratri & Tyas, 2022; Taqdir, 2025). Local culture has been found to increase learners' motivation, strengthen cultural identity, improve vocabulary acquisition, and promote active participation in classroom activities (Peng & Patterson, 2022). In addition, students are able to concurrently enhance their linguistic competency and their understanding of other cultures through the use of materials that base their education on culture (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023). Several aspects of local culture, including traditional tales, local knowledge, cultural customs, traditional games, and local arts, have been included into English language training by researchers (Supiatman et al., 2023). In conclusion, the findings of these studies suggest that local culture has the potential to serve as an efficient resource for contextualized language learning. However, most existing studies have primarily focused on evaluating the effectiveness of culture-based materials after their implementation rather than identifying which cultural elements should

be prioritized during the material development process.

The ability to recognize appropriate cultural information is vital in domains where the local culture is still closely intertwined with the lives of students. One such situation is the Minangkabau community in West Sumatra. The Minangkabau culture has many cultural expressions, such as traditional dances, songs, musical instruments, folktales, traditional attire, meals, games, and celebrations (Infer et al., 2025). These features of culture are known by a large percentage of primary school kids as they are often found in activities within the community and within families. The majority of the population of Lengayang District belongs to the Minangkabau ethnic group. Students grow up in an environment close to Minangkabau cultural traditions. Therefore, the integration of Minangkabau cultural content in English learning materials can provide students with a great opportunity to learn English by using concepts and experiences that are already familiar to them. However, there is still a paucity of empirical knowledge on whether particular Minangkabau cultural features ought to be prioritized in the development of English material.

Although previous research has highlighted the importance of local culture

in language education, limited attention has been given to teachers' perspectives regarding the prioritization of specific cultural features for elementary school English materials. The majority of research concentrate on the implementation of local culture-based learning or the responses of students to cultural content. However, the demands of teachers as material users and implementers are sometimes disregarded. Due to the fact that teachers play a vital role in selecting, customizing, and implementing learning materials in the classroom, it is essential to have a solid understanding of the priorities that teachers hold. Moreover, identifying the cultural features considered most relevant by teachers can provide a stronger empirical foundation for developing contextualized English materials that align with students' sociocultural backgrounds and learning needs.

The current study, in contrast to other research that primarily studied the efficacy of incorporating local culture, focuses on identifying and prioritizing certain Minangkabau cultural aspects for the construction of contextual English content based on the requirements of primary school teachers. By employing a needs analysis approach that combines questionnaire and interview data, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence

regarding the cultural content that should be incorporated into English learning materials for elementary school students. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to determine the levels of priority for Minangkabau cultural characteristics and investigate the reasons that teachers give for prioritizing such characteristics in

English language instruction. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of culturally responsive English materials and provide practical guidance for material developers, curriculum designers, and elementary school teachers in implementing contextualized English instruction.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

2.1. Contextual English Learning for Young Learners

Contextual learning has emerged as a fundamental strategy in modern education, as it underscores the relationship between educational content and students' real-world experiences (Mubarok et al., 2022). The methodology is grounded in constructivist theories that perceive learning as an active process wherein learners develop knowledge through their interactions with the environment (Jumaah, 2024). In English language education (ELT), contextual learning is especially pertinent for young learners, as children generally acquire new concepts more efficiently when they are associated with familiar settings, objects, and experiences (Guo, 2024; Jumaah, 2024). Students are taught to comprehend language through meaningful settings that mirror their daily experiences, rather of memorizing isolated

vocabulary or grammatical rules (Mustapa, 2025).

The significance of contextual learning is most apparent in elementary school environments, as students are in the process of developing cognitive and verbal skills (Sural & Sağlık, 2024). Young learners typically have minimal exposure to foreign languages and depend significantly on tangible experiences to comprehend abstract ideas (Paudi & Ngaito, 2026). Thus, educational resources that include familiar surroundings may alleviate cognitive load and enhance understanding. Research indicates that contextualized language training enhances students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary acquisition by enabling learners to correlate new linguistic forms with pre-existing notions (Sural & Sağlık, 2024; Paudi & Ngaito, 2026).

