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Constructing Cultural Identity through Language Education: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Language Textbooks

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Abstract This study examines how cultural identity is constructed in Indonesian language textbooks used in secondary education. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the study analyzes narrative texts drawn from textbooks for Grades VII to XII, including fables, folklore, literary narratives, and didactic texts. The analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions: narrative discourse, linguistic framing, and moral ideology. The findings show that textbooks function not merely as language-learning resources but as ideological and cultural artefacts that transmit social norms, moral values, and national consciousness. Narrative structures consistently frame honesty, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and social harmony as desirable forms of behavior, while evaluative language directs students toward normative interpretations of characters and actions. The textbooks also construct collective and national identity through heritage framing, inclusive references to shared community, and historical-national narratives. These findings demonstrate that Indonesian language education plays a significant role in reproducing cultural values and shaping learners' understanding of belonging within the national community.

Keywords: *Cultural identity, Indonesian language textbooks, Critical discourse analysis, Moral ideology, Language education*

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1. Introduction

Language education is widely recognized as a cultural and ideological practice rather than a neutral process of linguistic skill development. Language learning inevitably involves the transmission of cultural meanings and social norms that shape how learners understand themselves and their communities (Alghuwainem, 2025; Lu & Zuo, 2025; Smakman, 2026). Within educational systems, textbooks play a particularly influential role in this process because they function not only as instructional materials but also as cultural artefacts that organize knowledge, legitimizing particular

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cultural narratives (Fahmi, 2026; Sakki, 2025). Through narrative structures, textbooks implicitly guide learners toward specific interpretations of social behaviour and cultural belonging. As a result, language textbooks contribute to the reproduction of collective memory and national identity within educational discourse (Lopez et al., 2025; Orianne et al., 2025; Wertsch & Jäggi, 2022). For this reason, cultural identity becomes a crucial dimension of language education because textbooks not only transmit linguistic knowledge but also shape how learners interpret cultural heritage and collective belonging. Investigating cultural identity in language textbooks therefore allows researchers to understand how educational discourse contributes to the formation of social meaning and national consciousness within formal schooling.

A growing body of research has examined how educational texts represent culture, identity, and ideology across different educational contexts. Previous studies have shown that textbooks frequently embed cultural narratives and moral values through discourse structures and narrative patterns (Fereydoonfar, 2025; Morales, 2021; Shah, 2023a). Recent scholarship also highlights how cultural representation in language textbooks shapes learners' understanding of national identity and intercultural awareness (An & Thomas, 2021; Aslan & Güler, 2025; Klimova et al., 2025; Omrani et al., 2025). Within discourse-oriented research traditions, scholars have emphasized that language in textbooks functions as a site where ideology and cultural values are reproduced through everyday pedagogical discourse (Fahmi, 2026; Nesi & Alsop, 2021; Shah, 2023a, b). These studies collectively demonstrate that textbooks actively participate in constructing cultural meanings and social identities within educational discourse, highlighting the importance of examining how cultural identity is represented through language education materials.

Despite these advances, several limitations remain in the existing literature. Much of the research on textbook discourse has focused primarily on English language textbooks and educational contexts in Western or globalized settings, while relatively limited attention has been given to national language textbooks in non-Western educational contexts (Majadly & Amara, 2025; Shah et al., 2025). In particular, the discursive construction of cultural identity within national language textbooks remains underexplored, especially regarding how narrative discourse and linguistic framing interact to produce moral ideology and collective identity within educational materials. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how cultural identity is constructed in language textbooks used in secondary education in Indonesia through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. Specifically, the study examines how narrative discourse, linguistic framing, and moral ideology operate as discursive mechanisms that connect language education with the formation of collective and national identity (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022; Sakki, 2025). To guide the analysis, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are cultural values represented through narrative discourse in language textbooks?
2. What linguistic strategies frame moral and national identity in textbook narratives?
3. How do these discursive patterns contribute to the ideological construction of identity in language education?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Language, Identity, and Cultural Representation

Language is closely intertwined with the construction of cultural identity and social meaning. Scholars in sociolinguistics and cultural studies argue that language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a symbolic system through which individuals interpret social realities and construct collective identities (Gao & Zhang, 2026; Kroskrity, 2025; Norton & Kramsch, 2013; Zheng et al., 2026). Through language, cultural narratives, values, and shared memories are transmitted across generations and embedded within everyday discourse. In educational contexts, these processes become particularly significant because language learning often involves exposure to culturally framed texts that shape learners' understanding of social norms and collective belonging (Kravchenko, 2026; Zhang et al., 2026; Zheng et al., 2025).

