

A Review on Integrating Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and Local Folklore into EFL Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review synthesizes existing research on the integration of Generative AI (GenAI), Digital Storytelling (DST), and local folklore within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction by educators in Indonesia. Guided by the PRISMA framework, the analysis of 12 studies (2021-2025) aimed to identify current applications, prevalent teaching strategies, and documented learning outcomes. The findings reveal a potent synergistic relationship among the three elements: GenAI serves as a dynamic tool for creating and personalizing culturally relevant materials, DST provides an engaging, student-centered pedagogical framework, and local folklore supplies meaningful content that grounds language learning in local cultural identity. Instructional strategies consistently position GenAI as an augmenting tool to support teachers in adapting folklore for DST projects, thereby fostering both language practice and cultural preservation. Analysis of learning outcomes indicates a positive impact on students' English achievement, particularly in writing, speaking, and vocabulary, alongside enhanced motivation, confidence, and cultural awareness. The review concludes that this integrative triad offers a model for creating contextually grounded and effective EFL pedagogy. It further recommends future research to explore specific methodologies for prompting GenAI to generate digital stories rooted in specific Indonesian folktales and their inherent character values, thereby directly supporting teachers' pedagogical practices in blending technological innovation.

Keywords: DST, EFL, Folklore, Folktale, GenAI

1) INTRODUCTION

In response to the challenges of traditional EFL instruction, three emerging domains: Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), Digital Storytelling (DST), and the use of Local Folklore as instructional content. These domains offer transformative potential for creating more engaging, personalized, and culturally grounded learning experiences. GenAI, encompassing tools capable of producing text, images, and dialogue through advanced language models, enables personalized learning and creative prompts that support teaching materials creation (Tarigan et al., 2024). Digital Storytelling, which integrates narrative construction with multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video (Xiaoxin Miao & Lingling, 2024). Meanwhile, incorporating Local Folklore as EFL content situates language learning within culturally familiar contexts, allowing learners to engage with authentic

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narratives that reinforce cultural identity (Sawita et al., 2024). Collectively, these three domains represent promising avenues for reimagining EFL pedagogy in ways that are both innovative and contextually responsive.

The potential use of Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and Local Folklore in EFL instruction lies in how these three elements can work together to create a more meaningful and engaging learning process. In this possible framework, Generative AI serves as the Cognitive and Creative Scaffold, supporting students in exploring, adapting, and expressing ideas from Local Folklore through language assistance, feedback, and creative prompts (Kadaruddin, 2023). Local Folklore acts as the Cultural and Contextual Core, offering stories that connect learners to their own culture and provide authentic, relevant materials for language learning (Tantri & Santosa, 2024). Digital Storytelling becomes the Expressive and Productive Output, allowing users to transform these stories into multimedia that show both language use and personal creativity (Sabari & Hashim, 2023). When combined, these three components could form a balanced system where AI supports thinking and language, folklore provides meaning and context, and storytelling enables communication and expression. This potential integration suggests a promising direction for EFL instruction that values both cultural relevance and innovative learning practices.

Despite a growing body of research exploring innovative approaches to EFL instruction, a significant gap remains in studies that integrate Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and Local Folklore within a single pedagogical framework. AI offers personalized learning and automation benefits but struggles to foster cultural relevance and creativity unless combined with human artistic and cultural insight, such as through digital storytelling and folklore-based tasks (Fountoulakis, 2025). Digital storytelling enhances language skills and learner engagement by allowing students to express creativity and cultural narratives, though technical and infrastructural challenges persist (Tarigan et al., 2024; Usmani et al., 2025). Meanwhile, investigations into the use of local culture and folklore in EFL contexts emphasize improved learner identity and motivation, GenAI's capabilities with digital storytelling and local folklore holds potential to enrich EFL education by balancing technological innovation with cultural and creative expression (Fountoulakis, 2025; Tarigan et al., 2024). These studies have investigated how these three strands might intersect to form a holistic, synergistic model that connects technology, pedagogy, and culture in mutually reinforcing ways for EFL instruction.

