

ISRG Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (ISRGJMS)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: isrg j. multidiscip. Stud.

ISSN: 2584-0452 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjms/>

Volume – IV, Issue - V (May) 2026

Frequency: Monthly



Transforming Tradition into Literacy: A Systematic Literature Review on the Pedagogical Impact of Folklore on Students' Linguistic and Cultural Competencies

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| Received: 11.05.2026 | Accepted: 18.05.2026 | Published: 24.05.2026

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Abstract

The rapid flow of globalization significantly impacts the cultural identity and literacy of the younger generation. Integrating folklore into educational curricula offers a strategic approach to preserving cultural heritage while enhancing language learning and social skills. This Systematic Literature Review explores pedagogical strategies used to integrate folklore into learning environments and evaluates its impact on students' motivation, cultural literacy, and linguistic proficiency. Adhering to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a comprehensive search was conducted on the Scopus database. Six empirical studies published between 2017 and 2026 met the rigorous inclusion criteria and were analyzed using thematic synthesis. Findings reveal four primary outcomes. First, modernizing folklore through digital media yields high validity and practicality. Second, folklore interventions significantly elevate cultural literacy and cultivate prosocial characteristics like empathy. Third, utilizing familiar cultural narratives effectively accelerates receptive linguistic skills, particularly reading comprehension. Finally, folklore-based learning consistently escalates students' cognitive motivation and emotional engagement. Integrating folklore into education is a transformative pedagogical strategy. It bridges the gap between traditional wisdom and modern instructional design to foster learners with strong moral character, deep cultural appreciation, and advanced linguistic capabilities.

Keywords: Folklore, Cultural Literacy, Language Learning, Systematic Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity is transmitted through meaningful narratives and educational practices, though modern popular culture and technological penetration have eroded youth's awareness of folklore (Sarmadan et al., 2025). Folklore serves as a medium full of local wisdom, relevant for training social skills and instilling

moral values in students (Kusmana et al., 2020; Taufina et al., 2019). Furthermore, storytelling approaches rooted in local traditions have been empirically proven to cultivate social care character, a sense of responsibility, and empathy from an early age (Veronica et al., 2026). Despite its immense potential for character

education, the integration of local culture in formal education often remains incidental and urgently requires more structured contextual curriculum guidelines (Triyani & Adi, 2025).

In the dimension of language learning, recontextualizing local wisdom offers dual benefits: accelerating cognitive linguistic skills while simultaneously honing students' multicultural sensitivity. A systematic literature review highlights that exposure to folklore significantly enhances students' ability to analyze and comprehend narrative texts (Suryani et al., 2021). Moreover, folklore functions as a powerful educational platform to bridge foreign language acquisition with students' cultural backgrounds. For instance, the use of indigenous legends has proven effective in facilitating comprehensive English language skill development, while Arabic teaching materials adopting elements of Indonesian folklore successfully enrich the learning experience without distorting the students' native cultural identity (Al Farisi et al., 2024; Mauri et al., 2019).

The successful integration of folklore heavily depends on pedagogical design and the quality of social interaction established within the classroom. Strategic pedagogical practices, such as engaging students in argumentative discussions and contextual learning derived from indigenous knowledge systems, have been shown to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ogegbo & Ramnarain, 2024). From an educational psychology perspective, optimizing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through scaffolding methods based on local wisdom provides a crucial contribution to strengthening emotional regulation and interactive collaboration skills among students (Umayyah & Fauzi, 2026). Across disciplines, academic studies confirm that local wisdom plays a vital role as a bridge connecting scientific concepts in schools with the sociocultural realities of the students' daily environments (Subayani et al., 2025).

To dismantle the stigma that folklore is outdated, contemporary educators are required to revitalize local wisdom through the adoption of digital technologies that align with the learning styles of today's generation. The utilization of advanced media, such as Mixed Reality (MR), which integrates physical and virtual elements in presenting folklore, has been experimentally proven to expand students' cultural literacy skills within the knowledge dimension (Abidin et al., 2023). In line with this breakthrough, the development of interactive electronic modules (e-modules) encompassing timeless stories has demonstrated highly practical and effective results in boosting the learning motivation of

students, who previously often perceived conventional methods as overly monotonous (Masie et al., 2025). This digitalization and media innovation act as vital catalysts ensuring that noble values do not fade into obsolescence.

