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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF LOCAL FOLKLORE IN NARRATIVE TEXT

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Abstract: This study explores students' in-depth perceptions of the use of folklore in narrative text learning, considering the lack of studies discussing this topic. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, conducted at SMA Negeri Arjasa Jember. The research participants consisted of five tenth graders who were selected purposively based on two criteria: having adequate verbal communication skills to express their thoughts and having previous learning experiences related to the use of folklore in narrative texts in English lessons. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques by Miles & Huberman. The results showed that students had a positive perception of the integration of folklore, which was considered to improve motivation, engagement, understanding of local culture, and mastery of contextual language. However, limited vocabulary and difficulty in comprehending English structure still pose an obstacle to achieving mastery of past tenses in English. These findings open up opportunities for further research that examines the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in helping students overcome linguistic gaps when learning narrative texts based on local culture.

Keywords: local folklore, narrative text, students' perception

INTRODUCTION

The current applied curriculum in Indonesia is the Merdeka Curriculum. According to the curriculum, students in Indonesia are expected to experience a learning process that puts them at the center of the learning process itself (Kurniawan, 2023). This curriculum encourages teachers to design and implement teaching and learning activities that promote both students' cognitive and affective development. The same also applies to English subjects taught in formal education. Rintaningrum et al., (2023) stated that the Merdeka Curriculum may facilitate an effective English language

learning process, as students are exposed to learning that triggers their motivation, active engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and independence.

Still, in the Merdeka Curriculum, students are expected to learn and master various types of texts to improve their capability, especially those of 21st-century skills that the younger generation must acquire (Ramamonjisoa, 2024). Hence, teachers are responsible for providing a supportive, comfortable, and effective learning process, but also for developing students' 21st century skills. At the senior high school level, students are required to learn a variety of texts, such as descriptive, report, exposition, narrative, and any other form of text, in English class. In this study, the researchers focus on learning narrative text. A narrative text is defined as a form of text that tells a fictional story or a past event to entertain its readers (Safitri & Chairuddin, 2021). This kind of text follows a structure of orientation, complication, and resolution (Susilawati, 2017). Suryani et al., (2021) elucidated that narrative text has five main elements, namely, understanding that supports student understanding; characters that describe the nature of the characters in the story; plot as a series of events that form the story; setting that shows the time and place of the incident; and theme as the primary meaning of the text.

Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum also suggests that teachers provide contextual learning. Thus, in narrative text learning, teachers began to use local folklore to boost students' relatedness to the material. Kamil et al., (2017) expressed that students should experience local cultural contexts that are familiar to them, since it can promote comprehension more easily for students. As a foreign language, students may find it easier to connect their personal experience to the materials through the use of local content. Then, the incorporation of local cultural elements into the curriculum can foster greater student engagement, as the content becomes more contextually meaningful and relatable to their lived experiences. For Indonesian students, folklore constitutes stories reflecting culture that are spread out and passed down from generation to generation (Ramadani et al., 2023). Thus, the integration of folklore into narrative text learning not only assists students in promoting their language learning but also promotes cultural appreciation and identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' Perceptions and the Role of Folklore in Narrative Text Learning

Discussion regarding students' achievement in learning continues to be a concern. One of the most influential aspects towards students' achievements is perception. In an educational context, students' perceptions constitute one aspect that can be studied (Rahman, 2020). Perception is deemed to be the process of interpreting and recognizing stimuli in the form of individuals, objects, events, or activities received by human senses (Keramati & Gillies, 2022). This is in line with Mirazna & Hikmah (2019), who argued that perception is an individual's ability to recognize, process, and decode sensory stimuli in their thinking. Next, Ahmed et al., (2018) described perception as individuals' ways of thinking, attitudes, and beliefs to any aspects influencing their experience during the learning process, such as environment, teaching approach, methods, and content. Perception encompasses two types of forms: positive and negative perceptions. According to Irwanto (2002) positive perception refers to the views and responses of individuals that align with the characteristics or reality of the observed object, reflecting a constructive and supportive understanding, while negative perception reflects cognitive and emotional responses that are inappropriate or deviate from the nature of

the perceived object, which can lead to incorrect or biased judgments. It means that students' perceptions reflect students' viewpoints and way of thinking of something. As such, perception plays a crucial role in helping humans understand their environment and the various things around them.