This literature review aims to comprehensively examine the existing body of research on the integration of Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and Local Folklore in EFL instruction. Specifically, this review seeks to systematically identify, synthesize, and evaluate scholarly works that explore these three elements individually and in combination. It further aims to map the current research landscape, highlighting how these domains intersect within educational contexts. Following that, the specific objectives of this SLR are:

1. To identify the uses of integrating Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and Local Folklore into EFL instruction by Indonesian teachers.
2. To analyze the teaching strategies or methodology used by Indonesian teachers that integrate Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and Local Folklore into EFL instruction.
3. To map the most frequently examined learning outcomes related to students' English achievement based on the integration of Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, or Local Folklore into EFL instruction.

2) METHODS

This systematic review was conducted to synthesize existing literature on the integration of Generative AI (GenAI), Digital Storytelling (DST), and local folklore within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia. The review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework (Page et al., 2021) to ensure a transparent and reproducible process for identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant scholarly works.

The primary search for pertinent literature was executed utilizing the Google Scholar database, recognized for its extensive coverage of multidisciplinary and emerging-topic publications. To capture the most recent pedagogical developments, the publication year filter was set from 2021 to 2025. The reference management software Zotero was employed to systematically collate, deduplicate, and organize the retrieved citations and full-text articles. The search strategy combined keywords and Boolean operators to construct a comprehensive query string:

("Generative AI" OR "AI" OR "large language model" OR "ChatGPT") AND ("digital storytelling" OR "digital narrative") AND ("local folklore" OR "local wisdom" OR "cultural heritage") AND ("EFL" OR "English as a Foreign Language") AND ("Indonesia" OR "Indonesian").

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This query was designed to cast a wide net to capture studies at the intersection of these three core components within the specific context of Indonesian EFL education. The study selection process was guided by predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria to maintain focus and relevance. The exclusion criteria were applied to filter out irrelevant publications, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, empirical research, and conceptual papers.	Books, book chapters, theses, dissertations, non-academic articles, and editorials.
Content & Focus	Must integrate at least two of: GenAI, DST, and local folklore in an EFL context. Focus on Indonesian classrooms.	Studies focusing on only one element, non-EFL contexts (e.g., ESL, general education), or non-Indonesian settings.
Publication Year	2021 – 2025	Published before 2021.
Language	English or Bahasa	Languages other than English or Bahasa
Access	Full text available online	Full text not accessible.

The initial search across databases yielded a total of 900 records followed the PRISMA statement. Consequently, a total of 12 studies were deemed to satisfy all pre-defined criteria in final review.