Within this perspective, cultural representation in educational texts is understood as a discursive process through which certain cultural values and identities are normalized and reproduced. Language textbooks, therefore, play an important role in constructing cultural meaning because they organize particular narratives about society and national identity (Gao & Zhang, 2026; Majadly & Amara, 2025). Through narrative structures and linguistic framing, textbooks contribute to shaping learners' perceptions of cultural belonging and social responsibility within the broader national community.

2.2. Language Ideology in Education

Language ideology refers to the system of beliefs and values about language that reflects broader social, cultural, and political interests within a society (Markl, 2025; Smakman, 2026; Van Dijk, 2006; Zhang et al., 2026). In educational contexts, language ideology often becomes embedded within curriculum design, pedagogical discourse, and textbook content. These ideological meanings are rarely presented explicitly; instead, they are reproduced through patterns of representation, evaluative language, and narrative structures that guide learners toward particular interpretations of social behaviour and cultural norms.

Critical discourse scholars emphasize that educational discourse functions as a site where social power and ideological values are reproduced through language (Fahmi, 2026; Fairclough, 2013; Rahmawati et al., 2024; Sadeghi & Belali, 2025; Vasileva, 2025). Within textbooks, linguistic forms can implicitly classify behaviors as desirable or undesirable according to prevailing social norms. As a result, textbooks do not simply transmit linguistic knowledge but also participate in the formation of moral values and social expectations that shape learners' understanding of their role within society.

2.3. Textbooks as Ideological Artefacts

Textbooks occupy a central position within formal education because they serve as the primary medium through which curriculum knowledge is organized and disseminated. However, educational researchers have long argued that textbooks should not be viewed merely as neutral instructional tools. Instead, they function as ideological artefacts that reflect broader social, cultural, and political priorities within a given educational system (Fahmi, 2026; Patterson et al., 2022). Through the selection of texts, textbooks implicitly define what forms of knowledge and cultural traditions are considered legitimate within the curriculum.

Within language education, narrative texts are particularly important because they provide culturally meaningful contexts in which linguistic forms are embedded. Stories, folklore, and literary narratives often carry moral lessons, cultural values, and social norms that shape learners' interpretations of social life (Aslam et al., 2026; Kane et al., 2023; Perko et al., 2026). Through narrative structures that link characters, conflicts, social conditions, and moral resolutions, textbooks create symbolic frameworks through which learners encounter and internalize socially valued forms of behaviour. Consequently, the analysis of textbook discourse provides insight into how educational materials contribute to the reproduction of cultural identity and social ideology.

2.4. Critical Discourse Analysis

This study uses CDA as an analytical framework to examine how language in Indonesian textbooks constructs cultural and ideological meaning. CDA views discourse as a social practice that reflects and shapes the relationship of power, ideology, and identity in society (Anderson, 2025; Fairclough, 2013; Nartey, 2026; Van Dijk, 2006). To operationalize Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional framework in textbook discourse analysis, this study identifies specific analytical categories at each level of discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

At the *textual level*, analysis focuses on the linguistic features that frame moral and cultural meanings in narrative texts. Particular attention is paid to evaluative lexical choices, moral adjectives, and narrative structures that position characters and actions within normative social values. Linguistic indicators such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, and responsibility are examined as evaluative markers that guide the reader's interpretation of moral behavior in the story. In addition, narrative framing patterns, such as moral conflict and ethical resolution, are analyzed to understand how narrative structures reinforce specific cultural values. At the level of *discursive practice*, the analysis examines

