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## REVOLUTIONISING ESL LEARNING THROUGH THE NUSANTARA INDIGENOUS FOLKTALES FRAMEWORK: A COLLABORATIVE EDU-TALE APPROACH FOR PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

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### Abstract:

The integration of indigenous folktales into English as a Second Language (ESL) education has emerged as an innovative approach to enhancing language learning while preserving cultural heritage. This study explores the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF), which employs the Edu-Tale Approach to foster motivation, engagement, and linguistic proficiency among ESL learners. Grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the framework leverages culturally relevant storytelling, interactive activities, and digital tools to create an immersive learning experience. A qualitative research design was employed, incorporating student feedback, educator evaluations, and parental perspectives to assess the impact of folktale-based learning. Findings indicate that 70% of students reported increased motivation, while 75% found learning more enjoyable when indigenous folktales were integrated into ESL instruction. Additionally, educators (60%) and parents (50%) acknowledged the effectiveness of the framework in enhancing engagement and language retention. The study further demonstrates that folktales serve as cultural bridges, fostering intercultural awareness and identity reinforcement among learners. The results suggest that integrating indigenous narratives into ESL curricula improves vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and cultural appreciation. The study highlights the potential of NIFF to decolonize language education, ensuring that ESL learners view English acquisition as an extension rather than a departure from their heritage. Furthermore, the study underscores the long-term role of folktales in preserving intangible cultural heritage through formal education. Future research should explore longitudinal studies on language retention, the role of AI-enhanced digital storytelling, and cross-cultural

applications of indigenous folktale integration. The study concludes that the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework is an effective pedagogical model, bridging language learning and cultural preservation while fostering an engaging, student-centered learning environment.

**Keywords:**

Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework, Edu-Tale Approach, ESL Learning, Cultural Heritage, Storytelling, Motivation, Language Acquisition

**Introduction**

Folktales are timeless treasures of cultural heritage, connecting generations through the values, traditions, and shared identities they carry. Across the world, these stories play a pivotal role in passing down knowledge, shaping character, and preserving the essence of cultural continuity. Passed orally from one generation to the next, folktales embody the lived experiences, beliefs, and aspirations of communities, making them essential for cultural preservation. Beyond their cultural importance, these stories have also proven to be powerful educational tools. As Lwin (2016) notes, folktales can significantly enhance language skills while fostering ethical awareness and critical thinking. In an increasingly interconnected world, folktales offer learners not just linguistic proficiency but also a deeper understanding of diverse cultures.

In recent years, education has begun to embrace culturally relevant materials, recognizing their role in creating meaningful learning experiences. Among these materials, indigenous folktales stand out for their ability to engage students on a deeper level. By weaving cultural familiarity into learning, educators can bridge the gap between formal education and students' lived realities. As highlighted by Porter (2020), indigenous stories have immense potential to enhance language learning and cultural awareness by providing authentic, relatable contexts. This is particularly beneficial in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, where students often face the challenge of navigating unfamiliar linguistic and cultural landscapes. By integrating indigenous folktales into ESL curricula, teachers not only make lessons more engaging but also help students appreciate cultural diversity on a deeper level.

The Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) is an initiative that embodies this approach. Developed collaboratively by Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah in Malaysia and Universitas Merdeka Malang in Indonesia, the framework features folktales from the Semai tribe in Malaysia and the Tengger tribe from Mount Bromo, Indonesia. By spotlighting these stories, the NIFF celebrates the shared cultural heritage of the Nusantara region while preserving the unique narratives of its indigenous communities. At its heart lies the innovative Edu-Tale approach, which uses interactive activities like digital storytelling, multimedia presentations, and group discussions to make learning both immersive and enjoyable. This framework not only safeguards cultural heritage but also enhances ESL learning outcomes (Ali et al., 2021).

Despite the recognized value of storytelling in education, indigenous folktales remain underutilized in formal teaching frameworks, particularly in ESL contexts. In Southeast Asia, educational programs often prioritize Western narratives that do not always align with local

learners' cultural contexts. Smith and Akagawa (2019) argue that this reliance on Western materials can alienate students and diminish their connection to the content. The limited use of indigenous stories in classrooms reflects a broader issue of cultural dominance, where local narratives are overshadowed by global discourses. This imbalance underscores the need for initiatives like the NIFF, which prioritize culturally relevant teaching materials to create more inclusive educational experiences.

The importance of such research is echoed in growing calls for culturally responsive pedagogy. Johnson and Smith (2021) emphasize the urgent need to explore how indigenous folktales can enhance language learning, particularly in culturally rich but underrepresented regions like Southeast Asia. By incorporating these narratives into ESL curricula, educators can create learning environments that reflect and respect students' cultural identities. This approach not only improves language proficiency but also instils pride and a sense of belonging, helping students connect with their roots while navigating global contexts.

This study aims to address these gaps by evaluating the effectiveness of the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework in boosting ESL learners' motivation and engagement. Drawing insights from a survey of 47 students actively involved in the initiative, it investigates how Indigenous folktales impact language learning and cultural heritage awareness. By exploring the intersection of education and cultural preservation, this research contributes to the discourse on culturally relevant teaching and highlights the potential of folktales to revolutionize ESL education.