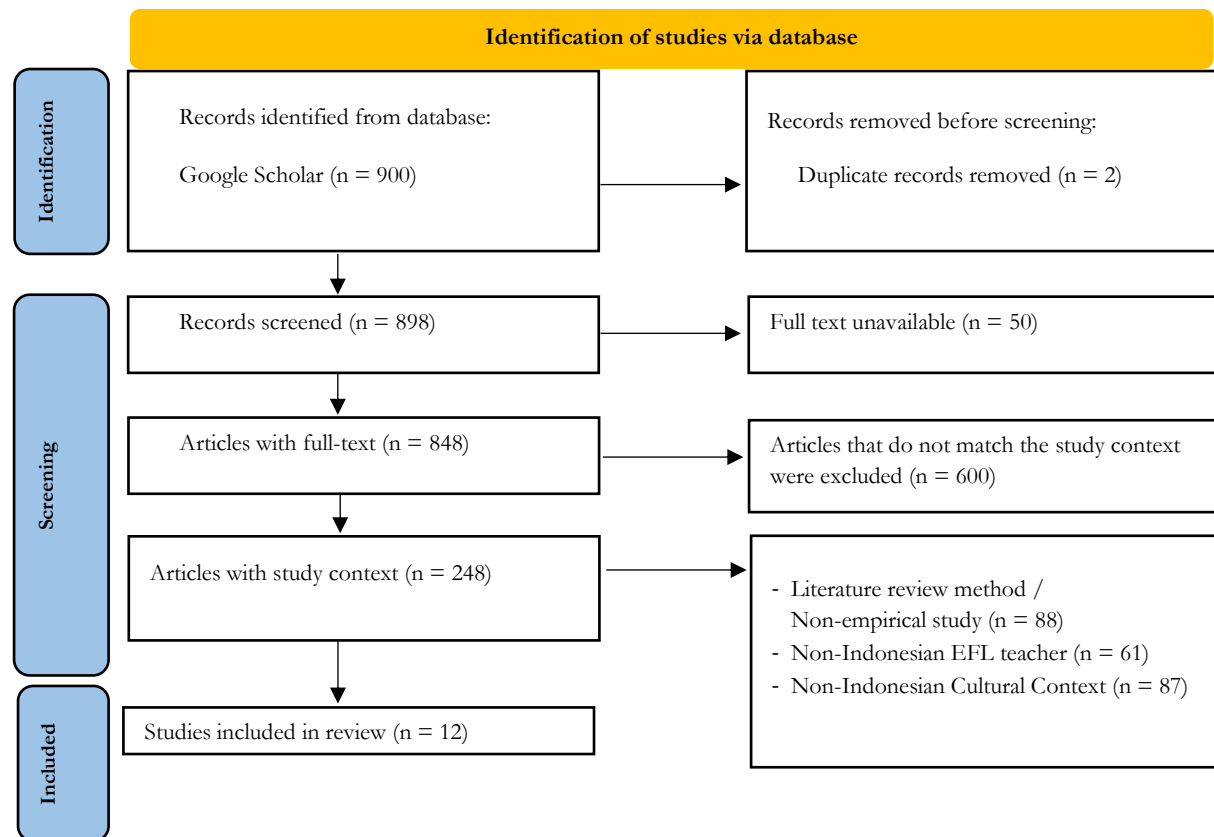


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Article Selection

Data from the 12 included studies were systematically extracted into a standardized matrix to facilitate a coherent and comprehensive analysis as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Extracted Articles*

Num.	Study ID	Research Design and sample	Key Findings
1	Creative teaching in English language classrooms: A reflective and contextual interpretation (Ahsanu et al., 2025)	Design: Qualitative; Narrative Inquiry. Sample: 2 Indonesian university EFL lecturers ("Shinta" & "Shanti") from public/private unis. >5 years experience.	Significance: Frames creativity as a reflective, contextual, and sustainable process, not just techniques. "Creativity in teaching is not merely about entertainment or aesthetic sense; it is closely linked to instructional effectiveness." Limitation: Small sample size (2 lecturers). Gap: Highlights tension between pedagogical innovation and institutional constraints.

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2	Exploring the Use of Generative AI in Student-Produced EFL Podcasts: A Qualitative Study (Baskara et al., 2024)	Design: Qualitative Sample: 80 third-year undergraduate EFL students at an Indonesian university.	Significance: Positions GenAI as a powerful creative collaborator in project-based EFL learning, augmenting rather than replacing human input. Limitations/Gaps: • Cultural Relevance: AI-generated content often lacked local cultural context and originality. • Ethical Ambiguities: Unclear boundaries regarding authorship, plagiarism, and intellectual property. • Accessibility: Steep learning curve and technical barriers (e.g., internet connectivity) for some students. Powerful Quote: "The AI can't replace the personal stories and cultural references that make a podcast truly relatable." (Indah, 21, Female)
3	Local Wisdom-Based Folklor Digital Storytelling through Metacognitive Strategy (Faridha, 2024)	Design: Quasi-experimental (one group, pre-test/post-test) Sample: 40 third-semester EFL students at an Indonesian university.	Significance: Demonstrates the effectiveness of combining local cultural content (folklore) with a structured metacognitive teaching strategy in a blended learning environment to significantly improve narrative writing skills. Limitations/Gaps: • Lacks a control group, making it harder to isolate the effect of the metacognitive strategy from other variables. • The study focuses solely on narrative writing, suggesting further research is needed on other writing styles. Powerful Quote (from discussion): "The story calendar based on local wisdom is a great tool for teaching students to write better narratives."
4	Local Wisdom in Fiction Text Comprehension Between Students and AIs (Juanda et al., 2025)	Design: Comparative quantitative design. Sample: 474 university students from 5 Indonesian universities; 5 AI systems (ChatGPT-4, Gemini, Perplexity AI, Claude 3.5 Sonnet, Chatsonic).	Overall Significance: AI significantly outperformed students in understanding local wisdom, with large effect sizes. This suggests AI's potential as a sophisticated tool for analyzing and interpreting cultural-literary texts. Limitations: The study design assessed comprehension in a test setting, not the application of AI within a pedagogical process. Gaps: Lacks a defined instructional model for integrating AI into teaching.