how these narrative texts function in the institutional context of language education. This includes considerations of how textbooks are produced within the framework of the national curriculum and how narrative materials are selected as pedagogical tools for language learning and character education. By examining the curricular context and pedagogical function of narrative texts, the analysis explores how discourse is organized and circulated in educational materials. At the level of *social practice*, this study interprets how the discursive patterns identified in textbooks relate to broader ideological processes in language education. Particular attention is paid to how narrative discourse builds collective identity through references to shared cultural traditions and community values, such as the Youth Pledge. Through this multi-level analysis, this research links linguistic patterns in textbook narratives to broader ideological processes involved in the construction of cultural and national identities.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis design informed by CDA to examine how cultural identity and moral values are constructed in narrative texts in Indonesian language textbooks. The study is treated as content analysis because the primary data consist of textual materials systematically selected, coded, categorized, and interpreted to identify recurring patterns of cultural representation, moral ideology, identity construction, and discursive strategies of value transmission. CDA, specifically Fairclough's framework, was used to analyze how these textual patterns operate at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). This framework enables the study to connect linguistic patterns found in textbook narratives with broader educational and ideological processes involved in the formation of cultural and national identity.

3.2. Materials

The data for this study were drawn from Indonesian language textbooks used in secondary education within the national curriculum (Figure 1). These textbooks represent the primary instructional materials through which linguistic knowledge and social values are introduced to students across different grade levels. In the Indonesian educational context, textbooks function not only as tools for language instruction but also as cultural and ideological artefacts that transmit socially recognized norms and collective identities through pedagogical discourse (Fahmi, 2026; Sakki, 2025). Consequently, the analysis of textbook discourse provides an important opportunity to examine how language education participates in the construction of cultural identity and national consciousness.

Figure 1
Indonesian Language Textbooks (Grades VII–XII)

Grade VII	Grade VIII	Grade IX



Grade X	Grade XI	Grade XII
		

In the Indonesian educational context, textbooks function not only as tools for language instruction but also as cultural and ideological artefacts that transmit socially recognized norms and collective identities through pedagogical discourse (Fahmi, 2026; Sakki, 2025). Consequently, the analysis of textbook discourse provides an important opportunity to examine how language education participates in the construction of cultural identity and national consciousness.

The corpus of this study consisted of Indonesian language textbooks used from Grade VII to Grade XII in secondary education. These books were selected because they constitute the official learning materials widely implemented in Indonesian schools and therefore reflect the dominant curricular discourse of language education. Each textbook includes a range of narrative texts such as fables, folklore (*hikayat*), literary excerpts, and short didactic narratives that integrate linguistic learning with moral and cultural themes. These narrative materials form the primary analytical corpus for examining how moral ideology, cultural values, collective memory, and national identity are discursively constructed within language education. To provide a more systematic overview of the data sources, the bibliographic information of the textbooks included in the corpus is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Indonesian Language Textbooks Used as the Research Corpus

Grade	Textbook Title	Publisher	Year
VII	Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMP/MTs Kelas VII [Indonesian for Junior High School/MTs Class VII]	Kemendikbud	2017
VIII	Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMP/MTs Kelas VIII [Indonesian for Junior High School/MTs Class VIII]	Kemendikbud	2017
IX	Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMP/MTs Kelas IX [Indonesian for Junior High School/MTs Class IX]	Kemendikbud	2018
X	Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMA/MA Kelas X [Indonesian for High School/MA Class X]	Kemendikbud	2019
XI	Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMA/MA Kelas XI [Indonesian for SMA/MA Class XI]	Kemendikbud	2019
XII	Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMA/MA Kelas XII [Indonesian for High School/MA Class XII]	Kemendikbud	2020

Within these textbooks, narrative texts constitute an important genre used to convey cultural values, social norms, cultural heritage, and moral lessons. These narrative materials therefore provide an appropriate corpus for analysing how discourse contributes to the construction of cultural identity in

language education. One sample page from the analyzed textbook materials is provided in Appendix A to illustrate the type of narrative text examined in this study.

