







Enhancing EYL Learning Media through AI-Generated Illustrations Used in Indonesian Folktales

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Received: 23 December 2025 | Received: in revised form 10 March 2026 | Accepted 30 March 2026

APA Citation:

Rohania, S., Anwar, M., Hariyanto, S., Cahyonod, B., M. (2026). Enhancing EYL Learning Media through AI-Generated Illustrations Used in Indonesian Folktales. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1), 14-28.
Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.12102>

Abstract

Culture and technology in language instruction become more important, especially for young learners. This research develops an application containing Indonesian folktales with AI-generated visuals and reading to improve primary school students' English vocabulary and reading comprehension. Employing a DDR model, it proceeded through four phases: preliminary study, design and development, expert validation, and field testing. 92 elementary school students, 3 teachers, and 2 parents from Indonesia and Australia were purposively selected to participate in the study with their consent. The product was an application with 27 folktales written in English with AI-generated visuals, completed with voiceovers, and gamified vocabulary and reading. Two experts validated the materials' linguistic and cultural properties, while an interview with teachers and parents showed content's relevance and appeal. In addition to the good acceptance by the students and parents, the findings at the field-testing phase also showed that students improved their vocabulary, reading comprehension, and cultural awareness. This implies that schools could use this application in the English lessons and make optimal use of parents' cellphones to help students learn at home. Since only limited number of folktales have been developed into the application, it is recommended that folktales from different regions to prevent stereotyping. As DDR could not show whether the folktales or the application that drove the learning gain better, it is recommended that future research employ an experimental or quasi-experimental design to determine which application use drives gains in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and cultural awareness.

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Keywords: artificial intelligence, English for Young Learners, illustrated folktales, Indonesian folktales.

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.12102>

Introduction

Due to digital literacy, cultural contextualization, and AI integration, English instruction for young learners has improved tremendously. EFL is popular worldwide, especially in multilingual countries like Indonesia, where it is seen as a global language and a tool for personal and national development (Zein, 2017). However, motivating, providing resources, and raising cultural awareness for elementary school pupils to learn languages is still difficult (Fadhli, 2020). Creating engaging educational resources and aligning them with learners' cultural and technological surroundings is necessary to address this difficulty.

Ramli et al. (2024) have acknowledged the integration of folktales into English language education as a pedagogical strategy to promote intercultural understanding, enhance literacy skills, and facilitate the integration of local wisdom (Lwin & Marlina, 2018). Folktales offer a genuine and significant context that facilitates the development of characters, the acquisition of vocabulary, and the development of moral reasoning (Mustofa & Romadhon, 2025; Nyoman & Gana, 2018). Teachers facilitate learners' comprehension of meaning by presenting local narratives in English, which transcends both linguistic and cultural barriers. Nevertheless, research suggests that the traditional, static, and text-heavy folktale presentation is often unable to captivate digital-native learners, who are more inclined to interactive and multimedia content (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Yuliani & Hartanto, 2021).

The lack of culturally appropriate and technologically stimulating English learning materials is a major issue for English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia. Low motivation, a limited vocabulary, and poor pronunciation are common challenges for students. Furthermore, their limited exposure to English outside of the classroom setting typically exacerbates these problems (Istiq'faroh, 2020; Rahman et al., 2020). Additionally, many teachers report having trouble finding English-language resources that are both regionally relevant and appropriate for children's psychological development (Fadhli, 2020; Zein, 2017). Although digital storytelling has gained popularity in the field of language instruction, its use in EYL has not been sufficiently researched or developed, especially when it comes to the use of gamification and artificial intelligence technologies (Erlina et al., 2021; Izzati, 2022).

The incorporation of digital tools and storytelling platforms has shown significant potential to improve the literacy outcomes, motivation, and autonomy of learners in a broader context (Lô et al., 2020; Mulyati et al., 2024). Duolingo and ChatGPT have been recognized for their efficacy in enhancing the acquisition of vocabulary, speaking, and listening skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students (Wei, 2023). Nevertheless, these tools frequently fail to deliver locally culture-based content, which is crucial for promoting the development of learners' identity and guaranteeing long-term engagement (Mishra & Satpathy, 2020). As a result, there is a pressing necessity for a contextualized approach that integrates technology with local narratives to simultaneously cultivate cultural competence and linguistic proficiency.

In recent academic discussions, one specific answer has been suggested: making digital folktales that are enhanced by AI. According to Mazzone and Elgammal (2019a) and Songsienchai et al. (2023), this new method combines AI-generated pictures and stories with game-like learning elements to give students a more unique and culturally relevant experience. This method not only helps students learn new words and improve their pronunciation, but it also fits with how most kids use technology these days (Sumakul & Hamied, 2023; Sumekto et al., 2022). Adding humor and visual stories to this method has also been linked to better student retention, emotional engagement, and moral thought (Izzati, 2022).

The research on incorporating artificial intelligence into culturally rich educational materials is still in its infancy, despite its enormous promise. Previous studies have mostly focused on the cultural benefits of folklore in traditional formats (Nyoman & Gana, 2018; Revika & Hayati, 2020) or the language benefits of AI in writing and reading tasks (Long, 2024). As a result, there is a significant dearth of empirical research examining the complementary use of local narratives and AI-generated content for young learners, including in Indonesian EFL classes. The lack of research on rural and poor educational environments, where there is a greater demand for creative educational solutions, exacerbates this gap even more (Mulyati et al., 2024; Qassrawi & Al Karasneh, 2025).