### **Research Objectives:**

The study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- To evaluate how effectively the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework enhances ESL learners' motivation and engagement.
- To analyze the impact of the Edu-Tale approach on language acquisition, focusing on vocabulary and reading comprehension.
- To promote awareness and appreciation of intangible cultural heritage through the use of indigenous folktales in formal ESL education.
- To understand students' attitudes toward incorporating indigenous folktales in language learning activities.

### **Research Questions:**

The research seeks to answer these key questions:

- How effective is the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework in increasing ESL motivation to learn English?
- What impact does the Edu-Tale approach have on students' language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary and reading comprehension?
- How do ESL learners perceive the use of indigenous folktales in enhancing their cultural awareness and appreciation?
- To what extent does including Indigenous folktales in ESL education contribute to preserving intangible cultural heritage?

By achieving these objectives, this study offers valuable insights into how culturally rich narratives can be integrated into formal education. It highlights the transformative potential of indigenous folktales in ESL teaching, emphasizing their role in fostering motivation, improving language skills, and celebrating cultural heritage. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of creating more inclusive and impactful learning experiences, paving the way for education that respects and preserves diverse cultural identities.

## Literature Review

### *Folktales and Education*

Folktales have always been a captivating way to share knowledge, pass down wisdom, traditions, and values from one generation to the next. More than just bedtime stories, they serve as powerful educational tools that immerse learners in rich, meaningful narratives. These stories, deeply rooted in cultural heritage, help shape not just language skills but also cognitive and social development. Their ability to engage learners in a familiar and relatable way makes them an effective medium for education, particularly in language learning.

Storytelling has long been recognized for its impact on language proficiency, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Porter, 2020). Folktales, in particular, offer an accessible way for language learners to grasp new concepts. Since they revolve around universal themes—such as morality, relationships, and cultural traditions—students can easily connect with the narratives, making it easier to absorb new vocabulary and grammatical structures (Kirmani & Frieman, 1997).

Beyond language development, folktales open doors to intercultural understanding. They introduce learners to different perspectives, moral dilemmas, and societal values, fostering discussions that promote empathy, reflection, and collaboration (Lwin, 2016). When students engage with these stories, they are not only learning a language but they are also developing a deeper appreciation for diversity and the complexities of human experience.

For English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, folktales act as cultural bridges between their native backgrounds and the language they are acquiring. By integrating culturally relevant narratives into the curriculum, educators create more inclusive learning spaces that resonate with students' lived experiences. This aligns with the principles of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasize making learning meaningful by connecting content to students' identities (Gay, 2018). Saad et al. (2024) highlight that indigenous folktales do more than improve linguistic proficiency, but they instill a sense of pride in one's heritage, allowing learners to see their culture reflected in their education while mastering a new language.

Storytelling activities such as role-playing, dramatization, and group discussions further enhance engagement, making learning an interactive and enjoyable process. These techniques create a relaxed environment where students feel encouraged to express themselves, ultimately boosting their confidence and motivation to use the target language (Garcia & Brown, 2017). The repetitive and rhythmic nature of folktales also strengthens language retention, reinforcing essential grammar structures and vocabulary in a way that feels natural and intuitive (Swales, 1990).

Besides teaching language, folktales also shape character. These stories often carry lessons about kindness, honesty, perseverance, and resilience, encouraging learners to reflect on their values and behavior. This aligns with educational theories that emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence and social awareness in learning (Babalola & Onanuga, 2012). Saad et al. (2024) argue that the moral teachings embedded in indigenous folktales provide students with ethical insights that are often missing from traditional ESL materials, making learning not just informative but also personally meaningful.

Ultimately, folktales are not just about preserving history, they are about shaping the future. By incorporating them into ESL education, educators can create an enriching and culturally vibrant learning environment that fosters language skills, critical thinking, and a deep appreciation for one's heritage.

### ***Indigenous Folktales in ESL Learning***

Despite the many benefits of storytelling in education, indigenous folktales remain largely underutilized in ESL classrooms, particularly in Southeast Asia. Many school curricula still prioritize Western literature, overlooking the wealth of knowledge and identity embedded in local narratives (Smith & Akagawa, 2019). However, research suggests that bringing culturally relevant stories into ESL lessons can significantly improve student motivation and engagement (Ali et al., 2021). When students see their own culture represented in their studies, they develop a stronger connection to the material, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable.

Culturally relevant content does more than just engage students as it also enhances their retention of information. Studies have shown that when learners relate to the materials they are studying, they not only stay more focused but also absorb information more effectively (Johnson & Smith, 2021). By incorporating indigenous folktales into ESL education, teachers create a space where students feel a sense of belonging, allowing them to connect their linguistic growth with their cultural identity. Saad et al. (2024) emphasize that integrating Indigenous narratives is a crucial step in decolonizing language education, ensuring that learners do not see English learning as a departure from their heritage, but rather as an expansion of it.

Including a diverse range of folktales in the classroom fosters cultural appreciation and global awareness. Learning through indigenous stories helps students develop respect for different perspectives while strengthening their own sense of identity (Saad et al., 2024). In this way, ESL education goes beyond just teaching a language as it becomes a gateway to cultural pride, storytelling traditions, and deeper human connections (Smith & Akagawa, 2019).