Narrative texts were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy commonly used in qualitative discourse research to identify data that are particularly relevant to the research objectives (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A total of 42 narrative texts were selected from textbooks spanning Grades VII to XII. The selection focused specifically on texts that represent cultural narratives and moral values within the language learning materials. Three criteria were used to identify narrative texts for analysis:

1. the presence of a clear narrative structure consisting of orientation, conflict, and resolution,
2. the inclusion of cultural, moral, or social themes, and
3. the pedagogical function of the text within language learning activities.

Narrative texts meeting these criteria were included in the analytical corpus. Each selected narrative text was treated as a unit of discourse, and sentences or clauses representing cultural values, moral evaluations, social norms, and national identity were identified as analytical segments for further examination.

3.3. Procedure

The analysis was conducted using CDA, which conceptualizes discourse as a social practice that both reflects and reproduces relations of power, ideology, and cultural meaning (Fairclough, 2013; Monticelli, 2026; Nartey, 2026; Parnell, 2026; Sindoni, 2024; Van Dijk, 2006; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). The analysis was conducted through several stages following the principles of CDA. First, all selected narrative texts were read repeatedly to identify discourse segments that represent cultural values, moral evaluations, social norms, and national identity. These segments include sentences or clauses describing character behaviour, moral judgement, or collective social actions within the narratives. Second, linguistic features within these segments were coded according to predefined analytical categories derived from CDA literature (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). The coding process focused on three main linguistic dimensions:

- evaluative lexical choices, referring to words that express positive or negative moral evaluation,
- moral adjectives, describing virtues or character traits such as honesty, responsibility, or cooperation, and
- narrative framing patterns, referring to narrative structures that present moral conflict and ethical resolution within the storyline.

Third, the coded linguistic features were grouped into broader thematic categories representing recurring cultural values within the narratives. These themes include values such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and community solidarity. Finally, the identified discursive patterns were interpreted using Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional framework. At the textual level, the analysis examines linguistic features within the narratives. At the level of discursive practice, the study considers how narrative texts function as pedagogical materials within the national curriculum. At the level of social practice, the analysis interprets how these discursive patterns contribute to the construction of cultural and national identity within language education. The analytical categories used in the study are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Analytical Categories Used in the Study

Analytical Level	Category	Description
Textual analysis	Evaluative lexical choices	Words expressing moral or cultural evaluation
Textual analysis	Moral adjectives	Adjectives indicating moral virtues
Textual analysis	Narrative framing	Narrative structures framing moral conflict and resolution
Discursive practice	Pedagogical context	Role of narrative texts in language learning
Social practice	Identity construction	Representation of cultural and national identity

4. Results

4.1. Narrative Discourse as Cultural Value

Analysis of Indonesian textbooks shows that narrative texts not only function as reading and writing practice materials, but also as pedagogical media that transmit cultural and moral values to students. Through story structure, character actions, and conflict resolution, narratives systematically frame certain actions as exemplary behaviors in social life. The variety of narrative genres used in textbooks suggests the existence of curricular strategies to integrate language learning with the formation of cultural values and character. The classification of narrative genres and their discursive functions in learning is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
Narrative Text Genres and Discursive Functions in Indonesian Language Textbooks

Narrative Genre	Grade Level	Number of Texts	Representative Texts in Textbooks	Structural Narrative Pattern	Dominant Cultural Values	Pedagogical Function
Fables	VII–VIII	17	animal fables used in narrative writing tasks	orientation – conflict – moral resolution	honesty, discipline, cooperation, responsibility	moral instruction through narrative learning
Folklore / *Hikayat*	IX–XI	12	traditional narratives such as *Hikayat Indera Bangsawan*	heroic quest narrative, royal setting	cultural heritage, bravery, loyalty	cultural literacy and heritage transmission
Literary Narratives	X–XII	8	excerpts from modern Indonesian literary works	realistic narrative structure	social empathy, ethical reflection	literary interpretation and social awareness
Didactic Narratives	VII–IX	5	short instructional narratives used in comprehension tasks	problem – lesson – reflection	discipline, responsibility	character education reinforcement