To fill this need, this study set out to create an example of an AI-generated graphic set that would supplement Indonesian folktales, with the intention of using them as a medium for teaching English to young Indonesian learners. Interactive digital platforms suitable for use in the classroom or at home are used to convey culturally significant narratives that incorporate AI-generated images and audio narration. According to Nakagawa (2024), this method takes elements from gamification and digital literacy education while utilizing the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) paradigm. By doing so, it introduces a fresh and relevant method for improving YL English instruction.

Three key components are integrated in this study, which makes it novel: (1) the cultural authenticity of Indonesian folktales, (2) the creative potential and accessibility provided by AI tools like ChatGPT and DALL·E, and (3) the learner-centered design of gamified, multimedia English learning modules. By suggesting and critically assessing a culturally sensitive, digitally enhanced learning model to support

vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation accuracy improvement, and learner motivation improvement, this study makes a substantial contribution to the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) study. It also offers helpful advice for educators and legislators who want to encourage English language learning while protecting and appreciating regional cultural knowledge.

Consequently, the present investigation addresses the necessity for culturally pertinent, innovative, and engaging learning resources for young English learners. It also aims to reconcile the discrepancy between the educational needs of the 21st century and the cultural heritage of the local community by judicious incorporation of AI technology, digital literacy, and EFL pedagogy for young Indonesian learners.

Literature Review

English for Young learner in Indonesia and Challenges Encountered

English at the elementary school level in Indonesia is seen as strategic to build the foundation of global literacy and communication from an early age. However, the implementation of EYL is often faced with several constraints, including teacher competency gaps, pedagogical limitations, student affective factors, and uneven infrastructure. There are at least five challenges to EYL implementation. The first is about the teachers. Many existing English teachers at elementary schools did not have formal qualifications in English. This situation leads to their limited linguistic and pedagogical resources to help them succeed in teaching EYL (Purwanti & Prasanti, 2025; Romadhon et al., 2024). Some new English teachers have had the English teaching background. However, the pre-service teacher training programs often fail to prepare teachers the students for handling young learners, particularly in culturally sensitive and linguistically diverse contexts (Damayanti & Meisani, 2025; Setyaningrum & Farah, 2025).

Secondly, there is also problems with the classroom. Although in few areas the number of students were decreasing, in many more areas elementary classrooms are still large. Due to the lack of adequate training, teachers face difficulties in managing large classes, maintaining student engagement, and addressing individual learning needs (Erlina et al., 2021). Specific to the challenge of these classes to learn English, there are psychological barriers such as students' fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and lack of motivation hindering effective language acquisition (Andriani et al., 2024; Wulandari et al., 2020).

The third challenge originates from Policy and Curriculum Issues. In the time of the research was done, English is not prioritized in the national curriculum for primary schools. This results in inconsistent implementation across schools (Lotfie, 2018). Although recently the government states that English is compulsory at the elementary school, no clear guideline is in place. The absence of clear teaching guidelines and funding for EYL programs have further complicated effective instruction.

The next challenge is the multilingual and cultural contexts. The fact that elementary students have different mother tongues, problems such are mother tongue interference and fossilization negatively affect English learning (Romadhon et al., 2024). Cultural identity also plays a role. Although translanguaging approaches may be beneficial, it requires careful integration to balance linguistic competence and cultural identity (Setyaningrum & Farah, 2025). And this is not a simple matter for the existing teachers.

The last challenge is about access to educational facilities for the students and to professional development for teachers. There is unequal access to professional development programs and technological resources across Indonesia, and this limits teachers' ability to innovate and improve their teaching practices (Damayanti & Meisani, 2025; Mustofa & Romadhon, 2025).

In conclusion, while Indonesia has made progresses in EYL education, significant challenges remain, including teacher qualifications, curriculum inconsistencies, multilingual complexities, and access. Addressing these issues through targeted professional development, culturally sensitive teaching methods, providing learning materials with better accessibility and policy reforms may improve English learning outcomes for young learners across the country (Damayanti & Meisani, 2025; Setyaningrum & Farah, 2025).

Inclusion of local wisdom and character building in Indonesian contexts

Previous research has shown that the integration of local wisdom into education, including language education, has been shown to play a significant role in character building by fostering cultural identity, moral values, and social cohesion. First of all, local wisdom helps foster cultural identity and character development. Local wisdom, such as a traditional dance, embodies very good values like perseverance, bravery, collaboration, and respect for history. These values, when integrated into curricula, enhance students' appreciation of their cultural heritage and promote positive behavior (Hasan et al., 2025). The indigenous knowledge itself in English Language Teaching (ELT) has been utilized to decolonize learning materials, by emphasizing local stories and traditions. This approach promotes self-reliance, creativity, and critical thinking and improves respect for local culture (Mambu et al., 2025).

Practical Applications of local wisdom in Education have been investigated although still in limited number. It has been incorporated into various subjects through e-modules. The example is the inclusion of Indonesian Baduy local wisdom into biology e-modules. These modules not only teach scientific concepts but also instill values aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile, such as discipline and cooperation (Haka et al., 2024). Another example in Indonesia is the integration of local traditions of the Rejang tribe's "Mulo Nu Mia" (cooperation) and "Pun Jabai" (kinship) into operational curricula, fostering community values and character education (Ferdhi Hasan et al., 2026).

Local wisdom has also been incorporated into language education in Indonesia. Take for example, the inclusion of the local stories in West Kalimantan to help students connect their language learning with their cultural environment (Mambu et al., 2025). Indigenous knowledge has been used in ELT to promote inclusivity and critical thinking. For example, teachers in West Kalimantan incorporated local stories and events into English lessons, helping students connect language learning with their cultural environment.

