INTEGRATING LOMBOK'S LOCAL AND ISLAMIC LITERATURE INTO BILINGUAL DIGITAL STORYTELLING FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEARNING MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the early-stage adaptation of Lombok's local and Islamic literature into bilingual digital storytelling materials to strengthen children's literacy. Responding to the persistent gap between students' cultural backgrounds and the limited availability of engaging digital reading resources, this research aims to identify culturally grounded narratives and to design an initial model of a bilingual storytelling application. Employing a qualitative descriptive design within the ADDIE (Analysis–Design) framework, data were collected over three months from six English teachers, thirty students from elementary and Islamic schools, and twelve cultural informants, including storytellers, religious figures, and librarians. The data were obtained through interviews, participatory observations, and documentation of oral and written traditions. A total of fourteen literary works, including *Princess of Mandalika*, *Cupak Gerantang*, *Tegodek Godek*, *The Legend of Masbagik*, as well as stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Yusuf, were analyzed and adapted into simplified bilingual scripts. Thematic analysis was employed to examine narrative content and pedagogical relevance, while data validity was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and expert validation involving literacy specialists and local cultural guardians. The findings reveal strong enthusiasm among students toward culturally familiar stories, with approximately seventy percent demonstrating improved comprehension indicators, vocabulary recall, and engagement during bilingual reading sessions. Teachers also reported increased participation and motivation when digital and visual elements were introduced. The study concludes that integrating local and Islamic literature into bilingual digital storytelling offers a culturally sustaining pathway for curriculum development, supporting literacy development, character education, and cultural identity reinforcement through contextually relevant digital media.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy is widely recognized as an essential foundation for lifelong learning, enabling individuals to understand the world, think critically, and develop positive character. However, international assessments continue to show that many countries, including Indonesia, face persistent challenges in fostering strong reading habits among young learners. In parallel, recent studies highlight that the rapid integration of digital media in children's learning environments has not automatically translated into effective digital literacy practices, particularly when learning materials are not developmentally appropriate or culturally grounded (Aisyah, 2024). According to the OECD (2019), Indonesian students consistently score below the global average in reading performance. This condition indicates that conventional teaching materials have not fully addressed learners' needs, particularly because many literacy resources remain detached from students' cultural experiences and everyday realities. As noted by Hermawan, Anjariyah, and Azhari (2021), reading activities become more meaningful when children engage with texts that reflect familiar environments, values, and social contexts.

This challenge becomes more pronounced in bilingual education, particularly within the Indonesian context. García (2009) emphasizes that bilingual literacy involves the ability to construct and interpret meaning across two languages, a competence that has become increasingly essential in a globalized world. Nevertheless, English learning materials used in Indonesian schools are largely imported and culturally distant, often reflecting values and traditions that do not align with local identities or Islamic beliefs. As a result, while students may acquire grammatical knowledge and vocabulary, they frequently experience limited emotional and cultural engagement with the learning content. This situation highlights a critical need for bilingual learning materials that support English acquisition while simultaneously affirming students' cultural and spiritual identities.

Lombok presents a particularly relevant context for addressing this issue due to its rich local and Islamic literary heritage. Studies on Lombok's traditional literary forms indicate that genres such as *cepung*, *babad*, and other oral performance traditions have long served as vehicles for cultural transmission and moral education within Sasaknese communities (Putra & Sudiatmaka, 2017). Known as *Pulau Seribu Masjid*, Lombok is deeply shaped by Sasak cultural traditions and Islamic teachings that are embedded in everyday community life. Oral literary forms such as *lelakaq*, *tembang dakwah*, *hikayat*, and *babad* convey moral values including honesty, humility, cooperation, and devotion, while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion (Fitriani, 2020; Hidayat, 2021). However, as in many other cultural settings, these traditional literary practices face increasing risks of marginalization as children increasingly gravitate toward digital and visual media.