In addition to the variations of narrative genres, the analysis also shows that moral values in texts are conveyed not only through the structure of the story, but also through the choice of language used to judge the actions of the characters. Certain lexical markers consistently appear in the context of moral resolution and character description, thus serving as linguistic indicators that frame behavior as expected social norms. The distribution of these evaluative markers is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Linguistic Markers of Moral and Social Evaluation in Narrative Texts

Lexical Marker	Frequency of Occurrence	Narrative Context	Semantic Orientation	Discursive Function
honest	12	moral resolution in fables	positive ethical value	moral evaluation of characters
good / kind	10	narrative character description	positive character framing	normative behavioral modeling
responsibility	7	moral lessons in narrative endings	ethical obligation	reinforcement of civic virtue
cooperation	6	social interaction scenes	collective value orientation	promotion of social harmony
discipline	4	didactic narrative instruction	behavioral regulation	character formation

Table 4 shows that moral values in narratives not only emerge as the theme of the story, but are also shaped through lexical choices that serve as markers of social evaluation. Words such as *honest, good, kind*, and *responsibility* are explicitly used to judge a character's actions and frame certain behaviors as expected social norms. The use of evaluative language shows that narrative texts in textbooks serve as a discursive device that leads readers to understand the actions of characters within the framework of certain moral values. The discursive function of these evaluative markers can be observed more clearly in specific narrative passages drawn from the textbooks:

"Karena ia jujur dan mau mengakui kesalahannya, masyarakat kembali mempercayainya"
(Because he was honest and willing to admit his mistakes, the community trusted him again)

In this passage, the word *jujur* ("honest") serves as a clear evaluative term that frames the character's behaviour as morally commendable. The phrase *mau mengakui kesalahannya* ("willing to admit his mistake") further strengthens this moral framing by presenting accountability as a positive personal quality. The final clause, *masyarakat kembali mempercayainya* ("the community trusted him again"), connects moral conduct with the restoration of social trust. Taken together, these linguistic choices show how the narrative associates honesty with social acceptance, positioning it as a value that sustains harmonious relationships within the community.

Overall, these findings show that narratives in Indonesian textbooks function as a form of cultural pedagogy. Through a combination of story structure, narrative genre, and evaluative linguistic markers, narrative texts not only teach language skills, but also shape learners' understanding of moral values, social relationships, and cultural norms that are considered important in society.

4.2. Moral Ideology and Character Formation

Analysis of narrative texts in Indonesian textbooks shows that moral values are not only conveyed as explicit messages at the end of the story, but also serve as an ideological framework that frames the representation of the characters' actions and their social consequences. Through conflict structure and narrative resolution, certain behaviors are positioned as exemplary actions, while other behaviors are constructed as deviations from social norms. The findings of the study identified three dominant moral values in narrative texts, namely honesty, discipline, and social harmony. The distribution of these values, along with their narrative context and discursive function, is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Moral Ideology Embedded in Narrative Texts of Indonesian Language Textbooks

Moral Value	Number of Narrative Texts	Linguistic Markers	Typical Narrative Context	Discursive Function
Honesty	14	honest, telling the truth, not lying	moral resolution in fables	ethical evaluation of characters
Discipline	11	Disciplined, diligent, and abiding by the rules	narratives of effort and responsibility	behavioral regulation
Social Harmony	10	cooperation, friendship, mutual help	cooperative conflict resolution	reinforcement of collective values

Table 5 shows that moral values in narrative texts do not appear randomly, but follow a distribution pattern related to the pedagogical function of textbooks. Honesty is the most dominant value and generally appears in fables that feature the conflict between honesty and lies. Narrative resolution consistently asserts that honesty generates social trust, while lies bring negative consequences for the characters who do so. The value of discipline appears especially in narratives that describe the relationship between effort, responsibility, and success. Characters who are diligent and follow the rules are portrayed as achieving goals through hard work, while characters who are not disciplined experience failure. This representation places discipline as a social norm that connects individual efforts to the

results obtained. This pattern can also be observed in narrative passages that emphasize discipline as a moral value. One textbook narrative states:

"*Ia selalu disiplin dan tekun belajar sehingga akhirnya berhasil mencapai cita-citanya.*" (He remained disciplined and diligent in his studies, and eventually succeeded in achieving his goals.)