There are many benefits of integrating local wisdom into teaching. First, it helps character building. It helps promote values like cooperation, respect, and perseverance (Ferdhi Hasan et al., 2026; Hasan et al., 2025; Sulkipani et al., 2023). Secondly, it strengthens students' cultural identity and appreciation for heritage. Finally, it makes education more relevant and meaningful by connecting it to students' lived experiences (Haka et al., 2024; Mambu et al., 2025).

However, some challenges have also been noticed. The rigid curricula and limited teacher training hinder the effective integration of local wisdom (Ferdhi Hasan et al., 2026). The inadequate institutional support and resources can limit implementation. Therefore, it is also recommended to develop culturally responsive teaching materials (Haka et al., 2024; Sholichah et al., 2023). In addition, the language educators can be trained to incorporate local wisdom into language and other subject areas effectively (Hanapi et al., 2025; Mambu et al., 2025).

Folktales as one Alternative to Improve English Competence and Character Building

Folktales can enhance speaking and pronunciation in English teaching. Reading folktales aloud, for example, has been shown to enhance English pronunciation and speaking skills. The engaging and interactive nature of storytelling encourages even shy students to participate in discussions, fostering oral communication skills (Aleksandrovna et al., 2020). Folktales written in English can also improve students' intercultural competence. Folktales can be used to teach English as an international language (EIL), helping students understand linguistic and cultural diversity. This approach helps enhance learners' ability to communicate their own cultures in English, so that it promotes intercultural communicative competence (Lwin & Marlina, 2018).

Folktales are also beneficial to build students' characters. Folktales often convey moral lessons and promote values such as compassion, courage, and friendship. For instance, folktale storytelling activities can instill these values and train children in communication skills (Srihati et al., 2025).

Folktales can also foster empathy and challenge stereotypes. For example, Turkish folktales were used to improve Greek students' perceptions of Turks, reducing national stereotypes and encouraging reflection on cultural differences (Magos, 2018). Finally, Folktales can also enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and stress management. Although quantitative results were mixed, qualitative feedback from students highlighted increased awareness of these skills through exposure to folktales (Çakır & Pili, 2024).

An example of a practical application is in the materials development. Folktales can be incorporated into teaching materials to improve literacy and character development. For example, books based on folklore were validated as effective tools for nurturing good attitudes in elementary school students (Taufina & Syarif, 2019).

Thus, it can be summarized that folktales serve as a dual-purpose tool for improving English competence and character building. They enhance language skills, promote cultural understanding, and instill moral values, making them a versatile resource in education. Integrating folktales into teaching strategies, particularly through digital platforms, can further amplify their impact.

Use of Updated Technology and AI in EYL Material Preparation

The integration of updated technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English for Young Learners (EYL) material preparation has significantly reshaped contemporary language education. Recent studies demonstrate that AI is increasingly utilized to enhance language skills, support teachers in instructional design, and develop interactive and personalized learning systems. These advancements are particularly relevant in EYL contexts, where engaging, adaptive, and multimodal materials are essential to accommodate young learners' cognitive characteristics and short attention spans.

A growing body of research indicates that AI-assisted learning environments can enhance multiple aspects of language acquisition. Studies on AI-supported interactive learning environments reveal

improvements in learners' reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation through the integration of digital tools and collaborative platforms. This suggests that AI contributes not only to isolated skill development but also to comprehensive language learning when implemented within interactive and participatory environments. Similarly, AI-powered response systems have been shown to improve writing performance by providing real-time feedback and increased engagement (Anggoro, 2025), highlighting the importance of immediacy and interactivity in language learning processes.

Despite these benefits, the literature consistently emphasizes that AI functions most effectively as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for teachers. Research examining the use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT indicates that learners rely on AI for technical support, including idea generation and linguistic accuracy, while still depending on teachers for deeper interpretation, cultural appropriateness, and evaluative feedback (Yin, 2025). This reflects a broader shift from teacher-centered learning to a human-AI collaborative model, in which AI enhances efficiency while human instructors maintain pedagogical and ethical oversight.

Furthermore, studies highlight several limitations of AI in language learning. AI-generated outputs may contain inaccuracies or lack contextual and cultural sensitivity, particularly in complex linguistic structures. In some cases, poorly designed AI integration can lead to learner amotivation due to unclear interfaces or lack of meaningful interaction (Sumakul & Hamied, 2023). These findings underscore that the effectiveness of AI depends largely on instructional design, user readiness, and pedagogical alignment rather than the technology itself.

Another critical aspect identified in the literature is the readiness of teachers and learners to utilize AI tools effectively. Research on pre-service teachers shows generally positive attitudes toward AI in education, yet concerns regarding over-reliance, academic integrity, and insufficient pedagogical training persist (Syamsi et al., 2025). Additionally, studies reveal that teachers' technological knowledge in integrating AI remains moderate, emphasizing the need for continuous professional development and stronger integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) frameworks (Hastomo et al., 2024).

In the context of EYL in Indonesia, the need for engaging and culturally relevant learning materials remains a significant challenge. Traditional materials are often text-heavy and less appealing to digital-native learners, while existing digital tools frequently lack local cultural integration (Fadhli, 2020; Zein, 2017). Previous studies have demonstrated that incorporating local wisdom, such as folktales, can enhance language learning, cultural awareness, and character development (Lwin, 2015; Yoedo & Mustofa, 2022). However, these materials are often delivered in conventional formats that do not fully utilize technological affordances.

Recent developments suggest that combining AI with culturally embedded content offers a promising solution. AI-generated illustrations, storytelling platforms, and gamified learning environments have been identified as innovative approaches that align with young learners' preferences for visual and interactive content (Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019a, 2019b). The combination of AI-generated visuals, audio narration, and gamified features enables the creation of contextualized learning experiences that simultaneously support language acquisition and cultural preservation. This approach aligns with contextual teaching and learning (CTL) principles by embedding language instruction within meaningful narratives.