Observations from several elementary and Islamic schools, including MIS Mardhatillah, MIS NWDI Lendang Batu, SDN 6 Masbagik Selatan, and SDIT Nurul Jihad Asyyamil, further illustrate this shift. Teachers reported that students show higher levels of interest and engagement when stories are presented through digital formats that combine visual illustrations, voice narration, and bilingual text. These observations are consistent with Nur'Aini's (2023) findings that younger generations demonstrate declining interest in conventional oral storytelling, as well as Nur'Aini et al (2025) argue that bilingual digital literacy supports comprehension by enabling learners to compare and interpret the meaning within the languages.

In addition, local and Islamic literature contributes significant pedagogical value to literacy instruction by embedding moral and cultural meanings within accessible narrative forms. Previous studies have demonstrated that Islamic stories can function effectively as supplementary English learning materials in Islamic elementary schools, supporting vocabulary development, moral education, and learner motivation (Maesaroh et al., 2022). In

the Indonesian context, narratives about the prophets, stories of local religious figures such as KH. Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, and moral folktales like *Cupak Gerantang* convey ethical and spiritual lessons that resonate strongly with students' lived experiences. Supporting this view, Azhari, Yoesoef, and Setyani (2022) argue that contemporary Islamic literature functions not only as artistic expression but also as an educational medium that integrates moral instruction with creative storytelling, making it particularly relevant for modern classroom contexts..

The present study is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory (1978), which posits that learning occurs through meaningful interaction within culturally situated environments. It is further informed by Gay's (2010) concept of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasizes the use of instructional materials that reflect learners' cultural backgrounds and lived realities. Within this theoretical framework, local and Islamic literature is viewed as a powerful resource for fostering motivation, identity development, and deeper comprehension in bilingual learning contexts.

Despite this theoretical and contextual potential, a clear research gap remains. Existing studies have given limited attention to the systematic adaptation of Lombok's local and Islamic literary heritage into bilingual digital storytelling formats designed specifically to support children's literacy development. Although these literary resources are abundant, they have not yet been sufficiently transformed into pedagogically structured digital materials that align with contemporary learning practices and technological preferences.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how Lombok's local and Islamic literary traditions can be adapted into bilingual digital storytelling materials and to examine the pedagogical implications of using Sasak and Islamic narratives as culturally grounded resources for improving children's literacy.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with an exploratory case study orientation, as commonly recommended for research seeking to understand cultural practices and educational needs in a natural context (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because the study aimed to document how local and Islamic literary traditions in Lombok can be adapted into multilingual digital storytelling materials, without attempting to generate theory or deeply interpret lived experiences, as in phenomenology.

The research was conceptually framed within the Analysis and Design stages of the ADDIE development model (Branch, 2009). Only these two stages were applied because the study focused on the preliminary phase of content exploration and prototype development, in alignment with the scope of a first-year R&D study. The subsequent ADDIE stages, such as Development, Implementation, and Evaluation were intentionally excluded, as the project had not yet advanced to creating a functional application. Instead, the aim was to build a strong conceptual and cultural foundation for future development.

ADDIE Stage 1: Analysis

The Analysis stage focused on examining learners' needs, cultural contexts, and the characteristics of local and Islamic stories to be adapted into bilingual digital storytelling materials. At this stage, the researcher sought to understand how linguistic ability, cultural familiarity, and pedagogical relevance intersect in children's literacy learning. This analysis was essential to ensure that the adapted materials would not only be linguistically appropriate but also culturally meaningful and educationally effective.

Data were collected over three months using a qualitative approach that allowed for in-depth exploration of both educational practices and cultural resources. Semi-structured

interviews were conducted with six English teachers, along with cultural figures, religious figures, and librarians, to gain insights into classroom needs, narrative traditions, and value transmission through storytelling. In parallel, participatory observations were carried out in six elementary and Islamic schools to document students' responses to storytelling activities and to observe how literacy instruction was implemented in real classroom settings. Additionally, a documentation review of oral and written Sasak and Islamic literary sources was undertaken to identify narrative patterns, moral themes, and linguistic features relevant to children's literacy development.

Data saturation was reached when similar narrative structures, cultural values, and pedagogical considerations repeatedly emerged across interview data, observational notes, and documented sources. The outcomes of this stage informed the selection of fourteen stories considered suitable for adaptation and guided the identification of key linguistic, visual, and cultural elements necessary for the development of bilingual digital materials. As a result, the Analysis stage provided a coherent and systematic foundation for the subsequent design phase, ensuring that the proposed storytelling application was grounded in learners' needs, cultural authenticity, and established educational principles.

