

RECONSTRUCTING MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH LOCAL TRANSMIGRATION NARRATIVES

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Abstract. Indonesia's long history of cultural diversity has shaped a complex social landscape where education plays a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and respect among different ethnic groups. However, history learning in schools often remains dominated by national narratives, leaving local experiences underrepresented. Local transmigration stories rooted in cooperation, adaptation, and intercultural encounters offer rich resources for developing multicultural awareness among students. This study explores how these local transmigration narratives can be used to reconstruct students' multicultural awareness through the framework of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations involving history teachers and senior high school students in Metro City, Indonesia. The findings reveal that incorporating local transmigration narratives into history lessons enables students to reflect on the values of tolerance, empathy, and social cohesion within their own community context. Learning through culturally relevant content allows students to connect academic knowledge with their lived experiences, thereby transforming their perspectives on cultural diversity. Teachers serve as facilitators who bridge local heritage and classroom discourse. The study concludes that reconstructing multicultural awareness through local history not only enriches civic and cultural education but also strengthens inclusive and transformative learning practices. It recommends integrating local narratives more systematically into history curricula to nurture multicultural competence and intercultural harmony.

Keywords: multicultural awareness, local history, transmigration, culturally responsive teaching, qualitative study.

INTRODUCTION

The paradigm of history education in Indonesia has undergone a profound transformation. From *The Old History* that emphasized political events and national heroism (Robinson, 1965), it has evolved into *The New History*, which embraces the complexity of social, cultural, and economic life through an interdisciplinary approach. As Burke (2013) observes, this transition marks the emergence of *social history* a form of historical inquiry that focuses on the lived experiences of people rather than the actions of political elites. Within the educational context, Hasan (2013) explains that this paradigm shift has redefined the philosophy of teaching history from a perennialist view that glorifies the past toward a socially reconstructive perspective that emphasizes relevance, critical thinking, and moral reflection.

This change positions history not merely as a vehicle for remembering national achievements, but as a medium for cultivating values, attitudes, and social empathy. History learning must therefore be capable of linking the past to present realities and equipping students with the awareness to live harmoniously within diversity (Burgos-Videla et al., 2025; van Straaten et al., 2019). As Hasan, (1999) suggests, the future of history education lies in its ability to help learners understand that historical knowledge is not final but continuously constructed through dialogue with culture and society. In this sense, history becomes a pedagogical space where students encounter the plurality of human experience, especially within Indonesia's multicultural context.

Local history provides an ideal entry point for this process. The narratives of transmigration, for instance, reveal authentic examples of cultural encounter, cooperation, and adaptation that have shaped the social fabric of communities such as Metro City. These local stories embody the essence

of multicultural living where differences coexist not as barriers but as sources of collective strength. Through such narratives, students can explore how intercultural interaction produces new forms of identity and shared understanding, thereby developing a deeper sense of empathy and multicultural awareness.

However, history education in Indonesia still tends to emphasize political unity over cultural diversity. Textbooks and classroom practices remain dominated by top-down national narratives that often overlook the richness of local experiences (Akhmad et al., 2018; Ridhoi et al., 2023). As a result, students' understanding of diversity is frequently abstract, detached from the realities of their own communities. To overcome this gap, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) offers an approach that repositions learners' cultural backgrounds as integral to the learning process (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By integrating local transmigration narratives through the CRT framework, teachers can create inclusive and reflective learning spaces where history becomes both personal and transformative.

