

The Multicultural Classroom Phenomenon: Presenting Multicultural Education in English Learning in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education comes as a guideline in creating a learning environment that respects cultural diversity in Indonesia. Integrating multicultural education values in English language learning can increase awareness of diversity and develop cross-cultural communication skills. This investigation seeks to explore the phenomenon of multicultural classrooms with a focus on the enactment of multicultural education values in English language learning in Indonesia. Through a library research approach by analyzing the concept of multicultural education integrated from various data sources in the form of basic regulatory documents, legal bases, study guides, and other supporting articles. The results of the study identified several important values in multicultural education, such as appreciation of the value of diversity, the value of humanity and social justice, the value of unity and integrity, tolerance and mutual respect, collaborative/cooperation, and empathy. This research seeks to offer contributions to the application and discussion of multicultural education both at the national and international levels. Furthermore, this study suggests the need to develop research on the teaching process and assessment of learning outcomes integrated in multicultural education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its long history and civilization, is a country endowed with highlighted by extensive diversity in ethnic, culture, linguistic, traditional, and religious aspect (Simandjuntak et al., 2023). This is what makes Indonesia a major multicultural country in the world (Mumtahanah, 2020). In the book rethinking multicultural by Bhikhu, (2006) it is stated that plurality, diversity, and heterogeneity are facts and things that will happen to a country. This statement further emphasizes that Indonesia is a place where all forms of diversity develop. This diversity enriches the nation's identity and becomes the foundation for community development in various economic, social, political and educational aspects (Nadziroh, 2014).

Departing from the mandate Law No. 20 of 2003 in chapter III article 4 paragraph 1 about the national education system must be organized in a democratic and equitable and non-discriminatory manner by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism proves that multicultural education in education units is needed to support the realization of national

education goals (Hakim & Darajat, 2023). Through multicultural-based education that is integrated into the teaching and learning process, students can learn to appreciate diversity and understand different perspectives (Banks & Banks, 2016), thus creating an inclusive learning environment and promoting broader social progress. The students' diverse cultural backgrounds contribute to the complexity of the English language learning process in the context of teaching English as foreign language (Asrianti et al., 2022). In its application in the classroom, multicultural education has a positive influence on learners psychologically, socially, and academically (Dias, 2019). Psychologically, it can increase learners' confidence and self-esteem in understanding their own identity and culture and develop a sense of empathy and understanding for other cultures. Socially and academically, it can improve communication and cooperation skills between learners with different backgrounds, as well as increase learning motivation and enrich learners' knowledge and understanding of various cultures (Kustati et al., 2020).

Different examinations have been led to comprehend the aspects related to multicultural education-based learning. Some of them include active learning system in multicultural educational environment (Boondao & Sheard, 2023), multicultural approach in English language learning through fairy tales (Ninsiana, 2017), the impact of multicultural education on students' attitudes (Karacsony et al., 2022), multicultural education in shaping national character and identity (Hakim & Darajat, 2023), teacher perspective on cultural diversity in school (Lim et al., 2023; Wahab et al., 2018), enhancing school literacy through multicultural Islamic education (Sismanto et al., 2023), multicultural education and student tolerance (Amalia et al., 2019). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of multicultural education paradigm in Indonesia (Jayadi et al., 2022), the representation of multicultural values in Indonesia ministry of education and culture (Setyono & Widodo, 2019), and the importance of implementing multicultural education in schools (Hanum Farida, 2006). These researches show the diversity of themes of multicultural education studied in various countries.

This research purposes to provide a deeper insight into the phenomenon of multicultural education in the process of teaching and learning in the English language classroom. With a deeper comprehension of the implementation of multicultural education, it is expected to provide knowledge about multicultural values integrated in teaching English to learners with diverse backgrounds in Indonesia. Moreover, this research provides information on how to make learning inclusive and relevant to multicultural realities in the English language classroom.

1.1 Multicultural Education Concept

Banks (2014) explains multicultural education as an idea, an edge work, a way of thinking, a philosophical perspective, a worth direction, and a bunch of instruction of necessities of culturally diverse student population. Multicultural education recognizes the importance of cultural diversity in education and emphasizes the value of social justice and equality in education, ensuring all learners have the same opportunity to succeed regardless of their cultural background. Howard in Indrawan et al., (2020) argues that multicultural education has a role in developing multicultural competence abilities. Which means that by applying multicultural education to learning, students are expected to develop and understand cultural differences that affect various aspects of life. Among them are the way individuals act (usage), the habits that exist in society (folkways), manners (mores), and customs (customs). This is reflected in the attitude of recognition of cultural diversity, race, gender identity, religion, and social and economic status in the education process (Banks & Banks, 2016).