In this passage, the lexical items *disiplin* ("disciplined") and *tekun* ("diligent") function as evaluative markers that associate personal effort with positive outcomes. The narrative links disciplined behaviour with achievement, thereby framing discipline not only as a personal virtue but also as a socially valued norm that guides individual success. Through this linguistic framing, the narrative reinforces the ideological message that responsible and disciplined conduct leads to positive social recognition. Meanwhile, social harmony is built through a narrative that emphasizes cooperation and solidarity between figures. Conflicts in stories are often resolved through collective actions such as mutual aid or cooperation, thus reinforcing the idea that harmonious social life is a value that must be maintained in society. Overall, these three values form an ideological framework that links language learning to character building. Through patterns of conflict and moral resolution, narrative texts function as pedagogical tools that instill social norms and cultural values in students.

4.3. National Identity Construction

Narratives in Indonesian textbooks not only function as a medium for language learning, but also as a means of forming national identity through cultural representation, social community, national identity, and historical memory. Analysis of the text shows that the construction of identity is built through three main discursive strategies: the framing of folklore as a cultural heritage that must be preserved, the use of inclusive linguistic references that place learners in a broader social community, and the use of historical events such as the Youth Pledge as a symbol of national unity. The three strategies show how narrative texts connect language learning with the internalization of national values. A summary of the discursive mechanism is presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Discursive Construction of National Identity in Indonesian Language Textbooks

Identity Dimension	Textbook Evidence	Linguistic Indicators	Discursive Mechanism	Ideological Function
Indonesian cultural pride	Folklore and *hikayat* are framed as cultural inheritance that must be preserved for future generations	Nation's Culture, Local Wisdom, Folklore, The Nation's Next Generation	heritage framing	affirming pride in Indonesian cultural traditions
Collective identity	Learners are positioned within a shared social body through inclusive references to common life and inherited values	us, the community, together, the young generation of Indonesia	collective pronoun framing	constructing shared belonging and common cultural membership
National unity	National solidarity is linked to the historical memory of Sumpah Pemuda and the responsibility to maintain unity	unity of the nation, common pledge, our nation, the spirit of unity	historical-national framing	reinforcing national cohesion and civic solidarity

Table 6 shows that the construction of national identity in textbooks does not take place directly, but through a combination of several discursive mechanisms. First, cultural pride is built through the framing of folklore as a cultural heritage that must be preserved. Second, collective identities are formed through the use of linguistic references that are inclusive, such as us, society, and together, which place learners as part of a broader social community. Third, national unity is strengthened through the use of

historical memory, especially the Youth Pledge event, as a symbol of national unity. This process can be seen more clearly in specific textual extracts. One narrative passage states:

"Dengan bekerja bersama, kita dapat menjaga keharmonisan masyarakat."
(By working together, we can preserve social harmony.)

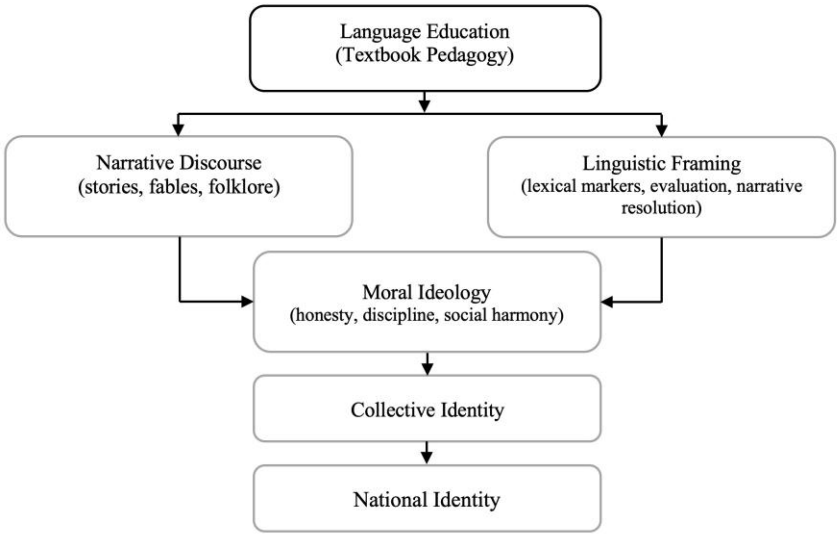
In this extract, the pronoun *kita* ("we") functions as an inclusive marker that positions readers within a shared social group rather than as isolated individuals. The phrase *bekerja bersama* ("working together") reinforces cooperation as a collective practice, while *keharmonisan masyarakat* ("social harmony") links this collective action to the well-being of the wider community. Taken together, these linguistic choices frame social responsibility as a shared moral obligation and construct collective identity as central to cultural life. The lexical reference *masyarakat* ("community") further expands this collective identity beyond the individual character, suggesting that moral behaviour is evaluated within a broader social framework rather than through personal actions alone.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, the three strategies show that language textbooks function as ideological tools that link language learning with the formation of national identity. Narratives, language choices, and historical representations work together to frame learners' understanding of themselves as part of a cultural community and nation. Thus, Indonesian textbooks not only teach linguistic competence, but also regulate how cultural and national identities are produced and reproduced in the context of education.