Building upon the existing realities and research gaps, a comprehensive review mapping the effectiveness of integrating local wisdom across various educational contexts is necessary. This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) specifically aims to critically examine recent literature regarding the utilization of folklore in language education. The review will explore the diverse pedagogical strategies and technological innovations deployed by educators to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm. Furthermore, this study evaluates the direct impact of folklore-based approaches on enhancing student motivation, while simultaneously measuring its significant role in fortifying cultural literacy. Through a systematic analysis, this research is expected to provide new paradigms and practical recommendations for curriculum developers and policymakers to design learning ecosystems that are meaningful, innovative, and firmly rooted in noble cultural heritage.

METHODE

Research Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, strictly adhering to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) 2020 reporting guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The utilization of the PRISMA 2020 protocol ensures that the entire process, which encompasses identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and data extraction, is conducted transparently, comprehensively, and reproducibly. Through this SLR approach, empirical literature was systematically evaluated to identify, appraise, and interpret relevant findings to address the research questions regarding the effectiveness of integrating folklore into language learning.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted utilizing Scopus, a highly reputable academic database. To retrieve highly specific and relevant literature, the search was executed using Boolean operators applied to the Title, Abstract, and Keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY) fields. Furthermore, automated limiters were applied directly within the database engine to refine the publication year, document type, language, and subject area. The detailed search strategy and applied limiters are delineated in Table 1.

Table 1. Search Strategy Table

Database	Search String	Automation Limiters	Records
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY(("folklore" OR "folktale*" OR "folk story" OR "legend*" OR "myth*" OR "fable*" OR "traditional story") AND ("interest" OR "motivation" OR "engagement" OR "attitude*" OR "affective") AND ("language learning" OR "language teaching" OR "L2" OR "FL" OR "literacy")))	Publication Year: 2017 to 2026 Document Type: Journal Article (ar) Language: English Subject Area: Social Sciences (SOC) and Arts & Humanities (ARTS)	Initial Identification: n = 353 Remaining after automated filters: n = 18

Eligibility Criteria

The determination of literature eligible for synthesis was predicated on a stringent set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised: (1) empirical research articles published in peer-reviewed journals; (2) publications within the last decade (2017 to 2026); (3) articles written in English; and (4) studies primarily focusing on pedagogical interventions utilizing

folklore or local wisdom materials in the context of language learning, literacy, or student motivation. Conversely, the exclusion criteria encompassed: (1) literature reviews, book chapters, conference proceedings, or conceptual papers; and (2) studies discussing myths, legends, or folklore but situated entirely outside the educational or pedagogical realm (for example, pure clinical health studies, grief counseling, urban planning, or climate change mitigation).

Study Selection Process

The literature selection process was mapped using the PRISMA 2020 framework, which comprises four primary phases:

identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). The detailed reduction process and the specific rationale for exclusion at each phase are systematically presented in Table 2.

Table 2. PRISMA Framework: Systematic Article Reduction For Final Coding And Thematic Analysis

PRISMA Phase	Reduction Process and Selection Criteria	Number (n)
Identification	Total initial records identified from the database search (Scopus)	n = 353
	Records marked as ineligible and directly excluded by automation tools and database filters prior to manual screening	n = 335
Screening	Total records screened for relevance based on titles and abstracts	n = 18
	Records excluded Reason: The topics were entirely outside the scope of education and language learning (for example, clinical health studies, bereavement/grief, or climate change).	n = 6
Eligibility	Reports sought for full-text retrieval	n = 12
	Reports not retrieved	n = 0
	Full-text reports rigorously assessed for eligibility	n = 12
	Reports manually excluded, with specific reasons:	n = 6
	a. Incompatibility with the operational definition of the search terms.	n = 4
	b. Absence of pedagogical interventions utilizing folklore or local wisdom materials in the classroom.	n = 2
Included	Final empirical studies meeting all criteria to be included in the review for coding and thematic analysis	n = 6