Besides facilitating language acquisition, contextual learning enhances the development of communicative ability (Aswad et al., 2024). Students are more inclined to utilize language for communication when they engage with it in authentic and relevant circumstances, rather than merely replicating memorized forms (Aswad et al., 2024; Mubarok et al., 2022). This corresponds with the objectives of modern English teaching, which prioritize significant communication and active engagement. In the Indonesian educational framework, the Merdeka Curriculum enhances the significance of contextualized learning by prompting teachers to create learning experiences pertinent to students' sociocultural backgrounds and local contexts (Aswad et al., 2024; Kumayas et al., 2025).

Although the advantages of contextual learning are acknowledged, prior research has predominantly concentrated on pedagogical tactics and classroom execution. Relatively insufficient emphasis has been devoted to determining the contextual resources that ought to be included in English learning materials. Consequently, identifying suitable cultural and environmental contexts is a crucial step in creating

effective English learning resources for elementary school kids.

2.2. Local Culture Integration in English Language Teaching

The integration of local culture into English language teaching has been attracting growing interest from researchers and educators. Cultural content from English-speaking countries has traditionally dominated English learning materials (Prayudha, 2023). While this type of information might expose students to many global perspectives, it may not always be relevant to learners' daily lives. Therefore, many scholars have argued for the incorporation of local culture into English teaching to build up a more balanced and relevant learning environment (Irwan et al., 2019).

Local culture is the set of values, traditions, practices, beliefs and cultural products that are specific to a particular community (Supiatman et al., 2023; Syafii et al., 2022). In educational contexts, local culture can provide a bridge between students' knowledge base and new learning experiences (Syafii et al., 2022; Taqdir, 2025). Students can keep up with their cultural identity and learn a foreign language through culturally relevant content (Peng & Patterson, 2022). This

view is strongly related to culturally responsive pedagogy, which stresses the necessity of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching techniques (Rifa'i et al., 2025; Roque et al., 2025).

There is a growing corpus of research showing the educational advantages of using local culture in English instruction. Research has indicated that the use of locally cultured materials results in higher levels of student enthusiasm, better classroom participation, enhanced vocabulary acquisition and improved cultural awareness (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Nambiar et al., 2020). Students tend to be more interested in learning activities when the things covered are familiar and meaningful to them (Syafii et al., 2022). In addition, local culture content offers authentic opportunity for learners to use English to describe their own experiences and localities (Komara & Neneng, 2021).

Another important part in local culture integration is the fostering of cultural identity and intercultural competency (Byrd, 2016; Sakti et al., 2024). In the age of globalization, educational institutions are expected to increase students' language abilities as well as to strengthen their awareness of local

values and traditions. Students can appreciate their own cultural history through the incorporation of local culture into English study, and at the same time they can improve the ability to converse with people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Kostikova et al., 2018).

Previous research has consistently shown favourable result; however, most studies have focused on the usefulness of local culture-based learning materials after deployment (Nambiar et al., 2020; Sumartias et al., 2020). Material development has received less attention in terms of the process of selection and prioritization of cultural content. Thus, the questions are posed as to what unique cultural characteristics are to be included in the English learning materials to make them most relevant and educational. This problem is particularly acute in culturally rich areas with many cultural aspects useful for educational purposes.

2.3. Minangkabau Cultural Features as Resources for English Material Development

Minangkabau culture is one of the local cultures in Indonesia that can be used as a richness of educational content to help the contextualized English learning. The

Minangkabau are one of the biggest ethnic groups in West Sumatra, and have a wealth of cultural traditions that are still very much alive in their local villages; Such traditions include traditional dances, songs, musical instruments, folktales, traditional costumes, meals, games, and ceremonies (Infer et al., 2025). Such cultural traits are strongly embedded in the lives of many primary school students, particularly in regions where Minangkabau culture still has a dominant role in the life of the community (Zulhermindra et al., 2023).

From an educational point of view, these cultural aspects represent substantial chances for language learning. For example, traditional games can help in acquiring action verbs, classroom instructions, and communicative expressions (Ratri & Tyas, 2022; Rustam et al., 2025). Games give students the opportunity to take part in interactive language activities that improve speaking practice and social connection (Supiatman et al., 2023). Moreover, traditional folktales can promote reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and moral instruction by providing learners with stories that they are already familiar with (Monica & Soplantila, 2024).