ADDIE Stage 2: Design

The Design stage focused on transforming the selected literary works into simplified bilingual drafts in Bahasa Indonesia and English, while simultaneously developing initial conceptual designs for a digital storybook interface. At this stage, the emphasis was placed on ensuring that the adapted stories were linguistically accessible to children without compromising their narrative coherence or educational value. Narrative structures were carefully simplified to align with children's cognitive and language development levels, allowing key plot elements and messages to remain clear and engaging.

In addition to linguistic simplification, particular attention was given to preserving the cultural and moral values embedded in the original local and Islamic stories. The adaptation process sought to maintain essential cultural references, ethical lessons, and spiritual themes so that the stories continued to reflect their original sociocultural meanings. To support bilingual learning, parallel text formats were developed in Bahasa Indonesia and English, enabling learners to compare meanings across languages and facilitating vocabulary development and comprehension within a bilingual literacy context.

Alongside the textual adaptation, early interface prototypes were drafted to visualize how the stories might be presented in a digital environment. These conceptual prototypes illustrated potential digital page layouts, navigation flows, and the integration of visual and audio elements such as illustrations and voice narration. It is important to note that these prototypes were not fully functional applications but rather conceptual mockups intended to inform and guide subsequent development stages. As such, the Design stage established a coherent blueprint that connected narrative adaptation, bilingual pedagogy, and digital storytelling principles, serving as a foundation for future implementation and evaluation phases.

Subject

This study involved a total of forty-six participants, consisting of six English teachers, thirty students, and ten cultural informants from five elementary and Islamic schools in East Lombok, namely SDIT Nurul Jihad Asyyamil, MIS NWDI Lendang Batu, SDN 6 Masbagik Selatan, MI Mambaul Ulum Jurit, and MIS Mardhatillah. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives and to capture diverse perspectives related to bilingual literacy and cultural storytelling (Creswell, 2013).

The teacher participants included six English teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience in elementary or Islamic school contexts. They were familiar with bilingual learning practices and had experience addressing students' literacy challenges. The

student participants consisted of thirty learners aged nine to eleven years who demonstrated foundational reading skills in Bahasa Indonesia and introductory proficiency in English. Cultural informants were selected based on their recognized roles as custodians of Sasak and Islamic literary traditions, including traditional storytellers, *lelakaq* performers, manuscript keepers, and religious or cultural figures.

The primary unit of analysis was the cultural and pedagogical suitability of literary texts adapted into bilingual digital storytelling materials. Data from teachers, students, and cultural informants provided complementary perspectives on literacy practices, learner engagement, and the preservation of local and Islamic narratives. This sampling strategy ensured data richness and supported a contextually grounded interpretation of bilingual digital storytelling as a culturally responsive literacy resource.

Instruments

Data were collected using four qualitative instruments aligned with the Analysis and Design stages of the ADDIE framework: literature review, field observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. These instruments were employed to identify learners' needs, cultural values, and narrative characteristics relevant to the adaptation of Lombok's local and Islamic literature into bilingual digital storytelling materials.

The literature review examined studies on bilingual literacy, digital storytelling, and culturally responsive pedagogy to inform the analytical framework and instrument development. Field observations were conducted during storytelling activities and classroom reading sessions using a structured checklist focusing on students' engagement, participation, and interaction. Semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, and cultural informants explored reading challenges, familiarity with local narratives, and cultural meanings embedded in Sasak and Islamic stories. Document analysis examined selected oral and written literary sources based on their cultural significance, moral relevance, and suitability for bilingual adaptation.

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation across data sources and methods. Instrument reliability and clarity were supported through pilot testing, expert validation, and consultation with cultural specialists. Each instrument contributed directly to either the Analysis stage (needs assessment and cultural mapping) or the Design stage (story adaptation and prototype planning).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted iteratively to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' perspectives and aligned with the objectives of the ADDIE framework's Analysis and Design stages.