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the six studies that met the eligibility criteria were systematically extracted into a data matrix. The extracted information encompassed author details, publication year, country of research, participant characteristics, methodological approach, pedagogical interventions applied, and the principal findings of each study. Following the extraction process, the data were synthesized using thematic analysis. This technique was employed to identify, categorize, and describe recurring patterns across the various studies regarding how the integration of folklore influences narrative text reading comprehension, enhances student motivation, and cultivates students' cultural literacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Based on the rigorous literature selection process utilizing the PRISMA framework, this study definitively identified empirical studies meeting all eligibility criteria for further data extraction and analysis. The included literature presents a highly diverse research landscape, encompassing varying educational levels, cultural contexts, and methodological designs. Participants in the reviewed studies spanned a broad age range, from early childhood in kindergarten settings to elementary school students, and extending

to learners in senior high and vocational schools. Methodologically, the included articles adopted robust empirical approaches, including quasi-experimental designs to measure direct impacts, qualitative ethnographic studies to dissect cultural interactions, and research and development (R&D) models focused on creating educational products.

The data exploration from these principal studies revealed critical findings that directly address the objectives of this systematic review, particularly regarding the effectiveness of integrating folklore to accelerate linguistic skills, learning motivation, and students' cultural literacy. The extraction results indicate a significant pedagogical transition; contemporary local wisdom is no longer taught conventionally but has been modernized through interventions such as Mixed Reality (MR) media, interactive electronic modules (e-modules), and information technology-based educational platforms. Conversely, non-digital pedagogical strategies, such as interactive storytelling and narrative text analysis, continue to demonstrate substantial leverage in transforming students' social care character and multicultural appreciation within the classroom. A systematic summary of the intervention characteristics and specific achievements of each study is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Detailed Data Extraction and Principal Findings of the Included Studies

Author & Year	Subjects & Methodology	Focus / Intervention Media	Principal Findings in Detail
Abidin et al. (2023)	418 fifth-grade students across 16 schools in West Java; Quasi-Experimental	Mixed Reality (MR) media featuring 5 West Javanese folktales.	The average cultural literacy score of the experimental class surged drastically from 39.99 to 107.41, compared to the control class. The most significant increase occurred in the cultural knowledge dimension (+15.957 points).

Author & Year	Subjects & Methodology	Focus / Intervention Media	Principal Findings in Detail
Al Farisi et al. (2024)	43 multicultural vocational high school students in Pangandaran; Qualitative Ethnographic Study	Integration of the "Origin of Bandung" folklore into Arabic language teaching materials.	Folklore effectively facilitated vocabulary translation, phonological analysis, and comprehension of Arabic communication conventions, fostering multicultural tolerance without displacing the native language identity.
Masie et al. (2025)	52 tenth-grade high school students in the Teluk Tomini area; 4D Model R&D	Interactive e-module featuring Gorontalo folklore (The Origin of Lake Limboto).	Product validity reached a highly valid level post-revision (material 5.00; language 4.75). During large-scale trials, 82.45% of students stated the module was highly practical and successfully boosted learning motivation.
Mauri et al. (2019)	Tenth-grade students in Valparaíso, Chile; Qualitative/Experimental	Indigenous Chilean legends integrated via an ICT-based educational platform.	The utilization of a task-based methodology paired with local legends specifically assisted students in developing receptive language skills (reading and listening) in English.
Taufina et al. (2019)	Elementary school students in Padang and Pariaman; R2D2 Model R&D	Reading textbooks featuring Indonesian folklore texts.	The instructional material instrument was categorized as "very valid" by experts and was empirically proven to be capable of improving and cultivating good attitudes among learners.
Veronica et al. (2026)	120 kindergarten children aged 5–6 years in Surabaya; Quasi-Experimental	A 12-week interactive storytelling method based on moral folktales.	The Social Care Character Scale (SCCS) score increased significantly ($t=-8.23$, $p=0.001$) with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.28$), particularly in the aspects of cooperation and empathy.

