

TEACHERS' VOICES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE EMBEDDING OF LOCAL CULTURE

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Article Info

Received: Apr 28, 2025

Revised: Jul 14, 2025

Accepted: Aug 16, 2025

OnlineVersion: Aug 26, 2025

Abstract

This paper investigates how Indonesian English language and science teachers in Jambi municipality perceive the relationship between national identity and local culture in English and Science teaching. Through thematic analysis, the study explores teachers' understanding toward the role of national identity in English and Science teaching as well as the challenges and strategies teachers encounter in integrating national identity into their teaching practices by the inclusion of local culture, emphasizing the importance of Jambi cultural context in the teaching. The research results reveal a number of findings such as teachers' beliefs that exploring national identity in the classroom can help students develop a sense of belonging and awareness of their place in a multicultural world. However, they express varying degrees of emphasis on national identity, with some advocating for a bigger portion of context of local culture, while others may prioritize students' development of English mastery no matter what culture is embedded. Teachers also report challenges and strategies employed, for instance the conduction of collaborative learning to help students learn from each other's perspectives, designing inclusive teaching materials to include diverse perspectives of national identity, and enhancing teachers' understanding of cultural sensitivity and identity issues. To conclude, it is recommended to build adequate support for a balanced English and Science teaching designs that respect and celebrate national identity while, at the same time, be able to prepare students for global engagement. By fostering the integration of local and global perspectives, English and Science education in Indonesia will be able to create English and Science teaching environment that empowers students as both national and global citizens.

Keywords: English Culture, English and Science Teaching, Local Culture, National Identity



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INTRODUCTION

This study investigates Indonesian English language teachers' perspectives on the interplay between national identity and English language teaching through the embedding of local culture. As the world's largest archipelagic nation, the country boasts an extraordinary tapestry of linguistic and cultural diversity. Comprising over 17,000 islands and home to more than 300 ethnic groups, the country is a

vibrant mosaic of traditions, languages, and customs (Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024). The official language, Bahasa Indonesia, serves as a unifying medium, yet over 700 indigenous languages are spoken across the archipelago. This linguistic richness not only reflects the nation's historical depth but also its social complexities, as local dialects and cultures coexist alongside the national identity. National identity, particularly in this context, encompasses the ways in which language reflects and shapes cultural belonging and societal values.

In this multifaceted environment, English language holds a significant position within Indonesia's educational landscape. In addition, driven by globalization and the demand for English proficiency in the workforce, the language is recognized as a key international language. Consequently, English mastery is a vital component of Indonesia's educational framework and seen as essential for accessing global knowledge, technology, and economic opportunities. Thus, the teaching of English serves as a crucial tool in Indonesian schools. English teaching has gained prominence educational institutions across the country. However, the incorporation of English into the educational landscape raises critical questions regarding the interplay between global and local identities. While English proficiency is increasingly linked to social mobility and career advancement, it also risks overshadowing local languages and cultural practices (Masita, 2021; Ahmad, 2022; Cameron & Galloway, 2019; Nugroho & Alista, 2023). Educators often grapple with balancing the need to equip students with global communication skills while fostering a sense of national and cultural identity. This tension highlights the significance of understanding how national identity can be integrated into English teaching practices, ensuring that students can navigate both local and global contexts effectively. As Indonesia continues to position itself within the global economy, exploring the relationship between national identity and English teaching becomes essential for developing culturally responsive pedagogies that honor Indonesia's rich heritage while preparing students for the future.

Additionally, in a globalized world, issues related to the development of national identity are increasingly pertinent. Teachers' perspectives on national identity can provide valuable insights into how these themes are navigated in the classroom, equipping students with the skills to engage with global challenges thoughtfully and empathetically. Teachers' insights of how to balance between global and local context is essential for preparing students to operate in a multicultural world while also fostering pride in their own national identities. Understanding how teachers perceive these dynamics can lead to more effective and relevant English teaching at their classrooms.