Nevertheless, a critical gap remains in the literature. Existing studies tend to focus either on AI in language learning or on the use of folktales in traditional or digital formats. There is limited empirical research that integrates AI-generated content, local cultural narratives, and EYL pedagogical frameworks into a unified model. To address this gap, the present study proposes the development of AI-generated illustrated Indonesian folktales as EYL learning media.

Methodology

Research Design

Design and Development Research (DDR) was used in the study, especially in the product and tool development cluster, with the main goal of making language learning tools. The research plan was made up of four steps: preliminary study, design and development, expert validation, and testing in the field. This design let the researchers keep getting feedback from the right people, like teachers and kids from both Indonesia and Australia, so they could keep improving the process.

The goal of the study was to create and build a prototype of illustrations made by AI that would make using Indonesian folktales as English-learning materials for young people better. It was true that this project combined the ideas of contextualized teaching and learning with technology-enhanced learning by adding local material and AI-made pictures to go with the stories. The new idea is to tell traditional stories in the form of a visually appealing comic book with audio narration, AI-generated drawings, and interactive features that are tailored to kids' likes and how they learn best.

Sampling and Research Procedure

The study included participants from two different geographic and cultural contexts: Indonesia and Australia. This selection sought to evaluate the cross-cultural adaptability of the developed media. Participants from Indonesia comprised elementary school children, educators, and parents. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, those residing in East Java, whilst the Australian participants were Indonesians residing in Melbourne, Victoria. Purposive sampling was used since this study was basically within the scope of qualitative research approach that allows biased selection of samples, especially purposively selecting participants in East Java and Melbourne. All participants have met the criteria of Indonesians residing in Indonesia to contradict those residing in Australia. These participants residing in Indonesia should be from schools that include English as a compulsory subject while participants from Australia should be Indonesians who lived in Australia. Then, Malang and Melbourne were chosen as the residing cities to meet the criteria of practicality since the researchers of the current study live in Malang and Melbourne.

The investigation involved 92 elementary school students, 3 teachers, and 5 parents in total. The participation of educators and parents enhanced the assessment process by providing pedagogical and contextual perspectives. Respondents from Indonesia were involved in the preliminary study and field-testing phases while respondents residing in Melbourne (three elementary school students and their mothers) participated in the field-testing phase. The adequacy assumption was satisfied by the number of respondents, which was necessary for a qualitative research design. All respondents have expressed their consents to partake in the research, with students represented by their parents.

Data Collection Procedures

During all stages of the study, a variety of qualitative and quantitative tools were used to collect data. Classroom notes were done during the preliminary study to see how engaged the students were and what English-learning activities they were doing at the time. Then, structured questionnaires were sent to teachers, parents, and students to get quantitative feedback on what they needed and wanted from English learning tools. As part of the preliminary study, talks with teachers were done to learn more about their points of view. During the expert validation stage, interviews with a basic structure were used to talk about the English used in the application as well as the cultural problems that each folktale brought up. IT (Information Technology) experts were also questioned to find out how well the tool worked technically.

Multiple qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to gather data during the investigation. The purpose of taking classroom notes during the pilot project was to observe the students' level of engagement and the activities they were engaging in while learning English. Subsequently, in order to gather quantitative feedback regarding the requirements and desires of English learning aids, teachers, parents, and students were handed standardized questionnaires. In order to better understand the perspectives of educators, interviews were conducted as part of the pilot project. Interviews with a basic framework were utilized during the expert validation stage to discuss the application's English and the cultural issues raised by each folktale. In order to gauge the tool's technical efficacy, we also polled IT (Information Technology) specialists.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the frequencies and averages of answers to quantitative data from questionnaires. For example, 87% of those who answered agreed that English was important, and 63% thought that technology would make them more motivated. Thematic analysis was used to find common themes in qualitative data from interviews, such as the preference for mobile learning and the value of culture integration. Source triangulation and method triangulation were used to keep the data valid and the research results reliable. Comparing data from different sources, like students, teachers, and parents, was how source trials were done. Triangulation was done by using different ways to gather information, such as surveys, interviews, and direct observations. It was also used to talk with experts to make sure the application was correct.

Results

Findings of the study are presented in sub-sections following the stages gone through, namely preliminary study findings, product design and development process, expert validation results, and field-testing results from both Indonesia and Australia respondents.

Preliminary Study Findings

The exploratory study yielded significant insights into the learning environment and requirements of the participants, comprising students, parents, and teachers from three elementary schools in Malang city. Data were gathered by direct observations, distribution of questionnaires, and interviews. Observational data

indicated minimal student involvement, as numerous pupils were not actively involved in classroom activities. Students exhibited a significant deficiency in initiative about inquiries and a lack of engagement with the instructional content provided by the teacher. Several students chose not to remain at their desks and instead interacted with their peers across the classroom. They participated in discussions irrelevant to the lecture, demonstrating a deficiency in concentration. Students exhibited passivity in posing inquiries or expressing viewpoints regarding the topic matter. When the teacher displayed English verbs, the pupils jointly repeated the words in a synchronized manner, exhibiting a heightened level of interest without haste.