In relation to the above, the integration of folklore to provide contextual learning into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has been explored in various studies, highlighting its potential to enhance language skills and cultural understanding. A systematic literature review study conducted by Suryani et al., (2021) revealed that folktales significantly improve students' understanding of narrative texts by increasing motivation and engagement. Barli et al. (2024) also found that students expressed increased interest and motivation when engaging with local folklore in their English lessons. The study also highlighted the role of folklore in imparting character education, aligning with cultural values. Likewise, Zahra et al., (2024) conducted a quantitative experimental study in Pakistan, revealing that students exposed to folklore-based reading materials showed significant improvement in reading comprehension compared to those taught with conventional texts. The study's findings also underscored the positive effects of folklore integration, with students exhibiting enhanced vocabulary and reading fluency. Also, Ramadani et al., (2023) conducted a quantitative study revealing that students taught narrative writing using folklore exhibited higher post-test scores compared to those taught without folklore integration. By incorporating folklore into EFL instruction, students' English language skills and cultural understanding seemed to have been enhanced.

Besides, Sutiawati et al., (2023) observed that integrating folklore as local wisdom in teaching narrative texts enhanced students' enthusiasm and critical thinking skills. Tineh et al., (2023) conducted a correlational study to investigate the impact of folklore-implemented teaching on EFL students' integrated English language skills. The research revealed a significant correlation between folklore-based instruction and the enhancement of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This means that students' overall English skills will also improve by integrating local folklore content. By understanding students' views on the utilization of local folklore, teachers are expected to be able to support the improvement of an enjoyable and engaging learning process. Based on this, this study focuses on students' perceptions of utilizing local folklore in learning narrative texts.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, this study aims to investigate students' perceptions of learning narrative texts using folklore materials. By employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research seeks to reinforce quantitative findings on students' motivation, engagement, language skills, and cultural appreciation when exposed to folklore-based narrative texts. Nevertheless, studies that specifically highlight students' perceptions of using local folklore in narrative text learning are still relatively limited. Therefore, the current research highlights students' perceptions toward narrative text learning using folklore materials.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design as the research methodology to explore students' perceptions of narrative text learning using folklore material in depth. A case study was utilized in various disciplines, particularly in the field of evaluation, in which researchers conduct in-depth interviews (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). The participants were five tenth-grade students selected from the tenth-grade students at SMAN Arjasa Jember. These participants were chosen based on the following criteria: they possessed proper verbal communication skills to share their thoughts, and they had prior exposure to the use of folklore in narrative texts, which they had learned as part of their English curriculum. They were labelled herein as Respondent 1 (R1), Respondent 2 (R2), Respondent 3 (R3), Respondent 4 (R4), and Respondent 5 (R5).

This research employed interviews with the five selected students to collect data. The collected data was analyzed using the analysis model proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994). The model includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. No prosodic component occurred in the transcription process, since this study focuses on the participants' own responses. The transcriptions were then thoroughly examined and displayed in a narrative way. After that, the researchers reviewed the entire transcription multiple times from start to finish to identify and group emerging themes or patterns relevant to the study's focus.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a detailed analysis of students' perceptions of the use of local folklore in learning narrative texts, structured across four core dimensions: motivation towards the learning process, learning engagement, local cultural understanding, improvements in English language skills, and challenges during the learning process. All participants have learned narrative text in their English class. Thus, they were at the perfect time to be interviewed. The data were drawn from in-depth interviews. The data were then reviewed, reduced, classified, and displayed in a narrative way.

Motivation towards the Learning Process

The student seemed to have increased their interest and motivation towards the learning process significantly. The following are the excerpts of the in-depth interview results after decoding, data reduction, and classification.