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5	Engaging English Learners: Using AI to Integrate Local Legends into Language Lessons in West Kalimantan (Mulyani et al., 2025)	Design: Survey (mixed-methods). Sample: 24 English teachers from various school levels in West Kalimantan, Indonesia.	Overall Significance: Highlights a strong teacher interest in using local legends but major implementation barriers (resources, time, knowledge). Positions AI as a key solution to make culturally responsive teaching feasible. Limitations: Small sample size (24 teachers); based on teacher perceptions and potential, not on empirical student outcome data from an intervention. Powerful Quote/Note: "AI can bridge the gap between teachers' enthusiasm for cultural integration and its practical classroom application."
6	FLITARA: Culture-Based Interactive Flipbook Innovation to Improve Elementary Schools' Literacy in the Era of Society 5.0 (Putri et al., 2025)	Research Design: R&D with the ADDIE model. Sample: Grade 3 students at Roudlotul Ulum Elementary School (Quasi-experimental design with control and experimental groups).	Overall Significance: FLITARA effectively improves literacy and cultural awareness. It is a pedagogically relevant and nationally strategic innovation. Limitations: Reliance on digital devices and internet; limited generalizability from a single-school study. Key Quote: "FLITARA not only provides a solution to students' low literacy skills, but also an educational innovation that can harmoniously bridge modernity with tradition."
7	Development of Wendok-Based Instructional Media Using Role Playing to Improve Fifth-Grade Students' Speaking Skills (Safaah & Airlanda, 2025)	Research Design: R&D (Borg & Gall) with the ADDIE model. Sample: 10 Grade 5 students at SD Negeri Ledok 05 Salatiga (Single group pre-test/post-test).	Overall Significance: Wendok is a feasible, effective, culturally grounded, and environmentally friendly medium for improving speaking skills through role-playing. Limitations: Small sample size; no control group; focus on a single school. Key Implication: "This study recommends the integration of local culture-based media as a creative and adaptive innovation for primary education."
8	Perceived Benefits of Digital Storytelling for Speaking Development Among Motivated Indonesian EFL Learners (Sulistianingsih et al., 2025)	Sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Sample: 15 highly motivated undergraduate EFL learners from an Islamic private university in Central Java.	Significance: DST supports affective and cognitive dimensions of speaking in culturally specific contexts. Limitation: Small sample size limits generalizability. Quote: "I felt more excited to speak because it was my own story, and I had control over how I told it."

