



Local Wisdom in Fairy Tales as Culturally Responsive Media for Indonesian Language Learning in Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian language learning in primary schools is expected to develop linguistic competence while also fostering cultural awareness, moral understanding, and meaningful literacy engagement. In practice, however, classroom activities often remain centered on textual comprehension and disconnected from students' sociocultural experience. This creates a need for instructional media that reconnect language learning with children's cultural worlds. This study examined how local wisdom was integrated into fairy tales as a medium for Indonesian language learning in four primary school classrooms. The analysis focused on the forms of local wisdom represented in the stories, the strategies teachers used to turn stories into learning activities, and the challenges encountered during implementation. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study drew on classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of instructional materials and student work. Data were analyzed through iterative reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, and credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that local wisdom was woven into narrative elements, customs, local environments, social practices, and moral expressions. Fairy tales also served as an integrated medium for listening, reading, speaking, and writing while foregrounding honesty, responsibility, cooperation, respect for elders, and environmental care. Students participated more actively and found the stories easier to understand when settings and characters reflected their everyday lives. At the same time, limited text availability, uneven reading ability, and restricted instructional time reduced the depth of implementation. The study's novelty lies in documenting the pedagogical process through which local wisdom is translated into classroom practice rather than treating fairy tales only as cultural or moral texts. It contributes to culturally grounded literacy pedagogy by outlining a practice-oriented pathway for embedding local wisdom in language instruction and highlighting the need for systematic development of culturally responsive teaching materials in primary education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning in primary education is now expected to do more than develop vocabulary, grammar, and reading accuracy. It also contributes to a broader formation of literacy, cultural identity, moral reasoning, and social participation. In Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia is central to this work because it functions both as a school subject and as a medium through which children interpret texts, communicate experience, negotiate meaning, and encounter social values. Research on character-oriented learning indicates that values can be embedded across subjects and everyday classroom practices rather than taught through a separate moral instruction agenda (Rif'ah et al., 2020; Suciati et al., 2023). This perspective is especially relevant in primary schools, where language learning, narrative comprehension, and character formation are closely connected. The texts children read are not culturally neutral; they carry social meanings, assumptions, and value orientations that influence how students understand themselves and their communities (Astuti et al., 2024; Budiyo et al., 2024; Mustofa & Liswati, 2023; Santoso et al., 2020).

Against this background, local wisdom has received growing attention as a culturally grounded resource for learning (Saleng et al., 2025). The concept extends beyond traditional customs or inherited moral sayings to include community knowledge, social norms, ecological awareness, oral traditions, artistic expression, and collective memory. Studies have therefore positioned local wisdom as a source of national education values, multicultural understanding, and identity formation (Eko et al., 2020; Ramlan et al., 2023). This is especially relevant in primary education because early literacy develops through familiar experiences, cultural symbols, and stories close to children's everyday lives. Research on Sundanese culture, Maja Labo Dahu culture, and local wisdom-based thematic instruction shows that cultural values can be meaningfully connected to elementary learning and character development (Ramlan et al., 2023; Sholichah et al., 2023; Umar et al., 2025). Integrating local wisdom into Bahasa Indonesia instruction may therefore support linguistic competence while also strengthening cultural belonging.

One persistent problem is that learning materials are often disconnected from students' lived cultural environments. When reading activities are reduced to identifying characters, answering factual questions, or completing worksheets, narrative texts lose much of their capacity to support interpretation, reflection, and value negotiation. Previous studies have similarly emphasized the need to update learning media, develop character-rich teaching materials, and design resources that respond to students' social contexts (Khuriyah et al., 2020;

[Mustofa & Liswati, 2023](#); [Zainuddin et al., 2020](#)). The issue, therefore, is not simply whether texts are available in the classroom. It is the extent to which those texts are pedagogically transformed into meaningful literacy experiences rather than left as inert content to be tested.