Based on the analysis and extraction of the aforementioned literature, the results of this systematic review are classified into four specific findings:

1. Validity and Practicality of Folklore Media Innovations

The findings demonstrate that the development of contemporary folklore-based teaching materials no longer relies solely on conventional texts; rather, it has been digitally modernized, achieving exceptionally high levels of validity. For instance, in the development of interactive electronic modules (e-modules) based on Gorontalo folklore utilizing the 4D model, validation by material experts initially yielded a score of 3.8. However, following revisions that localized the general narrative into a specific regional tale (The Origin of Lake Limboto) and integrated audio-visual elements via platforms like Flipbook and Wordwall, the material validity score surged to a perfect 5.00. The linguistic aspect of the module also improved significantly to 4.75, proving that adapting local wisdom into digital media is highly feasible and meets the stringent standards of formal education.

Beyond theoretical validation by experts, these folklore media innovations have proven to be highly practical and easily accepted by students in the field. In a large-scale trial involving 52 students, 82.45% confirmed the practicality of the e-module, with 83.6% appreciating the visual design and 87.3% finding the language highly comprehensible. Similar evaluations were observed in the development of folklore reading textbooks using the R2D2 model in elementary schools, which were empirically validated as "very valid" by expert committees, teachers, and students. Another review reinforces this finding, asserting that folklore instructional material prototypes designed in alignment with students' sociocultural backgrounds are exceptionally user-friendly and serve as highly effective learning instruments.

2. Quantitative Impact on Cultural Literacy and Social Skills

Pedagogical interventions employing folklore media have been statistically proven to exponentially skyrocket students' cultural literacy and prosocial behaviors. The implementation of Mixed Reality (MR) technology featuring five West Javanese folktales (such as Sangkuriang and Situ Bagendit) among 418 elementary students yielded highly impressive outcomes. The average cultural literacy score in the experimental group experienced a drastic surge from 39.99 at pretest to 107.41 at posttest, significantly outperforming the control group, which only reached a score of 61.92. The most substantial improvement occurred specifically within the cultural knowledge dimension (+15.957 points), providing concrete evidence that folklore integration is not merely for entertainment but functions as a potent, measurable instrument for cultural knowledge transfer.

At the early childhood education level, folklore plays a crucial role as the foundation for shaping children's social skills and empathy. An interactive storytelling program implemented over 12 consecutive weeks resulted in a significant spike in children's social care character; the Social Care Character Scale (SCCS) score increased from 3.45 to 4.12 ($p=0.001$) with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.28$). Optimizing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through scaffolding methods combined with local cultural activities has also been shown to encourage role-sharing, rule negotiation, and meaningful cooperation among children, thereby directly stimulating the development of their social interaction skills in the classroom.

3. Acceleration of Receptive Linguistic Skills and Text Comprehension

Folklore has proven to be a highly effective contextual instrument for accelerating the acquisition and comprehension of languages, both native and foreign. Within the context of Indonesian literacy,

systematic reviews confirm that the use of archipelago folktales significantly enhances students' ability to read and analyze narrative texts, as these materials bridge the text with the students' background knowledge. Furthermore, in Arabic language learning at vocational high schools, an ethnographic study revealed that the integration of the local folklore "The Origin of Bandung" greatly facilitated students in identifying phonological patterns, translating target vocabulary, and analyzing declarative and interrogative sentence structures without displacing their native cultural identity.

The positive impact of local wisdom on receptive skills is also strongly confirmed in English language learning. The utilization of Chilean indigenous legends, packaged through ICT platforms and a task-based methodology, effectively assisted high school students in holistically strengthening their reading and listening capabilities. A parallel finding was observed in the application of multi-sensory children's stories in Sri Lanka, where traditional narratives delivered using visual instruments, sign language, and oral speech significantly improved the acquisition of expressive and receptive vocabulary among children with hearing impairments. These findings underscore the cross-boundary function of folklore as a universal pedagogical medium for language.

4. Escalation of Engagement, Enthusiasm, and Cognitive Motivation

The deployment of local cultural narratives closely related to students' environments consistently stimulates their enthusiasm, motivation, and active cognitive participation in the classroom. Evaluation data from the implementation of folklore e-modules demonstrated highly positive results; 80.0% of students reported feeling significantly more motivated to learn, and 80.9% stated that local wisdom narratives helped them connect abstract academic materials with real-life examples in their surroundings. Additionally, 87.3% of students felt that learning became much more engaging when local wisdom was presented through a modern approach, effectively dismantling the boredom frequently associated with conventional methods.