Traditional meals and traditional attire are also good backgrounds for

English learning (Tandikombong et al., 2024). Such cultural features can be included in descriptive writing activities. Students can learn terminology about the appearance, qualities, substances, and daily lives (Nasriandi et al., 2023; Tandikombong et al., 2024). Such exercises allow learners to build language abilities while discussing themes directly related to their experiences. Moreover, traditional songs and musical instruments can be employed to enrich listening exercises and to teach cultural values through artistic expression (Mujahidah et al., 2023).

There is no doubt that Minangkabau cultural content has educational potential, but research on its application in English material development is quite restricted. Prior research tends to discuss the general issue of integrating local wisdom without specifying the cultural characteristics that should be addressed for primary school learners (Komara & Neneng, 2021; Madkur, 2025; Mujahidah et al., 2023). Empirical evidence is therefore needed to assist materials creators in picking the most relevant and the most successful cultural content for teaching English.

2.4. Teachers' Needs Analysis in Material Development

Needs analysis is considered to be an essential phase of the educational material development process. It is a systematic approach to identify the needs, expectations and priorities of the stakeholders participating in educational programs (Menggo et al., 2022). The needs analysis in the context of materials development assists in ensuring that the learning resources are in line with the learners' characteristics, the educational goals and the classroom reality (Amalia & Albiansyah, 2023).

Teachers are the key players in needs analysis as they know the students' learning challenges, interests and classroom experiences (Hariyadi & Yanti, 2019). Teachers are the major users and developers of instructional materials, and they are the best people to evaluate the appropriateness and usefulness of instructional content (Meilyani et al., 2025). Their views can give useful information on the kinds of resources that are most likely to facilitate excellent learning outcomes (Hariyadi & Yanti, 2019).

Previous research on material development have usually stressed the role of teachers in the design process (Azaini &

Ambarwati, 2023; Barghamadi, 2020; Fatimah, 2018; Hawanti, 2014). Studies have found that materials developed with teacher input are more likely to meet students' needs and classroom settings (Fatimah, 2018). However, research concentrating explicitly on teachers' priorities for local cultural content is still limited (Azaini & Ambarwati, 2023; Barghamadi, 2020). The majority of studies have focused on students' opinions or the effectiveness of current materials, rather than on what cultural aspects teachers believe is more appropriate for teaching objectives (Hawanti, 2014).

Therefore, it is necessary to undertake a teachers' needs analysis to determine culturally relevant content that can enhance contextual learning of English. The study of this type in the context of Minangkabau culture can provide empirical evidence of the characteristics of culture that teachers consider important in the development of English material. The results may be useful for the development of culturally responsive learning materials and for the integration of local culture into primary school English education in general.

METHODS

This study is a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design to explore and prioritize the Minangkabau cultural attributes for developing contextual English learning materials in elementary schools. This approach was selected because it enables systematic integration of quantitative breadth and qualitative depth. First, the quantitative phase was undertaken in order to determine the overall patterns of teachers' perceptions. Then, the qualitative phase was conducted to explain and elaborate the first statistical findings. This technique is deemed acceptable to explore teachers' thoughts on the creation of culturally responsive English content especially in the setting of the Merdeka Curriculum that highlights meaningful and contextualized learning for young learners.

This research was conducted in the Lengayang District, West Sumatra, Indonesia, where Minangkabau culture is ingrained in the society and the daily life of pupils. In the quantitative phase, there were 50 elementary school English teachers who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in teaching English in the elementary level. In the qualitative phase, 10 instructors were selected from

the first respondents by maximum variation sampling to ensure a range of perspectives based on their response to the questionnaire. This selection technique allowed the study to observe common trends and various perspectives on the inclusion of Minangkabau cultural aspects in English learning materials. All participants were informed of the goal of the study and participation was voluntary. Strict ethical issues were taken into account with the informed consent procedures and anonymised codes to protect the identity of the participants.

Data collection was done by two main tools; a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was constructed based on prior studies on culturally responsive teaching, English education for young learners, and the integration of local culture into language learning resources. It included of Likert scale statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree to assess teachers' judgment of the value of including Minangkabau cultural elements into the English instructional materials. The tool was validated by using expert judgment to determine the content validity, clarity and relevance to the study aims. In

addition, the semi-structured interview guide was created based on early quantitative data and related theoretical frameworks, enabling for a deeper analysis of teachers' thinking, experiences and proposals about cultural integration in English teaching.

