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INTEGRATING LOCAL CULTURE INTO THE SCHOOL LITERACY MOVEMENT: A STUDY ON DIGITAL FLIPBOOKS FOR BANJARESE FOLKLORES

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Abstract: Indonesia's junior high school students continue to demonstrate low reading competence, as reflected in the decline of the country's reading literacy score in PISA 2022. In response, the School Literacy Movement (SLM) was introduced to strengthen students' reading culture; however, challenges remain in sustaining engagement, integrating local culture, and utilizing digital media effectively. This study investigates the integration of digital flipbooks featuring English translations of Banjarese folklore as a culturally responsive strategy to support English Basic Literacy Skills (EBLS) within the SLM. Employing a survey design, data were collected from 846 junior high school students across five public schools in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, using open-ended questionnaires that examined students' familiarity with Banjarese folklore, perceptions of digital flipbooks, and literacy outcomes. The findings indicate varied levels of prior familiarity, with students' reading choices influenced by cultural familiarity and the perceived mystique of folklore titles. Students reported positive perceptions of digital flipbooks, particularly valuing their interactive and multimedia features. Analysis of written responses shows that students were able to comprehend narrative content, identify characters, and interpret moral values, despite persistent grammatical and lexical inaccuracies. These results suggest that digital flipbooks supported emergent reading comprehension and written meaning-making rather than measurable gains in linguistic accuracy. Overall, integrating Banjarese folklore into digital flipbooks enhanced engagement, reinforced cultural awareness, and supported foundational literacy processes. The study highlights the potential of culturally grounded digital media as a meaningful tool for strengthening basic literacy within the School Literacy Movement, particularly in non-English-dominant and resource-limited contexts.

Keywords: *Banjarese folklore; English basic literacy skills; cultural awareness; digital flipbooks; school literacy movement*

INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy remains a critical challenge for junior high school students in Indonesia, particularly in the post-pandemic context where learning disruptions have affected students' foundational skills. As a response to declining literacy performance, the Indonesian government has emphasized literacy development as a core educational priority aligned with global commitments to quality education (UNESCO, 2017; Abdillah, 2023; Rahmania, 2021). One major policy initiative addressing this issue is the School Literacy Movement (SLM), which aims to cultivate students' reading habits and literacy culture through structured and sustained school-based activities. SLM positions literacy not only

as a technical skill but also as a social practice embedded in daily learning experiences (Sulistiyarini et al., 2021; Papen, 2023). Through this initiative, schools are encouraged to integrate reading activities across subjects and learning contexts to foster lifelong literacy habits. However, the effectiveness of SLM depends greatly on the relevance of learning materials and the adaptability of instructional media to students' sociocultural and technological realities (Kartikasari & Nuryasana, 2022; Komariah et al., 2023).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the School Literacy Movement has a positive impact on students' reading interest and literacy skills at various educational levels. Research indicates that regular literacy routines, such as fifteen-minute reading activities, contribute to improved reading comprehension and engagement (Maryanah & Maknun, 2023; Madeten et al., 2024). In elementary and secondary schools, SLM has been shown to strengthen reading motivation and promote independent reading behaviors (Andini et al., 2025; Arimbawa et al., 2024; Yulianti & Sukasih, 2023). These outcomes highlight the importance of consistent literacy exposure within the school environment. Furthermore, SLM supports the development of students' writing skills as a natural extension of reading practices (Lestari & Kusumawati, 2025; Rafida et al., 2022). As such, SLM serves as a foundational framework for literacy enhancement across disciplines.

Beyond basic literacy skills, SLM has also been associated with the development of higher-order thinking skills and character education. Several studies emphasize that literacy activities integrated into subject learning encourage critical thinking and reflective learning (Putri et al., 2024; Suryawati et al., 2018). Literacy programs grounded in values and ethics contribute to students' moral and civic development (Wijayadikusumah, 2023; Simorangkir et al., 2024). Moreover, SLM facilitates the integration of character education through culturally meaningful texts and discussions (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Syahrianti et al., 2022). These findings suggest that literacy initiatives function not only as academic interventions but also as tools for holistic student development. Consequently, the selection of literacy materials plays a crucial role in achieving these broader educational goals.

However, despite its potential benefits, the implementation of SLM continues to face structural and pedagogical challenges. Studies report that low student motivation, limited reading proficiency, and insufficient school facilities hinder the success of literacy programs (Zalukhu & Zalukhu, 2024; Hamzah et al., 2023). Teachers also experience difficulties integrating literacy activities into subject-based instruction due to time constraints and limited pedagogical support (Lestari et al., 2024; Santosa & Supadi, 2023). Additionally, disparities in access to reading materials and digital infrastructure exacerbate literacy gaps across regions (Taufiq et al., 2024; Zulaikha et al., 2025). These constraints underscore the need for innovative literacy strategies that address both pedagogical and contextual limitations. Therefore, adaptive literacy media become essential to sustaining SLM implementation.

The integration of digital technology within SLM has emerged as a promising solution to these challenges. Digital literacy initiatives enable schools to expand access to reading materials and diversify learning experiences (Afandi et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2024). Research indicates that technology-supported literacy activities enhance students' engagement and autonomy in reading (Paramahita et al., 2023; Wirasti et al., 2024). Moreover, digital platforms allow for interactive and multimodal text presentation, which supports diverse learning styles (Asih, 2024; Elfina et al., 2023; Perdana et al., 2021). These affordances position digital media as a strategic component of contemporary literacy programs. Nonetheless, the effective use of digital tools requires alignment with pedagogical goals and content relevance.