Data in the form of frequency (f) and percentage (%) from the questionnaires on the students' opinion about learning English are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1: Students' Opinion about Learning English (N = 89)

No.	Questions	Responses						Average
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	I believe English is important.	0%	0%	0%	3%	87%	10%	5.1
2	I think English is difficult.	0%	0%	13%	37%	33%	17%	4.5
3	I think English needs to be delivered in a fun and interactive way.	0%	0%	0%	17%	60%	23%	5.1
4	I think the amount of time for English lessons taught at school is enough.	0%	0%	0%	13%	57%	30%	5.2
5	In my opinion, English lessons taught in class are interesting.	0%	7%	13%	23%	50%	7%	4.4
6	I think I need an additional supporting medium in learning English.	3%	0%	0%	60%	37%	0%	4.3
7	I feel that using technology in learning will make me more interested in learning.	0%	0%	0%	7%	63%	30%	5.2

From the data in [Table 1](#), we can deduce that while most respondents thought that knowing English is important (97%), many also found it difficult (87%). Additionally, 83% of them thought that learning English should be fun and engaging. Most students thought that the time spent learning English in class was enough (57%), and even more thought that their teachers kept their attention (57%). Sixty percent of respondents felt that there should be more resources available to help them learn, and 93 percent said that using technology into their studies would pique their interest in them more.

Students had a strong preference for mobile phones or other devices as a learning tool (54%), surpassing other options like books (20%), television (18%), and radio (8%). The demand for English language learning materials that are compatible with mobile devices was validated by students' preference for using their phones and other devices as learning tools. Visuals that captivate pupils are essential for effective language instruction, since students preferred interactive graphics and group projects when studying.

Product Design and Development

The initial phase of application development involved identifying and choosing the folktales. A diverse array of information was collected from printed cultural texts, cultural experts, and cultural websites. Initially, stories were composed in the Indonesian language to preserve the authenticity of cultural material. All Indonesian folktales are composed in straightforward language with basic vocabulary, tailored for the intended audience of youngsters or primary school students. The translation procedure guaranteed cultural and linguistic suitability. Free translation was favored as the primary objective was to preserve the attributes of the texts to engage young readers, particularly youngsters and elementary school students.

During the phase of design and development, a total of 27 folktales from Java and other provinces in Indonesia were chosen through the process of translation into English that is easy to understand and communicate. Android was recommended as the appropriate platform due to its ubiquitous accessibility, which makes the application widely available for elementary school pupils, given the widespread availability of mobile phones or other devices. The development process involved comments from IT specialists, who recommended Android as the preferred platform. A number of gamified features, including word games and reading comprehension exercises, were incorporated into the program. An illustration of the flow of the design and development process may be found in [Figure 1](#).

The picture tools in ChatGPT were used to generate the illustrations while Typecast was used to create the audio narration. Writing appropriate prompts to generate the required illustration was the problem of using Chat-GPT 3.0 to create graphics. It was also a harder challenge when it came to creating a series of illustration. On multiple occasions, Chat-GPT 3.0 failed to deliver characters that were consistent throughout the series. After then, it was necessary to rewrite the prompts, which required multiple rounds of revisions. Since this research centered on the production of illustrated cultural folktales, the task of coming up with suitable cultural illustrations was an even greater hurdle.

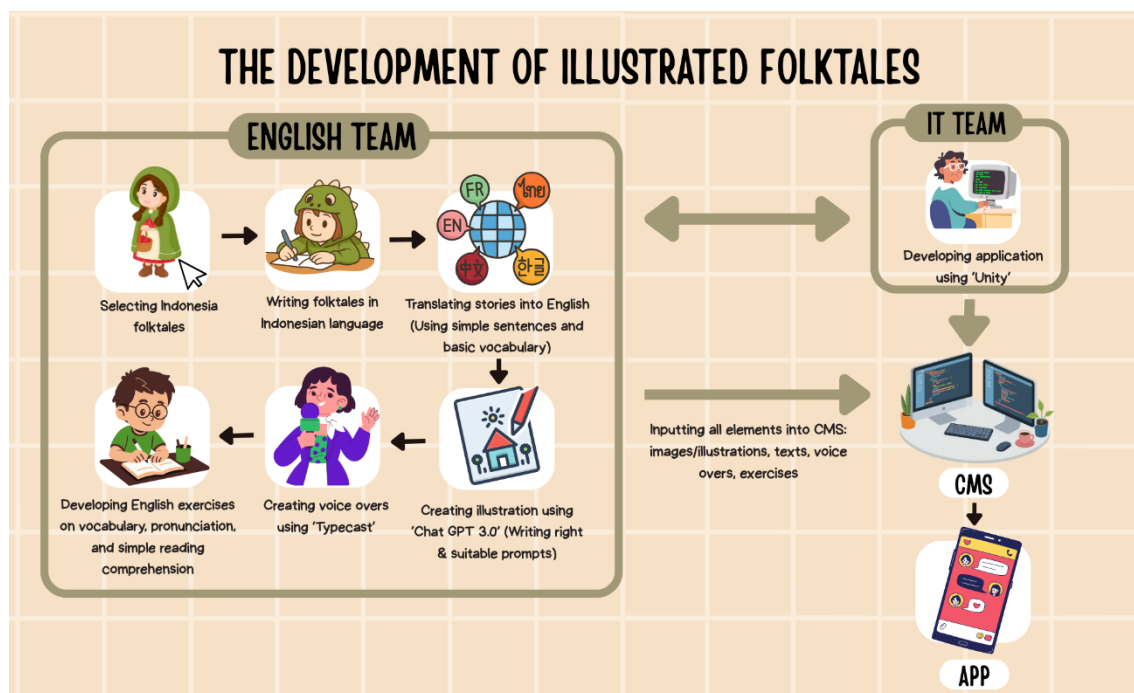


Figure 1: Flow of Design and Development Process of the Application

The voiceovers were produced using a tool called Typecast that incorporates human voices. Pronouncing Indonesian names and other non-English language was the most difficult part of using Typecast. In this instance, the Typecast inputted words were written in a way that matched their correct pronunciations.