There has been a raising awareness toward the burgeoning of global English communities and its influence to students' local culture and values. The results of previous studies articulate that English teaching programs in many non-English speaking countries is not value free; instead, the programs are cultural and ideological constructs (Gray & Morton, 2018; Yazan et al., 2021; Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2019; Pennycook, 2022). About this, Kramsh (2016) comments that teaching English for students of other languages have become the mode for: "the promulgation of global ideologies through the worldwide expansion of one language" (p. 76).

Concerning the aforementioned issue, Indonesian scholars have voiced the urgency of preserving Indonesian culture, values, and ideologies within English teaching programs in Indonesia. This advocate is also supported by the research results of Masita (2021, 2022) revealing how Indonesian culture has been marginalized and downplayed in English textbooks at schools. In line with that, Ahmad (2022) enunciates that the embedding of local values in English teaching has positively impacted students' awareness of their identity as Indonesian young generation. Consequently, a crucial key point in English teaching in Indonesia is to understand teachers' viewpoints on the interplay between local culture and English teaching in regards to the development of students' national identity. As the same track, a pedagogical approach must not be one-size-fits-all. Instead, an urgent need exists to incorporate local context into English teaching to make the language more relevant, culturally inclusive, and engaging for students (Yazan et al., 2021; Pennycook, 2024).

Previous research by Nugroho and Alista (2023) claims that incorporating local culture into English teaching make the language learning more relevant to students' daily experiences. It is believed that students are more engaged and motivated when they see the immediate relevance of what they are learning. When teachers understand how national identity influences their students' experiences, they can create teaching plans that integrates local contexts and values, making English language learning more relatable and meaningful. Rather than relying solely on Western-centered texts which may seem distant or irrelevant to local students, teachers can incorporate local literature, traditions, and societal issues into

English lessons. By reflecting the cultural, social, and political contexts that students understand, teachers can make English a more powerful tool for students to express their own experiences and ideas.

Moreover, teachers' perspectives on national identity help them to identify ways in incorporating diverse voices and experiences into the classrooms. Cameron and Galloway (2019) explain that recognizing the plurality of identities within a nation allows teachers to foster an inclusive environment where all students feel represented and valued. This inclusivity can enhance students' engagement and motivation to learn. In a rural community, for instance, local folk tales or stories related to local customs might serve as excellent teaching materials, allowing students to practice English while learning about their own heritage. In urban areas, on the other hand, learning activities might focus on current events or local issues, using English as a medium to discuss problems like urbanization, environmental challenges, or local governance. This local culturally inclusive approach enables English learning to be more applicable and valuable in the students' own worlds.

In the same line, the inclusion of local culture into English teaching encourage students' deeper cognitive engagement and critical thinking as well. According to Yazan et al., (2021) when students connect English to their own experiences, they are more likely to use the language critically rather than passively memorizing vocabulary and grammar. By doing so, the teachers do not merely focus on the improvement of students' linguistic skills but also fosters their greater cultural awareness and critical thinking. This such connection can lead to a more participatory classroom, where learners critically engage with content, question assumptions, and discuss relevant topics in their local context. Local issues, such as community development or social justice, can be used as themes to encourage debates, group discussions, and problem-solving in English. For example, students might debate local environmental policies or discuss their role in a community project, all while practicing English. This method develops not only their language skills but also their ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and take part in societal development.

Ultimately, the goal of teaching English at school is to help students communicate effectively in diverse contexts. In such societies in Jambi where many students often speak regional languages or dialects at home, recognizing linguistic and cultural diversities are crucial in English teaching. As Porto et. al. (2025) state, learning English in the context of local culture enhances students in building their cultural competences, which refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. For this reason, integrating local context into English teaching helps students see language as not only a tool for communication but also a means of expressing their cultural identity. By discussing local customs, traditions, and historical events in English, students develop an awareness of how language and culture are intertwined.