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine how cultural identity is constructed in Indonesian language textbooks through discursive mechanisms embedded in narrative texts and linguistic structures. Using a CDA framework, this study explored how narrative discourse, linguistic framing, and moral ideology interact within language education materials. The findings indicate that textbooks function not only as instructional tools for language learning but also as discursive instruments that transmit cultural values and shape collective understandings of identity. Figure 2 synthesizes these findings by illustrating how narrative discourse and linguistic framing jointly produce moral ideology, which subsequently contributes to the formation of collective and national identity within language education.

Figure 2
Discursive Pathways of Cultural Identity Construction in Indonesian Language Textbooks



The findings demonstrate that narrative discourse plays a central role in transmitting moral and cultural values through educational texts. Stories, fables, and folklore provide narrative structures through which moral meanings are embedded within characters, conflicts, and resolutions. This supports foundational

arguments that narratives function as cultural tools for meaning-making and socialization, but it also aligns with recent textbook scholarship showing that educational narratives routinely carry cultural representation, moral values, and identity cues rather than serving as neutral pedagogic content alone (Dos Santos et al., 2024; Gómez-ruiz et al., 2021; Pamungkas et al., 2023; Purc-Stephenson et al., 2019). Through these narrative structures, textbooks guide learners to interpret actions and consequences within a moral framework, thereby linking language learning with broader processes of cultural transmission and identity formation.

In addition to narrative discourse, linguistic framing also contributes significantly to the construction of cultural and ideological meanings in textbooks. Lexical markers, evaluative language, and narrative resolutions operate as linguistic cues that direct readers toward specific interpretations of social behaviour. This finding is consistent not only with classical discourse theory, which views language as a site of ideological reproduction (Fairclough, 2013; Fereydoonfar, 2025; Klimova et al., 2025; Van Dijk, 2006), but also with recent studies showing that evaluative language, moral labelling, peace-value discourse, and textbook framing practices shape how readers classify actions, identities, and social norms (Kenntemich et al., 2026; Klimova et al., 2025; Nesi & Alsop, 2021; Wang & Moreano, 2026). Through repeated evaluative patterns, textbooks normalize ethical values such as honesty, discipline, and social harmony while simultaneously narrowing the range of acceptable social meanings available to learners.

The findings show that cultural identity in Indonesian language textbooks is shaped through the interplay between narrative design and the way language is used to frame meaning. Stories such as fables, folklore, and short didactic texts do more than present content for reading practice. They organize actions, conflicts, and resolutions in ways that make certain forms of behaviour appear appropriate and desirable. At the same time, the wording used to describe characters, especially evaluative expressions, guides how those behaviours are understood. As a result, moral meaning is not simply stated at the end of a story but gradually built through the interaction between narrative progression and linguistic cues. In this sense, textbooks work as structured environments where learners come to recognize and internalize socially valued norms. This pattern can be understood within a critical discourse perspective, which views language as a medium through which ideology is produced and maintained (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2006). Earlier studies on textbook discourse have similarly shown that educational texts embed cultural values through narrative sequencing and evaluative wording rather than through explicit instruction alone (Fahmi, 2026; Majadly & Amara, 2025; Shah, 2023a). The repeated appearance of terms associated with honesty, discipline, and cooperation in the present study illustrates how such values become normalized over time. In addition, references to shared traditions and national history position learners within a broader social framework. This supports previous research suggesting that textbooks contribute to identity formation by linking everyday learning materials with collective memory and cultural representation (Sakki, 2025; Zhao & Wotipka, 2025).