One response in the literature has been the development of contextual, culturally responsive, and values-oriented learning media. Character education studies show that values can be internalized through classroom learning models, thematic instruction, extracurricular activities, and culturally situated practices ([Hidayat et al., 2022](#); [Nuraini et al., 2020](#); [Sholichah et al., 2023](#); [Yudhar et al., 2021](#)), while work on indigenous knowledge and ethnopedagogy has used local cultural systems to reconnect learning with socially and morally meaningful contexts ([Sakti et al., 2024](#)). Taken together, this literature suggests that local wisdom-based fairy tales in Bahasa Indonesia instruction should not be viewed simply as a way to make lessons more entertaining. Their pedagogical value lies in bringing literacy instruction into closer relation with cultural context, children's imagination, and character formation.

Several more specific strands of research point in the same direction. Folklore has been used to support character formation, literary appreciation, language acquisition, and elementary learning ([Nugraheni et al., 2022](#); [Rochmiyati et al., 2020](#)). Oral traditions, children's songs, trilingual songs, puppet stories, and traditional arts have likewise been examined as cultural media for strengthening character, awareness of diversity, and local identity ([Nasution et al., 2023](#); [Sinaga, 2022](#); [Subiyantoro et al., 2023](#); [Sutikno et al., 2021](#)). Digital and multimodal studies have explored manuscripts, videos, locally developed learning media, and virtual reality as ways to make local culture more accessible ([Adiputra et al., 2021, 2024](#)). Collectively, these studies suggest that culturally rooted media can enrich learning when they are adapted to students' developmental levels and instructional goals.

Despite this body of work, an important gap remains. Previous studies have treated folklore as a source of character values, local wisdom as a foundation for elementary education, and cultural media as tools for learning innovation ([Nugraheni et al., 2022](#); [Rochmiyati et al., 2020](#); [Umar et al., 2025](#)), yet few have examined how local wisdom embedded in fairy tales is actually integrated into Bahasa Indonesia learning as a classroom medium. The issue is not only whether fairy tales contain moral and cultural values. It is also how teachers select, adapt, present, and connect them with listening, reading, speaking, and writing activities. Research on responsibility habits, multiple intelligence-based reading, and basic literacy reconstruction emphasizes student development through structured learning design, yet it does not specifically describe how local fairy tales are transformed into Bahasa Indonesia learning media ([Maharsiwi](#)

&utama, 2024; Sholeh et al., 2025). This gap justifies the present study's focus on the integration process itself, rather than on the presence of values in texts alone.

To address this gap, the study describes how local wisdom is integrated into fairy tales as a medium for Indonesian language learning in primary schools. It considers how teachers use local fairy tales in classroom instruction, the forms of local wisdom represented in the stories, students' responses to culturally familiar narratives, and the challenges that arise during implementation. Three research questions guide the study: (1) how is local wisdom integrated into fairy tales as a medium for Indonesian language learning in primary schools? (2) what cultural values and language-learning activities emerge through this integration? and (3) what opportunities and constraints do teachers and students experience during the learning process? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to culturally grounded literacy pedagogy and to provide practical insights for Indonesian language instruction that are contextual, meaningful, and responsive to students' cultural identities.

II. METHODS

The study used a descriptive qualitative design to examine how local wisdom is integrated into fairy tales as a medium for Indonesian language learning in primary schools. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand classroom practices, teacher reasoning, student responses, and the pedagogical meanings associated with locally grounded narratives rather than to measure learning outcomes in numerical terms. The design followed the naturalistic and descriptive logic of qualitative inquiry (Moleong, 2017), which allows a phenomenon to be documented systematically as it unfolds in its natural classroom setting instead of being isolated under controlled conditions. This approach aligned directly with the study's aim of describing how fairy tales containing local wisdom were selected, presented, interpreted, and connected with Indonesian language learning activities in ordinary classroom practice.

The study was conducted in four primary school classrooms during Indonesian language lessons in which teachers used locally grounded fairy tales as instructional media. Participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in this form of instruction and could provide information-rich accounts of the phenomenon under study. Data came from several sources. Field data were drawn from classroom teachers, students, and the observed learning process itself. Teachers served as key informants because they planned, selected, adapted, and implemented the lessons, while students provided information about their

engagement, comprehension, and responses to the use of local fairy tales. Documentary data included teaching modules, fairy tale texts, student worksheets, teacher notes, student work, and curriculum-related materials, allowing observation and interview accounts to be compared with what had been planned and produced.