During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, checklists, and literary documents were coded inductively and grouped into thematic categories related to students' literacy engagement, instructional challenges, cultural authenticity, and story adaptation potential. Relevant data were condensed while preserving core meanings. In the data display stage, the reduced data were organized into matrices and thematic tables to facilitate comparison across data sources, including students, teachers, and cultural informants.

Conclusion drawing and verification involved synthesizing recurring patterns to interpret how Lombok's local and Islamic literature can support bilingual literacy development. Emerging interpretations were continuously reviewed through cross-checking across data sources and validation with cultural informants.

To enhance analytical rigor, triangulation was applied across data sources, methods, and investigators. Trustworthiness was further ensured through member checking with teachers,

peer debriefing with literacy and cultural experts, maintaining an audit trail, and reflexive journaling to minimize researcher bias. These procedures ensured that the findings were credible, culturally grounded, and pedagogically meaningful.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained prior to data collection. Permission was granted by school principals, and informed consent was obtained from all teacher participants. Written consent from parents or legal guardians was secured for student participation, and students provided verbal assent in an age-appropriate manner. Cultural informants also consented to recorded interviews and the adaptation of local and Islamic literary materials.

Participant confidentiality was maintained through anonymization, and all participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. These procedures ensured compliance with established ethical standards for educational research.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings
Diversity and Pedagogical Potential of Lombok's Local and Islamic Literature

The analysis identified fourteen core literary works representing folktales, legends, historical chronicles, place-origin stories, and Islamic narratives. These texts were consistently mentioned by cultural informants and supported by document analysis, indicating their strong cultural legitimacy and pedagogical relevance.

Interview data revealed that place-origin stories were among the most frequently cited narratives due to their close connection with students' lived environments. Cultural elders explained that village names often originated from observable local activities or physical landmarks. For example, an elder from Masbagik stated:

> "Dulu orang tua bilang, Masbagik itu dari 'ames-ames bagek', tempat orang meremas asam jawa." ("The elders used to say Masbagik comes from *ames-ames bagek*, where people squeezed tamarind".)

Similarly, the cultural figures from *Tetebatu* explained:

> "Tetebatu itu dari 'tete batu', jembatan batu tempat orang lewat dan berkumpul dulu." ("Tetebatu comes from *tete batu*, the stone bridge where people used to pass and gather".)

Triangulation across interviews, observation notes, and local manuscript references showed consistency in these explanations. Document analysis further confirmed that such narratives commonly embed moral values such as cooperation, honesty, and communal responsibility.

From an analytical perspective, these findings indicate that place-origin stories function not merely as cultural histories but also as accessible narrative resources for literacy instruction. Their familiarity enables students to connect textual content with real-world contexts, supporting culturally responsive learning.

Table 1
Local and Islamic literary works identified in the study and their core values

Story/Origin	Type	Core Values	Notes
Cupak Gerantang	Folktale	Honesty vs greed	Common across Lombok
Putri Mandalika	Legend	Sacrifice	*Bau Nyale* event
Babad Bayan	Chronicle	Faith, leadership	Islamization story
Inak Tegining	Folktale	Gratitude, hard work	Agrarian relevance

The origin of Masbagik	Origin legend	Honesty, community help	Verified by elders
The legend of Tetebatu	Origin legend	Unity, deliberation	Stone structure narrative
Islamic stories (Ibrahim, Yusuf)	Islamic narrative	Obedience, patience	Madrasah relevance

Table 1 illustrates that the selected local and Islamic literary texts encompass diverse narrative types that convey moral values relevant to primary education. Folktales foreground everyday virtues such as honesty, gratitude, and hard work, while legends and chronicles emphasize sacrifice, faith, and leadership grounded in local history. Place-origin stories highlight communal values, including cooperation and unity, through narratives linked to local geography and collective memory. Islamic narratives reinforce religious values such as obedience and patience, particularly within madrasah contexts. The alignment between narrative types and core values confirms the pedagogical suitability of these texts as culturally responsive resources for bilingual digital storytelling.

Cultural and Pedagogical Relevance in Classroom Contexts

Data from teacher interviews, student responses, and classroom observations indicated strong cultural and pedagogical relevance of the selected texts. All participating teachers (6 out of 6) reported increased student engagement when students read stories that reflected familiar cultural settings and moral values. One teacher explained that:

"Kalau ceritanya dekat dengan kehidupan mereka, anak-anak langsung semangat membaca." ("When the story reflects their life, students become eager to read".)