Reconstructing multicultural awareness through local transmigration narratives thus represents a critical pedagogical act. It transforms history learning from memorization of facts into a process of cultural dialogue where students interpret diversity, negotiate meaning, and internalize empathy as part of their civic and moral development. In doing so, history education fulfills its humanistic function preparing learners to live consciously and responsibly within Indonesia's plural society. Therefore, this study aims to explore how local transmigration narratives can be integrated into history learning to reconstruct students' multicultural awareness through a culturally responsive teaching framework.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore how students and teachers experience the reconstruction of multicultural awareness through local transmigration narratives in history learning. The phenomenological design was chosen because it allows a deep understanding of participants' lived experiences, focusing on how meanings of multicultural awareness are constructed through cultural encounters in the classroom rather than measured as fixed variables. The research was conducted in Metro City, Lampung Province, an area historically shaped by Indonesia's transmigration program and characterized by a rich cultural mosaic of Javanese, Lampungese, Balinese, and Bugis communities. Seven senior high schools were purposively selected to represent diverse educational and cultural settings, namely SMAN 1 Metro, SMAN 2 Metro, SMAN 4 Metro, SMAS Kartikatama Metro, SMAS Taruna Gajahmada Metro, SMAS Muhammadiyah 1 Metro, and SMAS Yos Sudarso Metro. Participants consisted of seven history teachers and twenty-four eleventh-grade students who had direct experience engaging with local history materials that incorporated transmigration narratives. In this phenomenological inquiry, participants were treated not as respondents but as co-constructors of meaning whose lived experiences form the core of interpretation.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The interviews explored teachers' and students' perceptions of local history learning and its influence on multicultural understanding. Classroom observations focused on how culturally responsive teaching (CRT) principles appeared in pedagogical practice particularly how dialogue, empathy, and reflection were encouraged among students from different cultural backgrounds. FGDs further deepened collective reflections and shared meaning-making about multicultural values and social harmony. All sessions were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and supported by detailed field notes documenting classroom dynamics and contextual nuances. Data were analyzed using phenomenological thematic analysis following the steps of Moustakas, (1994) and Braun & Clarke, (2006). The process involved bracketing to set aside researcher bias, horizontalization to identify significant statements, and the development of textural and structural descriptions that revealed *what* participants experienced and *how* they experienced it. These descriptions were synthesized to uncover the essential meanings of multicultural awareness emerging through local history learning. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of data

sources, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail of analytic decisions. Reflexive journaling was also employed to critically examine the researcher's positionality and interpretive lens throughout the study. Through this interpretive and reflexive process, the phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to capture the essence of how multicultural awareness is reconstructed within the intersection of local history, lived experience, and culturally responsive pedagogy..

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1. Local History as a Mirror of Cultural Diversity

The first major theme that emerged from the data is the recognition of local history as a mirror of cultural diversity. This theme captures how both teachers and students experienced the integration of local transmigration narratives as a means to understand the multicultural realities of their own lives. In the phenomenological sense, participants described a process of *awareness awakening* a realization that the past is not distant or abstract, but embedded in their everyday existence. During classroom observations, history lessons that included stories of early transmigrant settlers such as the arrival of Javanese, Balinese, and Bugis families in the Lampung region sparked a visible sense of curiosity among students. Teachers explained how these narratives were not just historical data but representations of lived social encounters that continue to shape community identity in Metro City today. As one teacher reflected, *"When students learned that their neighbors or even their grandparents came from different islands, they began to see that diversity is not an imported value; it is something we inherited"*.

This sense of historical proximity made students more engaged and emotionally connected to the lesson. Through interviews and focus group discussions, many students described moments of reflection when they discovered parallels between historical events and their own family stories. One student shared, *"I never thought that my grandfather's story about moving from Central Java was part of the national transmigration history. It makes me proud that our family became part of Indonesia's diversity."* Such experiences exemplify how learning local history transformed into a process of *self-recognition* students began to locate themselves within the broader historical narrative of multicultural Indonesia. From the teachers' perspective, the integration of local transmigration materials offered an opportunity to contextualize multiculturalism through tangible examples. Rather than teaching diversity as an abstract moral concept, teachers situated it within the concrete lived experiences of people in Metro City. This pedagogical move aligns with the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which emphasize the use of learners' cultural references to make learning more meaningful and relevant (Gay, 2018). By connecting lessons to the students' sociocultural environment, teachers facilitated a shift from *learning about history* to *learning from history*.

Phenomenologically, this shift represents the emergence of intentional consciousness a moment when students' understanding of history becomes directed toward the meaning of cultural coexistence. In classroom discussions, the act of comparing stories of migration, adaptation, and cooperation allowed students to interpret diversity not as a category of difference but as a shared human experience. This echoes Vygotsky's view of learning as a socially constructed process, where meaning is negotiated through dialogue and reflection within cultural contexts. Moreover, the study found that local history served as a reflective mirror that helped students question dominant narratives found in national textbooks. While most textbooks emphasize political integration, the local transmigration narratives introduced a social and cultural dimension to nation-building. Students began to discuss how local communities negotiated identity, language, and tradition in everyday life. Such critical engagement reveals that history learning, when grounded in local context, can promote historical empathy and pluralist thinking.

Teachers observed that after learning local history, students were more open to discussing sensitive issues such as ethnic stereotypes or cultural prejudices. They showed increased willingness to share personal stories related to cultural differences and to reinterpret historical events through a more inclusive lens. One teacher summarized this transformation by saying, *"Through these stories, students learn that diversity is not something to tolerate, but something to understand and*

celebrate.” In essence, the theme of Local History as a Mirror of Cultural Diversity illustrates the core phenomenological finding of this study: that meaning emerges when learners encounter history as a lived reality. Local transmigration narratives act as cultural mirrors that reflect students’ identities and reshape their understanding of multiculturalism from passive awareness into reflective consciousness. This process embodies the very essence of multicultural awareness reconstruction a transformative learning experience in which history becomes a medium for personal and social understanding.