By embracing the richness of indigenous folktales, educators can transform ESL learning into a truly immersive experience—one where language acquisition and cultural preservation go hand in hand (Ali et al., 2021). This approach ensures that students not only learn English but also carry forward the stories and traditions that define their communities (Johnson & Smith, 2021).

### ***Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage***

In an era of rapid globalization, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage such as oral traditions, folktales, and storytelling is more important than ever. These narratives are not just



stories; they are living reflections of identity, history, and values that have been passed down through generations. However, with the rise of digital media and global influences, many traditional folktales risk being forgotten or overshadowed by dominant cultures.

Recognizing this, UNESCO (2023) emphasizes the need to safeguard these cultural treasures by integrating them into formal education systems. By doing so, younger generations can continue to connect with their heritage while developing a deeper appreciation for the diverse cultural narratives that shape societies. Beyond cultural preservation, incorporating indigenous folktales into education also enhances student engagement, language learning, and cognitive development (Smith & Akagawa, 2019).

One such initiative is the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework, which aims to document, preserve, and integrate indigenous stories into modern educational settings. By merging traditional storytelling with contemporary teaching methods, this framework ensures that folktales remain relevant and accessible to learners today. Through digital storytelling, classroom discussions, and interactive learning experiences, students not only improve their language skills but also develop a strong sense of cultural pride and identity.

Ultimately, preserving folktales is not just about keeping old stories alive but it is about maintaining the cultural wisdom and traditions that define communities. When students learn through these narratives, they are not only acquiring knowledge but also carrying forward a legacy that connects the past, present, and future.

### ***The Edu-Tale Approach***

The Edu-Tale approach is an innovative educational strategy that integrates traditional storytelling with modern teaching methodologies, making learning more dynamic, immersive, and meaningful. Rooted in the belief that stories are powerful vehicles for knowledge transmission, this approach goes beyond conventional teaching by engaging students in a way that connects language acquisition with cultural heritage and personal experience.

At its core, the Edu-Tale approach leverages multimedia, interactive storytelling, and collaborative activities to enhance learning outcomes. Instead of relying solely on textbooks and rote memorization, educators use digital storytelling tools, animations, role-playing, and gamified elements to make lessons more engaging and relatable (Ali et al., 2021). These techniques cater to different learning styles, ensuring that both visual and auditory learners benefit from a well-rounded educational experience.

One of the key strengths of the Edu-Tale approach is its alignment with active learning principles, which emphasize participation, exploration, and creativity. Research has shown that when students engage in storytelling activities such as retelling, acting out scenes, or creating their folktales, they develop stronger language skills, improve critical thinking, and enhance problem-solving abilities (Mayer, 2022). This method also encourages self-expression, allowing learners to use language in authentic and meaningful ways.

Moreover, the Edu-Tale approach is closely linked to culturally responsive teaching, as it incorporates indigenous folktales and oral traditions into the curriculum. By doing so, students not only improve their language proficiency but also gain a deeper understanding of their own heritage and the cultural perspectives of others. This fosters a sense of identity, respect for

diversity, and a global outlook which are the essential skills in today's interconnected world (Saad et al., 2024).

In a classroom setting, the Edu-Tale approach can be implemented through various interactive strategies, including:

- Digital Storytelling: Using videos, podcasts, and animations to present narratives engagingly.
- Role-Playing and Dramatization: Encouraging students to act out scenes from folktales, enhancing comprehension and verbal fluency.
- Collaborative Story Creation: Allowing students to co-write and illustrate their own versions of traditional stories.
- Gamification: Incorporating storytelling-based educational games to reinforce vocabulary and grammar concepts.
- Discussion and Reflection: Encouraging learners to analyze stories' moral values, cultural significance, and thematic elements.