Regardless the positive impacts, however, the considerations of what is meant by "national identity" and what is included as the representative of "local culture" are so challenging in a widely heterogeneous nation such as Indonesia. With a very diversely local languages, traditions and customs among Indonesian ethnic groups, teachers' understanding of this concept as well as how to implement them in English classrooms are very crucial as an effort to the promotion of local culture towards the development of students' national identity. Therefore, the research in this paper is addressed to answer the following research questions: (1) How do teachers perceive the role of national identity in English teaching? (2) What challenges do they face in integrating national identity through the embedding of local culture into their teaching? And (3) What strategies do they employ to address these challenges? In short, the investigation of teachers' perspectives on national identity in English teaching is vital for developing pedagogical practices that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and effective. It enables them to create a learning environment that not only teaches language skills but also respects and celebrates the diverse identities of students, ultimately preparing them for meaningful participation in both local and global contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

The participants of this research are two junior high school English teachers in Jambi City with the pseudonyms as Teacher A and Teacher B. They are selected based on certain criteria such as 1) holding educational background as professional English teacher; 2) having English teaching experience over 10 years; 3) Understanding the concept of national identity; 4) willing to participate in this study. Through qualitative approach, the study explores the challenges and strategies teachers encounter in integrating national identity into their teaching practices, emphasizing the importance of the inclusion of cultural contexts in language teaching. The data collection is carried out through semi-structure interviews

to the teachers. The concept of Discourse Analysis by Gee (2014a, 2014b) is adopted for analyzing the collected data. A five-stage discourse analysis model as stated by Gee as follows: (1) Working with Raw Data, (2) Analyzing Selected Building Task, (3) Applying Selected Inquiry Tools, (4) Designing Preliminary Discourse Models, and (5) Reviewing the Discourse Model are implemented. Then, the results of the research are presented through the thematic analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding teachers' viewpoints on this relationship is essential for developing effective pedagogical practices that resonate with students' identities. Through the thematic analysis of the interview results, the research reveals three main themes related to how teachers define national identity, the challenges they face in integrating it into their teaching practices, and the strategies they employ to navigate these complexities.

The first emerging theme is related to teachers' perceptions of how national identity is understood. Both Teacher A and Teacher B perceive national identity as an understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage, history, and values that are specific to their country. Teacher A says: "*Bagi saya, identitas nasional Indonesia mengacu kepada 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' yang artinya kesatuan dalam keberagaman. Ini melibatkan nilai-nilai bersama, tradisi, dan budaya yang membuat kita menjadi bangsa Indonesia.*" (for me, Indonesian national identity is about unity in diversity or we call it '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*'. It's about the shared values, traditions, and culture that make us uniquely Indonesian). Related to the varieties of tribes and ethnics in Indonesia, the teacher further states: "*meskipun berasal dari latar belakang etnis dan daerah yang berbeda, ada rasa kebersamaan dan saling menghormati antar budaya dan agama di Indonesia.*" (even though we come from many ethnic backgrounds and regions, the sense of togetherness and mutual respect for different cultures and religions within Indonesia exists).

In relation to English teaching, the teachers view local culture as a foundational aspect of English language teaching in developing their national identity. The teachers believe that the local culture can be served as a tool for fostering students' connection to their own cultural backgrounds while also facilitating cross-cultural understanding to other cultural background in the world specifically English culture. Through the exploration of Indonesian culture in the classroom, students connect English learning with their national background. By doing so, students will be able to develop a sense of belonging and awareness of Indonesia in a multicultural world. According to Teacher B, the embedding of local culture in the classroom activity will make students: "*... lebih tertarik dan terlibat dalam pelajaran serta bisa merasa lebih dekat dan relevan dengan materi yang diajarkan. Selain itu, ini juga bisa membantu mereka mengenal dan mencintai budaya daerah mereka sendiri, yang penting untuk membangun identitas dan kebanggaan sebagai masyarakat Jambi.*" (... become more interested and involved in lessons. They can feel closer and more relevant to the material being taught. Apart from that, this can also help them get to know and love their own regional culture, which is important for building identity and pride as Jambi people).