English tasks were offered in the subsequent section following the presentation of each folktale. The objective kind of exercises was deliberately selected to ensure the effective functioning of autoscoring. Three tasks were presented: matching images to corresponding words, true-false assertions, and multiple-choice comprehension questions. Gamification was used by awarding scores for the completion of exercises by all users. The compilation and integration of images, texts, voiceovers, and gamified workouts for each narrative were executed by entering into a content management system of an application developed using Unity. The IT team constructed the application, while the English team integrated all materials, including drawings, texts, voiceovers, and gamified activities, into the CMS.

Expert Validation Results

Subject matter and language validators were responsible for carrying out the expert validation. A consensus was reached among the content validators that the stories were written in an appropriate manner, that they communicated strong moral values, and that they aided vocabulary learning. It was discovered that the drawings improved both comprehension and engaged the audience. Table 2 provides a quantitative breakdown of the content validation results.

Table 2: Content Validation Result

No	Questions	Score					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	The language used in the folktales in this application is easy to understand.					√	
2.	Intonation of storytelling is easy to hear and understand.						√
3.	The folktales use vocabulary that is appropriate for the students' ability level.					√	
4.	The illustrations used in the app help students understand the story better.					√	
5.	The story reading feature in this app helps with student learning.					√	
6.	The folktales in this app can attract students' attention and interest.					√	
7.	This app helps students in improving English vocabulary.						√
8.	The folktales present moral values that are beneficial for students.					√	
9.	The folktales in this app effectively introduce local culture to students.						√
10.	These folktales help students understand English grammar better.					√	

The content validator has typically affirmed the quality and suitability of the folktales and workouts included in the created application. The validator expressed high agreement on three principal points: the clarity and comprehensibility of the storytelling intonation, the app's role in enhancing kids' vocabulary, and

the folktales' effectiveness in introducing local culture to pupils. This signifies that the application effectively fulfills its objective as an auxiliary English learning resource for youngsters. The validator's commendation highlights the application's capacity to improve language acquisition and promote cultural awareness among primary school students.

The results of language validation similarly confirmed the quality of sentence structure, vocabulary, and grammatical usage. Validators emphasized that the discussions were authentic and appropriate for elementary-level learners. Table 3 displays the language validation sheet.

Table 3: Language Validation Result

No	Questions	Score					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	The sentence structure in the folktales is quite simple and easy to understand.					√	
2.	In terms of grammar, the folktales text in this application is good and correct.					√	
3.	The selection of vocabulary in the folktales is in accordance with the English level of elementary grade 5 students.					√	
4.	Pronunciation of the story will be quite easy for students to understand.					√	
5.	The transitions between paragraphs in the folktales flow naturally.					√	
6.	The use of punctuation in this folklore text is in accordance with the rules of correct English usage.					√	
7.	The folktales contain sentences that support effective learning of new vocabulary.						√
8.	The dialog in the folktales sounds natural and appropriate to the context of the story.						√
9.	This folktale uses simple language but is still interesting for students.					√	
10.	Overall, the English structure in the folktales is good and suitable to be used as learning materials.					√	

Table 3 indicates that the language validator verified the high quality and appropriateness of the English language utilized in the stories and exercises. In particular, the validator expressed a strong consensus on two critical points: the dialogues in the stories were natural and appropriate for the context, and the folktales included sentences that facilitated the acquisition of new vocabulary. This feedback indicates that the application was well-suited to assist elementary school pupils in their English language acquisition.

Field-Testing Results

During the field-testing phase, the application was evaluated by responders comprising primary school pupils, parents, and instructors in Indonesia and Australia. Table 4 displays the responses that reflect a significant degree of satisfaction. All respondents expressed satisfaction with the app, and more than 60% acknowledged its user-friendliness. Concerning the application for English language acquisition, over 60% of participants asserted that the interactive aspects enhanced their enjoyment of the learning process, while the majority anticipated that use the app would augment vocabulary (80%) and reading proficiency (73%).

Table 4: Indonesian Students' Opinion on the Use of Application (N = 89)

No	Questions	Responses						Average
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	I am glad using the folktales app to learn English.	0%	0%	0%	0%	80%	20%	5.2
2	The stories in the app are easy to understand even though they are in English.	0%	0%	3.3%	30%	53.5%	13.3%	4.8
3	The pictures in the app help me understand the stories better.	0%	0%	0%	33.3%	60%	6.7%	4.7
4	The interactive features in the app make learning English more enjoyable.	0%	0%	3.3%	33.3%	60%	3.3%	4.6
5	This app helps me improve my reading skills in English.	0%	0%	0%	26.7%	70%	3.3%	4.8
6	I can learn a lot of new vocabulary from this app.	0%	0%	0%	20%	80%	0%	4.8
7	This app makes me more interested in learning English.	0%	0%	16.7%	30%	53.3%	0%	4.4
8	The folktales stories in this app help me learn more about Indonesia's culture	0%	0%	0%	36.7%	63.3%	0%	4.6
9	This app makes me more enthusiastic about learning English.	0%	0%	6.7%	43.3%	50%	0%	4.4
10	I feel this app helps me understand folktales in English better.	0%	0%	16.7%	23.3%	60%	0%	4.4

App users also reported a greater interest in and admiration for Indonesian culture and English as a result of using the app. The majority of students felt the app was helpful for comprehending folktales (60%), and 63% said it helped them learn more about Indonesian culture overall.