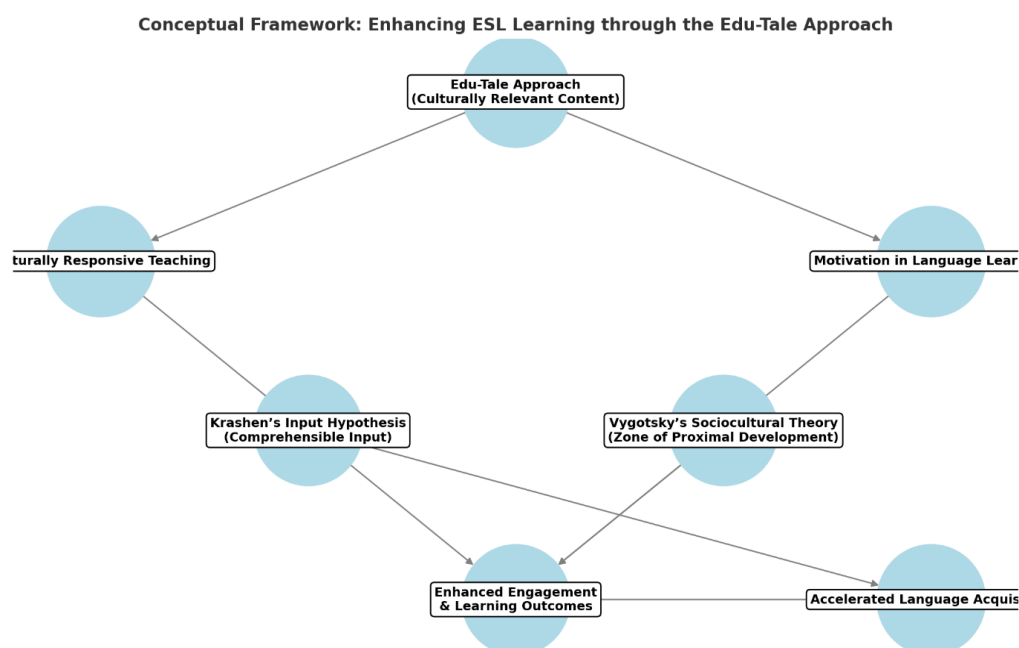
Ultimately, the Edu-Tale approach transforms the learning process into an interactive and meaningful journey, making language learning more engaging, memorable, and impactful. By combining the wisdom of traditional storytelling with modern pedagogy, this approach ensures that students do not just learn a language but also experience the richness of its cultural narratives which is a crucial step in fostering holistic and lifelong learning.

### ***Conceptual Framework: Enhancing ESL Learning through the Edu-Tale Approach***

The conceptual framework for this study integrates key theories and principles to illustrate how the Edu-Tale Approach enhances ESL learning through motivation, culturally responsive teaching, sociocultural interactions, and comprehensible input. Motivation in language learning is a crucial factor that drives learners to engage with and persist in learning tasks (Dörnyei, 2001). It is significantly influenced by learning materials' relevance and cultural relatability (Gay, 2018). When students find personal connections to their learning, their engagement, language retention, and proficiency improve. The Edu-Tale Approach capitalizes on this by incorporating culturally rich Indigenous folktales, making ESL learning meaningful and relatable. This aligns with the principles of culturally responsive teaching, which asserts that learning becomes more effective when students see their culture reflected in educational content. By integrating folktales that resonate with learners' backgrounds, this approach fosters increased engagement, deeper comprehension, and a stronger cultural identity.

Building on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), the Edu-Tale Approach supports learning within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by encouraging peer discussions, storytelling, and collaborative activities. These social interactions help learners construct knowledge through guidance from more knowledgeable peers and teachers, enhancing their social learning, critical thinking, and linguistic development. Additionally, Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly above their current proficiency level ( $i+1$ ). The Edu-Tale Approach provides structured, engaging, and contextualized storytelling that aligns with this theory, resulting in improved vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and fluency.

Together, these components create a structured learning process: culturally relevant content (Edu-Tale Approach) increases motivation, which enhances engagement and learning outcomes; sociocultural interactions facilitate learning within the ZPD; and comprehensible input through storytelling accelerates language acquisition. This interconnected framework highlights how integrating cultural narratives into ESL learning can make education more engaging, inclusive, and effective. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for enhancing ESL learning through the Edu-Tale Approach.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Enhancing ESL Learning through the Edu-Tale Approach.**

The Conceptual Framework illustrates the relationships between key elements in enhancing ESL learning through the educational approach. This framework visually represents how culturally relevant storytelling influences motivation, engagement, and language acquisition, supported by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Krashen's Input Hypothesis.

### ***Previous Related Studies***

Recent studies have continued to explore the integration of folktales in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, highlighting their multifaceted benefits. Safitri (2023) conducted a literature review examining the use of folktales as reading materials for EFL students, finding that folktales provide authentic and engaging content that enhances linguistic and cultural competence. The study also noted that folktales encourage critical thinking and creativity through the exploration of themes and characters. Lwin (2015) discussed the distinctive linguistic and structural features of folktales, such as novel words and repetitive patterns, which create interesting rhythms and can be effectively utilized in language teaching. The study emphasized that folktales offer rich linguistic input and cultural insights, making them valuable resources for language educators.



A study by Hastini et al. (2023) investigated the representation of local folktales in English language teaching textbooks in Central Sulawesi. The findings revealed a lack of local folktale content, leading to a recommendation for documenting and incorporating regional folktales into teaching materials to preserve local wisdom and enhance cultural appreciation among learners.

Additionally, a study highlighted in the ERIC database explored the perceptions of Grade 9 learners and teachers regarding the use of folktales in the English First Additional Language (EFAL) classroom. The research found that folktales, stemming from oral traditions, are effective in engaging students and providing cultural context, thereby enhancing the learning experience. Collectively, these studies underscore the value of incorporating folktales into EFL education. They not only enrich the learning experience by providing engaging and culturally relevant materials but also contribute to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in an increasingly globalized world.

The present study aligns with previous research in its emphasis on the educational value of folktales in English language learning, particularly in enhancing linguistic competence, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation. Similar to Safitri (2023) and Lwin (2015), this study recognizes folktales as authentic and engaging resources that support vocabulary development and comprehension. It also shares common ground with Hastini et al. (2023) in advocating for the integration of local folktales into ESL curricula to preserve cultural heritage. Additionally, like the study from ERIC (2023), this research acknowledges the role of folktales in engaging students through oral traditions and fostering cultural identity.