The teachers participating in the research perceive their role as incorporating aspects of national culture into English language teaching to help students better understand their own cultural identity. In this view, national identity and English teaching are not seen as opposing forces; rather, teachers aim to help students balance their sense of national pride with an openness to the cultures embedded in English teaching. Through English, students are encouraged to critically engage with topics on identity and culture, fostering both a strong national self-concept and an appreciation for diversity. Teacher A argues: "*dalam mengajar Bahasa Inggris, kami harus berhati-hati agar tidak hanya mempromosikan bahasa asing, tapi juga memastikan siswa tetap terhubung dengan akar budaya mereka sendiri*" (in teaching English, we have to be mindful that we're not just promoting another language but also making sure students remain connected to their own cultural roots). At the same track, Teacher B says: "*Belajar Bahasa Inggris adalah alat yang sangat berguna, tetapi kita harus memastikan itu melengkapi identitas Indonesia mereka, bukan menggantikannya*" (Learning English is a powerful tool, but we need to ensure that it complements their Indonesian identity, not replaces it).

From the results of the interview, however, a recurring theme among teachers is the tension between teaching a global language and preserving national identity. English is often perceived as a language of global influence, which can sometimes overshadow local cultures and values. The teachers express varying degrees of emphasis on national identity upon the teaching of English skills, with some advocating for more exploration of Indonesian identity through its culture and heritage while others may prioritize the development of English mastery upon the identity development. Through the statement such

as: *“Penting bagi siswa untuk memahami bahwa belajar Bahasa Inggris tidak berarti mereka harus mengadopsi nilai-nilai Barat atau bahkan menjadi seperti orang Inggris, melainkan Bahasa Inggris dapat digunakan untuk mengekspresikan nilai-nilai dan sudut pandang Indonesia.”* (It’s important for students to see that learning English doesn’t mean they have to adopt Western values or even becoming English people, rather, they can use English as a tool to express Indonesian values and perspectives), Teacher A expresses his concern that students might associate success or intellectual prestige primarily with English-speaking countries, potentially weakening their connection to their own culture. At the same track, Teacher B mentions: *“walaupun murid harus selalu diberi pemahaman bahwa tidak berarti budaya barat lebih baik dari budaya Indonesia sendiri, tapi menurut saya focus pada peningkatan keterampilan berbahasa siswa jauh lebih penting.”* (even the students need to understand that it doesn’t mean that Western culture is better than Indonesian culture, but in my opinion focusing on the improvement of students’ language skills is more important).

In spite of this tension, both teachers agree that English language education plays a significant role in shaping a modern sense of national identity. With increased global communication and technology access, English serves as a bridge that allows students to interact on an international scale while reflecting on how their national identity fits within this broader context. For the teachers, the goal is not to dilute national identity but to redefine it in a way that incorporates both national pride and global interconnectedness. It urges the significance of consciously balancing English language instruction with discussions that reaffirm students’ own cultural values and traditions.

However, the results of interview expose teachers’ challenges in their effort to integrate national identity concept into their teaching practices. The first challenge is mentioned by Teacher A as : *“terbatasnya fleksibilitas kurikulum dan sumber materi pengajaran tentang budaya lokal”* (limited curriculum flexibility and teaching resources of local culture). As the most recent education curriculum in Indonesia, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has very limited room for teachers to incorporate local culture into their teaching. Standardized curricula may not allow sufficient space for exploring national identity, this eventually limits teachers’ ability to address these themes comprehensively. Regarding this, the teacher further explains: *“... kurikulum Bahasa Inggris sudah sangat padat, tidak selalu mudah untuk menambahkan materi tambahan mengenai identitas nasional atau budaya lokal tanpa mengurangi materi lain yang juga penting”* (The English curriculum is already very dense, it is not always easy to add additional material about national identity or local culture without reducing other important material).

In line with that, Teacher B states: *“Mengajar dengan Kurikulum Merdeka memang memberi kebebasan lebih kepada guru untuk menyusun materi ajar, termasuk memasukkan konsep identitas nasional dan budaya lokal. Namun, tantangannya cukup besar. Salah satu tantangan utamanya adalah beban kerja yang tinggi dan terbatasnya dukungan serta fasilitas yang tersedia di sekolah. Dengan Kurikulum Merdeka, kami memang dituntut untuk lebih kreatif, tapi itu juga menuntut waktu dan usaha ekstra di tengah tugas-tugas lain yang sudah cukup banyak”* (Teaching with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* does give teachers more freedom to compose teaching materials, including the infusion of national identity and local culture concepts. However, the challenges are quite big. One of the main challenges is the high workload and limited support and facilities available in schools. With the curriculum, we are required to be more creative, but it also demands extra time and effort in the midst of already quite a lot of other tasks). From the statement, the teacher expresses her concern on the school expectation and the strict regulation of implementing the national curriculum adherence to the high workload within inadequate time allocation often leaves little flexibility for teachers to spend adequate time exploring topics that are culturally relevant or engage in discussions that might deepen students’ understanding of national identity.