2. Dialogical Learning and Empathy Formation

The second theme that emerged from the phenomenological analysis is dialogical learning as a catalyst for empathy formation. In the classroom settings observed, history learning no longer appeared as a one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Instead, it evolved into an interactive and reflective space where dialogue became the central mode of meaning-making. Teachers intentionally positioned themselves not merely as informants but as facilitators who encouraged students to share, question, and reinterpret historical events based on their own cultural perspectives. The second theme that emerged from the phenomenological analysis is dialogical learning as a catalyst for empathy formation. In the classroom settings observed, history learning no longer appeared as a one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Instead, it evolved into an interactive and reflective space where dialogue became the central mode of meaning-making. Teachers intentionally positioned themselves not merely as informants but as facilitators who encouraged students to share, question, and reinterpret historical events based on their own cultural perspectives.

Such moments exemplify what phenomenologists refer to as intersubjective understanding a shared space of meaning that arises through dialogue (Schutz, 1967). Through dialogical exchanges, students began to see others’ experiences not as distant stories but as human realities deserving empathy. The dialogical process allowed them to interpret diversity not as difference to be tolerated, but as a shared struggle for coexistence. Teachers noticed that when students exchanged stories about their families’ migration backgrounds, barriers between ethnic groups softened, replaced by mutual curiosity and appreciation. Interviews with teachers confirmed that dialogical learning also transformed classroom dynamics. One teacher from SMAS Muhammadiyah 1 Metro described how discussion-based history lessons “turned passive students into storytellers,” fostering emotional connection and a sense of equality. In a typical CRT framework, such interactions align with Ladson-Billings, (1995) idea that culturally responsive pedagogy values students’ voices as intellectual resources. Through open-ended dialogue, students’ lived experiences became legitimate sources of knowledge, reinforcing both self-respect and empathy toward others.

The dialogical model also functioned as a corrective lens to the traditional, textbook-centered approach that often silences diverse cultural experiences. Instead of positioning history as a fixed narrative, teachers used dialogue to co-construct interpretations with students. This pedagogical shift reflects Freire, (1970) concept of *education as a practice of freedom*, where knowledge emerges from critical conversation rather than unilateral transmission. Students were encouraged to question whose stories dominate historical narratives and to identify voices that had been marginalized such as women, migrants, or minority ethnic groups within the local transmigration context. In doing so, empathy became not merely an emotional reaction but an ethical stance rooted in awareness of historical injustice and social interdependence. Empathy formation was most clearly observed during focus group discussions where students shared their reflections after studying local transmigration narratives. Many expressed feelings of respect and admiration for how earlier generations overcame hardship through cooperation and tolerance. Some reported that the discussions made them more sensitive to present-day issues of discrimination or exclusion in their school environment. As one participant put it, *“Now I think more before judging someone different from me because I see that diversity has always been part of our history.”*

From a phenomenological perspective, this represents a deepening of consciousness through encounter where empathy emerges as both an emotional and cognitive process shaped by dialogue. The dialogical learning space thus becomes a moral laboratory where students experience, rather than merely learn about, cultural coexistence. In this sense, empathy is not taught; it is *cultivated* through reflective interaction and shared narrative exploration. Ultimately, the theme of Dialogical

Learning and Empathy Formation reveals that the integration of local transmigration narratives facilitated through culturally responsive and dialogical pedagogy transforms the history classroom into a participatory space for moral and emotional learning. It affirms that empathy, as a central dimension of multicultural awareness, grows not from instruction but from *encountering the humanity of others through dialogue*.

3. Culturally Responsive Teaching as a Bridge of Meaning

The third major theme uncovered in this study highlights the role of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) as a bridge that connects the historical narratives of transmigration with students' lived cultural realities. In the classrooms observed, CRT principles were not treated as abstract pedagogical ideals, but as concrete strategies that enabled teachers to contextualize learning and make history personally meaningful for every student. Teachers described how they adapted instructional materials to resonate with the cultural backgrounds of their students. For instance, history teachers in SMAN 1 Metro and SMAS Yos Sudarso Metro modified their lesson plans by incorporating local oral histories, family migration stories, and traditional practices into discussions on Indonesia's transmigration policies. One teacher explained, *"When I start a lesson with students' own family stories, they immediately feel that history belongs to them."* Such an approach shifted the classroom dynamic from hierarchical to participatory, allowing students to see themselves not as recipients of knowledge but as contributors to historical understanding.