The data collecting was carried out in two subsequent phases. In the first phase, the questionnaire was given to 50 English teachers in elementary schools, either in paper form or online (depending on accessibility). The responses were gathered, examined for completeness and prepared for statistical analysis. Phase 2: Selection of 10 teachers among the respondents of the questionnaire with variations in their level of agreement toward the incorporation of Minangkabau cultural aspects. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant for an average of 30–60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the

participants and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy and dependability.

Descriptive statistical approaches and theme analysis were used to analyse the data. The answers obtained from the questionnaire were evaluated by utilizing mean scores, frequencies and percentages to find out the overall view of the teachers and to find out the most prioritized Minangkabau cultural elements in developing English material. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis that comprised data familiarisation, coding, formation of themes and interpretation of patterns appearing from teachers' responses. Finally, at the interpretation stage, the results of both phases were amalgamated to obtain a full view of the phenomenon. Triangulation integration improved the validity of the results and provided more comprehensive insights into how Minangkabau culture elements might be successfully incorporated into English learning materials for elementary students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and prioritize the cultural characteristics of Minangkabau culture for the production of contextual English

learning materials in primary schools. The results are reported using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods methodology. The quantitative results ($n = 50$ teachers)

relate to Research Question 1 (RQ1) while the qualitative findings (n = 10 teachers) relate to Research Question 2 (RQ2). The combination of both phases gives a full explanation of teachers' attitudes and practical issues in incorporating local culture into English instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum.

Quantitative Findings (RQ1)

The first study topic explored the most priority Minangkabau cultural aspects for English learning material production. As shown in Table 1, teachers demonstrated a very high level of agreement regarding the need of integrating local cultural content into English instruction. Among eight cultural characteristics, traditional games scored best (M = 4.78), followed by folktales (M = 4.72), traditional food (M = 4.65), and traditional dress (M = 4.61). These four features were consistently identified as the most relevant for elementary-level English learning materials.

These findings indicate that teachers regard interactive and recognizable cultural elements as the most effective resources for language acquisition. Traditional games, for example, were deemed extremely ideal for young learners since they foster active

engagement and experience learning. This coincides with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and mediated learning in cognitive development (Alkhudiry, 2022). Similarly, Piaget's theory of cognitive development promotes the use of concrete and experiential activities for elementary learners, who are in the concrete operational stage (Guo, 2024).

Folktales were also highly rated due to their narrative structure, which helps word learning and comprehension. According to schema theory, learners absorb new information more efficiently when it is related to prior knowledge (Nambiar et al., 2020). Minangkabau folktales such as Malin Kundang give relevant cultural schemas that enhance language processing and retention.

Traditional food and apparel were also evaluated highly as they offer visual and contextual clues that aid word acquisition. This is consistent with dual coding theory, which argues that integrating verbal and visual data promotes cognitive processing and memory retention (Liang et al., 2025).

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Minangkabau Cultural Elements for English Material Development (n = 50)

No	Cultural Element	Mean	SD	Rank	Interpretation
1	Traditional Games (e.g., congklak, galah asin)	4.78	0.41	1	Very high
2	Folktales (e.g., Malin Kundang, Cindua Mato)	4.72	0.45	2	Very high
3	Traditional Food (e.g., rendang, lamang)	4.65	0.48	3	Very high
4	Traditional Clothing (e.g., bundo kanduang attire)	4.61	0.50	4	Very high
5	Traditional Houses (Rumah Gadang)	4.42	0.55	5	Very high
6	Local Festivals/Events	4.38	0.57	6	Verh high
7	Traditional Songs	4.35	0.60	7	Very high
8	Traditional Tools/Artifacts	4.21	0.63	8	Very high

Qualitative Findings (RQ2)

The second research question was on teacher's view on pedagogical grounds of incorporating Minangkabau cultural aspects in English learning materials. The thematic analysis of the interviews with the 10 teachers yielded three primary themes: (1) cultural familiarity enhances vocabulary retention, (2) cultural integration increases student engagement, and (3) culturally based materials support meaningful communication.