At the same track, a number of terms such as *“fasilitas yang belum memadai”* (limited facilities), *“dukungan keuangan yang terbatas”* (the lack of financial supports) and *“beban kerja administrasi yang sangat menyita waktu”* (the burden of time-consuming administrative works) are also recorded as the challenges of the teachers. This situation is reported from the interview when the teachers talk about the lack of Jambi local culture available in the school textbooks. In fact, there is no evidence of Jambi cultural heritage presented at the textbooks nor any other teaching materials to sell in Jambi markets. Teacher A says: *“Tantangan terbesar adalah ketersediaan materi yang sesuai. Buku pelajaran Bahasa Inggris yang disediakan oleh pemerintah berfokus pada materi umum dan kurang mencerminkan budaya lokal. Kalaupun ada ulasan tentang budaya Indonesia, tidak ada satupun topik ajar yang berhubungan dengan budaya local Jambi”* (The biggest challenge is the availability of suitable materials. The English textbook provided by the government focuses more on general material and does not really reflect our local culture. If there is any, none of them are related to local culture contexts). In line with this aforementioned

statement, Teacher B describes: “*Saat ini, materi ajar yang kami gunakan sebagian besar adalah buku-buku yang diterbitkan secara nasional, jadi materinya bersifat umum. Ada juga topik-topik tentang budaya Indonesia. Sayangnya, jarang sekali ada materi yang berkaitan dengan budaya lokal, khususnya budaya Jambi*” (Currently, the teaching materials we use are mostly books published nationally, so the material is general in nature. There are also topics about Indonesian culture. Unfortunately, there is rarely any material related to local culture, especially Jambi culture). The lack of alignment as articulated by the teachers create difficulties to make lessons more relatable and meaningful to their students when schools in resource-constrained settings may lack access to supplementary materials or technology that could help teachers tailor their lessons in culturally relevant ways.

To address the gap, the teachers adapt or create their own materials, however, this often adds to their workload and requires extra money, time and resources that may not be readily available. This situation might also hinder teachers in providing cultural-based teaching materials. About this concern, Teacher A voices the urgency of the additional teaching materials focusing on Jambi local contexts and culture: “*Saya pikir penyediaan materi tambahan berbasis budaya lokal seperti cerita rakyat, informasi tentang tempat bersejarah di Jambi, atau profil tokoh-tokoh lokal akan sangat membantu.*” (I think providing additional material based on local culture such as folklore, information about historical places in Jambi, or profiles of local figures would be very helpful.). In doing so, the teachers incorporate Indonesian stories, folktales, literature and national heroes into their English classes to make lessons culturally relevant and meaningful. By using familiar narratives, teachers not only engage students but also provide opportunities to discuss the values, themes, and historical contexts that are important to Indonesian identity. For instance, teachers might use stories from Indonesian folklore to illustrate moral lessons or to encourage students to reflect on cultural values, making English learning a more relatable and enriching experience. According to Teacher B says: “*Salah satu aktivitas yang sering saya gunakan adalah meminta siswa menulis tentang tokoh-tokoh Indonesia atau menceritakan cerita rakyat dalam Bahasa Inggris. Misalnya, mereka bisa menulis esai pendek tentang R.A. Kartini atau pahlawan dari daerah Jambi seperti Sultan Thaha Syaifuddin. Dengan cara ini, mereka berlatih Bahasa Inggris sambil merenungkan rasa kebanggaan dan identitas nasional*” (One activity I often use is having students write about famous Indonesian figures or discuss traditional Indonesian stories, but in English. For instance, they might write a short essay on R.A. Kartini or a local hero from Jambi, Sultan Thaha Syaifuddin. This way, they practice their English skills while also reflecting on national pride and identity).