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9	Integrating Local Folklore into Language Education: A Case Study of the Danau Toba Narrative in Indonesian Secondary Schools (Simbolon & Mandalahi, 2025)	Qualitative case study. Sample: 2 teachers and 18 students in grades VIII–IX at SMP Negeri 1 Ronggurnihuta, Samosir Regency, North Sumatra.	Significance: Folklore serves as a living pedagogical resource, not just a literary artifact. Challenges: Lack of official teaching materials, methodological guidance, and rigid national curriculum. Quote: “That story is part of us.” – Student on the Danau Toba narrative.
10	Development of Digital Teaching Materials Based on Differentiated Learning Assisted by Artificial Intelligence to Improve Students’ Historical Literacy (Umamah et al., 2025)	Research Design: R&D using ASSURE model Sample: High school students in Banyuwangi, Indonesia (3 schools)	Significance: AI-augmented differentiated learning effectively improves historical literacy. Limitation: Limited to local history; small scale. Quote: “The Gandrung dance history teaching material has a positive influence on improving historical literacy.”
11	Engaging English Learners: Using AI to Integrate Local Legends into Language Lessons in West Kalimantan (Vina et al., 2025)	Research Design: Mixed methods (explanatory sequential) Sample: 30 high school students (Singkawang, West Kalimantan)	Significance: AI-driven cultural integration boosts both language skills and cultural awareness. Limitation: Short intervention (1 month); small sample. Quote: “Learning English through our local stories made the language feel more relevant to our daily lives.”
12	Bridging Educational Gaps Through AI Augmented and Culture-Responsive Multimedia: Evidence from Rural Indonesian EFL Instruction (Wandira & Sumarsih, 2025)	Research Design: Quasi-experimental mixed methods Sample: 120 rural EFL students (Mandailing Natal)	Significance: Combines AI and culture to improve reading in low-resource settings. Limitation: Engagement did not directly predict comprehension gains.

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Pedagogical Landscape: Current Applications of Generative AI (GenAI), Digital Storytelling (DST), and Local Folklore in Indonesian EFL Classrooms

Based on the synthesis of the provided studies, the pedagogical integration of GenAI, DST, and Local Folklore in Indonesian EFL classrooms reveals a dynamic and multi-faceted landscape. GenAI is primarily utilized as a collaborative tool to augment, rather than replace, student and teacher creativity. It streamlines the production of language learning materials by assisting in brainstorming ideas, drafting scripts, checking grammar, and generating multimedia assets like images and music for

student projects such as podcasts (Baskara et al., 2024). Furthermore, teachers perceive GenAI as a powerful solution to overcome practical barriers, using it to source, adapt, and convert local legends into customized and interactive teaching materials, thereby making culturally responsive pedagogy more feasible (Mulyani et al., 2025; Vina et al., 2025). Its application extends to developing differentiated learning materials for improving specific literacies, such as historical literacy, and creating adaptive, culture-responsive multimedia platforms for rural instruction (Umamah et al., 2025; Wandira & Sumarsih, 2025). However, challenges persist, including a steep learning curve, ethical ambiguities regarding authorship, and a noted lack of local cultural depth and originality in AI-generated content (Baskara et al., 2024).

Concurrently, DST and Local Folklore are often intertwined, serving as potent vehicles for contextualizing language learning and fostering student engagement. DST empowers students by allowing them to create digital narratives using voice recordings, images, and video editing, which significantly enhances motivation and speaking skills, particularly when the stories are based on personal or culturally relevant themes (Sulistianingsih et al., 2025). Folklore provides the essential cultural content for these activities, anchoring learning in local identity and wisdom. Studies demonstrate that using local folklore within structured frameworks, such as metacognitive strategies supported by digital visual media or integrated into interactive flipbooks as a part of DST, effectively improves narrative writing skills and cultural awareness (Faridha, 2024; Putri et al., 2025). This integration positions folklore not as a mere artifact but as a living pedagogical resource that strengthens students' connection to their heritage, a sentiment echoed by students who feel that such stories are "part of us" (Simbolon & Mandalahi, 2025).

In synthesis, the current applications show that these three elements are not isolated but can be synergistically combined. GenAI acts as an efficient engine for material creation and personalization, DST provides an engaging and student-centered pedagogical method, and Local Folklore supplies the culturally significant content that gives learning deeper meaning and relevance. This triad offers a promising approach to creating more effective, engaging, and contextually grounded EFL instruction in Indonesia, bridging the gap between modern technological innovation and traditional cultural knowledge.