Overall, it seems that the folktales app was a hit with users. Pictures and quizzes added to the engaging aspects made it more enjoyable and easier to understand, and it also sparked interest in Indonesian culture. In spite of a few students' small gripes, the app seems to have a lot of promise as a supplementary tool for English language learners.

Interviews with Respondents Residing in Australia

Qualitative interviews were conducted with three Indonesian children residing in Melbourne: Nad, Ghy, and Tom. Interviews were done while trying out the application with the presence of their parents.

Based on the interview with Nad, it was mentioned that the folklore application provides an engaging and educational experience, yet there are areas that can be improved to enhance its accessibility for children. Nad expressed that the story itself was interesting, but she found certain words challenging, such as "frustrating" and "gorgeous," which may not be familiar to very young audiences. She suggested simplifying the vocabulary by choosing words that are more commonly used and easier for children to understand, as well as replacing complex adjectives with simpler synonyms such as "angry" instead of "frustrating."

'Some of the words in the story are like a bit hard to understand for some children. Because like, frustrating is like a bit, like it's not really an easy word for most children to know.' (Nad)

The illustrations were generally well-received by Nad, who felt they effectively supported the story and helped her to grasp the main idea. She gave the visuals a score of 8 out of 10, indicating that they were useful in providing context and enhancing the overall experience. However, while the visuals were appreciated, the story's message could have been made clearer for her, as she had difficulty fully understanding it. When asked about the moral of the story, Nad suggested it might be about the importance of honesty and the consequences of lying, which highlights the need for clearer communication of the story's message.

The application's voice narration was considered good, although Nad noted that the pace sometimes did not align with the text, especially when the voice actor was slower than the progression of the text. This mismatch could lead to confusion or detract from the experience, particularly for younger listeners who might struggle with following the pace.

"The voice, it's good, it's just sometimes some of the words can be a bit like, at the end of the sentences, the text can be already like, and onto the next page and sometimes the voice actor is a bit slower than the paragraphs." (Nad)

Nad's feedback also included positive comments about the exercise activities that followed the story. She found them enjoyable and engaging, rating them 9 out of 10. These activities, which involved matching words to images and answering questions, were seen as fun and interactive, which is an important aspect of maintaining children's attention and encouraging learning.

Regarding the cultural aspect of the application, Nad acknowledged that while the story helped her connect a little to her Indonesian roots, the lack of other Indonesian students in her grade made it difficult for her to fully relate to how others might react. However, she believed that Indonesian elementary school students would likely enjoy the application, as it could serve as a reminder of their culture and heritage.

Overall, Nad's feedback highlights that while the application is a valuable tool for storytelling and cultural education, it could benefit from simplifying the language to ensure better comprehension, especially for younger children. In addition, adjusting the voice narration to match the text flow and maintaining clear connections between the story's moral and its message would further improve the application's effectiveness. Nad's responses also emphasized the importance of interactive elements, suggesting that such exercises are engaging and well-received by students.

The second interview was done with Ghy, a second grader. Ghy rated the story an 8 out of 10 in terms of interest, indicating that she found it engaging. She identified the storyline as the main point of interest, even though she recognized it as fictional or "made up."

Regarding the illustrations used in the application, Ghy commented positively, giving a high rating of 9 out of 10. However, the voiceover used in the application received a lower score (5 out of 10) due to its perceived speed and lack of clarity. Ghy suggested that slowing down and varying the intonation could make the voiceover more effective and enjoyable.

'Because it's like, too, a bit. Fast. t doesn't sound very clear. It doesn't sound very clear.' (Ghy)

Ghy also identified specific values from the story, such as the importance of not being lazy, as 'Si Kabayan', the character in the story was depicted as a somewhat lazy yet clever character. Ghy also humorously noted a practical lesson from the story: "Don't sleep in a bag of beans."

This interview with Ghy reflects her active engagement with the story and her ability to critically assess its elements while appreciating its humor and cultural relevance. The exercise also provided a valuable opportunity for the researcher to reinforce values and make cultural connections through traditional storytelling.

These interviews highlighted the need for user-centered design in educational applications, especially when targeting diverse learner backgrounds. They also confirmed that children could extract values from the stories, supporting cultural learning goals.

The Developed Application

The application was successfully developed, and the screen recorded version of several stories can be accessed via YouTube channel, for example:

1. The Legend of Coban Rondo (<https://youtu.be/Xi-a1fvi0Tk>)
2. Si Kabayan (<https://youtu.be/-94iNIIvNE0>)
3. The Little Girl Named “Timun Mas” (Golden Cucumber) (<https://youtu.be/r5-aEMKmaY?si=yiUnBrJ5eav9HgAO>), and
4. The Young Man Named “Joko Kendil”
5. (<https://youtu.be/Qb6VnI5AAsM?si=gWPvxztIfBITryPl>).

The significant features and novelty of the application lie on the content of Indonesian folktales as well as the use of artificial intelligence in the generation of illustrations and voice overs.

Discussion

The findings show that the integration of Indonesian folktales into a mobile English learning application for young learners is effective in helping them improve their vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and cultural awareness. In addition, they also received the application well. It confirms that contextual learning, which is supported by technologies, enhances language acquisition (Moybeka et al., 2023).

This study enriches the existing literature by showcasing a new kind of integration of AI-generated illustrations, which supports folklore presentation for English language education, drawing upon the foundational work of Mazzone and Elgammal (2019b) regarding AI in educational contexts. The synergy of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), and AI tools positively affects a dynamic learning environment that effectively addresses students' motivational needs and cultural contexts.