Excerpt 1

"I can pay more attention because I was already familiar with some parts of the story, so it was easier for me to follow the English version." (R1)

Excerpt 2

"My friends and I discussed the characters a lot, and I enjoyed talking about it with them. The discussions became more engaging." (R3)

According to the above results, students' perceptions tend to be positive towards the use of local folklore in English narrative text materials. It seemed that it also supports their learning process. Respondent 1 stated that prior knowledge of the storyline made it easier to understand the English version. This suggests that familiarity with local content seems to significantly contribute to triggering students' focus and interest in following the material.

Meanwhile, Respondent 3 highlighted the social and affective aspects of the learning process. Discussions about characters in local folklore seemed to encourage interaction between students and created a fun and collaborative learning atmosphere.

This demonstrates that the use of local stories may be suitable for enhancing narrative understanding and fostering students' intrinsic motivation in learning a foreign language.

Thus, local folklore seems to be a suitable medium for developing their motivation to learn English, particularly in mastering narrative texts that are rich in cultural meaning and contextual values closely related to their lives. They also overwhelmingly reported that using local folklore increased their intrinsic motivation to participate in English lessons.

Learning Engagement

The students demonstrated an improvement in their involvement in class activities, particularly during group discussions and story reconstruction tasks. The following are the excerpts of the in-depth interview results after decoding, data reduction, and classification.

Excerpt 3

"Since I already knew the story, I felt more comfortable answering the questions. Completing the given assignments also became easier for me. I was also able to assist my group members." (R2)

Excerpt 4

"My friends and I watched a folktale video played by the teacher, and we were assigned to identify the moral values in the story. As a result, we discussed the values presented in the story and sometimes debated which characters were right or wrong." (R5)

The results of the interview above show that the use of local folklore in learning English narrative texts may enhance students' participation cognitively, affectively, and socially. Respondent 2 said that background knowledge of the story made him feel more comfortable and confident in answering questions and completing the tasks given by the teacher. Respondent 2 also claimed that he was able to play an active role in the group by helping his friends during the discussion session. This reflects that familiarity with local content may encourage active contribution to learning.

Likewise, Respondent 5 emphasized students' involvement in group discussions after watching a folklore video played by the teacher. She claimed that the discussions were meant to analyze the folklore in detail. The discussions on moral values and characters in the story contributed to creating a space for critical and collaborative thinking, even promoting healthy debates among students. This suggests that local folklore may serve not only as a tool to help understand narrative texts, but also as a catalyst for social interaction and intellectual engagement in learning. Thus, students may experience comfort and interest during the learning process, which also encourages them to engage actively in the learning activities.

Local Cultural Understanding

Local cultural understanding refers to an understanding of the values, norms, traditions, and ways of life of the local community, including knowledge of customs, language, and cultural symbols that shape local identity. In an educational context, this understanding enables students to relate subject matter to their lives, strengthens their cultural identity, and fosters a tolerant and appreciative attitude towards diversity.

Regarding this dimension, the following are the excerpts of the in-depth interview results after decoding, data reduction, and classification.

Excerpt 5

"I was familiar with the story, but previously I had only read it superficially. This was the first time I analyzed the deeper meaning. I realized that such stories teach us important values such as honesty, mutual assistance, and respect for others, especially our parents." (R1)

Excerpt 6

"Indonesian folktales are diverse, so it was enjoyable when we were asked to compare them. I found it easier to comprehend the stories, and my knowledge increased as a result. I was unaware that our culture was so varied before." (R4)

Based on the above results, students demonstrated their broadened cultural insights into local wisdom by incorporating local folklore into their learning of English narrative texts. They also demonstrated an improvement in language comprehension through the assistance of local folklore. Respondent 1 stated that despite previously knowing the story, this local folklore incorporated learning was his first experience in analyzing the meaning of the story in depth. Through the learning process, he realized that the local culture conveyed strong moral messages, including honesty, mutual assistance, and respect for others, especially elders, which also enriched his understanding of local cultural values. This assumes that the integration of folklore into learning materials may trigger students' reflective awareness of cultural values in the context of foreign language learning.