Among various digital media, flipbooks have gained attention as effective literacy tools due to their interactive features and accessibility. Studies show that flipbook-based digital books significantly improve students' reading interest and comprehension (Nafiah et al., 2023; Hiralda & Zulherman, 2023). Flipbooks support multimedia integration, such as images, audio, and animations, which enhance textual understanding (Handy & Putra, 2023; Saktilia & Wulandari, 2024; Ramadanti & Bektiningsih, 2023). Research also highlights their effectiveness in supporting writing and creative literacy tasks (Janah et al., 2023; Munajah & Anggraini, 2025). These findings confirm the pedagogical value of flipbooks in literacy instruction. However, most studies focus on first-language or general content areas.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), digital flipbooks have demonstrated potential in supporting reading

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development. Research indicates that interactive digital texts can reduce cognitive load and support comprehension in L2 reading contexts (Masykuri et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2023). Digital reading media also facilitate vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency among EFL learners (Syaputra et al., 2024; Hendratno et al., 2025). Additionally, multimedia elements help learners connect textual meaning with visual cues, which is particularly beneficial for novice readers (Rima et al., 2024; Hunsu et al., 2024). Despite these advantages, EFL literacy integration within SLM remains limited. This gap calls for context-specific exploration.

Cultural relevance is another critical factor influencing literacy engagement. Studies consistently demonstrate that students respond more positively to texts that reflect their local culture and lived experiences (Tarigan et al., 2019; Sukadari et al., 2023). Local culture-based literacy materials enhance comprehension by activating students' prior knowledge (Demir et al., 2024; Monica & Soplantila, 2024). Moreover, culturally grounded texts foster identity formation and character education (Ariani & Sulistyorini, 2025; Listia et al., 2025). These findings emphasize the pedagogical importance of culturally familiar content in literacy programs. Consequently, integrating local folklore into literacy instruction offers meaningful educational opportunities.

Banjarese folklore represents a rich cultural resource that embodies moral, social, and spiritual values. Scholars highlight that Banjar folklore functions as a medium for transmitting local wisdom and ethical principles across generations (Asnawi, 2020; Wahyu, 2022). Research also shows that folklore contributes to character education and cultural literacy development (Yulianto et al., 2020; Patricia & Hidayatullah, 2022). In educational contexts, Banjarese stories have been used primarily for moral instruction and cultural preservation (Azkia et al., 2022; Alfisyah & Azkia, 2024). These studies affirm the educational value of folklore-based materials. However, their application in English literacy learning remains underexplored.

Previous studies integrating folklore and digital media have largely focused on Indonesian language learning. Digital folklore-based materials have been shown to improve students' reading and writing skills in L1 contexts (Anggrasari et al., 2021; Dawudi et al., 2024). Research also indicates that digital folklore enhances students' engagement and appreciation of local culture (Juita et al., 2025; Widhiyanti & Gunanto, 2021). These initiatives support the dual goals of literacy development and cultural preservation. Nevertheless, such studies rarely address English literacy or SLM policy alignment. This limitation restricts their applicability to EFL contexts.

Furthermore, most SLM-related studies emphasize program evaluation or policy analysis rather than instructional innovation. Systematic reviews reveal that empirical classroom-based studies integrating digital media and local culture within SLM are still limited (Cahyani et al., 2025; Istiqomah, 2025). Research tends to examine literacy outcomes in isolation, without considering the combined effects of language, technology, and culture (Simarmata & Sulistyaningrum, 2023; Santoso et al., 2025). This fragmentation highlights the need for integrative literacy models. Addressing this issue requires empirical investigation grounded in authentic school contexts.

Despite extensive research on SLM, digital flipbooks, and local folklore, empirical studies that integrate Banjarese folklore-based digital flipbooks within an English literacy-oriented SLM context remain scarce. Existing studies predominantly focus on first-language literacy, cultural preservation, or general digital learning without addressing EFL challenges (Samrah, 2014; Lubis et al., 2023). The cognitive and linguistic demands of reading in a foreign language may influence how students engage with culturally familiar content (Masykuri et al., 2024; Demir et al., 2024). Moreover, students' familiarity with folklore and their perceptions of digital media use in literacy activities are rarely examined together. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How familiar are junior high school students with Banjarese folklore? (2) How do students perceive the use of digital flipbooks for literacy learning? (3) What is the impact of English Banjarese folklore-based digital flipbooks on students' English basic literacy skills?

Positioned within recent developments in literacy education, this study integrates local folklore, digital flipbook media, English basic literacy, and the School Literacy Movement policy framework. Unlike prior research that examines these components separately, this study situates English literacy learning within culturally familiar content delivered through interactive digital media (Anggrasari et al., 2021; Masykuri et al., 2024). The use of Banjarese folklore in

English provides a unique approach to reducing linguistic barriers while maintaining cultural relevance (Irlina & Djamalie, 2024; Monica & Soplantila, 2024). Additionally, positioning the intervention within SLM activities ensures policy relevance and practical applicability. This integrative approach contributes a new perspective to literacy research in EFL contexts.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically, pedagogically, and practically to literacy education. Theoretically, the study enriches the discourse on culturally responsive and digitally mediated literacy practices in EFL contexts (Papen, 2023; Demir et al., 2024). Pedagogically, it provides teachers with an alternative literacy model that aligns local culture with English learning through digital media (Adawiyah et al., 2024; Juita et al., 2025). Practically, the study supports schools and policymakers in strengthening SLM implementation through innovative and context-sensitive literacy resources (Cahyani et al., 2025; Mahendra et al., 2024). Ultimately, this research aims to promote sustainable literacy development that bridges language learning, technology, and cultural identity.

METHOD

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the use of digital flipbooks in introducing English versions of Banjarese folklore during one of the accessible sessions of the School Literacy Movement (SLM). The focus of the study was to document students' familiarity with Banjarese folklore, their perceptions of digital flipbooks, and their demonstrated comprehension and written meaning-making after engaging with the materials, rather than to measure literacy improvement over time. The population of this study consisted of junior high school students in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. Based on data from https://satudata.banjarmasinkota.go.id/data-statistik, approximately 19,350 students are enrolled in public junior high schools in Banjarmasin each academic year. This study applied convenience sampling techniques due to limitations related to accessibility, time, and logistical constraints. As a result, five accessible public junior high schools were selected as research sites.