Theme 1: Cultural Familiarity and Vocabulary Retention

Teachers stressed that students learn English vocabulary better when it is linked to familiar cultural circumstances. They said students are more likely to retain English words if they are associated with traditional games, meals or daily cultural experiences. This confirms schema theory which states that prior knowledge helps comprehension and memory retention (Chen, 2025). Cultural familiarity serves as a cognitive bridge between new linguistic input and old knowledge structures.

Theme 2: Increased Student Engagement

Teachers also indicated that cultural integration greatly enhances student enthusiasm and participation. Traditional games were often cited as useful means of generating dynamic and entertaining learning settings. This study aligns with the paradigm of culturally responsive teaching, which posits that incorporating students' cultural origins improves motivation, engagement, and academic performance (Gay, 2002). Based on Dörnyei's motivational theory (2007), motivation plays a vital role in second language acquisition.

Theme 3: Meaningful Communication in English Learning

The third theme implies that culturally contextualized materials facilitate meaningful communication in English. Teachers noticed that students tend to communicate more in English when discussing familiar cultural topics. This aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction rather than rote learning (Richards, 2017). The inclusion of cultural content provides authentic contexts for language practice, enabling students to negotiate meaning within real-life situations.

Discussion

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings indicates high convergence. Both sets of data show that traditional games, folktales, traditional food and traditional attire are the highest rated cultural aspects. The quantitative data identified the priorities and the qualitative data explained the educational rationale for these selections. This triangulation increases the validity of the data and provides holistic insight into the development of culturally responsive English material.

The outcomes of this research provide significant support for the use of culturally responsive pedagogy in the teaching of English language at the primary level. The use of Minangkabau cultural components in English learning materials is in line with the Merdeka Curriculum which stresses contextual, meaningful and student-centered learning. This strategy is also in accordance with constructivist learning theory, which argues that learners construct knowledge based on their experiences and cultural backgrounds (Guo, 2024).

Also, the results are consistent with earlier studies emphasizing the role of local culture in language learning. There is evidence that culturally relevant materials

can increase vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and student engagement (Gay, 2002; Monica & Soplantila, 2024). The integration of local culture contributes to bridging the gap between global language learning and students' local identities in the setting of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Alwasilah, 2024).

This study contains contributions but also numerous shortcomings. First, the research was conducted only in one district (Lengayang, West Sumatra) that may restrict the generalizability of the findings in other regions with distinct cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the study only considered teachers' impressions and did not incorporate the viewpoints of students, which could offer new insights into the usefulness of cultural integration in English learning. Third, the study used only

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the inclusion of Minangkabau cultural aspects in English learning materials is very important and pedagogically useful for primary school education under the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Traditional games, folktales, traditional food, and traditional clothing were found to be the most prioritized cultural elements. Teachers considered these elements as the most effective resources that could support vocabularies' development,

descriptive statistics. Future research can use inferential statistical analysis to analyze the link between variables in depth.

In conclusion, this study confirms that the Minangkabau cultural aspects, especially traditional games, folktales, traditional food, and traditional clothes are very relevant for the English learning material development in primary schools. Incorporating local culture not only aids vocabulary development but also increases student involvement and meaningful conversation. The findings have practical consequences for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in their efforts to establish culturally responsive English instruction within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

increase students' engagement, and facilitate meaningful use of language. The findings emphasize that culturally contextualized learning materials form a meaningful bridge between students' everyday experiences and English language learning, making the process of learning more relevant, engaging, and cognitively accessible to young learners.

The significance of this study is that it contributes to the knowledge of culturally responsive English language teaching in

Indonesia, particularly in the elementary education contexts. This study offers practical guidelines to instructors, materials producers and curriculum designers on building English instructional resources that are linguistically effective and culturally relevant based on empirically grounded goals of local cultural content. In addition, the findings reflect earlier research on culturally responsive pedagogy and constructivist learning, which suggest that

meaningful learning takes place when instruction is linked to learners' cultural backgrounds. In this aspect, the study contributes to the enhancement of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by supporting localized and student-centered practices of English learning that assist language acquisition and cultural identity development.

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