This pedagogical bridge also helped students construct meaning through cultural recognition. Students often expressed pride when realizing that their ancestral experiences were part of the nation's historical narrative. For example, during a focus group discussion, one student remarked, *"I never knew that my grandmother's migration from Bali to Metro was part of the transmigration program; now I feel that her story matters to Indonesia's history."* This sense of personal connection illustrates how culturally responsive pedagogy transforms historical knowledge into an instrument of identity affirmation and collective belonging. From a phenomenological standpoint, the use of CRT practices represents what Van Manen, (2016) calls *pedagogical tact* the ability of teachers to intuitively link learning to the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) of their students. By validating local knowledge as a legitimate source of understanding, teachers created what Husserl terms an *intentional horizon*, where the meaning of history extends beyond textbooks and enters the realm of lived experience. In these moments, history learning ceased to be a linear recounting of the past and became a dialogical construction of meaning situated in the students' social and cultural contexts.

Teachers' reflections further indicated that CRT fostered inclusivity and equity within the classroom. In SMAN 4 Metro, for instance, the teacher deliberately mixed students from different ethnic backgrounds in group activities, encouraging them to share how cultural practices from their families shaped their views on cooperation and tolerance. This strategy not only enriched classroom discussion but also nurtured a sense of shared humanity. The teacher noted, *"When students realize that everyone's culture has a story of struggle and adaptation, they begin to see difference not as distance, but as connection."* The integration of CRT also brought methodological innovation to history teaching. Instead of using fixed timelines and state-centered narratives, teachers employed project-based learning and community-based assignments that required students to explore local historical sites, interview elders, and document cultural artifacts related to the transmigration experience. These experiential activities allowed students to "learn through doing," reinforcing the principle that knowledge is constructed through interaction with one's cultural environment. In this process, CRT functioned as an epistemological bridge linking formal curriculum with indigenous wisdom and community memory.

In the broader interpretive sense, these findings affirm that Culturally Responsive Teaching operates as a transformative educational practice that mediates between history as knowledge and history as lived meaning. Through CRT, students learn to interpret historical diversity as a reflection of present-day coexistence. Teachers, meanwhile, act as cultural mediators who translate abstract historical concepts into human experiences. This bridging role of CRT thus becomes essential in reconstructing multicultural awareness, it situates learning within students' cultural identities while fostering empathy and social understanding across differences. Ultimately, the theme of Culturally Responsive Teaching as a Bridge of Meaning underscores the potential of culturally grounded pedagogy to humanize history education. It demonstrates that when students see their own cultural

narratives represented in learning, they do not merely learn about the past they also rediscover themselves within it. Such pedagogy transforms history lessons into acts of recognition, dialogue, and belonging, embodying the essence of multicultural education in practice.

4. Reconstruction of Multicultural Awareness

The culmination of the phenomenological inquiry reveals that the integration of local transmigration narratives within history learning leads to a process of reconstructing multicultural awareness. This theme encapsulates how students move from passive recognition of diversity toward an active, reflective, and ethical understanding of cultural coexistence. The reconstruction process was not instantaneous but unfolded gradually through experiential engagement, dialogue, and emotional reflection anchored by the culturally responsive teaching practices applied by teachers. Field observations across several schools demonstrated a consistent pattern of transformation in students' attitudes and perspectives. In early sessions, discussions about migration history were often dominated by factual recall and political explanations. However, as lessons increasingly incorporated local stories and students' personal narratives, the classroom atmosphere shifted. Students began to express empathy toward the historical actors they studied and to relate these experiences to their own community life. A teacher from SMAS Kartikatama Metro noted, *"At first they only memorized what transmigration meant. But after connecting it with their own families, they started to talk about respect, tolerance, and the meaning of living together."*

From the students' reflections, this shift represented an awakening of cultural consciousness. Many described realizing that multiculturalism was not merely an external idea introduced by textbooks but something that exists within their own histories. One student shared, *"I used to think multiculturalism was just about knowing different cultures. Now I feel it's about understanding how our lives are connected through history."* Such reflections signify a reconstruction of awareness where understanding diversity evolves into a moral stance and a lived commitment to coexistence. Phenomenologically, this process aligns with Husserl's notion of intentionality, where consciousness is always directed toward something meaningful. In this case, students' consciousness was directed toward recognizing themselves within the continuum of cultural interactions that define Indonesian identity. The act of revisiting local transmigration stories thus functioned as a reflective loop: by understanding the past, students reinterpreted the present and envisioned more inclusive forms of living together. History, therefore, became a medium for *self-awareness* and *moral formation*.