Multicultural education in the school environment is an important point in creating a global diversity rich in perspectives and understanding among learners (Indrawan et al., 2020). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum launched by the government has a connection with multicultural education. In the Pancasila student profile program, there are certain parts that are relevant to multicultural education, namely global diversity. Through this program, schools pay special attention to the character building and tolerance of students in the face of global diversity (Ramadhani et al., 2020). By integrating the principles of Pancasila in the curriculum, learners are

better able to understand and appreciate the values of diversity, unity and equality in an increasingly complex and diverse Indonesia. Among them are more emphasis on self-regulation of interests, learners determining their own learning processes and goals, learning that occurs in real contexts, and learning as a social activity (Abacioglu et al., 2023).

In the teaching and learning process, especially in an English class that has students with various mother tongue backgrounds, it is not easy. There are various factors that affect the interaction in the teaching and learning process, such as teacher intervention, peer relationships, teaching methods, materials taught, classroom settings, and other factors (Dias, 2019). However, effective interaction management is key in overcoming this challenge. Teachers need to pay attention to the diversity of students' language backgrounds, create a supportive environment, and adopt inclusive teaching strategies to ensure that all students feel valued and engaged in the learning process (Okagbue et al., 2022). Furthermore, when teachers demonstrate a positive attitude toward diversity, students are more likely to develop an appreciation for different backgrounds and perspectives. So that learners do not oppose the existing diversity, and they can also understand local culture through learning in the classroom and respect the distinctions within language, religion, ethnicity, and culture of the people in Indonesia (Tarihoran, 2017).

1.2 Dimension of Multicultural Education

Enacting multicultural education practices in Indonesia can be done flexibly, not necessarily changing the curriculum used, but multicultural education can be integrated in other subjects. Teachers can use the dimensions of multicultural education (figure 1) pioneered by Banks, (2014) as a guide in integrating subjects in the classroom. The dimensions are (1) content integration, (2) knowledge construction process, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) equity pedagogy and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure. By paying attention to and implementing these dimensions, teachers can create an inclusive learning environment and promote diversity centered learning.

Content integration refers to the teacher's efforts to use examples of materials from various cultural backgrounds of learners in teaching. According to Banks, (2006), more opportunities are available to integrate cultural materials in social studies, language arts, and music subjects. Multicultural education empowers teachers to integrate rich cultural resources, making English learning more engaging and relevant to students from various backgrounds. Furthermore, knowledge construction process relates to teachers' activities in helping learners engage in a critical examination of the interplay between cultural assumptions and the process of knowledge creation within a chosen discipline (Katz & Zalk, 1978).

The prejudice reduction dimension refers to teachers' strategies in developing positive attitudes in students towards various cultural groups. Research shows that providing learning materials that include content about various cultural groups can help students foster positive attitudes between cultural groups (Bigler & Hughes, 2009). Equity pedagogy is an action when teachers adapt their instruction to ensure all students, regardless of background such as language, religion, economics, and social status have an equal opportunity to succeed academically. This enables teachers to effectively deliver learning materials by considering the diverse needs and learning styles among learners. A school's empowering culture and social culture transform the learning environment. This fosters an inclusive space where students of all cultures have the support and resources, they need to thrive (Banks & Banks, 2016). Not making distinctions between ethnic groups or social status is an important goal for schools that aim to empower and improve learner achievement.