Student questionnaire data supported this observation. Among the thirty participating students, 23 students (77%) stated that they "liked" or "strongly liked" stories portraying family life, village cooperation, or Islamic teachings.

One student commented that:

"Ini seperti ibu bapak saya yang bekerja keras." ("This is like my parents who work hard.")

Classroom observation notes further revealed increased student participation during pair discussions and oral retelling activities when culturally grounded stories were used. Students appeared more willing to share ideas, respond to peers, and reconstruct narratives orally, suggesting a higher level of cognitive and emotional involvement in the learning process.

From an analytical perspective, these patterns indicate that familiarity with cultural content supports students' emotional engagement and facilitates meaning-making during literacy activities. When narrative contexts reflect students' everyday experiences and value systems, comprehension becomes more intuitive and interaction more spontaneous. Teachers also observed that such texts align well with the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka, particularly in fostering contextualized literacy and integrating character education within classroom practice.

Bilingual Adaptatiaon and Linguistic Accessibility

Three stories such as *Cupak Gerantang*, *Tegodek Godek*, and Prophet Ibrahim were for bilingual adaptation based on teacher recommendations and cultural relevance. The adaptation process involved simplifying sentence structures, aligning vocabulary with A1–A2 CEFR levels, and adding glossaries for culturally specific terms such as *nyale*, *lelakaq*, and *Bau Nyale*.

Teacher validation data indicated positive responses to these adaptations. Five out of six teachers (83%) agreed that the bilingual drafts were linguistically clear and appropriately

leveled, while all teachers confirmed that the cultural and moral meanings were preserved. A cultural expert remarked that

> "Bahasa Inggrisnya sederhana, tapi makna budaya tetap ada." ("The English is simple, but the cultural meaning remains.")

From an interpretive standpoint, these findings indicate that linguistic simplification functioned as a pedagogical strategy rather than a process of cultural reduction. The use of simplified sentence structures and leveled vocabulary enhanced accessibility for young learners without altering the core narrative sequence, moral orientation, or culturally specific meanings embedded in the stories.

The bilingual presentation further supported comprehension by allowing students to move flexibly between Bahasa Indonesia and English, enabling meaning negotiation while preserving cultural references through contextual cues and glossaries. This balance suggests that accessibility and cultural authenticity are not inherently contradictory; instead, when carefully designed, bilingual adaptation can maintain narrative integrity while expanding learners' linguistic access to culturally grounded texts.

Classroom Response to Bilingual Story Drafts

Classroom observations revealed notable changes in student engagement when bilingual story drafts and mockups were introduced. Observation data showed that 25 out of 30 students (83%) maintained longer attention spans compared to sessions using printed monolingual texts.

Teachers also reported improvement in students' thematic vocabulary related to values such as honesty, gratitude, bravery, and sacrifice. Additionally, 18 students (60%) attempted partial retelling in English after reading the bilingual drafts.

Students often related the stories to their lives, indicating emerging cultural literacy. For example, one student said that:

> "Cupak itu seperti orang yang serakah, Bu guru bilang tidak boleh begitu."
> ("*Cupak* is like a greedy person, the teacher said we should not behave like that.")

Triangulation across teacher interviews, student statements, and observation notes confirmed increased confidence and participation across learning activities. Teachers reported greater student willingness to speak, observation notes documented more frequent peer interaction and voluntary responses, and student statements reflected growing comfort in engaging with story content.

Analytically, these converging patterns suggest the early emergence of bilingual awareness alongside cultural literacy. Students did not merely recall story content but began to experiment with language choice, alternating between Bahasa Indonesia and English during retelling activities. This behavior indicates an initial sensitivity to bilingual meaning-making, where cultural understanding supports linguistic risk-taking. At the same time, students' ability to relate narrative themes to familiar cultural contexts reflects developing cultural literacy, as they demonstrated awareness of values, social norms, and moral lessons embedded in the texts.