However, the novelty of the present study lies in its specific focus on the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) as a structured pedagogical approach. While prior studies discuss the importance of folktales in EFL learning, few have developed a systematic framework that incorporates indigenous narratives into ESL education through the Edu-Tale Approach. This study moves beyond general storytelling methods by integrating digital storytelling, gamified elements, and interactive activities to enhance engagement, motivation, and language retention. Unlike previous studies, which primarily focus on Western or general folktales, this research specifically examines how indigenous stories from the Nusantara region (Malaysia and Indonesia) can be utilized as a tool for ESL learning while also preserving intangible cultural heritage.

By introducing a structured framework, this study offers a practical, scalable model for incorporating Indigenous storytelling into ESL curricula, ensuring that language learning remains culturally relevant, immersive, and effective. This innovative approach bridges the gap between cultural preservation and modern ESL teaching strategies, making it a unique contribution to existing literature.

## **Methodology**

This section outlines the research design, participants, sampling methods, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations employed in this study.

### ***Research Design***

This study adopts a quantitative research design, which is widely recognized for its ability to objectively measure and analyze numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study

utilizes a pre- and post-intervention survey approach to assess the effectiveness of the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) in enhancing ESL learners' motivation, engagement, and language proficiency. A structured questionnaire was administered before and after the intervention to measure changes in students' learning outcomes. The primary intervention involved incorporating indigenous folktales into the ESL curriculum, with structured activities designed to assess their impact on language learning (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

### ***Locale of the Study***

The study was conducted at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah, Malaysia, a university with a diverse student population, making it an ideal setting to evaluate the impact of integrating indigenous folktales into ESL instruction. The participants were enrolled in semester one Diploma ESL courses, ensuring that they were at an early stage of academic English learning. This setting aligns with UiTM's commitment to integrating cultural narratives into formal education to enhance language learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2007).

### ***Population and Sample***

The population for this study comprised all semester one Diploma ESL learners at UiTM Kedah. These students represented a diverse cohort of English learners who could benefit from the integration of Indigenous folktales into their learning process.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 47 ESL learners as the sample for the study. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was chosen to ensure that participants were likely to benefit from the intervention based on their English proficiency and cultural background. The selection criteria focused on students who had demonstrated a need for innovative learning approaches and were willing to actively engage in folktale-based learning activities.

### ***Intervention: Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF)***

The Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) was developed as a structured intervention designed to enhance motivation, engagement, and language proficiency among ESL learners by incorporating culturally relevant storytelling into the learning process. This framework integrates indigenous folktales from Malaysia and Indonesia, providing a meaningful and relatable learning experience that aligns with culturally responsive teaching practices.

For this study, the intervention was implemented over a four-week period, during which students engaged in structured activities using two selected Indigenous storybooks:

1. "The Myths of Semai Values from The Jungles" (Malaysia) – A collection of folktales from the Semai tribe, highlighting moral values, cultural beliefs, and traditional wisdom.
2. "The Tengger Tribe of Mount Bromo" (Indonesia) – Folktales from the Tengger community, reflecting their connection with nature, spiritual practices, and indigenous way of life.

The structured intervention comprised six key activities, each designed to target specific language skills, promote cultural awareness, and foster deeper engagement with the content. These activities were conducted weekly, ensuring a gradual and immersive learning process.

### ***1. Digital Storytelling***

**Objective:** To enhance speaking skills, listening comprehension, and creativity through storytelling.

**Activity:**

- Students selected a folktale from the provided storybooks and were guided to retell the story in their own words using digital tools such as voice recordings, video presentations, or animations.
- They were encouraged to modify the storyline by adding new elements, characters, or alternative endings, promoting imaginative thinking while reinforcing narrative structures.
- Teachers provided feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and storytelling techniques to improve oral communication skills.

**Outcome:**

- Improved speaking fluency and confidence in English.
- Enhanced listening comprehension as students listened to their peers' stories.
- Increased engagement with cultural narratives through personal adaptation of folktales.

### ***2. Podcast Discussions***

**Objective:** To develop critical thinking, discussion skills, and a deeper understanding of cultural themes in folktales.

**Activity:**

- Students formed small groups to discuss the themes, morals, and cultural significance of the folktales they read.
- They recorded their discussions as podcast episodes, expressing their perspectives and engaging in analytical conversations about the characters, conflicts, and values presented in the stories.
- The recorded podcasts were shared with the class, followed by a reflective discussion to compare interpretations.

**Outcome:**

- Strengthened speaking and listening skills in an informal, interactive setting.
- Encouraged collaborative learning and critical thinking through meaningful discussions.
- Deepened cultural appreciation by analyzing folktale messages from different perspectives.

### ***3. Interactive Quizzes***

**Objective:** To reinforce vocabulary, reading comprehension, and retention of key language elements.

Activity:

- After reading and discussing the folktales, students completed interactive quizzes designed to test their understanding of vocabulary, story elements, and moral lessons.
- The quizzes included multiple-choice questions, matching activities, crossword puzzles, and Kahoot! live quizzes, making learning fun and engaging.
- Instant feedback was provided to reinforce learning and clarify misunderstandings.