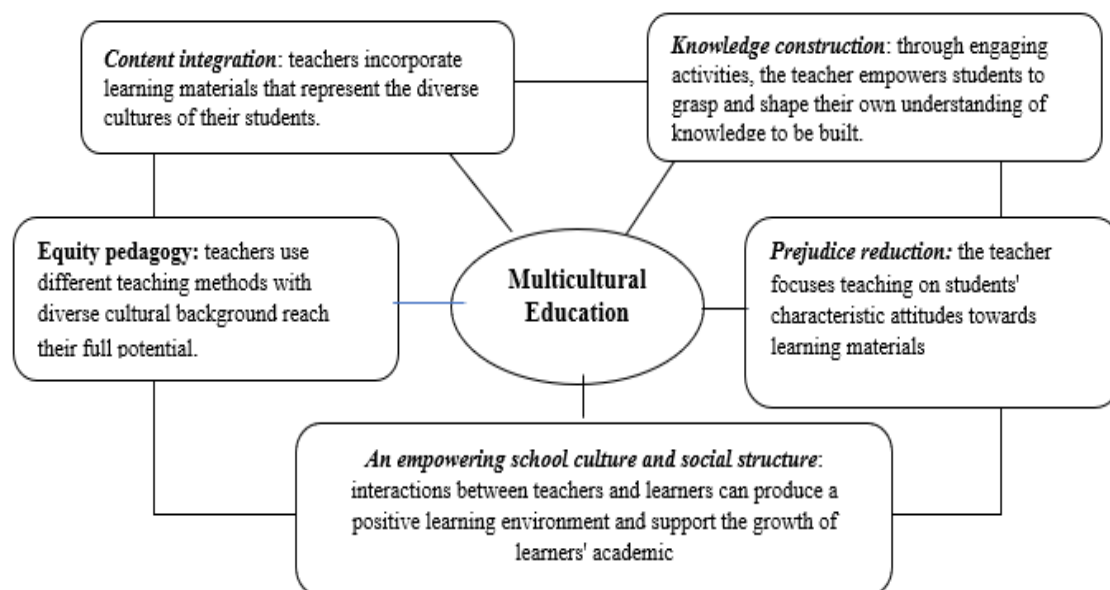


Figure 1: Dimensions of Multicultural Education Source: James A. Bank, (2014), *Introduction to Multicultural Education*, Boston: Pearson

2. METHOD

This research uses library research to review the literature relevant to the research topic. Literature study is a type of qualitative research with a descriptive approach (Sari & Asmendri, 2020). This approach involves the gathering data, reading, and extracting meaning form of literature and is relevant to the research focus desired by the researcher (Bordens & Abbott, n.d.). In addition, the library research technique is an approach that is used systematically, explicitly, and reproducibly to identify, assess, and summarize the findings of previous research ideas (Okoli & Schabram, 2012). Literature reviews are often referred to as library research because they primarily rely on existing scholarly materials (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013).

The steps of library research (figure 2) begin with the identification of topics relevant to the research to be studied, in other terms detailing all information related to the research. A well-defined and focused research topic acts as a roadmap, guiding the research and ensuring it stays within manageable boundaries (Subagiya, 2023). Next, an exploration of information sources is carried out to ensure their availability, such as laws, textbooks, reference books, journals, the internet and other sources. Researchers can use various platforms to find the information needed. In this case, some of the platforms used by researchers in searching for information are Mendeley, Scopus Preview, Library Genesis, Google Scholar, and various other platforms. All data was accessed using the keywords "education", "multicultural", "culture" and "English". In this activity, ability to think critically are key to determine the accuracy of the information found. It's crucial to verify the information used in the research to guarantee its accuracy and trustworthiness.

The next step is the evaluation of the selected sources of information. At this stage, researchers select and evaluate the sources of information that have been found by looking at the relevance, credibility, accuracy, and age of the information to be used (George, 2008). Relevance, the information is directly related to the topic to be discussed; Credibility, the information used is trusted; Accuracy, the information used is correct and precise; Age, about how recent or old the information was published. Next, data analysis of the data found. In this activity, researchers carefully read data sources, make notes and process notes to get a conclusion that is relevant to the research topic. The completion is the preparation of the report by referring to the applicable writing systematics.

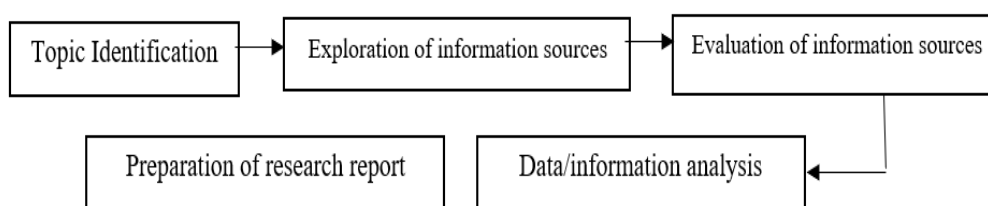


Figure 2: Flow of library research

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research examines various themes of multicultural education phenomena in English language learning. The data for this study was gleaned from a comprehensive review of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Pancasila, English for Nusantara textbooks for junior high school/*Madrasah Tsanawiyah* level published by the Ministry of education, culture, research and technology, and other pertinent scholarly articles. Data analysis from these sources resulted in important findings. Below is a full description of the findings of this study:

3.1 Appreciation value of diversity

As the state constitution, the 1945 Constitution contains fundamental values that form the basis for the development of multicultural education in Indonesia. The 1945 constitution provides a crucial framework for promoting multicultural education in Indonesia, reflecting the nation's commitment to respect and acceptance of cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity. This is clearly stated in the following document of the foundational law of Indonesia:

"Indonesia's education system needs to be structures around democratic ideals, ensuring fairness and celebrating differences in faith, culture, and national identity, all while upholding fundamental human rights (No. 20 of 2003, article 4 paragraph 1)"

The law cited, No. 20 of 2003, article 4 paragraph 1, underscores the importance of structuring Indonesia's education system around democratic ideals. This means that the education system should promote fairness and inclusiveness, celebrating the diversity in faith, culture, and national identity. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of upholding fundamental human rights within the educational framework. Essentially, the law advocates for an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also fosters a sense of equality, respect for differences, and adherence to human rights principles. This approach aims to cultivate a more harmonious and democratic society through education. Multicultural education has a role in achieving national education goals by equipping students with a deep understanding of cultural diversity. So that students can become individuals who are able to adapt well in a diverse society. This aligns perfectly with the following principle enshrined in the constitution of the Republic Indonesia:

"The national education system of Indonesia is designed to foster the intellectual, moral, and civic development of its citizens. It seeks to cultivate individuals who are faithful, possess noble character, are knowledgeable and capable, and demonstrate creativity and independent."

By upholding the cultural values and plurality of the nation, the 1945 Constitution encourages the implementation of education that not only focuses on academic aspects, but also on developing the character and cultural identity of students. The principles listed in the foundational law of Indonesia above guide the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia. Multicultural education ensures that all learners, regardless of their cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds will feel accepted and valued in the school environment (Banks, 2006b). The 1945 Constitution affirms that basic principles such as democracy, justice and human rights are the

foundation for inclusive and non-discriminatory education. This is also in line with UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, (2006) which describes the diverse cultural nature of society, not only in terms of national ethnic cultural elements, but also includes linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity. Therefore, multicultural education becomes a bridge in civilizing and empowering learners to become individuals who promote diversity in the midst of society itself

3.2 Values of humanity and social justice

Pancasila, the cornerstone of Indonesia, establishes the ideological and legal principles that underpin all aspects of national life, ensuring their application in the implementation of multicultural education. The essence of Pancasila becomes the foundation in realizing education that appreciates and respects cultural diversity in Indonesia so as to create social justice for all levels. In this case, 2 precepts in Pancasila reflect social justice, namely the second and fifth precepts.

"The second principle; fair and civilized humanity"

"The fifth principle; social justice for all Indonesian people"

The second principle emphasizes the importance of treating every individual with fairness and dignity, without discrimination. Multicultural education supports this goal by promoting a sense of understanding among learners from different backgrounds. And, in the fifth precept, it can be seen that multicultural education should uphold human values, such as equal rights and dignity, and social justice, including in terms of quality education.

Every educational institution must ensure the rules and guidelines for implementing multicultural education so that social justice will be created equally for everyone. (Lee Manning et al., 2017) argues that social justice can be achieved by making fair rules that govern one's behavior to reduce acts of oppression argues that social justice can be achieved by making fair rules that govern one's behavior so as to reduce acts of oppression. To achieve social justice in the school environment, support from educational institutions is needed to support a fair education system. Thus, multicultural education promotes social justice for all groups regardless of religion, culture, language, age and gender (Glazer, 1997).

Implementing multicultural education within educational institutions involves integrating diverse perspectives and cultural content into the curriculum, fostering an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and respected (Atwater Editor, 2022). This approach not only broadens students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures but also equips them with the skills needed to navigate and thrive in a diverse society. Teachers play a crucial role in this process by adopting culturally responsive teaching methods, challenging biases, and encouraging critical thinking about social issues (Mccoy, 2005). By doing so, educational institutions can create a more equitable learning environment that recognizes and addresses the unique needs and experiences of all students, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of social justice.