Table 1. *The involving schools based on its accessibility*

No.	Schools	Address
1	Junior High School 9 Banjarmasin	Jl. Batu Benawa Raya No. 29 RT.47, Mulawarman
2	Junior High School 14 Banjarmasin	Jl. Banua Anyar No.14, Benua Anyar
3	Junior High School 7 Banjarmasin	Jl. Veteran KM.4,5 RT.30 No. 99, Sungai Bilu.
4	Junior High School 4 Banjarmasin	Jl Teluk Tiram Darat No 01
5	Junior High School 11 Banjarmasin	Jl. Tembus Mantuil RT.02 No.140, Basirih Selatan

While the number of respondents was relatively large, this non-probability sampling approach limits the representativeness of the sample and does not allow generalization of the findings to all junior high school students in Banjarmasin. The research instrument was an open-ended questionnaire designed to collect students' perceptions of the digital flipbooks and their demonstrated comprehension of the folklore texts they read. The questionnaire focused on students' immediate responses after exposure to the materials.

Table 2. *The blueprint of the questionnaire*

Elements asked		The Questions
Demographics	1.	What is your Name?
	2.	What grade are you?
Students' perception on the use of digital flipbooks	1.	Do you enjoy reading stories through the digital Flipbook?
Students' Familiarity toward the Banjarese Folklores and the impact of using digital flipbooks on English Basic Literacy	1.	What is the title of the story?
	2.	What is the story about?
	3.	Who are the good characters?
	4.	Who are the bad characters?
	5.	What moral lessons do you get from the story?

A total of 898 students completed the questionnaire. Most respondents were seventh- and eighth-grade students, as ninth-grade students were preparing for graduation during the data collection period. From the total responses, 52 students did not read the English Banjarese folklore provided. Consequently, 846 students' responses were included in the analysis.

The implementation of digital flipbooks within the SLM consisted of three stages. The first stage

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involved selecting the folklore texts, with more than 40 Banjarese folklores adapted into digital flipbook format. Each story was selected and adapted to highlight narrative passages suitable for reading comprehension. The second stage was developing the digital flipbooks, which involved translating the stories into simple English and integrating visual and interactive elements. The flipbooks were created using various digital tools and adapted from available online resources. Each flipbook included multimedia features such as audio narration and vocabulary highlights to support comprehension. The third stage involved student engagement, where students accessed the flipbooks using tablets or computers both inside and outside the classroom.

After engaging with the digital flipbooks, students were asked to complete the questionnaire to document their reading experience, comprehension, and perceptions. The study employed a single-point, post-exposure survey design. No pre-test, post-test comparison, or control group was included. Therefore, the study does not aim to establish causal relationships or measure literacy gains over time. Instead, it focuses on students' immediate comprehension, written meaning-making, and engagement with English Banjarese folklore presented through digital flipbooks.

The collected data consisted of numerical distributions and written responses. The responses were coded and categorized to map students' experiences and demonstrated comprehension while using the digital flipbooks (Saldaña, 2025). Content analysis was applied to generate replicable and valid inferences from the textual data in relation to the research questions (Krippendorff, 2004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The specific focus of the results is on the integration of Banjarese folklore and digital flipbooks as a medium for exposure to the junior high school students toward their EBLS.

Students' familiarity with Banjarese folklore

To determine the favouritisms of the English Banjarese folklores read by the students, the results are categorized into 'The Most Chosen,' 'The Average Chosen,' and 'The Least Chosen.' There is also a category of 'Not Listed Folklore' which means the students might have misunderstood the instruction by reading random stories which are not offered by the researchers. The categorization is by determining the range of the highest and lowest percentage for the chosen folklores, those are 14,77 and 0,01. The obtained range is between 4,90 – 4,92.

Table 3. *The categorizations of the folklores read by the students*

Categories	Percentage	Range	Number of Readers	Percentage
The Most Chosen	9,85 - 14,77	4,92	339	40.07
The Average Chosen	4,92 – 9,84	4,92	171	20,21
The Least Chosen	0,01 – 4,91	4,90	284	33,57
Not Chosen Folklore	0,00	0,00	0	0,00
Not Listed Folklores	-	-	52	6,15
Total			846	100

Based on the table of categorization, the First and Second most read folklores are "The Origin of Kambang Island" with 125 readers or 9,67% and "The Myth of Yellow Crocodile" with 120 readers or 9,28. In the third position is "King of the Sun, Raden Putra or Surianata Prince" with 94 readers or 7,27% (See Figure 1).

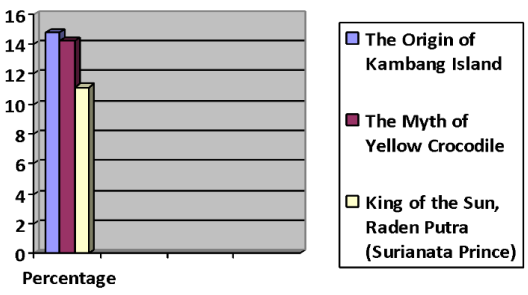


Figure 1. *The most chosen folklores*

For the Average Chosen Folklores, Antasari Prince was read by 77 students with 9,10% of the total readers. Next is Queen Zaleha, which was read by 50 students or 5,91%. Last, Lambung Mangkurat was chosen by 44 readers or 5,2% (See Figure 2)

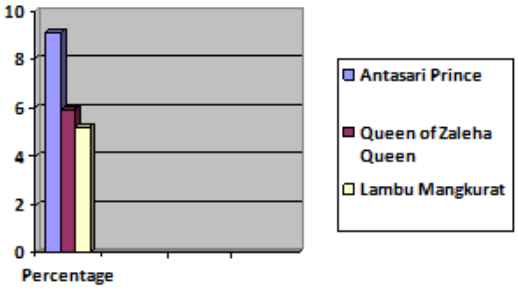


Figure 2. *The average chosen folklores*

The least chosen folklores belong to two divisions. One with more than 10 readers and the other ones are those with less than 10 readers. Starting from Si Palui to Putri Gumbili and Bambang Haruman, the readers are more than 10 people. Samudra Prince was read by 10 people or 1,18%. The folklore of the Story of the Lizard Prince until Princess of Junjung Buih and Suryanata Prince has less than 10 readers (See Table 4). 'Not Chosen' folklores or the English Banjarese folklores which receive zero attention are (1) Radin Pangantin, (2) The Origin of Bajuin Village, (3) The Legend of Meratus Mountain), (4) Datung Ayuh and Bambang Siwara, (5) Nuin and Datu Pujung, and (6) Ampu Mandastana.