Beyond cognitive motivation, the integration of folklore also triggers a high degree of emotional engagement. Behavioral observations indicated that children exposed to interactive storytelling sessions based on local wisdom voluntarily began practicing prosocial responsibilities, such as sharing materials and offering assistance to peers facing difficulties. From the perspective of science education, pedagogical strategies involving argumentative discussions regarding indigenous knowledge (such as local tools or traditional ecological practices) have been proven capable of demystifying science as a rigid discipline, encouraging students to actively engage in experiments, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving. This interactive engagement proves that folklore ignites a profound spirit of inquiry across various academic disciplines.

DISCUSSION

1. Validity and Practicality of Folklore Media Innovations

The exceptionally high validity and practicality of folklore-based educational media confirm that local wisdom is highly adaptable to modern instructional design. The development of interactive electronic modules (e-modules) that achieved a perfect feasibility score proves that recontextualizing local narratives into digital platforms is highly relevant to the demands of 21st-century formal education (Masie et al., 2025). This aligns with findings suggesting

that folklore-based literary teaching materials, when meticulously designed to reflect students' social backgrounds, can meet the most stringent validity criteria set by educational experts and practitioners (Taufina et al., 2019). Furthermore, integrating folklore structures that are inherently familiar to students' daily lives has proven to be an effective pedagogical scaffold, facilitating teachers in designing high-quality, user-friendly learning materials (Kusmana et al., 2020).

The practicality of these innovative media also serves as a crucial solution to the threat of oral traditions fading amidst the influx of global popular culture. The declining interest of the younger generation in local wisdom is frequently attributed to conventional presentation formats that no longer resonate with their digital-native lifestyles (Sarmadan et al., 2025). Therefore, the digitalization of folklore into *e-stories* or electronic modules not only rescues cultural heritage from obsolescence but has also been proven to massively ignite students' interest in reading and rewriting these narratives in language learning settings (Abd Rahim et al., 2017). The transformation from outdated printed texts to interactive audio-visual media successfully dismantles the stigma that folklore is archaic, rendering it a highly practical and relevant instrument for modern classrooms.

2. Quantitative Impact on Enhancing Cultural Literacy and Social Skills

The drastic surge in students' cultural literacy occurs because media innovations, such as Mixed Reality (MR), are capable of presenting sociocultural experiences immersively and tangibly within the classroom. When students interact with local legends through visual and virtual representations, their cultural knowledge and attitudes are optimally stimulated compared to merely reading static texts (Abidin et al., 2023). This integration underscores that local wisdom is not merely a supplementary curriculum component, but rather a robust interdisciplinary bridge connecting conceptual understanding in schools with the reality of preserving cultural heritage in the community (Subayani et al., 2025). Utilizing local wisdom in foundational education has also been confirmed to effectively foster a love for one's own culture and strengthen students' national identity (Triyani & Adi, 2025).

In the context of social skill formation, the effectiveness of folklore can be thoroughly explained through the lens of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory regarding the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The massive improvement in social care character (effect size $d = 1.28$) through storytelling methods proves that folktales provide "social scripts" that guide children in practicing empathy and collaboration (Veronica et al., 2026). When teachers optimize the ZPD through scaffolding methods integrated with local cultural activities, children who were previously reluctant to share become more adaptive, capable of negotiating, and demonstrate highly positive prosocial behaviors toward their peers (Umayyah & Fauzi, 2026). Thus, folklore provides a safe psychological ecosystem for students to regulate their emotions and learn to resolve social conflicts constructively.