3.3 The value of unity and integrity

Multicultural education integrated in English language learning is able to create a conducive learning environment, where every learner can understand and appreciate differences, and contribute to national unity. Ideologically, the value of unity is found in the third principle.

"The third precept; the unity of Indonesia"

Linking multicultural education with the third precept can help students understand that unity does not mean uniformity, but appreciation and acceptance of diversity. In addition, multicultural education in its application in the classroom, is connected to the six elements carried in the Pancasila Student Profile. Namely, (1) Spiritual grounding, (2) global awareness, (3) collaboration, (4) innovation, (5) analytical thinking, and (6) self-sufficiency (Pendidikan & Teknologi, 2022). These

six elements are integrated in the activities in the English for Nusantara book. In one of the materials of this book, namely:

"Hi, my name is Galang. I'm from Kalimantan. I live on Sumatra Road. I'm thirteen years old. I go to Merdeka Junior High School. I like fishing, and I have two sisters." (Book of English for Nusantara grade 7)

The characters used in this book provide a learning context that represents the diversity of the archipelago, because the characters presented represent various ethnicities in Indonesia. This is intended to show the harmony of living together as mandated in the Pancasila Student Profile which ultimately strengthens the sense of unity and love for the country.

The concept of unity in multicultural education emphasizes the importance of recognizing similarities and the concept of equality among all individuals within the school environment (Naz et al., 2023). In addition, the concept of unity in multicultural education highlights the significance of fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect among students from diverse backgrounds. By recognizing similarities, educators can build common ground that promotes understanding and cooperation, while the emphasis on equality ensures that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed (Parker, 2019). This approach encourages students to appreciate both their shared humanity and the unique contributions of different cultures, leading to a more harmonious and inclusive school environment. Unity in multicultural education also involves creating policies and practices that address inequities and provide support for all students, ensuring that no one is marginalized or left behind (Potts et al., 2008). Through this commitment to unity and equality, schools can cultivate a more just and compassionate society.

3.4 Tolerance and mutual respect

This English for Nusantara book at junior high school level is designed not only to teach English skills, but also as a means to encourage understanding and mutual respect among learners. To showcase the values contained in the global diversity section, learners are also prepared with fun facts that provide information about their surroundings.

"Indonesian Independence Day celebrations vary across the country, with each region boasting unique traditions. In Bandung, a captivating parade showcases the city's spirit. Dozens of participants march, carrying colorful palanquins overflowing with locally harvested food. The parade culminates in a playful "battle" for the delicious offerings, followed by a joyous community feast." (Book of English for Nusantara Grade 8)

With this approach, the English for Nusantara book, which explicitly addresses the themes of cooperation between cultures, festivals of different religions, and customs of different regions, creates a more interesting learning atmosphere (Damyanti et al., 2022). Discussions on these topics in class help build awareness and understanding of the significances of appreciating and respecting people's difference. This is important for forming individuals who are not only competent in language skills but also have a strong understanding of the importance of living in a diverse society.

Furthermore, the English for Nusantara book serves as a valuable tool in promoting intercultural competence among students. By engaging with content that explores cultural cooperation, religious festivals, and regional customs, students develop a deeper appreciation for diversity and the complexities of different cultural practices. This enriched learning experience not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters empathy, critical thinking, and global awareness. Teachers can facilitate discussions that challenge stereotypes and encourage students to reflect on their own cultural identities in relation to others (Mccoy, 2005). As a result, students become more open-minded and better prepared to interact positively in multicultural settings, both within and

beyond the classroom. This holistic approach to education ultimately contributes to the formation of well-rounded individuals who value and respect diversity, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and harmonious society.

According to (Banks & Banks, 2016) one indicator of successful social relations is the ability of educational institutions to create respectful and tolerant interactions between individuals. Teachers and learners should have a sense of accepting each other's differences. Furthermore, (*UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, 2006) emphasized building a sustainable world demands not just tolerance and respect, but also actively embracing and collaborating with people from different backgrounds to leverage their unique perspectives.