Teachers played a crucial role in facilitating this reconstruction. By framing historical learning through Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), they enabled students to link cognitive understanding with affective and ethical dimensions (Harmon, 2012; Lee, 2025; Wojuade, 2025). Teachers often encouraged students to engage in reflective journaling, group storytelling, and thematic discussions on cooperation and tolerance. These activities provided what Mezirow (1991) calls a *transformative learning space* a setting where individuals critically reassess their assumptions and reconstruct their worldviews. Through these reflections, students demonstrated increased openness toward difference, reduced stereotyping, and heightened sensitivity to cultural diversity within their school community. Furthermore, this reconstructed awareness was observable not only in verbal reflections but also in behavioral changes. Teachers across multiple schools observed that students began initiating mixed-ethnicity study groups, greeting peers in different local languages, and incorporating multicultural perspectives into their classroom presentations. One teacher commented, *"They became more respectful, not because we told them to, but because they began to feel that diversity is part of who they are."* Such behavioral manifestations show that multicultural awareness had moved beyond the cognitive level into the affective and ethical domains a hallmark of transformative education.

From an educational philosophy perspective, this reconstruction process demonstrates the integration of constructivist and humanistic paradigms in history learning. Students did not merely receive knowledge; they constructed it through engagement with cultural experiences that reflect their own community life. This process redefines history education as an act of *cultural reconstruction* a continual reinterpretation of the past in light of the present to build a more inclusive future. It resonates with Paulo Freire's (1970) vision of education as the practice of freedom, where awareness (*conscientização*) emerges through critical reflection and social dialogue. In essence, the

theme of Reconstruction of Multicultural Awareness captures the ultimate transformation observed throughout this study. The integration of local transmigration narratives, mediated through dialogical and culturally responsive pedagogy, enabled students to reconstruct their understanding of diversity as a lived moral consciousness. They no longer viewed multiculturalism as a static social condition but as an ongoing process of becoming of learning to live with and learn from others. This reconstructed awareness reflects the broader purpose of history education in a plural society to cultivate citizens who not only understand the nation's past but also embody the values necessary for its harmonious future. History, when grounded in local experience and taught through cultural responsiveness, becomes not just a subject to learn, but a mirror through which humanity understands itself.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that integrating local transmigration narratives into history learning through the lens of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) fosters a profound reconstruction of multicultural awareness among students. The phenomenological exploration across seven senior high schools in Metro City revealed that when historical learning is grounded in students' lived cultural contexts, it transforms from a process of memorizing facts into one of dialogical reflection and moral formation.

The findings unfolded through four interconnected themes. First, local history served as a mirror of cultural diversity, allowing students to see how their community's past reflects Indonesia's broader plural identity. Second, dialogical learning nurtured empathy, creating spaces where students encountered the humanity of others and experienced diversity not as difference but as connection. Third, CRT acted as a pedagogical bridge, linking curriculum content with the cultural realities of learners and validating local knowledge as part of historical understanding. Finally, these intertwined processes culminated in the reconstruction of multicultural awareness, where students internalized tolerance, respect, and shared belonging as moral imperatives rather than abstract values. Collectively, these findings affirm that history education when approached through a culturally responsive and phenomenological lens possesses transformative potential. It not only transmits knowledge about the past but also shapes ethical consciousness and civic identity. By situating historical learning within local experiences of transmigration, this study reclaims history as a humanizing discipline one that cultivates empathy, reflection, and coexistence in a multicultural society.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this research underscores the importance of designing learning materials and teaching strategies that are contextually rooted and culturally inclusive. Teachers play a pivotal role as cultural mediators who facilitate dialogue and help students construct meaning from their diverse heritages. In this way, CRT provides an effective framework for bridging national narratives with local realities, ensuring that every student can recognize themselves within the story of the nation. Philosophically, the reconstruction of multicultural awareness revealed in this study illustrates that education is not a neutral act but an ethical engagement with humanity. It echoes Freire's conception of education as a practice of freedom and Mezirow's idea of transformative learning, where understanding emerges through reflection and dialogue. Thus, history learning, when conducted responsively and empathetically, becomes a space for cultivating consciousness *a moral act of remembering who we are, together*. In conclusion, the integration of local transmigration narratives through culturally responsive pedagogy contributes significantly to the renewal of history education in Indonesia. It offers a pathway to nurture generations who not only know the nation's past but also embody its multicultural values in everyday life. History, in this sense, is no longer confined to the classroom it becomes a living dialogue between culture, identity, and humanity.

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