3. Acceleration of Receptive Linguistic Skills and Text Comprehension

The success of folklore in accelerating narrative text comprehension is heavily correlated with the activation of students' pre-existing schemas or background knowledge. When students are presented with folktales or legends rooted in their own sociocultural environment, their cognitive load in decoding the text is significantly alleviated, which exponentially improves their

comprehensive reading abilities (Suryani et al., 2021). The exact same pattern has proven effective in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where the utilization of indigenous legends, packaged through educational technology platforms and task-based methodologies, successfully facilitates the holistic enhancement of receptive language skills, particularly reading and listening (Mauri et al., 2019). Even in inclusive educational settings, multi-sensory stimulation based on traditional stories is effective in prompting new vocabulary acquisition for children with hearing impairments (Hettiarachchi et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the use of folklore enables foreign language acquisition to occur without distorting or displacing the students' native cultural identity. Ethnographic studies reveal that Arabic teaching materials adopting elements from the "Origin of Bandung" folktale greatly assist students in analyzing phonology, syntactic structures, and enriching target vocabulary while simultaneously building multicultural awareness (Al Farisi et al., 2024). Symbolic engagement with these traditional myths or narratives has also been shown to stimulate students' metaphorical reasoning, which is a crucial foundation in higher-order language processing (Gellel et al., 2024). This affirms that local wisdom acts as a universally responsive pedagogical medium, bridging the acquisition of foreign languages with the roots of students' local identities.

4. Escalation of Emotional Engagement, Enthusiasm, and Cognitive Motivation

The deployment of local cultural narratives consistently stimulates students' enthusiasm and cognitive participation because these materials bridge abstract academic concepts with the real world. Empirical evaluations indicate that when cultural elements are integrated into electronic modules, students' learning motivation skyrockets because they feel an emotional proximity between the materials and their daily experiences (Masie et al., 2025). Approaches that prioritize culturally authentic multimodal texts provide autonomy for students to explore diverse discourses, thereby deeply boosting their engagement in the literacy process (Park, 2021). Consequently, the adoption of local values and cross-cultural reading practices not only revitalizes the classroom atmosphere but also empowers students to become highly proactive learners.

This engagement is further accelerated when educators utilize local wisdom as a foundation to trigger cross-disciplinary critical thinking. In science education, the use of indigenous artifacts and local community knowledge systems, coupled with argumentative discussions, has been proven to ignite a spirit of inquiry, dispel the misconception that science is rigid, and embolden students to actively participate in experiments and collaborative problem-solving (Ogegbo & Ramnarain, 2024). Additionally, actively involving students through cultural revitalization initiatives, such as storytelling festivals or cultural competitions, fosters a collaborative learning climate among community members (Sarmadan et al., 2025). Comprehensively, this review concludes that local wisdom possesses vital interdisciplinary leverage in cultivating learners who are motivated, critically minded, and characterized by strong moral foundations (Subayani et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that integrating folklore and local wisdom into the educational ecosystem is a transformative pedagogical strategy that empirically enhances

contemporary learning quality. The synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals that modernizing local narratives through innovative media, such as Mixed Reality (MR), interactive electronic modules (e-modules), and digital educational platforms, yields exceptionally high validity and practicality for 21st-century classrooms. These culturally responsive interventions significantly elevate students' cultural literacy and cultivate prosocial characteristics, including empathy and cooperation, particularly when optimizing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through structured teacher scaffolding. Furthermore, utilizing familiar cultural narratives effectively accelerates students' receptive linguistic skills, particularly narrative reading comprehension and listening, by alleviating cognitive load and bridging language acquisition with their existing background knowledge. Ultimately, folklore-based learning consistently demystifies complex academic subjects, thereby escalating students' cognitive motivation, emotional engagement, and active classroom participation.

The findings of this review present critical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, underscoring that folklore must be positioned as an essential interdisciplinary educational bridge rather than a mere supplementary entertainment element. To maximize these pedagogical benefits, there is a pressing need for affirmative educational policies that systematically integrate local wisdom into the core curriculum, coupled with comprehensive training programs to equip teachers with the capacity to design culturally responsive instruction. While the current body of literature provides robust evidence of these advantages, it is predominantly characterized by qualitative approaches and short-term experiments. Therefore, future research should heavily prioritize large-scale, longitudinal quantitative studies to evaluate the long-term retention of the acquired linguistic and socio-emotional skills. Expanding the geographical scope of the explored folklore and integrating these narratives into more advanced technological frameworks remain highly prospective avenues for advancing a global educational landscape that is firmly rooted in local identity.

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