Three techniques were used to collect data: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations examined how teachers used fairy tales as learning media, how students participated in listening, reading, speaking, and writing activities, and how local wisdom appeared as the lesson unfolded. Observations focused particularly on two related aspects: the Indonesian language learning process itself and the integration of local wisdom within the fairy tales used. Semi-structured interviews with teachers explored lesson planning, reasons for selecting particular local fairy tales, alignment with learning objectives, instructional strategies, and challenges encountered during implementation. Student interviews addressed interest in the stories, understanding of narrative content, the values students identified, and the connections they made between the stories and their own experiences. Documentation was used to support and cross-check evidence from observations and interviews rather than to function as an independent source of findings.

In line with qualitative research conventions, the researchers served as the primary instruments and were responsible for study design, data collection, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Four supporting instruments were used to make data collection more systematic: an observation guide covering classroom activities, teacher-student interaction, student engagement, and the presence of local cultural values in the stories; a teacher interview guide addressing planning, material selection, instructional strategy, and implementation constraints; a student interview guide focused on interest, comprehension, perceived values, and personal relevance; and a documentation checklist for teaching modules, fairy tale texts, worksheets, teacher notes, and samples of student work. Table 1 shows how the techniques, observed aspects, indicators, and data sources were aligned so that the procedure can be followed in comparable classroom settings.

Table 1. Data collection instruments

Data collection technique	Aspects observed/explored	Indicators	Data sources
Observation	Indonesian language learning process	The teacher uses fairy tales as learning media; students listen to, read, and respond to the content of the fairy tales.	Teacher and students
Observation	Integration of local wisdom	The fairy tales contain cultural values, customs, traditions, local	Learning process

Data collection technique	Aspects observed/explored	Indicators	Data sources
		environments, or local community practices.	
Teacher interview	Lesson planning	Reasons for selecting local fairy tales, alignment with learning objectives, and instructional delivery strategies.	Teacher
Teacher interview	Learning challenges	Availability of teaching materials, students' understanding, instructional time, and school support.	Teacher
Student interview	Responses to fairy tales	Students' interest, story comprehension, values learned, and personal experiences related to the fairy tales.	Students
Documentation	Learning tools and learning outcomes	Teaching modules, fairy tale texts, student worksheets, teacher notes, and students' work.	Learning documents

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles et al., 2014), providing a systematic rather than impressionistic way to organize the qualitative evidence. During reduction, observation transcripts, interview recordings and notes, and documentary materials were selected and organized around four analytical areas: forms of local wisdom, instructional strategies, student responses, and implementation challenges. Irrelevant or redundant material was set aside at this stage to keep the analysis anchored to the research questions. The reduced data were then displayed as narrative descriptions, thematic categories, and summary tables, allowing patterns to be examined systematically rather than remaining dispersed across field notes. In the final stage, conclusions were developed by identifying patterns that recurred across observation, interview, and documentary data and then checking those patterns against negative or disconfirming instances before accepting them as findings.

Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of both sources and techniques (Denzin, 1978). Data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, student interviews, and instructional documents were compared throughout the analysis. When accounts converged, for example, when a teacher's stated rationale for choosing a story matched what was observed in the lesson and what appeared in the teaching module, the finding was treated as well-supported. When discrepancies arose, they were retained and reported as part of the analysis rather than resolved by privileging one source and discarding another. This procedure allowed the study to examine the internal consistency of the findings while also providing a fuller account of how local wisdom-based fairy tales functioned as Indonesian-language learning media in primary school classrooms. The procedures are described in sufficient detail to support methodological transparency and transferability to comparable cultural and institutional settings.