3.5 Collaborative/working together

One of the objectives of strengthening the Pancasila Learner Profile is to train students to explore real issues in the surrounding environment and collaborate in finding solutions to the issues faced. Collaborative or cooperation is one of several values in multicultural education, which is reflected in the English for Nusantara book. The English for Nusantara book often includes tasks that encourage students to work together in groups.

"Make groups that consist of some people based on the recount text that the teacher prepares. After that, every group must stand in line....." English for Nusantara book grade 9

The English for Nusantara book uses learning methods that ask students to work together in completing tasks. This teaches learners about the importance of collaboration in facing challenges. Through this approach, the book helps facilitate a collaborative learning environment where students can learn from each other and appreciate diversity. By employing learning methods that require students to work together, the English for Nusantara book emphasizes the value of teamwork and collective problem-solving (Damayanti et al., 2022). This approach not only enhances students' academic skills but also fosters essential social skills such as communication, cooperation, and mutual respect.

In a collaborative learning environment, students are exposed to diverse perspectives and ideas, enabling them to learn from one another and appreciate the strengths and contributions of their peers. This interaction helps break down cultural barriers and promotes a sense of community and inclusion within the classroom (Figuerola & Hofhuis, 2024). As students engage in group activities and discussions, they develop a deeper understanding of diversity and the benefits it brings to the learning process. Ultimately, this collaborative approach prepares students to navigate and thrive in a multicultural world, reinforcing the principles of equity and social justice in education. The value of collaboration in multicultural education is very important in raising awareness and appreciation of religious, ethnic and cultural differences (Lo Bianco, 2010). In multicultural education, cooperation is realized through strategies such as cognitive cultivation, attitudes related to problems, actualization actions, and habituation (Dirsa, 2021).

3.6 Empathy

A key component of multicultural education is empathy, as the ability to understand and feel the feelings of others from different cultural backgrounds helps to create an inclusive environment. In the context of the English for Nusantara book, the development of empathy among learners is supported through various content and activities that reflect human values.

"What kind of situation makes you have these feelings?" It seems like you can relate to wide range of emotions. Can you tell me about situations that evoke different feelings in you? (happy, sad, worried, scared, surprised, angry, heartbroken)? You can refer to your experience?" English Book for Nusantara Grade 7

Incorporating empathy into the learning process can help students to improve their communication skills, manage emotions better and make wiser decisions. Incorporating empathy into the learning process enriches students' educational experiences by enhancing their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Empathy encourages students to understand and share the feelings of others, which in turn improves their ability to communicate effectively and respectfully (Burton & Furr, 2014). By putting themselves in others' shoes, students learn to manage their own emotions more effectively, fostering a classroom environment that is supportive and inclusive. Additionally, empathy helps students develop critical thinking skills, as they consider different perspectives and the broader impact of their decisions. This emotional intelligence leads to wiser decision-making, as students are better equipped to navigate social complexities and conflicts with sensitivity and understanding. Ultimately, teaching empathy prepares students to become compassionate, thoughtful, and responsible individuals, both within the classroom and in the wider world.

Overall, empathy in multicultural education is the key to creating a generation that balances academic intelligence with strong emotional intelligence and social skills (Dias, 2019). Empathy in multicultural education is essential for nurturing a generation that excels not only in academic intelligence but also in emotional intelligence and social skills. It enables students to build meaningful connections with diverse individuals, fostering a sense of unity and mutual respect. By prioritizing empathy, schools can cultivate compassionate leaders who are well-equipped to address the complexities of our interconnected world

4. CONCLUSION

The prevalence of multicultural classes in Indonesia underscores the critical role of integrating multicultural education values into English language learning. This fosters the development of understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity among learners. The presence of multicultural education in the school environment creates values that are embedded in the learning process activities. By embedding the values of multicultural education, there will be an appreciation of the essence of diversity, humanity and social justice, the essence of unity, tolerance and mutual respect, collaboration/cooperation, and empathy. Teachers and learners who actively apply multicultural values encourage inclusive and effective learning. This research reviewed documents, books and articles on concerning the practical application of multicultural education values created in a multicultural classroom environment. This study recommends that future research delve deeper into the process of material selection and teaching methodology employed by English language educators in the context of multicultural education. Thus, continuing research can provide a richer understanding of how teachers manage multicultural education values that are integrated into learning materials. A comprehensive examination of multicultural education in Indonesia would provide a clearer picture of its implementation.

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