Another strategy is by highlighting local traditions and celebrations. Both Teacher A and Teacher B often include discussions of national and cultural traditions, holidays, and festivals from various regions in Indonesia to help students see connections between English and their own cultural heritage. Lessons around Indonesian Independence Day, traditional ceremonies, or regional celebrations allow students to share their personal experiences while practicing English. About the question of the use of local occasions to enhance language learning through presentations, discussions, and projects that celebrate Indonesian identity, Teacher A explains: “*Pernah, meskipun hanya dalam beberapa topik saja. Misalnya, saat mengajarkan descriptive text, saya meminta siswa untuk mendeskripsikan objek atau tempat wisata lokal seperti Candi Muaro Jambi atau Danau Sipin. Saya juga kadang-kadang meminta siswa untuk menulis atau berbicara tentang makanan tradisional Jambi seperti tempoyak, bolu sarang semut, dan sebagainya. Dengan begitu, siswa bisa berlatih Bahasa Inggris sambil mengenal budaya dan tempat di daerah mereka.*” (Yes, although only in a few topics. For example, when teaching descriptive text, I ask students to describe local objects or tourist attractions such as Muaro Jambi Temple or Sipin Lake. I also sometimes ask students to write or talk about traditional Jambi foods such as *tempoyak*, *bolu sarang semut*, and so on. Through those activities, students can practice English while getting to know the culture and places in their areas). This statement refers to the efforts taken by the teacher in fostering both English skills and cultural pride. In doing this, the teachers often contextualize English lessons with national and local geography and societies, incorporating local geography, societal structures, and community issues into English lesson. Through the embedding of discussions about traditional food and customs, local ecosystems, or heroes in reading and writing exercises, the teachers do not merely aid comprehension by connecting to familiar topics but also encourages students to view English as a tool for expressing aspects of their national identity. This contextualization helps students connect English with their own surroundings rather than viewing it solely as a foreign or distant language.

Moreover, teachers’ effort to equip them to address challenges more effectively is by improving their professional development. According to Teacher B, “*guru perlu terus mengembangkan diri agar bisa memberikan pengajaran yang relevan bagi siswa. Dengan memahami budaya lokal dan konsep*

identitas nasional, kita bisa mengajar Bahasa Inggris dengan cara yang lebih bermakna bagi siswa” (a teacher needs to continue developing themselves so that they can provide relevant teaching for students. By understanding local culture and the concept of national identity, we can teach English in a way that is more meaningful to students). In doing this, the teachers get involved into a number of collaborative activities such as peer discussions with other English teachers to get any necessary information about teaching materials and strategies. For example teacher A states: *“Saya sering membaca buku atau artikel tentang budaya Jambi dan mendiskusikan materi ajar yang membahas budaya lokal dan nasional tersebut bersama teman-teman guru lain. Dengan begitu, saya bisa lebih memahami konsep-konsep ini dan berpikir kreatif bagaimana mengintegrasikannya dalam pelajaran Bahasa Inggris”* (I often read books or articles about Jambi culture and discuss teaching materials related to the local and national culture with my colleagues. That way, I can better understand these concepts and think creatively about how to integrate them into English lessons). By doing so, he believes this too can help them learn from each other’s perspectives as well as promote a more nuanced understanding of national identity within a supportive environment. Another effort is to *“...terus belajar dan mencari referensi tentang budaya lokal Jambi dan identitas nasional Indonesia yang bisa saya kaitkan dengan pelajaran Bahasa Inggris”* (keep learning and looking for any references related to local and national culture to use in their classroom teaching).