III.RESULTS

The results are presented through six recurring themes: implementation of fairy tales in Indonesian language learning, forms of local wisdom embedded in the stories, teacher planning and instructional strategy, implementation challenges, student responses, and documentary evidence from learning materials and student work. Across these themes, fairy tales containing local wisdom operated as more than reading texts. They supported listening, reading, speaking, and writing while also creating opportunities for cultural understanding and character formation in primary school Indonesian language lessons. Table 2 summarizes the principal findings by data source before each theme is examined in detail.

Table 2. Summary of research findings

Data source	Focus of findings	Main findings
Classroom observation	Indonesian language learning process	Fairy tales were used in listening, reading, discussion, retelling, and simple writing activities. Students showed stronger participation when the stories were connected to their social and cultural experiences.
Classroom observation	Integration of local wisdom	Local wisdom appeared through cultural values, traditions, local environments, social practices, and moral messages embedded in the story.
Teacher interview	Lesson planning	Teachers selected local fairy tales because they were familiar to students, easy to understand, and relevant to the objectives of Indonesian language learning.
Teacher interview	Implementation challenges	The main challenges were limited availability of suitable local fairy tale texts, differences in students' reading ability, limited instructional time, and insufficient visual media.
Student interview	Student responses	Students expressed interest, enjoyment, and better comprehension because the characters, settings, and values in the stories were close to their daily lives.
Documentation	Learning tools and student work	Teaching modules, fairy tale texts, worksheets, teacher notes, and student work showed alignment between language learning objectives, story content, and local wisdom values.

Classroom observations revealed that fairy tales were used through a structured instructional sequence. Lessons typically began with the teacher linking the story's theme to students' daily experiences, often by asking whether they had heard similar stories from parents, grandparents, or other community members. This opening established emotional and contextual

engagement before the main learning task. During the core activity, the teacher presented the fairy tale orally, using intonation, facial expressions, gestures, and vocal changes to sustain attention. Students listened closely, reacted spontaneously to notable events, and followed the development of characters, setting, conflict, and moral message. After listening, they read the text individually and in small groups, practiced pronunciation, worked through the meaning of sentences, identified characters and settings, and reconstructed the sequence of events. Guiding questions then directed attention to the main character, the problem in the story, its resolution, and the values reflected in the characters' actions. Read together, these observations show that fairy tales functioned as engaging listening material because of their imaginative and emotionally involving narrative structure, while a single story could support several language skills in sequence rather than only one.

Local wisdom was not presented as a separate lesson. Instead, it appeared within the narrative fabric of the fairy tales through cultural traditions, community habits, local environments, social relationships, local figures, and moral expressions that students could relate to their own lives. The values that appeared most consistently were cooperation, respect for parents and elders, responsibility, honesty, care for nature, and social solidarity. Cooperation was represented when characters solved problems collectively; respect appeared in child characters' responses to parental or elder advice; environmental awareness emerged in stories involving forests, rivers, fields, animals, or natural resources in need of protection; and honesty and responsibility were dramatized through conflicts in which characters chose between self-interest and morally appropriate action. Table 3 summarizes how these forms of local wisdom were represented in the narratives, the values associated with them, and their functions in Indonesian language learning.

Table 3. Forms of local wisdom and their pedagogical functions

Element of local wisdom		Narrative representation	Values developed	Function in Indonesian language learning
Customs and traditions	and	Traditional ceremonies, advice from elders, community habits	Respect, responsibility, politeness	Students learn cultural vocabulary and retell cultural practices in their own words.
Local environment		Forests, rivers, fields, animals, plants, and rural landscapes	Environmental care, caution, responsibility	Students describe settings and identify ecological messages in the story.
Social life		Cooperation, helping one another, discussion, community problem-solving	Solidarity, tolerance, cooperation	Students discuss social values and write responses based on their experiences.

Element of local wisdom	Narrative representation	Values developed	Function in Indonesian language learning
Local figures	Children, elders, fishermen, figures	parents, farmers, village	Wisdom, courage, role modeling
Local expressions	Proverbs, advice, local terms, sayings	Cultural pride and meaning-making	Students identify character traits and evaluate characters' actions.
			Students enrich vocabulary and interpret expressions within narrative context.