Feasibility and User Reception of the Bilingual Digital Storytelling Prototype Application

The prototype mockups of the bilingual digital storytelling application received positive feedback from teachers, students, and cultural experts, indicating strong feasibility for future development. The mockup featured parallel bilingual texts, simplified illustrations, and basic navigation elements representing a digital storybook interface.

During validation sessions, five out of six teachers (83%) described the layout as clear and child-friendly. One teacher noted that:

"Kalau jadi aplikasi, ini sangat membantu anak karena teksnya pendek dan gambarnya menarik." ("If developed into a real application, this would help students because the text is short and the visuals are engaging.")

Student responses were similarly positive. When shown printed mockup pages, 26 out of 30 students (87%) demonstrated increased attention and verbal engagement. One student commented that

"Kalau ada suaranya dan bisa dibaca dua bahasa, saya mau baca terus."
("If it has audio and two languages, I would want to read it more often.")

Cultural experts emphasized the importance of preserving narrative authenticity. One expert remarked that:

"Asal gambarnya sopan dan ceritanya tidak berubah jauh, ini bagus untuk anak-anak sekarang." ("As long as the illustrations are respectful and the story isn't altered too much, this is good for children today.")

Triangulated analysis across these data sources identified three feasibility indicators: linguistic suitability, cultural suitability, and technological suitability. These findings suggest that the prototype provides a strong foundation for advancing to the Development stage of the ADDIE model in future research cycles.

Design Feasibility

Triangulation across teacher interviews, classroom observations, and cultural expert reviews confirmed three interrelated indicators of feasibility. Linguistic suitability was evidenced by teacher validation data, in which five out of six teachers reported that the stories simplified to an A1–A2 English level were clear and accessible for students, while classroom observations showed that students were able to follow the parallel bilingual texts and recall new vocabulary during retelling activities.

Cultural suitability was supported by feedback from cultural experts and teachers, who emphasized that the moral messages and narrative structure of the stories remained intact; additionally, observational notes indicated that glossaries helped students interpret culturally specific terms such as *nyale* and *lelakaq* without disrupting comprehension.

Technological suitability was reflected in validation sessions where teachers described the mockup navigation as child-friendly and intuitive, and student observations documented increased attention to illustrations and expressed interest in future audio features. Collectively, these data indicate that the mockup provides a sound empirical foundation for progressing to the Development stage of the ADDIE model in subsequent research cycles.

Prototype Mockup of the Digital Storytelling Application

The prototype mockup developed in this study represents the initial visual form of the application generated during the Design stage of the ADDIE model. It includes bilingual parallel text, simplified illustrations, and basic interface navigation. The mockup was evaluated by teachers and cultural experts to ensure its appropriateness for young learners and its consistency with Sasaknese and Islamic cultural values. Figure 1 displays the mockup interface.

Figure 1. Homepage mockup

Figure 1 illustrates the homepage of the prototype, which incorporates culturally responsive materials. Figure 2 presents the layout and positioning of the story content within the prototype.

Figure 2. The homepage of the story

Figure 3 presents the English-language version of the story as displayed in the prototype.

Figure 3. The story appears in the prototype

Figure 4 illustrates the appearance of the culturally responsive bilingual digital storytelling prototype, which integrates local and Islamic cultural elements and is designed for Android smartphones.
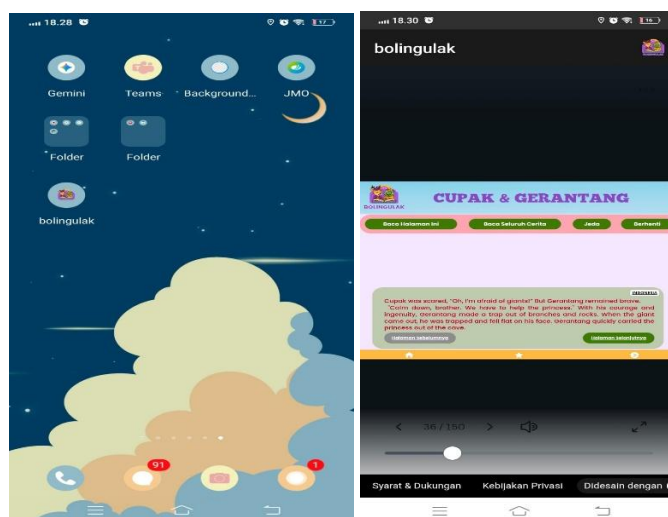
Figure 4. The application appears on Android