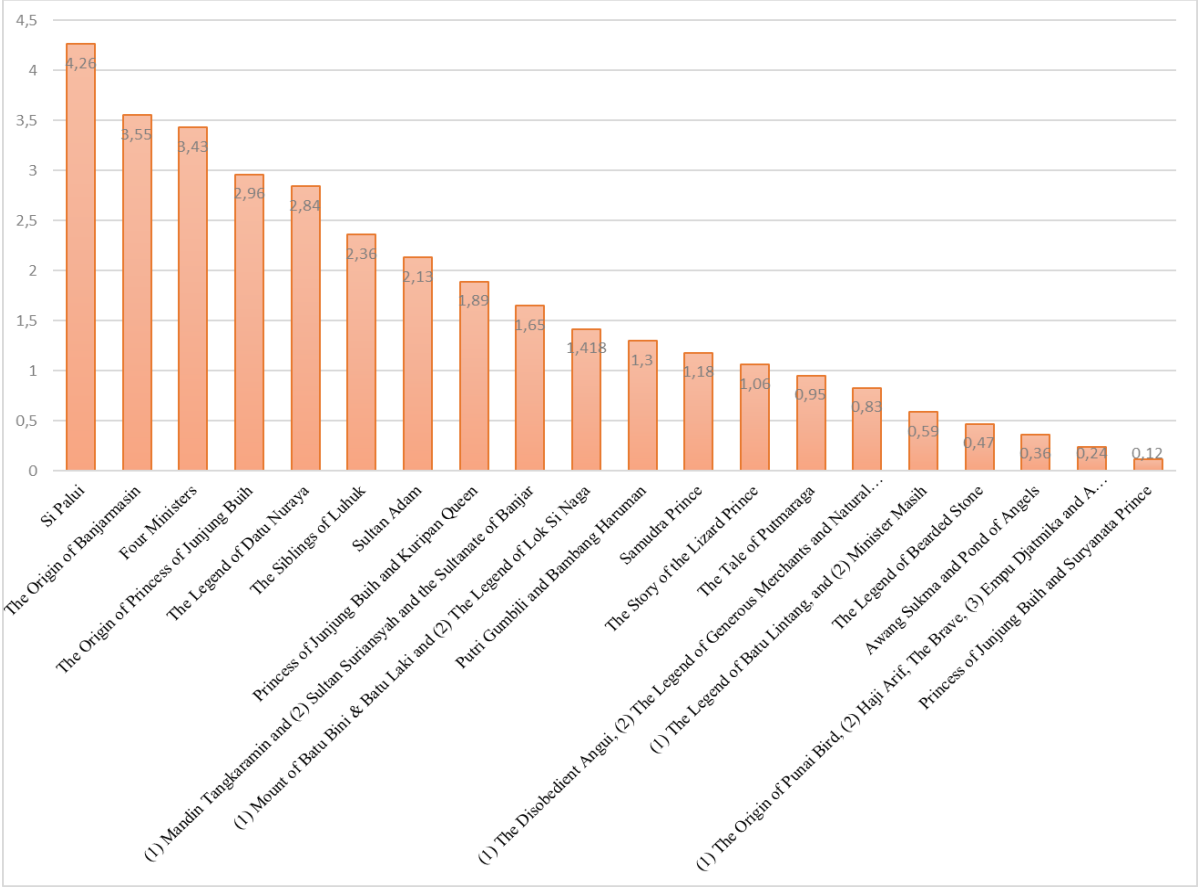


Figure 3. *The least chosen English Banjarese folklores*

The students' choices reflect how much they previously know about the folklore. There might be two reasons why the students chose the stories to read. First, it seems that the students chose the folklore by considering the title which is familiar. All students might know about Kembang Island because it is a famous tourist attraction in Banjarmasin, South Borneo. 'Yellow Crocodiles' are thought to be distinct from ordinary crocodiles and are often described as mystical creatures with golden-yellow skin. Surianata Prince is a well-known and historical figure in Banjarese Sultanate. The second reason for the chosen folklore is due to the mystery around the thing, creature and person, which raise their interest a lot. Kambang Island with its troops of monkeys living in it has always been mysterious for the Banjarese people. The island has rich local versions of stories surrounding its origins. A popular one is that the island formed in the 1750s from the wreckage of a British ship destroyed by the Biaju people on the Sultan of Banjar's command. The ship's remnants supposedly sprouted trees and became an island inhabited by a troop of monkeys (Handy & Putra, 2023). The stories of Kambang Island are passed down from generation to generation and the island is still found as one of local tourism objects on Barito Riverbank. This may be one of the reasons why the participants chose 'The Origin of Kambang Island' to read through the digital flipbook. Next, it is also believed by the Banjarese people that the yellow crocodile carries spiritual, cultural, and moral significance within Banjarese folklore.

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According to the legend, yellow crocodiles are considered sacred and are believed to be the spiritual protectors of rivers, particularly the mighty Barito River. The yellow crocodile is said to represent a spiritual guardian or the manifestation of an ancestral spirit. In many versions of the story, these crocodiles are protectors of justice, guarding against wrongdoing or misbehavior in their domains. They are thought to appear only to those who are spiritually attuned, respectful of nature, or in dire need of help. Same as Surianata Prince, the stories around him are mystical and interesting such as his marriage with Princes of Junjung Buih and the Pamaton Mountain which is located in Martapura Regency and believed to be his kingdom.