Moreover, it has been stated earlier that the teachers also face challenges due to *“terbatasnya dukungan sistem dan pelatihan untuk guru”* (limited support system and training for teachers) to adapt curriculum content to local cultural needs. Without access to professional development that equips them with strategies to integrate local content into English lessons, teachers may feel underprepared to bridge the cultural gap in the curriculum. Teacher A claims: *“pelatihan bagi guru mengenai cara mengintegrasikan budaya lokal dan identitas nasional dalam pelajaran Bahasa Inggris akan sangat bermanfaat. Dengan adanya pelatihan, kami bisa lebih kreatif dan percaya diri dalam menyusun materi, sayangnya biaya yang dibutuhkan biasanya cukup besar. Beberapa kali saya mengikuti pelatihan tentang metode pengajaran kreatif atau seminar yang berkaitan dengan budaya dan identitas nasional. Pelatihan-pelatihan ini tentu membantu meningkatkan pemahaman dan keterampilan saya, tapi karena butuh biaya pribadi yang cukup besar, saya hanya bisa mengikuti pelatihan jika kebetulan ada anggaran pribadi yang cukup, sehingga tidak bisa rutin dilakukan”* (the trainings for teachers on how to integrate local culture and national identity in English lessons would be very beneficial. With training, we can be more creative and confident in compiling material, unfortunately the costs required are usually quite large. I have attended some workshops on creative teaching methods or seminars related to culture and national identity. These trainings certainly helped improve my understanding and skills, but because I have to use my personal costs and it was quite large, I can only take part in training if I happen to have sufficient personal budget, so it cannot be done routinely).

However, the limited financial support does not automatically make teachers stop their efforts in the integration of national identity into their English teaching. One of the efforts is to search for any teaching materials related to Jambi local contexts. As mentioned by Teacher B: *“Saya berusaha kreatif dengan memanfaatkan sumber daya yang ada. Misalnya, saya menggunakan cerita rakyat Jambi yang saya cari secara daring atau mengajak siswa untuk berbagi pengalaman tentang adat atau budaya di keluarga mereka. Kadang saya juga meminta siswa untuk melakukan proyek sederhana, seperti membuat poster tentang tempat wisata lokal dalam Bahasa Inggris. Jadi, meskipun ada keterbatasan finansial, saya mencoba mencari cara lain agar materi budaya tetap bisa disampaikan di kelas”* (I try to be creative by utilizing existing resources. For example, I use Jambi folklores that I look for online or invite students to share experiences about customs or culture in their families. Sometimes I also ask students to do simple projects, such as making posters about local tourist attractions in English. So, even though there are financial limitations, I try to find other ways so that cultural material can still be conveyed in class).

Additionally, another effort is the attendance in workshops on English teaching to later adapting the teaching materials to be more relevant to Indonesian national identity or Jambi local culture. The teachers have attended any seminars or workshops related to local and Indonesian culture. Alternatively, teachers also seek out training and resources that enhance their understanding of cultural sensitivity and identity issues. However, as mentioned earlier, the teachers voice two main issues, the limited financial support and the unavailability of workshop or training specifically focuses on Jambi local culture. As stated by Teacher A: *“Dukungan dari sekolah dan pemerintah dalam hal ini masih terbatas. Sekolah memang memberi kami kebebasan dalam memilih materi ajar, tetapi tidak ada pelatihan khusus atau modul tambahan dari pihak terkait yang membantu kami mengintegrasikan budaya lokal atau identitas*

nasional dalam Bahasa Inggris. Pelatihan yang diadakan biasanya lebih berfokus pada pencapaian kurikulum umum, bukan pada pengembangan materi berbasis budaya lokal” (Support from schools and the government in this case is still limited. The school does give us freedom in choosing teaching materials, but there is no special training or additional modules from related parties that help us integrate local culture or national identity in English. The training that is held usually focuses more on achieving the general curriculum, not on developing material based on local culture).

In regards to this, both teachers believe that special training for teachers on how to integrate local culture in lessons would be very helpful. Apart from that, providing modules or books containing local Jambi topics in English would be very useful. That way, teachers don't need to create their own material and can directly use relevant and official sources. Further, Teacher B expresses her hope as: *“Saya berharap ada pelatihan atau workshop khusus yang difokuskan pada pengajaran berbasis budaya lokal dan nasional. Selain itu, dukungan berupa materi ajar atau modul yang relevan juga akan sangat membantu. Jika ada bahan ajar yang sudah mengakomodasi budaya lokal Jambi, misalnya, kami bisa lebih fokus pada cara menyampaikannya kepada siswa, tanpa harus menyusun materi dari awal. Selain itu, jika beban administrasi bisa dikurangi atau disederhanakan, tentu kami punya lebih banyak waktu untuk mengembangkan kemampuan mengajar kami* (I hope there is special training or workshops that focus on teaching based on local and national culture. Apart from that, support in the form of relevant teaching materials or modules will also be very helpful. If there are teaching materials that accommodate Jambi's local culture, for example, we can focus more on how to convey them to students, without having to prepare the material from scratch. Apart from that, if the administrative burden could be reduced or simplified, of course we would have more time to develop our teaching abilities).