Meanwhile, Respondent 4 highlighted the diversity of Indonesian folklore and her new experience in comparing stories from various regions. She claimed that this kind of activity assists her in understanding the content of the story and also helps in expanding her knowledge of the diversity of Indonesian culture that she had not previously realized. This finding demonstrates that incorporating local folklore may foster a deeper understanding of local culture and strengthen students' connection to their culture while enhancing students' appreciation for the nation's cultural richness.

English Language Skills Improvement

Language mastery is essential for students. It also applies to English. English as an international language will facilitate access to global information for students. The following are the excerpts of the in-depth interview results after decoding, data reduction, and classification.

Excerpt 7

"Since I already knew the plot, I was able to focus more on the English vocabulary and sentence structures. As a result, I gained a better understanding of the English reading passages." (R2)

Excerpt 8

"I learned the meanings and pronunciation of new vocabulary from the texts I read. I also became more focused on learning English tenses. It was quite enjoyable." (R3)

According to the above results, it seems that the use of local folklore in learning English narrative texts has a positive impact on language comprehension and students' involvement in the learning process. Respondent 2 expressed that, as he already understood the storyline, he could focus more on linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary and sentence structure in English. This assumes that familiarity with the content of the story makes it easier for students to focus on language learning, without being burdened by the need to understand new narrative content.

Moreover, Respondent 3 conveyed that through the folklore text, she learned new vocabulary and pronunciation thereof. She said that she felt more motivated to understand grammatical structures, especially tenses used in narrative text. She added that this kind of experience was enjoyable and made the learning process more interesting. These responses suggest that local folklore may serve as an effective medium for developing foreign language skills comprehensively. Thus, it is assumed that students experienced significant improvements in their English language skills, especially in narrative reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery.

Challenges during the Learning Process

Despite the advantages of incorporating local folklore into the learning of narrative texts in English, students still seemed to face some difficulties during the learning process. When asked questions that denoted their challenges, they expressed what they faced and felt during the learning activities. The following are the excerpts of the in-depth interview results after decoding, data reduction, and classification.

Excerpt 9

"Occasionally, when I encountered vocabulary that was difficult to pronounce, I momentarily lost interest. I had to translate each sentence first. While I could grasp the moral values, it was still quite difficult to express them in English. Fortunately, the teacher provided support." (R1)

Excerpt 10

"Honestly, I still struggle with grammar, particularly with the past tense. Sometimes I forget to use the correct verb forms." (R2)

Excerpt 11

"I liked the story, but I generally do not enjoy learning English. However, folktales made it easier for me to understand. The main challenge I faced was that I still spent a lot of time thinking in English because the language itself is difficult for me." (R3)

Excerpt 12

"Even though I enjoyed the story, I became tired when I did not understand the sentences. It slowed me down. I encountered a lot of new vocabulary, and I had to frequently ask the teacher or check the dictionary on my phone." (R4)

The results of the interviews above illustrate students' interests in local folklore, yet they still experienced challenges in comprehending the English language structures and tenses used in the folklore and in expressing the content of the folklore in English. Respondent 1 and Respondent 5 revealed that limited vocabulary and difficulty in pronouncing or constructing sentences in English were the main obstacles in expressing their comprehension of the moral values contained in the story. This assumes that

linguistic barriers may reduce interest and slow down the learning process, even if students understand the content and cultural meaning of the story.

Furthermore, Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 highlighted difficulties in understanding grammar, especially the use of past tenses, as well as the tendency to think in Indonesian first before translating it into English. Respondent 4 added that limitations in comprehending sentence structures and new vocabulary required additional efforts, such as asking teachers or using a dictionary. Although local folklore facilitates students' access to the cultural context and content of the story, language barriers remain a significant challenge. Thus, despite the fact that the response to the use of local folklore in terms of cultural understanding tends to be positive, strong pedagogical support is still necessary to help students overcome linguistic barriers in learning English narrative texts.