As for the least chosen folklores, this may be due to the fact that they are less known by people today. There are actually sites which refer to folklore like the tomb of Datu Nuraya in Rantau Regency or the pond, which is believed to be where Awang Sukma had stolen the angels' clothing in Barabai Regency. Next, Banjarese folklores are told through oral storytelling traditions, which are declining as younger generations become less and less engaged with culture. Many of these stories were traditionally passed down verbally by elders, but the folklores are not widely documented or promoted. In addition, limited publication and preservation efforts mean that many folklores remain in local communities and are not included in school curricula. As a result, only a few well-known legends survive, while others remain hidden or forgotten. Names like *Luhuk, Mandin Tangkaramin, Putri Gumbili, Angui, Halaban, Minister Masih, Haji Arif* and *Raden Sekarsungsang* may be less known to the Banjarese younger generation.

Students' familiarity with Banjarese folklore reflects its cultural significance within the community. Folklore functions as a medium for developing social solidarity, group identity, social control, and communal harmony, while transmitting shared knowledge that shapes ways of thinking and behaving across generations (Asnawi, 2020). Through repeated exposure to folk narratives, younger generations learn community values and norms, allowing folklore to serve as an informal educational tool embedded in everyday cultural practices. By emphasizing wisdom, prudence, and moral conduct regardless of social or economic status, folklore contributes to identity formation and collective pride rooted in ethical behavior rather than lineage (Asnawi, 2020).

Consistent with this perspective, many Banjarese folklores embody moral, social, and cultural values that support early character formation (Suriansyah et al., 2021). Morally, these stories convey values such as honesty, kindness, responsibility, and courage; socially, they emphasize cooperation, respect for elders, and harmonious living; and culturally, they reflect local wisdom, environmental awareness, and spiritual beliefs that connect humans with their environment. These embedded values increase the likelihood that students encounter and remember such stories from an early age through family, community, and cultural contexts (Suriansyah et al., 2021; Wahyu, 2022).

Students' familiarity is also shaped by the categorization of Banjarese folklore into legends, myths, and fables, which helps structure how stories are recognized and transmitted within the community (Asnawi, 2020). Certain categories, particularly legends associated with historical figures or local places, may be more widely known than others. In addition, folklore functions as a cultural product passed down through generations by means of speech, example, and social practice, playing a crucial role in preserving Banjarese identity (Alfisyah & Azkia, 2024). This intergenerational transmission helps explain why some students demonstrate greater familiarity with specific folklores depending on family and community exposure.

However, students' familiarity with Banjarese folklore is not uniform. Research indicates that limited documentation of folklore and insufficient integration of local culture into formal education can restrict students' access to a wider range of traditional narratives (Listia et al., 2025; Zulaikha et al., 2025). As a result, while certain folklores remain widely recognized, others may be less familiar to students despite their cultural importance. These factors suggest that students' familiarity with Banjarese folklore is shaped by a combination of cultural transmission, early exposure, narrative categorization, and structural access to local cultural resources.

Perceptions on the potential of the digital flipbooks

Second findings are about the perceptions on the potential of digital flipbooks utilizing Banjarese Folklore by surveying whether the students read the materials presented in form of flipbooks and enjoy reading them as well as the mostly chosen

Banjarese folklore. Based on the qualitative inspection of the responses to the question "*Did the students read the reading material from the given flipbook*?", several insights can be drawn. First is varied reading engagement which shows that many students did read the material from the Digital Flipbook. Second is some responses indicate partial reading, with only a portion of students engaging with the content although a few responses suggest that some students didn't read the material at all. Then, a few responses indicate that some students did not read, with reasons such as following their friends or leaving the classroom. To get a more quantitative understanding of the responses, the data are shown from Chart 1. It has been unsurprisingly predicted that the majority of students would read the materials through the flipbook due to their curiosity and status as Gen Z. The chart 1 shows the distribution of responses for whether the students go through the flipbook materials after assigned.

The majority of students (82.95%) read the flipbook material, with some partial readers and a small percentage who didn't read it. This has proven that it is more enjoyable when traditional reading materials are transformed into interactive, multimedia experiences through digital flipbooks. They are a dynamic substitute for static textbooks since they look like real books yet are accessible on screens. Important advantages include interactivity, accessibility, and visual appeal. First, interactivity is clickable elements, audio narration, and animations allow students to interact with the content. Second, accessibility is when learning is made flexible by the fact that digital flipbooks are accessible from a variety of devices. Last, visual appeal means students' attention is drawn in and comprehension is improved by the use of pictures, films, and colours.

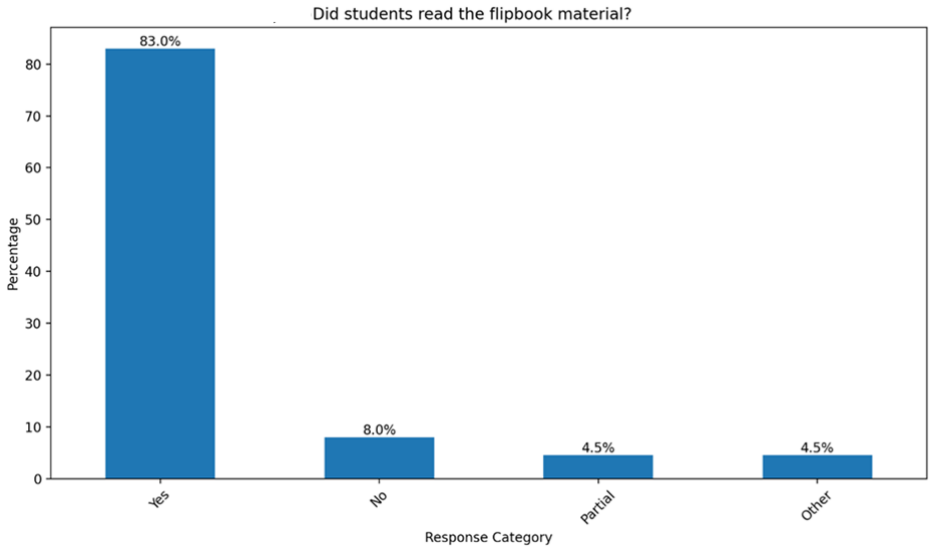


Figure 4. *Responses to whether the students read the flipbook materials*

Next, the pie chart presents responses to the question whether the students enjoy reading stories through the digital Flipbook. The majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they enjoy reading stories through the digital Flipbook. A small portion of respondents (5%) gave a neutral response. Another 9% expressed that they did not enjoy reading stories through the Digital Flipbook. Last, a minor part, 4%, did not provide an answer. In summary, the vast majority of participants have a positive experience with the digital Flipbook, while a small number remain neutral or have a negative response.