Synthesizing Instructional Frameworks: Prevalent Teaching Strategies or Research Methodology for Integration

Based on the synthesis of the included studies, Indonesian educators are employing a range of structured instructional frameworks to integrate Generative AI, digital storytelling, and local folklore into EFL instruction. A prominent strategy involves combining project-based learning with metacognitive scaffolds. For instance, in a project where students created EFL podcasts, the PBL cycle was explicitly supported by guiding students to document their process, critically evaluate AI-generated content, and reflect on their learning, positioning GenAI as a collaborative tool rather than a replacement for human creativity (Baskara et al., 2024). Similarly, a structured metacognitive strategy was used to guide students through planning, monitoring, and evaluating their writing process when creating digital folklore narratives, significantly improving their skills (Faridha, 2024). This emphasis on process-oriented, reflective learning is further echoed in the Five-Facet Framework, which conceptualizes teaching as a dynamic orchestration of resources, methods, and continuous adaptation (Ahsanu et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the integration is frequently operationalized through systematic instructional design models, particularly ADDIE and ASSURE, which provide a clear, step-by-step process for developing and implementing culturally relevant media. Studies on the development of the FLITARA flipbook and Wendok-based puppets meticulously followed the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) to create validated, interactive learning tools rooted in local folklore (Putri et al., 2025; Safaah & Airlanda, 2025). In a different context, the ASSURE model was employed to develop AI-assisted differentiated learning materials, where AI was used to tailor local historical content to diverse student needs, thereby improving historical literacy (Umamah et al., 2025). For digital storytelling, a well-established four-stage model (pre-production, production, post-production, distribution) was effectively implemented, providing learners with a scaffolded process that enhanced speaking skills and personal connection to the content (Sulistianingsih et al., 2025).

A key synthesis across these studies is the strategic role assigned to technology and cultural content. Generative AI is predominantly framed not as an autonomous teacher, but as an augmenting tool for creating, adapting, and personalizing culturally responsive materials, as seen in studies where AI was used to generate and diversify local legend content for lessons (Mulyani et al., 2025; Vina et al., 2025). Digital storytelling and local folklore are deeply intertwined, serving as dual vehicles for

both language skill development and cultural preservation. This synergy is evident in classroom practices where folktales are read aloud, analyzed, and then retold or transformed through digital media, fostering engagement and a sense of cultural identity among students (Simbolon & Mandalahi, 2025; Wandira & Sumarsih, 2025).

Mapping the Impact: A Taxonomy of Learning Outcomes on English Achievement

Based on the synthesized findings from the included studies, the integration of Generative AI (GenAI), Digital Storytelling (DST), and Local Folklore into EFL instruction maps onto a multifaceted taxonomy of learning outcomes concerning English achievement. The most prominent outcomes are cognitive and linguistic gains. Studies consistently report significant improvements in specific language skills, such as narrative writing facilitated by metacognitive strategies applied to local folklore (Faridha, 2024) and DST (Simbolon & Mandalahi, 2025), and speaking fluency enhanced through role-playing with cultural media (Safaah & Airlanda, 2025) and DST projects (Sulistianingsih et al., 2025). Furthermore, reading literacy and comprehension were significantly boosted by culture-based interactive media like flipbooks (Putri et al., 2025) and AI-augmented, culture-responsive multimedia (Wandira & Sumarsih, 2025). GenAI contributes to these cognitive gains by streamlining the writing process, improving grammatical and lexical quality in student-produced podcasts (Baskara et al., 2024), and serving as a tool for creating differentiated learning materials that improve literacy (Umamah et al., 2025).

Beyond discrete skills, a second cluster of outcomes pertains to the affective and motivational domains, which are crucial for sustained language achievement. The use of local folklore and culturally relevant content consistently fosters deeper student engagement, strengthens cultural identity, and instills a sense of relevance (Simbolon & Mandalahi, 2025; Vina et al., 2025). This, combined with the creative and reflective processes inherent in DST and creative teaching, leads to increased intrinsic motivation, reduced speaking anxiety, and greater learner autonomy (Ahsanu et al., 2025; Sulistianingsih et al., 2025). GenAI further supports this dimension by helping to overcome creative blocks, thereby boosting creative confidence (Baskara et al., 2024), and is perceived by teachers as a potential bridge to make such engaging, culturally responsive pedagogy more feasible (Mulyani et al., 2025). In essence, the taxonomy reveals that these interventions do not merely target language

proficiency in isolation but synergistically enhance it by fostering a more motivated, confident, and culturally-grounded learner.