These findings point to the broader role of textbooks in shaping how students understand both themselves and the society they belong to. Rather than functioning as neutral teaching tools, textbooks participate in defining what counts as appropriate behaviour and shared identity. This has practical implications for curriculum design and classroom practice. It suggests that educators need to be more attentive to how values are embedded in learning materials, and that students should be encouraged to reflect on the meanings conveyed through language. Such an approach may help learners move beyond passive acceptance toward a more critical engagement with the cultural assumptions present in educational texts.

Despite these contributions, further research is needed to deepen our understanding of how discourse in educational materials shapes cultural identity across different contexts. Recent reviews and comparative textbook studies indicate strong potential for broader cross-curricular, cross-national, and multimodal inquiry, particularly in relation to ideology, identity, gender, peace values, and cultural politics in textbooks (Sutton & Saenkhum, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Future studies may therefore extend the present analysis by comparing Indonesian textbooks with textbooks from other educational

systems, by incorporating visual and multimodal analysis, and by combining discourse analysis with classroom-based or reader-response approaches to examine how students actually interpret and internalize ideological meanings embedded in school texts.

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The authors used an AI-based tool solely for linguistic polishing and/or for generating figures or tables. The ideas, interpretations, and analyses presented in this paper are entirely original and the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Data Availability

The data supporting this study are derived from Indonesian language textbooks published by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud). These textbooks are publicly available educational materials. No additional datasets were generated or analyzed beyond the narrative texts selected from these textbooks as described in the methodology.

Ethics Declaration

This study analyzed publicly available textbook materials. No human participants, animals, or personal data were involved. Therefore, institutional review board approval and informed consent were not required.

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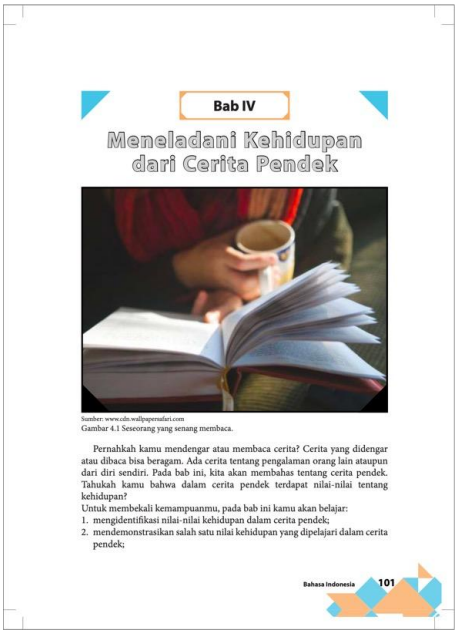
Appendix A

Opening Page of Chapter IV *Meneladani Kehidupan dari Cerita Pendek* in *Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas XI*



Bab IV

Meneladani Kehidupan dari Cerita Pendek

Sumber: www.cdn.wallpapersafari.com
Gambar 4.1 Seseorang yang senang membaca.

Pernahkah kamu mendengar atau membaca cerita? Cerita yang didengar atau dibaca bisa beragam. Ada cerita tentang pengalaman orang lain ataupun dari diri sendiri. Pada bab ini, kita akan membahas tentang cerita pendek. Tahukah kamu bahwa dalam cerita pendek terdapat nilai-nilai tentang kehidupan?
Untuk membekali kemampuanmu, pada bab ini kamu akan belajar:
1. mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai kehidupan dalam cerita pendek;
2. mendemonstrasikan salah satu nilai kehidupan yang dipelajari dalam cerita pendek;

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