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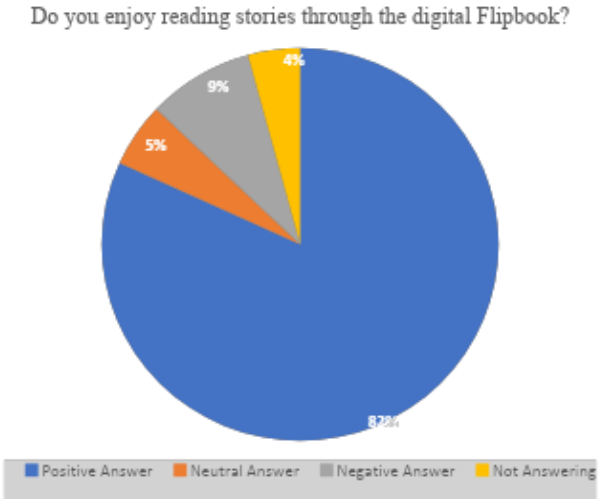


Figure 5. *Responses to whether the students enjoy reading stories through the digital flipbook*

The integration of Banjarese Folklore into digital flipbooks offers significant potential for enhancing literacy education by combining cultural storytelling with interactive, multimedia-based learning. Digital flipbooks are viewed as effective tools for presenting local stories in ways that resemble the experience of reading a physical book while enabling learners to engage with content digitally. Juita et al. (2025) support this view, noting that digital flipbooks are effective for teaching local narratives, enhancing students' cultural understanding, and increasing engagement through interactive presentation. Teachers and students also perceive that culturally relevant digital materials foster greater appreciation of cultural heritage and increase motivation to participate in classroom discussions, suggesting that digital flipbooks can contribute not only to language learning but also to cultural education.

The use of Banjarese folklore in digital flipbooks is further perceived to support reading comprehension and engagement through cultural relevance. When learners can connect new information to their prior knowledge and cultural identity, comprehension is more likely to occur (Demir et al., 2024; Hunsu et al., 2024). As part of students' cultural heritage, Banjarese folklore provides a familiar context that encourages visualization, engagement, and deeper meaning-making. This familiarity is perceived to make learning more meaningful and personally relevant, while simultaneously reinforcing students' cultural identity and appreciation of local traditions.

From a design and feasibility perspective, digital flipbooks are perceived as effective learning tools due to their multimedia and interactive features, user-friendly structure, and adaptability for instructional use. Rima et al. (2024) highlight the use of the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate) in developing learner-centered digital flipbooks that integrate multimedia elements and interactive activities to enhance accessibility and engagement. Similarly, Perdana et al. (2021) report that 93.30% of respondents rated flipbook-based digital media as feasible for educational use, indicating strong acceptance among both learners and educators. These findings suggest that digital flipbooks are widely perceived as practical and implementable learning media.

Teacher readiness and professional development are also viewed as essential to realizing the potential of digital flipbooks. Mahardika et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of teacher training programs that equip educators with the skills needed to develop and adapt digital flipbooks, including culturally specific content such as Banjarese folklore. In addition, digital flipbook–based learning modules are perceived to support new learning experiences aligned with 21st-century learning activities by increasing student motivation, responsibility, and independent learning skills (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Saktilia & Wulandari, 2024).

In terms of literacy development, digital flipbooks are perceived to support key reading skills, particularly comprehension and fluency. Studies by Hendratno et al. (2025) and Widiastuti et al. (2023) suggest that the interactive and visually rich nature of digital flipbooks can enhance reading comprehension, fluency, and overall literacy skills, especially when learners engage with narrative texts such as folklore. Multimedia features, including audio narration, videos, and animations, are perceived to provide scaffolding that supports learners who may

struggle with conventional text-based reading, making folklore more accessible and engaging.

Finally, issues of scalability and sustainability are perceived as important considerations for broader implementation. The dissemination component of the 4D model emphasizes the need for careful planning to ensure effective distribution and adoption of digital flipbooks (Rima et al., 2024). Adequate digital infrastructure and teacher readiness are viewed as crucial for expanding the use of Banjarese folklore–based flipbooks across different educational contexts. As highlighted by Mahardika et al. (2022), without sufficient training and support, the pedagogical potential of digital flipbooks may remain underutilized despite their perceived benefits.

Impact of digital flipbooks on students' EBLS

The impact of using digital flipbooks featuring English Banjarese folklores on students' EBLS is examined through students' written responses to open-ended questions regarding story titles, plot summaries, character identification, and moral lessons. The students' answers to the questions *"What the story is about?"* and *"What is the moral lesson?"* demonstrate their ability to comprehend both the factual and moral aspects of the stories. In this study, *EBLS* refers to students' foundational ability to comprehend narrative texts in English and to express that understanding in written form.

Reading comprehension and narrative understanding

Students' responses to the question *"What is the story about?"* demonstrate that many were able to capture the central ideas of the folklore texts they read. For the most frequently selected story, *The Myth of Yellow Crocodile*, students produced summaries such as *"Buaya Kuning is a crocodile that is believed to be a supernatural creature that makes agreements with humans,"* and *"It is about the yellow crocodile named Datu Kartamina."* Another student described the narrative more elaborately, stating that *"It is about Datu Kartamina who transformed into a yellow crocodile to fight pirates who wanted to raid his village."* Similarly, in *King of the Sun*, students summarized the story as *"It's a story about Raden Putra who was born magically."* and *"It's about a king's son who was magically born."* Although these responses are written partly or fully in Bahasa Indonesia, they reflect accurate understanding of the story's central theme, namely the miraculous birth of Raden Putra. The students recognize it as a story about Raden Putra's miraculous birth. Although their descriptions are brief, they suggest an understanding that the story conveys messages about destiny, goodness, and divine blessing. In general, the responses show comprehension of the narrative ideas. Likewise, in *Antasari Prince*, the students show factual understanding by describing him as a hero from the Banjar Sultanate, known for his bravery, intelligence, and strong personality. These responses indicate that students were able to identify the main character, key events, and the supernatural nature of the story. Despite variation in sentence structure and language accuracy, the core narrative meaning was preserved, suggesting functional reading comprehension at a basic literacy level.