Teacher interviews suggested that story selection was guided by three considerations. The first was familiarity: stories with recognizable settings, characters, and community practices were easier for students to understand. The second was alignment with learning objectives, especially narrative comprehension, listening, reading, retelling, identifying moral messages, and writing simple responses. The third was pedagogical indirection, because fairy tales allowed teachers to introduce character values without relying on direct moral instruction. During lesson planning, teachers adjusted stories to students' language development by simplifying long or complex plots and explaining unfamiliar local vocabulary before or during reading. At the same time, they retained a clear plot, identifiable characters, positive values, and relevance to the stated objectives. Storytelling, guided questioning, shared reading, group discussion, retelling, and worksheet-based tasks were combined so that one fairy tale could support several integrated language skills.

Using local fairy tales also presented several practical difficulties. The most persistent was the limited supply of texts suitable for primary school students. Some stories remained oral, some were written in regional languages, and others had plots that were too long or complex for children, requiring teachers to rewrite, simplify, or adapt them before use. A second challenge was variation in students' reading ability, which meant that some learners needed additional support with vocabulary, sentence meaning, narrative comprehension, and written responses. Time was another constraint because meaningful use of a fairy tale involved several stages: contextual introduction, storytelling, reading, discussion, value interpretation, and written tasks. When lesson time was limited, teachers could not always explore cultural values in depth. Finally, supporting media such as illustrations, character cards, puppets, or short videos were limited, even though these resources could make the stories more accessible to students who were still developing independent reading skills.

Despite these limitations, classroom observations and student interviews showed a consistently positive response to local fairy tales. Students described the lessons as more

enjoyable and less monotonous, and they were particularly interested in stories about children, animals, nature, family relationships, and events resembling their daily lives. Familiar cultural settings helped them follow the storyline and connect it with their personal experiences. Students could also identify moral messages such as honesty, helping others, respecting parents, and protecting nature. These messages were easier to grasp because they were represented through characters' actions and the consequences produced by those actions. During classroom discussion, students appeared more confident in answering questions and expressing opinions about characters' behavior. In writing activities, they retold parts of the story, produced simple reflections, and connected the story's values to their own experiences. Table 4 summarizes these responses by aspect and interpretation.

Table 4. Student responses to the use of local fairy tales

Aspect of student response	Observed response	Interpretation
Interest	Students listened attentively, laughed, asked questions, and responded to story events.	Fairy tales made the learning process more engaging.
Story comprehension	Students identified characters, settings, problems, and endings.	Fairy tales supported understanding of narrative structure.
Value comprehension	Students mentioned honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and environmental care.	Fairy tales supported character education.
Personal connection	Students connected the story with home, family, and community experiences.	Local wisdom made learning more contextual.
Language skills	Students answered questions, retold the story, and wrote simple responses.	Fairy tales supported integrated language learning.

Documentary evidence supported the patterns observed in classrooms and reported in interviews. Teaching modules connected learning objectives with narrative comprehension, character identification, retelling, and interpretation of moral messages. The fairy tale texts themselves contained local settings, cultural habits, social practices, and moral values, while student worksheets asked learners to identify the title, characters, setting, problem, solution, and message of each story. Most student work showed an understanding of these basic narrative elements, although the completeness of responses varied with reading ability. Teacher notes likewise indicated stronger engagement when stories were connected to students' cultural and social environments, while also recording the continuing need for simplified texts and visual

support. Figure 1 brings these elements together in a single pedagogical sequence: local wisdom provides the cultural and moral content of the fairy tales; the stories are used through listening, reading, speaking, and writing; and these activities support narrative comprehension, interpretation of cultural values, and, ultimately, literacy, character, and cultural identity.