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Lombok's local and Islamic literature functions not merely as cultural content but as a pedagogical foundation that meaningfully shapes students' engagement with literacy learning. Familiar narratives such as *Cupak Gerantang*, *Putri Mandalika*, and *The Origin of Masbagik* were found to reduce affective barriers toward English and foster more active participation among learners. This finding aligns with Gay's (2010) assertion that culturally responsive pedagogy enhances learning by aligning instruction with students' cultural identities and lived experiences. While previous studies in Indonesian and international contexts have shown that culturally relevant texts increase motivation and comprehension (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Cummins, 2001; Ibda & Wijayanti, 2023), the present study extends this literature by situating culturally grounded narratives within a bilingual digital storytelling environment. Unlike studies that focus on printed or monolingual materials, this research illustrates that local and Islamic stories can be successfully transferred into bilingual and digital formats without diminishing their moral or cultural integrity. Validation from teachers, students, and cultural elders confirms that cultural familiarity remains effective even when mediated through contemporary digital design.

Analytically, these findings suggest that cultural relevance does more than support engagement; it restructures the literacy process itself. Students approached English not as an abstract foreign system but as a medium through which familiar values such as honesty, humility, courage, and devotion could be rearticulated. In this way, Lombok's literary diversity does not merely supplement bilingual learning but anchors it, reinforcing both language development and cultural identity. This insight advances culturally responsive pedagogy by demonstrating its applicability within bilingual digital literacy contexts.

The findings further indicate that students did not engage with bilingual texts as isolated language exercises. Instead, meaning was constructed through a sociocultural lens by linking textual content to moral routines and social experiences already familiar within home, village, and religious settings. Cultural knowledge functioned as an interpretive scaffold, enabling students to follow narratives even when English vocabulary was unfamiliar. Values and plot logic such as honesty versus greed, patience under trial, and communal responsibility were already intelligible to learners, allowing them to anticipate events and infer meanings. This pattern is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning is mediated by culturally meaningful tools. In this study, local and Islamic stories rooted in Sasaknese life and Islamic teachings served as mediational resources that supported learners' movement from recognition of meaning to articulation of meaning in a new language.

This sociocultural mediation also explains why the bilingual format did not overwhelm learners. Although García (2009) cautions that bilingual materials may increase cognitive load for young readers, the present findings suggest that cognitive load is influenced not only by linguistic complexity but also by the familiarity of the represented world. Because students already knew the story contexts, they were able to tolerate gaps in linguistic knowledge without disengaging. Cultural proximity reduced uncertainty and created space for students to take linguistic risks, such as attempting English vocabulary, producing partial retellings, and asking questions rather than withdrawing when comprehension was incomplete. This contrasts with findings from culturally distant or imported textbooks, where unfamiliar contexts often limit students' entry points for interpretation.

Meaning-making in this study was also socially negotiated. Retelling activities and peer discussions transformed the bilingual stories into shared interpretive spaces in which students and teachers jointly explored motives, consequences, and moral lessons before attempting bilingual expression. These interactions reflect learning within the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners extend their capabilities through guided participation. As a result, the bilingual story functioned not only as a text but as a social space in which cultural reasoning supported language production. This refines sociocultural and bilingual literacy scholarship by showing that culturally anchored bilingual texts reconfigure comprehension as a communal and value-laden process in which language learning and identity development occur simultaneously.

The bilingual adaptation of local and Islamic stories also supported the development of early metalinguistic awareness. Exposure to parallel texts enabled students to compare vocabulary, expressions, and narrative structures across languages, supporting García's (2009) view of bilingual literacy as a dynamic process of meaning negotiation. Teachers observed improvements in vocabulary recall and bilingual retelling, findings that align with Swain and Lapkin's (2013) emphasis on bilingual input as a catalyst for metalinguistic reflection. Importantly, the present study demonstrates that cultural familiarity plays a catalytic role in sustaining engagement with bilingual texts. Rather than the bilingual format alone driving awareness, it was the combination of bilingual presentation and culturally meaningful narratives that encouraged students to explore language differences with curiosity rather than hesitation.