Character identification as evidence of comprehension

Students' comprehension is further reflected in their ability to identify characters. Most answers correctly mentioned both familiar and unfamiliar characters, such as *Angui and Diang Ingsun* in "*Mount of Batu Bini and Batu Laki*," *Datu Suban* in "*the Legend of Datu Nuraya*," *Inu Karpati* in "*Antasari Prince*," *Ning Wandan Puri* in "*Putri Gumbili and Bambang Haruman*," *Garuntung Manau, Garuntung Waluh, Panimba Sigara and Pambalah Batung* in "*the Four Ministers*," as well as *Datu Kartamina* in "*The Myth of Yellow Crocodile*." Antagonistic characters, like *Mantri Bandar* or *Kiai Pelabuhan* in "*Sultan Suriansyah and the Sultanate of Banjar*," were also correctly identified. This accuracy suggests close engagement with the narrative texts. In addition, folklore titles that use characters' names −*Queen Zaleha, Antasari Prince, Princess of Junjung Buih, Sultan Suriansyah, Lambu Mangkurat* and others− were generally recalled more accurately by the students.

Moral interpretation and value construction

Beyond factual comprehension, students demonstrated the ability to interpret moral and cultural values embedded in the stories. In *The Myth of Yellow Crocodile*, moral lessons expressed by students include *"Don't easily believe in supernatural beings who make agreements with humans," "One must sincerely help,"* and *"Everyone must be willing to sacrifice and brave."* These responses indicate that students not only understood the plot but were

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also able to extract moral values conveyed through the narrative. Next, students described *Antasari Prince* as *"a hero who comes from the family of the Banjar Sultanate, South Kalimantan,"* emphasizing his bravery and respected personality. The moral lessons derived from this story include *"Never give up,"* and *"Complying with religion, be brave and smart in fighting."* The identification of moral lessons such as *perseverance, religious devotion,* and *courage* indicates that the students can interpret the story beyond surface details, recognizing the character's values and relating them to moral ideals. In *Queen Zaleha*, students summarized the narrative as *"It is about the courage and resilience of Queen Zaleha,"* and concluded with the moral lesson that *"Being confident will make oneself strong."* These responses suggest that students were able to connect character traits with abstract values, reflecting interpretive reading skills. Students' responses also further demonstrated moral understanding. In *Princess of Junjung Buih*, students highlighted the princess's *purity, kindness,* and *perseverance*, identifying moral lessons such as *"kindness, perseverance in facing challenges, the importance of honesty, or even about sacrifices*. The conclusion *"Do not think badly of others."* for *The Legend of Datu Nuraya* reveals students' moral sensitivity and an understanding of interpersonal ethics. In *Mandin Tangkaramin*, students emphasized that *"real strength comes from being humble, wise, and adaptable."* The students' emphasized humility and wisdom as true sources of strength. The story of *Mount of Batu Bini and Batu Laki* was associated with lessons such as *"Do not be disobedient to your parents, and do not be ashamed of your parents' condition just because of pride."* It teaches the students about familial devotion and respect for parents, demonstrating moral reasoning about family and social norms. Similarly, in *The Legend of Lok Si Naga*, their understanding that people should not eat something unfamiliar and should be patient reflects awareness of caution, obedience, and patience as virtues. Finally, in *Putri Gumbili and Bambang Haruman*, students derived the moral lesson *"Always try to control your emotions and don't ever do it."* Across these examples, students consistently demonstrated the ability to identify moral values.

Writing as expression of comprehension

Although students' written responses generally show good understanding of story content and moral lessons, several minor inaccuracies were identified in language use. For example, *"God the Sun"* instead of *King of the Sun*, or *"The parents died of their two children"* in *Putri Gumbili and Bambang Haruman* instead of *"The parents of the two children died,"* In *Mount Batu Bini and Batu Laki*, the wording "*a young boy and his wife*" is slightly inaccurate, since "*young man and his wife*" is more appropriate. This shows a mixed-up understanding between a boy and a man. Some participants failed to mention the correct titles of the folklores. For instance, "*Datu Kartamina*" was written as the title for *The Myth of Yellow Crocodile,* "*Si Pujung*" was titled as "*Pulau Hambana*", and "*God the Sun*" appeared instead of "*King of the Sun.*" Several folklore titles were also written in Bahasa Indonesia, such as Asal Mula Pulau Kembang (T*he Origin of Kembang Island), Fatih Empat (Four Ministers), Mitos Buaya Kuning (The Myth of Yellow Crocodile), Batu Laki Batu Bini (Mount of Batu Bini and Batu Laki), Ratu Zaleha (Queen Zaleha)* and *Cerita tentang Raden Putra yang lahir secara ajaib, (A Story of Raden Putra who was born magically).* These inaccuracies in title naming do not imply a lack of narrative understanding but rather reflect limitations in English vocabulary and expression to express them accurately.

The impact of digital flipbooks featuring English Banjarese folklores on students' EBLS is examined through students' written responses to open-ended questions addressing story titles, plot summaries, character identification, and moral lessons. In this study, EBLS refers to students' foundational ability to comprehend narrative texts in English and to express that understanding in written form at a basic level. The analysis focuses on how students demonstrate comprehension and meaning-making rather than on measurable gains in grammatical accuracy or overall English proficiency.