Figure 1. Pedagogical flow of local wisdom integration in fairy tales

Overall, the findings indicate that the incorporation of local wisdom into fairy tales renders Indonesian language learning more contextualized and facilitates the practice of multiple language skills within a unified and coherent sequence. The stories also provided a medium for character learning because students encountered values through characters' actions and their consequences, while local traditions and knowledge became part of ordinary classroom practice. However, the usefulness of this approach depended heavily on teachers' ability to select, adapt, and present appropriate stories. Local fairy tales therefore need more than a supplementary role; they need to be systematically developed as culturally grounded learning media that align with curriculum objectives, students' language abilities, and classroom conditions.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings show how local wisdom was integrated into fairy tales as a medium for Indonesian language learning in the classrooms studied. Local fairy tales did not function simply as

supplementary reading. They became culturally situated learning media that linked narrative comprehension, language practice, moral reflection, and cultural identity formation. This integration took place through ordinary classroom activities such as listening, reading, discussion, retelling, and writing. Local wisdom was carried through cultural values, customs, local environments, social practices, and moral messages rather than introduced as a separate topic.

A key interpretation is that cultural familiarity contributed to students' engagement. Students participated more actively when characters, settings, events, and values resembled experiences from their daily lives. This pattern is consistent with culturally responsive teaching, which treats students' cultural backgrounds as resources for learning rather than as matters outside the classroom (Gay, 2010; Kurniati et al., 2025). It also aligns with culturally relevant pedagogy, in which meaningful learning connects academic achievement with students' cultural identity and social experience (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In the present study, local fairy tales appeared to move students from passive reading toward more active interpretation because the texts were culturally familiar. The findings therefore suggest that cultural proximity can support comprehension, participation, and emotional connection in language learning.

The findings can also be read through sociocultural and narrative perspectives on learning. Vygotsky's (1978) view that knowledge is constructed through social interaction, language, and cultural mediation helps explain why storytelling, guided questioning, and group discussion supported students' understanding in this study: the teacher did not simply present the fairy tale as a finished text but turned it into a shared cultural tool through which students discussed characters, interpreted moral messages, and related events to personal experience. Bruner's (1996) view of narrative as a mode of meaning-making offers a complementary explanation. By working with plot, conflict, character, and consequence, students moved beyond identifying textual elements toward constructing meaning from culturally recognizable situations.

These findings are broadly consistent with earlier research on folklore and local wisdom in literacy and character education, while also adding a more process-oriented perspective. Purwani and Mustikasari (2024) found that local wisdom-based fairy tales support character formation in primary schools because they carry moral messages accessible to children; Solissa et al. (2025) reported that local folklore-based tutoring improved elementary students' reading interest and comprehension; and Rahmawati et al. (2026) showed that integrating Dayak local wisdom into Indonesian language instruction strengthened reading, writing, listening, speaking,

and cultural awareness together. The present study extends this line of work by examining not only the benefits associated with local folklore but also the pedagogical process through which fairy tales were selected, adapted, presented, discussed, and connected with language learning objectives. This process-oriented focus matters because the instructional value of local wisdom depends as much on how teachers transform cultural content into classroom practice as on the presence of that content within the text itself.

The results also connect with broader research on local wisdom and character education in elementary schools. [Ramlan et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that Sundanese local wisdom embodies character values pertinent to elementary education. [Sholichah et al. \(2023\)](#) documented the internalization of character education founded on local wisdom within thematic learning frameworks. [Umar et al. \(2025\)](#) indicated that the integration of Maja Labo Dahu culture into educational modules can facilitate character development among elementary students. Additionally, [Sudarmin et al. \(2025\)](#) observed that a Pakarena dance program enhances character virtues such as cooperation and emotional maturity among elementary school students. Consistent with these studies, the fairy tales examined here promoted honesty, responsibility, cooperation, respect for parents and elders, and environmental care. The present study adds a more specific insight by showing that students encountered and interpreted these values through narrative experience rather than receiving them only through direct moral instruction. By interpreting characters' actions, conflicts, and consequences, students engaged with character values in a more reflective and contextually grounded way.

The implementation challenges, however, deserve equal attention. The continuing scarcity of suitable local fairy tale texts shows that cultural resources do not automatically become pedagogical resources. Many local stories remain oral, linguistically complex, or insufficiently adapted to children's developmental levels, a pattern consistent with studies calling for updated learning media and character-based teaching materials matched to instructional objectives and student needs ([Khuriyah et al., 2020](#); [Mustofa & Liswati, 2023](#); [Zainuddin et al., 2020](#)). Differences in students' reading ability also show that cultural familiarity alone is not enough to ensure meaningful access to the text. Even when stories are motivating and familiar, students still need scaffolding, vocabulary support, visual media, and structured worksheets, particularly those who are not yet fluent readers.