The strong classroom response to the digital mockup further underscores the role of digital storytelling as a culturally situated multimodal practice. Consistent with Kress (2010), students showed longer attention spans and greater enthusiasm when interacting with stories that combined text, images, and potential audio narration. Similar outcomes have been reported in other contexts, such as Malaysia and the Philippines, where digital storybooks enhanced motivation and comprehension (Yusof & Tahir, 2022; Bautista, 2021). However, the distinct contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that students' engagement stemmed not only from digital features but from the cultural resonance of the stories themselves. Familiar characters, traditions, and values presented through modern media fostered emotional connection and reduced the perceived distance of English learning.

Teachers reported that the integration of cultural familiarity, bilingual text, and visual storytelling facilitated vocabulary acquisition and encouraged more active classroom participation. These observations suggest that digital storytelling functions not merely as a multimodal enhancement but as an emotional and cultural bridge that connects language, identity, and technology. The study's central contribution lies in showing that digital storytelling is most effective when technology, cultural relevance, and bilingual learning are integrated rather than treated as separate components. In this form, digital media becomes a tool not only for engagement but also for preserving and revitalizing Lombok's cultural heritage while supporting contemporary literacy practices.

Finally, the digital adaptation of *lelakaq*, *tembang dakwah*, and origin stories such as Masbagik and Tetebatu demonstrates how intangible cultural heritage can be revitalized for younger generations. Cultural elders perceived the digital transformation as a continuation of tradition rather than a disruption, a view consistent with UNESCO's (2003) framework on safeguarding living heritage. By embedding local and Islamic literatures within bilingual digital storytelling, the study offers a model in which cultural preservation and literacy development are mutually reinforcing. This contributes to international scholarship by providing empirical evidence that local knowledge systems can be revitalized rather than diluted through carefully designed digital educational practices.

This study makes a distinctive contribution by integrating local and Islamic literature, bilingual pedagogy, and digital storytelling into a unified instructional framework. While prior studies have examined these domains separately, the present research demonstrates how their convergence produces pedagogically meaningful, culturally respectful, and technologically feasible literacy materials. Pedagogically, the findings indicate that bilingual local literature can reduce language anxiety, enhance motivation, and support character education. Culturally, the study highlights digital adaptation as a viable pathway for sustaining Lombok's literary heritage. Technologically, the positive reception of the prototype suggests strong potential for developing a full digital storybook application aligned with Kurikulum Merdeka and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited by its prototype-based design, restricted sample size, short observation period, and lack of quantitative measurement. Future research should advance to the Development and Implementation stages of the ADDIE model by producing a functional application, expanding participant scope, and employing mixed method approaches to examine long-term effects on bilingual proficiency, reading comprehension, and moral development. Future studies should also explore teacher-generated content and test the model across diverse sociocultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating Lombok's local and Islamic literature into bilingual literacy instruction creates a meaningful and culturally responsive learning environment. By adapting stories such as *Cupak Gerantang*, *Legenda Putri Mandalika*, and *Babad Bayan* into bilingual formats, students showed improved comprehension, stronger engagement, and deeper moral reflection. These findings reaffirm that literacy becomes more effective when learners encounter texts that reflect their cultural identities and lived experiences.

The study contributes to bilingual literacy theory by demonstrating how digital storytelling can serve as a contemporary form of cultural mediation, supporting Vygotsky's sociocultural learning principles and Gay's framework of culturally responsive pedagogy. Practically, it offers a replicable model for teachers and curriculum developers to design bilingual story materials that connect English learning with local wisdom and character education. The initial mockup also shows strong potential for future development into a fully functional digital storybook that blends technology with tradition.

This research is limited by its small sample size and the prototype-only nature of the digital product. Future studies should test the full application in classrooms, measure long-term learning outcomes, and explore implementation in other regions to broaden the model's applicability. Strengthening collaboration with cultural custodians and digital media practitioners is also recommended to ensure cultural authenticity and sustainability.

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