The students' written responses indicate that difficulties observed in English expression primarily reflect challenges in grammatical, lexical, and phrasing accuracy rather than misunderstandings of story content. Errors such as inaccurate word choice, sentence structure, or phrasing suggest that students were able to grasp the narratives and moral ideas conveyed in the folklore but lacked sufficient linguistic control to express their understanding accurately in English. Despite these limitations, students were able to use written English as a medium to convey meaning at a basic level. This pattern indicates

comprehension of content even when English expression is limited and supports the characterization of students' writing ability as *emergent writing literacy*, in which meaning is communicated despite inaccuracies in form. This finding is consistent with prior studies showing that transforming folklore and local knowledge into digital learning materials supports students' meaning-making and written expression in cultural literacy contexts (Dawudi et al., 2024; Sukadari et al., 2023; Zahro et al., 2025).

Previous studies have reported that digital flipbooks significantly enhance reading engagement and literacy outcomes when used in first-language or general content learning contexts (Fatonah & Muzaki, 2024; Lubis et al., 2023; Munajah & Anggraini, 2025). The present findings partially align with this literature, as students demonstrated high engagement and functional comprehension when interacting with flipbooks. However, unlike many L1-based studies that report improvements in linguistic accuracy, the present EFL-focused study found persistent grammatical and lexical errors in students' written responses. This difference suggests that while digital flipbooks may similarly support engagement and meaning-making across L1 and L2 contexts, the English medium introduces additional challenges related to vocabulary, grammar, and written expression. In this EFL setting, the primary benefit of digital flipbooks appears to lie in supporting comprehension and emergent writing rather than immediate language accuracy or proficiency gains.

Beyond narrative comprehension, students' responses demonstrate an ability to interpret moral meanings embedded in the folklore narratives. Their answers reflect understanding of values such as sincerity in helping others, courage, sacrifice for the community, emotional self-control, and caution toward supernatural agreements. Across stories, students consistently demonstrated comprehension of moral meaning, suggesting that they could move beyond surface-level recall to interpret values conveyed through narrative events and character actions. Collectively, these responses reveal comprehension skills that combine factual recall, moral reasoning, and value interpretation. Students were able to extract character-building messages from local folklore and relate them to personal and cultural values, including kindness, respect, humility, perseverance, and emotional control. These patterns illustrate developing abilities in narrative comprehension, moral interpretation, and cultural value internalization, indicating that folklore functions effectively as a medium for character and moral education within literacy activities.

Based on students' demonstrated comprehension of folklore narratives, this study shows the potential of digital flipbooks as an effective tool for supporting EBLS among junior high school students. Most responses indicate that students could comprehend relevant story content, identify characters, and articulate moral lessons. By incorporating Banjarese folklore into digital content, the flipbooks supported reading comprehension and meaning-making while also fostering a stronger connection to students' cultural heritage. The integration of local cultural narratives into language learning therefore appears to be a meaningful strategy for engaging students and supporting foundational literacy development.

Importantly, the findings indicate that digital flipbooks supported students' emerging reading comprehension and meaning-making skills rather than producing measurable gains in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary mastery, or overall English proficiency. This impact is evident in students' ability to summarize stories, identify characters, and articulate moral lessons despite persistent grammatical and lexical inaccuracies. The data do not support claims of improvement in formal language accuracy or proficiency. Instead, the observed impact should be understood as strengthening foundational literacy processes—particularly reading comprehension and written meaning expression—rather than generating immediate language gains. By presenting culturally familiar stories in an interactive digital format, the flipbooks enabled students to engage meaningfully with English texts and articulate understanding, thereby laying important groundwork for further literacy development.

These findings align with previous studies showing that digital flipbooks provide engaging and immersive reading experiences through interactive features, multimedia elements, and user-friendly design, which help sustain students' interest, encourage active participation, and improve comprehension and digital literacy (Afandi et al., 2024; Fatonah & Muzaki, 2024; Maknun et al., 2023; Munajah & Anggraini, 2025; Nafiah et al., 2023). Research also suggests that integrating traditional stories into digital formats deepens students' understanding and emotional connection to texts, enhancing overall

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literacy (Anggrasari et al., 2021; Monica & Soplantila, 2024). Additional studies report that digital flipbooks effectively enhance reading literacy while supporting broader digital literacy development (Anggrasari et al., 2021; Paramahita et al., 2023; Wirasti et al., 2024).

Further impacts include improved retention and accessibility. Digital flipbooks support diverse learning needs and improve knowledge retention (Hiralda & Zulherman, 2023; Ramadanti & Bektiningsih, 2023; Wibowo et al., 2019), while flexible access to content anytime and anywhere further reinforces learning opportunities (Rini et al., 2021). From a literacy-development perspective, folklore's rich language and narrative structure align with the view that early language skills are closely linked to later literacy development (Scarborough, 2001). Embedding folklore within digital tools may therefore strengthen vocabulary, narrative comprehension, and critical thinking (Ariani & Sulistyorini, 2025). In addition, interactive features such as clickable elements, multimedia integration, and embedded activities promote active learning and deeper literacy processes, including comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking (Elfina et al., 2023).

In summary, the use of digital flipbooks to present Banjarese folklore supports students' basic literacy by enhancing reading engagement and comprehension through interactivity and multimedia features, connecting students to culturally relevant content, and supporting diverse learning needs while promoting equitable access to educational materials. However, the effectiveness of such initiatives depends on addressing gaps in digital literacy skills among students and educators, ensuring adequate technological infrastructure, and integrating digital tools effectively within broader literacy programs. By combining traditional storytelling with modern digital media, this approach offers a promising pathway for strengthening foundational literacy in both local and broader educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of English Banjarese folklore presented through digital flipbooks within the SLM to examine students' familiarity with local folklore, perceptions of digital media, and demonstrated EBLS. The findings show that students were generally familiar with culturally prominent Banjarese folklores and responded positively to digital flipbooks, indicating increased engagement and accessibility. Analysis of students' written responses suggests that the flipbooks supported basic reading comprehension, character identification, and moral interpretation in English. Although grammatical and lexical inaccuracies were evident, these reflected limitations in language expression rather than misunderstandings of content, indicating emergent writing literacy rather than proficiency gains. Given the survey design and convenience sampling, the findings are not generalizable. The study highlights the potential of culturally grounded digital flipbooks to support foundational literacy and engagement in Indonesian EFL contexts, warranting further longitudinal investigation.

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