Thus, the illustrated folktales application developed in this study offers an innovative model for English language instruction for young learners. Its effectiveness, confirmed by empirical data, underscores the significance of culturally relevant, engaging, and technology-driven learning tools for primary school students.

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into folktale presentation improved the motivation of primary school students to learn English. The data revealed that features such as interactive illustrations and audio-visual narration significantly increased students' willingness to engage with English materials. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Wei (2023) and Moybeka et al. (2023), who assert that AI-generated media can increase student motivation due to its personalized learning experiences. Furthermore, mobile phone-based learning, favored by most students taking part in the preliminary study. This resonates with trends that emphasize technology's appeal to younger learners.

One of the distinctive features of the developed application was the incorporation of East Javanese folktales as a local content. These folktales contextualized not only vocabulary and grammar for the learners but also nurtured cultural awareness and pride. Prior studies by Lwin (2015), Nyoman and Gana (2018), and Fadhli (2020) underscore the significance of utilizing culturally embedded narratives in language learning to enhance both linguistic and intercultural competencies. The students' enthusiasm for exploring their own culture while learning English further affirms this pedagogical benefit.

Improvement of students' vocabulary size and reading comprehension was revealed during the field testing and interviews. This aligns with study results from Muflihah and Authar (2019) and Izzati (2022), who showed that digital folktale platforms can effectively reinforce vocabulary acquisition and facilitate contextual reading. The current study results are also consistent with the findings of Rahman et al. (2020), emphasizing how gamified learning materials foster basic literacy through repetition and narrative structure. The efficacy of AI-generated illustrations and voiceovers in facilitating reading comprehension is in line with the literature on multimedia learning theory, as presented by (Kirkwood & Price, 2014).

The responses from Indonesian children living in Australia showed the global reception of the application. Although they lived in a country far from Indonesia, the origin of the folktales, they showed good engagement with the folktales. This shows that what Zein (2017) argues, i.e. the inclusion of culturally rooted learning materials to maintain identity among diaspora learners, is feasible. The children, however, had some

criticisms concerning voice pacing and vocabulary level of difficulty. These highlight the need for speech control and a glossary.

Broader digital medium acceptability was also shown by the teachers and parents. The English teacher acknowledged the application's effectiveness in enhancing students' vocabulary retention and increasing class participation. At the same time, parents valued the capacity of the application to offer productive educational screen time while reinforcing cultural identity. These findings resonate with those of earlier studies, including those by Kusmaryati (2022), which advocate for the involvement of stakeholders in the adoption of innovative instructional materials.

In the previous literature, folktales, Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), and Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) are explored as distinct constructs. Only few studies have holistically integrated all three with artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in English for Young Learners (EYL). This study addressed the gap by demonstrating that AI-generated illustrations to support folktale presentation can provide a rich material for contextual language learning, particularly for young learners characterized by short attention spans and a strong affinity for digital engagement. The development of local and gamified digital content places this research within an emerging field prioritizing inclusivity, technology, and cultural relevance in English language instruction (Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019b; Yoedo & Mustofa, 2022).

In short, this study has shown that combining AI technology, local folklore, and contextual learning theory can produce a powerful medium for English language acquisition for your learners. This integrated model not only delivers academic advantages but also fosters cultural benefits. Other researchers from other Indonesian regions aspiring to develop culturally relevant and technologically engaging English as a Foreign Language (EFL) material can replicate this framework to produce the similar learning medium and materials.

Conclusion

This research project has developed an AI-generated application by integrating Indonesian digitally illustrated folktales into English language learning for young learners. The application was developed through a structured method comprising four systematic phases—preliminary study, design and development, expert validation, and field testing. With its engaging and culturally related contents, it solved the problems faced by elementary school students in mastering vocabulary and improving their English pronunciation. The research finally revealed that folktales presented with AI-generated illustrations and gamified features could significantly improve students' engagement and motivation.

As validated by the expert, the material in the application features linguistic accuracy and pedagogical suitability. It was also found that students and teachers valued the interactive features, which contributed to enhancements in students' vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Furthermore, they reported that the cultural contents improved students' interest in local heritage. This affirms the dual roles of the application as a tool for language learning and civic education.

In terms of its novelty, this study makes a notable contribution to the teaching of English for Young Learners (EYL) by integrating three important aspects: Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), and local folklore. From technology-enhanced learning, it showcases an innovative application of artificial intelligence in generating story illustrations and integrating the narration, and it expands the design and development research paradigm.

Implications of the study include the facts that integrating folktales aligns with national emphases on character education and local wisdom, allowing English lessons to contribute to broader curricular goals (e.g., values education, cultural literacy). Furthermore, for schools with limited print resources, mobile delivery of folktales provides scalable, repeated exposure to comprehensible input aligned with learners' background knowledge with better access as nowadays almost every adult person has a cellphone.

This study paves the way for the further development of AI-driven storytelling platforms tailored for young learners of English. There is significant potential to improve this model to incorporate animated videos and more interactive elements, such as AI chatbots, to facilitate personalized learning experiences. Future research could also concentrate on assessing the long-term effects of such tools on literacy, motivation, and cultural identity. Further research can also curate more diverse folktales, including stories from multiple Indonesian regions and cultures to broaden representation, prevent stereotyping, and sustain novelty across levels. Finally, it is necessary to train teachers on story-based instruction, facilitating post-reading tasks, using analytics, and addressing cultural content sensitively.

Acknowledgments

This journal article is one of the outputs of research (under the scheme of 'Penelitian Kerjasama Luar Negeri' or 'Collaborative Research with Foreign Researchers) funded by DIPA Politeknik Negeri Malang (State Polytechnic of Malang) granted in 2024, number SP DIPA – 023.18.2.677606/2024.

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