Recommendation for Pedagogical Design: The Potential Uses of Generative AI (GenAI) in Digital Storytelling (DST) to Support Teachers' Pedagogical Practices for Integrating Local Culture into EFL Instruction

Considering the landscape of Indonesian education and the national philosophy of education proposed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara by their very foundation in local culture and character values integrated into teaching. Teacher should consider the using of DST, as its narratives such folktales to promote local culture and character values instilled in its story, with other educational approaches to further enhance its effectiveness. Further research related to the potential use of GenAI in DST to support teachers' pedagogical practices for integrating local culture and character values into EFL instruction should investigate how GenAI tools can be strategically prompted to generate DST culturally-relevant story rooted in specific Indonesian folktales that instill character value.

Previous studies have shown that local folktales contain character values hence ideal with the landscape of Indonesian education and the national philosophy of education. For instance, a study by Mukhlishina (2019) describes the content of character values on the folklore based on Strengthening Character Education (PPK). Beside the definition of character value based on PPK, a study by Suninica et al., (2024) reveals the character values that were found in the selected folktales align with the Pancasila Student Profile (*Profil Pelajar Pancasila*). As narratives deeply embedded in local culture, folktales serve as repositories of character value (Maulani et al., 2025) such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), discipline, and perseverance through their plots and characters in the story. When utilized in the EFL classroom, these stories transcend their role as mere texts (Safitri, 2024). They become authentic cultural artifacts that provide meaningful context for language acquisition, allowing students to engage with English while absorbing the character lessons inherent in the cultural stories. However, traditional storybooks, while rich in narrative, often lack adaptability and personalization (Abdelrahim, 2025). Meanwhile, a study by Hakim (2025) reveals that there are research gap like the lack of exploration in local language and cultural contexts. To cater this, the creation of compelling teaching materials based on folklore is now greatly enhanced by digital tools with GenAI (Abdelrahim, 2025; Saraswati et al., 2025).

Storytelling has long been a cornerstone of education. One of the most innovative applications of GenAI in storytelling, for instance, is Gemini Storybook (Abdelrahim, 2025), making it well-suited for creating interactive storybooks that incorporate both audio narration and illustrations. Gemini, powered by GenAI, is a compelling AI model that excels at generating new content based on the input it receives (Imran & Almusharraf, 2024). As a multimodal pedagogical approach, digital storytelling is one of the innovative pedagogical approaches that can engage students in deep and meaningful learning (Ugap et al., 2025). In conclusion, further research should consider these concepts by incorporating GenAI like Gemini Storybook for DST creation integrated local cultural values into EFL instruction which in line with Wan & Gu (2025) who offer relevant insights for educational practitioners seeking to utilize GenAI to develop DST and their understanding of human–AI collaboration.

4) CONCLUSIONS

This review establishes that the strategic integration of Generative AI, Digital Storytelling, and local folklore represents a transformative and highly promising paradigm for EFL instruction in Indonesia. By synergizing technological innovation with culturally resonant content, this triad moves beyond traditional pedagogy to create a learning environment that simultaneously advances language mastery and strengthens cultural identity. The framework positions the teacher as a crucial facilitator who leverages GenAI to efficiently create personalized materials, uses DST to provide an engaging platform for creative expression, and draws upon local folklore to ensure the learning process is meaningful and contextually grounded. For this approach to reach its full potential, further research must focus on developing clear pedagogical models and providing professional development to empower Indonesian teachers or educators to harness these tools effectively, thereby ensuring that English language not only builds communicative competence, but also instill a profound connection to local heritage.

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