Outcome:

- Strengthened vocabulary acquisition through repeated exposure to key terms.
- Improved reading comprehension by focusing on main ideas, themes, and character development.
- Increased motivation and participation through gamified learning experiences.

**4. Role-Playing Activities**

Objective: To improve fluency, pronunciation, and expressive communication in English.

Activity:

- Students worked in groups to dramatize key scenes from the folktales, bringing the characters and stories to life.
- They rehearsed their roles, focusing on intonation, emotion, and body language to enhance storytelling delivery.
- Performances were presented to the class, followed by feedback from peers and instructors.

Outcome:

- Enhanced oral fluency and confidence in speaking English.
- Strengthened non-verbal communication skills (gestures, tone, and expressions).
- Developed collaborative teamwork and creative problem-solving through performance planning.

**5. Writing Exercises**

Objective: To improve writing proficiency, critical reflection, and storytelling skills.

Activity:

Students engaged in structured writing tasks related to the folktales, including:

- Summaries: Writing concise retellings of folktales to practice paraphrasing and comprehension.
- Reflection Essays: Expressing personal interpretations of the morals and themes, linking them to real-life experiences.
- Creative Writing: Creating alternative endings or original folktales inspired by the cultural elements in the storybooks.

Outcome:

- Strengthened writing structure, coherence, and vocabulary usage.
- Developed analytical skills by interpreting folktale meanings and themes.
- Encouraged creativity and self-expression in written narratives.

## 6. Cultural Dialogues

**Objective:** To foster cultural awareness, empathy, and deeper engagement with indigenous traditions.

### Activity:

- Students participated in classroom discussions connecting the folktales' cultural values to their traditions and personal experiences.
- Guest speakers (e.g., elders, cultural storytellers) were invited to share real-life perspectives on indigenous storytelling, enriching the students' understanding of oral traditions.
- Students created comparative presentations on similarities and differences between Indigenous folktales and other global narratives.

### Outcome:

- Developed cross-cultural awareness and appreciation for oral traditions.
- Encouraged empathetic thinking and ethical discussions on folktale morals.
- Strengthened speaking and presentation skills in an interactive, multicultural setting.

## *Implementation & Weekly Schedule*

The intervention was implemented over four weeks, with each activity aligned with specific learning goals. Table 1 shows the weekly schedule.

**Table 1**  
**Weekly Schedule**

Week	Activity	Language Skill Focus
Week 1 Digital	Storytelling	Spaking & Listening
Week 2	Podcast Discussions & Interactive Quizzes	Speaking & Vocabulary
Week 3	Role-Playing Activities & Writing Exercises	Fluency & Writing
Week 4	Cultural Dialogues & Final Reflections	Critical Thinking & Presentations Skills

The structured intervention leverages the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) to bridge language learning with cultural heritage preservation. Through engaging storytelling methods, interactive discussions, and gamified activities, this approach enhances ESL learners' motivation, engagement, and overall language proficiency.

By incorporating culturally relevant folktales, the intervention ensures that student not only develop their English skills but also connect with their heritage, making language learning more meaningful and impactful. This innovative approach aligns with contemporary learner-centred pedagogies, fostering both linguistic competence and cultural pride in ESL education.



### ***Data Analysis***

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure changes in students' motivation, engagement, and proficiency before and after the intervention.

#### ***Descriptive Statistics:***

Means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were calculated to identify trends and patterns in the responses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

The data analysis was performed using SPSS software, ensuring accuracy and reliability in statistical computations.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from UiTM's Research Ethics Committee, ensuring compliance with research ethics guidelines. The following ethical considerations were observed:

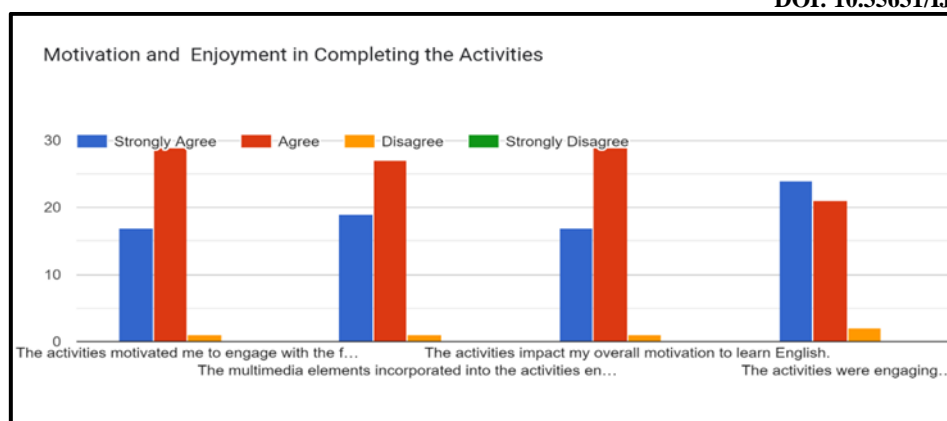
- **Informed Consent:** All participants were provided with detailed information about the study and signed consent forms before participation.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants' responses remained anonymous, and data were stored securely.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Students were informed that participation was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any stage without consequences.