Following this, the current study set out to explore students' perceptions of the integration of local folklore into narrative text learning within the context of a tenth-grade EFL classroom. The findings above revealed significant impacts across four key dimensions: motivation, learning engagement, local cultural understanding, English language skills improvement, and challenges during the learning process. Each of these dimensions revealed rich insights into how culturally grounded content may reshape the experience of learning English, particularly narrative comprehension and writing.

Regarding the motivation towards the learning process and learning engagement dimension, the findings revealed that the use of local folklore is considered effective in increasing students' motivation and engagement to learn English, especially in understanding narrative texts that are rich in cultural elements and values relevant to their life experiences. Students also stated that local folklore encouraged their intrinsic motivation in participating in English learning. It means that locally based learning materials appear to trigger learning motivation and engagement. In such a context, folklore serves as a bridge between home culture and the language academy. This recognition of culture seemed to foster motivation far more effectively than conventional subject matter. It proves that integrating local folklore may significantly enhance students' motivation to engage with English learning materials. It is similar to a study by Barli et al., (2024) that noted, using local stories as educational tools contributed to an engaging classroom atmosphere where students felt encouraged to contribute and share personal insights. All respondents also reported that the familiarity of the stories and their cultural relevance made for a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience. These were in line with a previous study conducted by Zahra et al., (2024) and Suryani et al., (2021), which reported enhanced student engagement and comprehension when folklore was integrated into language learning.

Moreover, they also reported that it enhances their confidence and language comprehension, enabling active participation in discussions that foster critical thinking, collaboration, and more engaging, culturally relevant learning experiences. This was in line with Belouiza et al., (2024), who found that prior knowledge of the story content enhances motivation, confidence, and encourages active involvement in group discussions that support critical thinking, cooperation, and meaningful learning. Similarly, Sutiawati et al., (2023) reported that when used in narrative lessons, folklore elevated students' enthusiasm and fostered intrinsic motivation. In addition, Safitri (2023) also identified similar patterns, highlighting how students showed deeper involvement when reading culturally rich narratives. Students in this study also performed brainstorming and mind-mapping exercises to identify key elements such as

setting, conflict, and characterization, reflecting higher-order thinking skills, especially students who can be categorized as high achievers. Students displayed improvements in their cognitive, emotional, and social engagement, which in turn encourages active participation in class and collaborative learning. These studies suggest that the use of folklore increases students' motivation and engagement during the teaching and learning process of narrative text.

In relation to the above, through storytelling rooted in local folklore, students may develop a fundamental understanding of traditional values and cultural identity. Regarding the local cultural understanding dimension, the culturally grounded nature of the materials may encourage students to contribute ideas, ask questions, and relate the text to their own life experiences (Besonia et al., 2023). They reported that analyzing folklore allowed them to reflect on cultural values, compare traditions, and find connections between moral lessons and everyday life. Likewise, folklore may also serve as an effective tool to introduce or deepen students' cultural understanding (Sawita et al., 2024). They could identify implicit lessons around virtues that are culturally applied, such as honesty, perseverance, and respect for elders, which are often portrayed through the behavior of story characters. Students progress from "I know this story" to "This story is interesting and teaches me something important" and to "The moral and cultural values in this story still apply to my life today." This process represents maturity in interpretive thinking and cultural reflection.

However, the researchers found something that was somewhat unique. Students also explained during the interview that at first they were excited when the folklore video played through a projector in their class, and yet they were indeed struggling to comprehend the vocabulary that they heard. However, when they read the vocabulary that was sourced from the video, they were able to understand it, although they did it step by step. This showed students' eagerness to translate and comprehend the vocabulary that they heard and read. Thus, students were capable of comprehending the narrative passage and analyzing the moral and cultural values in the story. These results align with research by Safitri (2023) and Sutiawati et al., (2023), which indicated that folktales serve as cultural transmitters, helping students internalize values central to their communities. Such research supports the idea that narrative texts can serve not only as language models but also as tools for moral education. This is also supported by studies by Monica & Soplantila (2024) and Nambiar et al., (2020), which argued that students with prior exposure to local tales exhibited a more profound appreciation and were more confident in drawing connections between folklore and their personal experiences. Thus, suggestions for more inclusive curriculum planning are necessary to integrate culturally relevant content across grade levels consistently.