From what the teachers have said, it appears that ideally the government and schools provide teaching materials that include Jambi local culture and Indonesian national identity. In addition, more intensive training on how to develop local culture-based materials in the context of the teaching curriculum will be very helpful. Also, the better access to literary sources about Jambi local culture, whether in the form of books, videos or digital learning media is also encouraged to make language teaching more accessible and relevant. Through these strategies, teachers aim to create a classroom environment where national identity and local culture can be explored thoughtfully and inclusively, ultimately enhancing students' language learning experiences. By connecting English learning with students' cultural backgrounds, teachers foster a sense of national pride while preparing students to navigate an increasingly globalized world through English learning.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the critical role of national identity in English teaching. The teachers face both opportunities and challenges in balancing national identity with the teaching. Teachers in the study see English as both a bridge to global communication and a potential threat to local cultural identity. Their efforts to incorporate Indonesian local culture into the teaching of English at their classrooms underscore the role of language teaching in shaping students' sense of national identity. This intersection between language and identity is critical in a globalized world where English often dominates, posing a risk of eroding local languages and cultural values. There is an implicit risk of overshadowing local languages and cultural values, potentially leading students to feel disconnected from their own identities.

The results of this study also emphasize the need to connect students' learning to their cultural backgrounds. By embedding local contexts such as folktales, traditions, and historical contexts in their lessons, teachers make English more relevant and accessible to students, enhancing both engagement and comprehension. Such cultural approaches help students see English as a tool for expressing their own identities rather than as a language confined to foreign perspectives. This reinforces the idea that language learning can foster a dual sense of identity, where students view themselves as both members of their national community and participants in a global society.

The findings reveal that both teachers are not simply passive agents of a standardized curriculum; rather, they actively strive to mitigate this risk by integrating aspects of Indonesian identity through the embedding of local culture into English lessons, demonstrating that English teaching can serve as a means of reinforcing, rather than replacing, students' cultural roots. One of the biggest challenges faced by teachers is when they have to navigate standardized curricula that often prioritize Western perspectives and global English norms rather than national and local culture. These challenges reflect broader debates in language education around the “ownership” of English and the need for English teaching models that respect and incorporate local identities. The teachers' experiences point to a desire for a more inclusive

curriculum, one that allows them to incorporate culturally relevant materials while still meeting educational standards. This tension emphasizes the importance of curricular flexibility and teacher agency in allowing teachers to make language learning meaningful within their specific cultural contexts. Also, the research results reveal the urgency of the availability of local cultural-based teaching materials and the improvement of teachers' competencies in implementing the materials into their classrooms.

Despite the obstacles, the teachers actively seek ways to make English teaching more culturally relevant. Both teachers actively incorporate not only foster students' engagement but also allows them to see English as a language through which they can express their unique identities, balancing a strong sense of national pride with the competencies needed for global citizenship. The implications for teaching practice suggest that integrating national identity into language education requires a supportive curriculum, comprehensive teacher trainings, and active community involvement. By prioritizing culturally relevant content in curriculum design, providing professional development on cultural competence, and fostering partnerships with government and local communities, teachers can help students develop a deeper connection to their heritage while navigating the demands of a globalized world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research team would like to express our sincere gratitude to the *Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Jambi* (LPPM UNJA) for supporting and funding this research project.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, EM.; methodology, EM, MH and F; formal analysis, EM, MH, F; investigation, EM and F; resources, F; data curation, MH; Project Administration, EM, MH, F; supervisor in research activities to article writing, reviewed and edited, EM.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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