In summary, this methodological framework ensures a systematic and rigorous approach to evaluating the impact of indigenous folktales on ESL learning. By integrating culturally relevant storytelling into language education, this study aims to demonstrate how folktales enhance motivation, engagement, and language acquisition while simultaneously preserving intangible cultural heritage. The structured design, combined with quantitative data analysis, provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Nusantara Indigenous Folktales in ESL education.

## **Results And Findings**

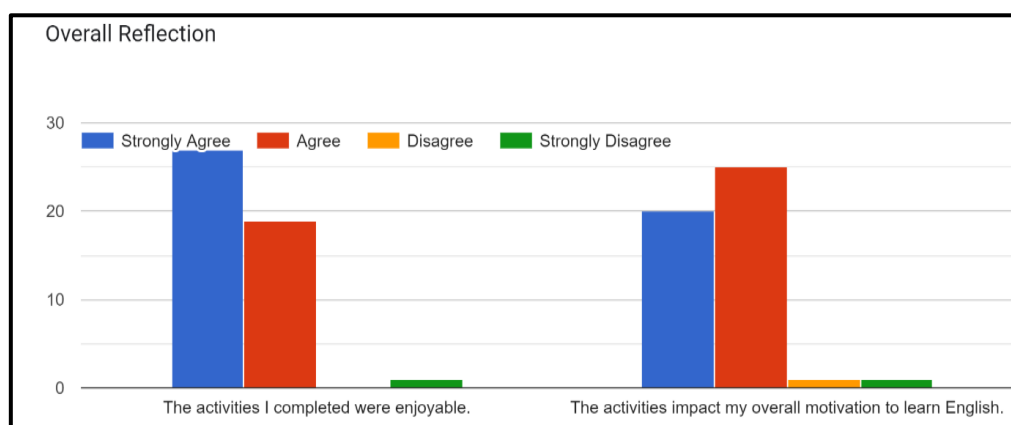
### ***How Effective Is The Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework In Increasing ESL Learners' Motivation To Learn English?***

The findings indicate that the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) effectively enhances reader motivation and enjoyment. This suggests that ESL learners find Indigenous folktales engaging and motivating, as the interactive and culturally rich content captures their interest, making English learning more enjoyable and meaningful. Figure 2 shows motivation and enjoyment in English language learning using the Nusantara Folktales.



**Figure 2. Motivation And Enjoyment**

For overall reflection with these statements “The activities I completed were enjoyable” and “The activities impact my overall motivation to learn English”, 46 students chose “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” while only 1 chose “Strongly Disagree”. For the latter statement, 45 students chose “the activities impact my overall motivation to learn English.” Figure 3 shows students’ overall motivation to learn English.



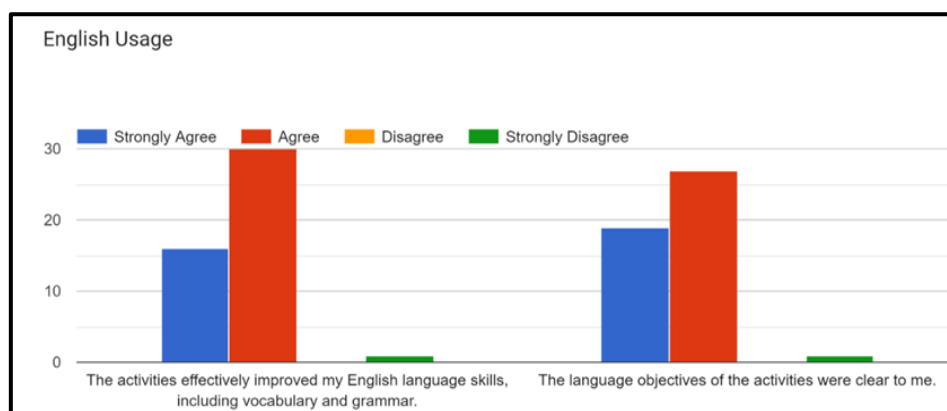
**Figure 3. Students’ Overall Motivation To Learn English**

### ***What Impact Does The Edu-Tale Approach Have On Students’ Language Proficiency, Particularly In Vocabulary And Reading Comprehension?***

The Edu-Tale approach, as implemented through the e-book, has demonstrated its potential to improve language proficiency by providing contextualized and meaningful content. Since engagement levels were reported to be high among learners, this suggests that students are more likely to retain vocabulary and improve reading comprehension when learning is embedded within familiar and culturally relevant stories. The interactive storytelling elements encourage active learning, reinforcing language acquisition.