Moreover, regarding improvements in English skills, students demonstrated a quite noticeable enhancement in their English skills during the folklore learning sessions. Their familiarity with the story's content allows them to focus more on linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary, sentence structure, and tense usage, without being burdened by the need to understand new content. This was in line with a study by Vandana (2022) which highlighted how story familiarity fosters independent learning and enables students to grasp grammar and vocabulary more naturally. It means that integrating folklore into learning may provide a more accessible and meaningful context for students to develop their language skills. This also aligns with Tineh et al., (2023) who argued that teaching English by incorporating folklore assisted students in enhancing integrated English abilities for EFL students. This finding is supported by

Zahra et al., (2024) who highlighted how incorporating culturally relevant content helped learners develop a more substantial interest in reading and language acquisition. This suggests that folklore indeed assists students in improving their mastery of English skills.

However, in terms of challenges during the learning process, despite demonstrating interest in local folklore-integrated learning, students still faced linguistic barriers, such as vocabulary limitations and difficulties with comprehending English sentence structure. In detail, such difficulties arise when students have to construct sentences and retell stories in English, even though they have understood the cultural values and morals in the stories. Thus, students need proper scaffolding as it significantly helps EFL learners in enhancing their reading and comprehension skills, as well as vocabulary mastery (Arora et al., 2024). It means that students need continuous support in terms of verb use, sentence cohesion, and descriptive language skills. As such, teachers need to pay attention to the level of language complexity and provide assistance such as glossaries or an initial introduction to important vocabulary, as students still experienced some challenges during the process. After all, folktales function as a spark, but teaching strategies are the fire that keeps the spirit of learning burning (Darmayanti et al., 2024). Therefore, folktales may indeed encourage fluency in conveying ideas. However, they should be accompanied by feedback, concrete examples, and guided practice so that students may express their ideas in English more effectively.

To conclude, integrating folktales into narrative text instruction has been shown to create positive change in assisting students learn narrative text, especially as it also revitalizes student engagement in the EFL classroom context. More than just a teaching tool, folktales serve as emotional and cultural bridges, connecting students' local identities with the global language skills they are honing. In the learning environment, these stories spark curiosity, increase engagement, and build meaningful connections, whether to the material being studied or to themselves as learners. However, learning through storytelling is not free from linguistic barriers that need to be bridged with consistent strategic support. Therefore, the success of utilizing folktales depends heavily on the collaboration between the underlying cultural values and careful pedagogical methods. The content taught is essential, but so is the way we present it and guide students in their exploration.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students hold positive perceptions of narrative text learning when folklore materials are utilized. Despite facing the difficulties and challenges mentioned above, students still demonstrated positive responses towards the integration of folklore in narrative text learning. They not only enjoyed a more meaningful learning experience but also felt valued when their culture was highlighted in the teaching materials. Folklore provides a space for students to express their identities and emotions in a familiar context, making the learning process feel more natural and enjoyable. This has a direct impact on increasing their motivation, class engagement, and improving their reading comprehension slightly in using English.

However, this process also reveals that there are still linguistic challenges to be addressed. Gaps in vocabulary and sentence structure mastery hinder fluency of expression, especially when students are asked to write or retell the folklore with proper

grammar. Therefore, the role of teachers is crucial in providing continuous scaffolding through strategies such as language modeling, guided practice, and constructive feedback. Folklore can ignite the spirit of learning, but the right teaching strategies are what will keep the fire burning. The research implications for future studies are to evaluate the effectiveness of specific scaffolding strategies in enhancing students' linguistic abilities during the process of exploring local narrative texts. With a holistic approach that combines meaningful content and strong pedagogical support, folklore becomes not only a means of language reinforcement but also a means to build a bridge between students' cultural heritage and global competence.

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