From a methodological perspective, the combination of observation, interviews, and documentation made it possible to examine not only which values appeared in the fairy tales but also how those values were enacted in classroom interaction. This is important because

earlier work on folklore, character values, and local wisdom has often focused on textual analysis or program outcomes alone (Nugraheni et al., 2022; Rochmiyati et al., 2020). The classroom-based account offered here follows local wisdom through teacher planning, storytelling practice, student participation, and learning documents. On that basis, the study positions local fairy tales as an integrated pedagogical medium for language learning rather than only as cultural texts or moral reading material.

In summation, the findings refine the theoretical understanding of local wisdom-based education by showing that its pedagogical value emerges through a specific transformation process: cultural content is shaped into a narrative medium, the narrative is organized into language-learning activities, and those activities create opportunities for value interpretation rather than simply carrying values automatically. Cultural richness by itself does not guarantee educational value. More broadly, the study suggests that culturally grounded literacy pedagogy works best when it is treated as a deliberately designed instructional system rather than as an incidental use of local materials. This has implications for teacher education, curriculum development, and instructional media design, particularly for efforts to build local wisdom into language learning more systematically. In practice, schools could develop banks of local stories adapted to children's reading levels, provide visual and multimodal resources, and support teachers in culturally responsive literacy instruction. Curriculum developers could likewise embed local fairy tales in language materials explicitly aligned with listening, reading, speaking, writing, and character-development outcomes. Future research using mixed-method or quasi-experimental designs could examine the effectiveness of local wisdom-based fairy tales for measurable outcomes such as reading comprehension, oral language development, writing ability, and character formation.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating local wisdom into fairy tales offers a pedagogically meaningful medium for Indonesian language learning in primary schools. Local fairy tales supported integrated practice in listening, reading, speaking, and writing while helping students interpret cultural values embedded in narrative texts. Culturally familiar stories encouraged stronger student engagement, since characters, settings, events, and moral messages were closely connected to students' everyday experience, and fairy tales functioned not only as instructional texts but as cultural and ethical learning resources that supported students' interpretation of honesty, responsibility, cooperation, respect for elders, environmental care, and

cultural identity. The novelty of the study lies in documenting the pedagogical process by which local wisdom is transformed into classroom-based language-learning media, a process that has received comparatively little attention in prior research on folklore and character education.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the findings are situated within the specific educational and cultural contexts examined in this study and therefore may not fully represent the diversity of primary school settings and local cultural traditions in Indonesia. Second, as a qualitative study, the interpretation of local wisdom, classroom practices, and students' learning experiences is inherently context-dependent and may be further enriched through additional perspectives and settings. Future research may extend this work by examining local wisdom-based fairy tales across a wider range of educational and cultural contexts and by exploring their potential contributions to different dimensions of language learning and character development. Overall, this study contributes to culturally grounded literacy pedagogy by demonstrating how local wisdom can be deliberately transformed into language-learning media that connect literacy development, character education, and cultural identity formation in primary education.

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Author contributions

Sabaruddin and Abdul Rahman: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, and Writing – review & editing. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available because they include classroom observations, interviews, and student work involving minor participants. De-identified data may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical, privacy, and institutional restrictions.

Declarations

Ethics approval

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research involving human participants and the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Institut Agama Islam DDI Maros prior to data collection.

Consent to participate

Informed consent was obtained from all participating teachers. For student participants, consent was obtained from their parents or legal guardians prior to participation.

Consent to publication

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Claude Sonnet 4.5 (Anthropic) to improve the language and readability of the manuscript and to produce the diagram in Figure 1 from the authors' draft. Following the use of this tool, the authors carefully reviewed, verified, and edited the generated content as necessary to ensure its accuracy, consistency, and scientific integrity. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the published article

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