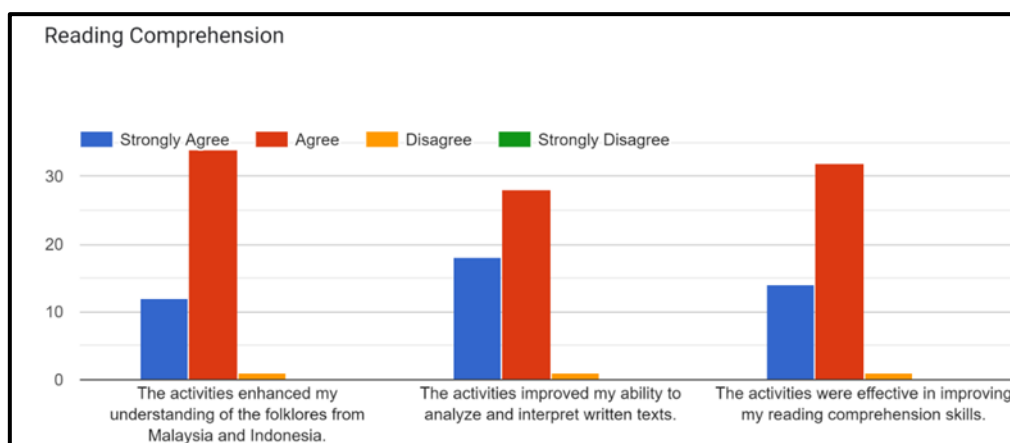
For the English usage statement “the activities effectively improved my English language skills including vocabulary and grammar” and “The language objectives of the activities were clear to me”, the former stated 46 students chose “Strongly agree” and “agree”. Meanwhile only 1

student chose “Strongly Disagree”. Figure 4 shows the impact of the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework on English Usage .



**Figure 4. English Usage**

For Reading Comprehension statement, “The activities enhanced my understanding of the folklore from Malaysia and Indonesia”, “The activities improved my ability to analyse and interpret written texts” and “The activities were effective in improving my reading comprehension skills”, the first statement showed 46 students chose “Strongly agree” and “Agree” while Disagree is only 1 student. The second statement revealed 46 students chose “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” while the last statement with 46 students chose “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”. Figure 5 shows the impact of the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework on Reading Comprehension.



**Figure 5. Reading Comprehension**

### ***How Do ESL Learners Perceive The Use Of Indigenous Folktales In Enhancing Their Cultural Awareness And Appreciation?***

Both parents and educators overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of folktale preservation for maintaining cultural heritage and educating future generations. This indicates that ESL learners perceive indigenous folktales as valuable tools for cultural awareness, helping them connect with their heritage while learning English. By integrating these folktales into ESL

learning, students develop a deeper appreciation for their traditions while improving language skills.

### ***To What Extent Does Including Indigenous Folktales In ESL Education Contribute To Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage?***

The findings suggest that nearly all educators and a significant portion of the public recognize the importance of preserving folktales for future generations. This reinforces the idea that

incorporating Indigenous folktales into ESL education plays a crucial role in ensuring that oral traditions and cultural narratives are sustained. By embedding these folktales in learning materials, both language and cultural knowledge are transmitted effectively, contributing to the long-term preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

The findings strongly support the effectiveness of the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework and the Edu-Tale approach in motivating ESL learners, enhancing their language skills, fostering cultural appreciation, and preserving intangible cultural heritage. The high engagement levels reported by parents and educators confirm that indigenous folktales serve as a powerful educational tool for both linguistic and cultural enrichment in ESL classrooms.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### ***Alignment of Findings with the Literature Review***

The findings of this study confirm and expand upon the existing body of research on the role of folktales in ESL education, the significance of indigenous narratives in language learning, and the potential of the Edu-Tale approach in fostering motivation, engagement, and linguistic proficiency.

### ***Folktales and Education***

The study found that folktales serve as an effective educational tool that enhances language learning, cognitive development, and cultural appreciation, as highlighted in previous studies (Porter, 2020; Kirmani & Frieman, 1997; Lwin, 2016). The findings indicate that students who engaged with indigenous folktales exhibited increased confidence, motivation, and engagement, supporting research by Garcia and Brown (2017) that emphasizes the role of interactive storytelling in boosting learning enthusiasm.

Additionally, findings align with Saad et al. (2024), who argue that indigenous folktales instill cultural pride while simultaneously enhancing linguistic proficiency. The culturally responsive nature of storytelling made learning more inclusive and meaningful, consistent with the culturally responsive teaching framework (Gay, 2018). The study reaffirms that folktales are not just linguistic tools but also ethical and moral guides, resonating with the insights of Babalola and Onanuga (2012) on the role of folktales in shaping values and social awareness.

### ***Indigenous Folktales in ESL Learning***

This study's findings demonstrate that incorporating indigenous folktales into ESL lessons significantly improves student motivation and engagement, aligning with Ali et al. (2021). Students reported feeling a stronger connection to the content when their own cultural heritage was reflected in the learning material, reinforcing the argument made by Johnson and Smith (2021) that culturally relevant content improves retention and focus.

The research also supports Saad et al. (2024), who emphasize that integrating indigenous narratives into ESL curricula helps decolonize language education, ensuring that learning English is an expansion of heritage rather than a departure from it. Findings confirm that using local folktales fosters cultural identity and appreciation, which corresponds with Smith and Akagawa (2019), who advocate for local storytelling as a means of preserving cultural heritage.

### ***Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage***

The findings further support the argument that education plays a critical role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Students, parents, and educators overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of folktale preservation, validating UNESCO's (2023) assertion that oral traditions must be safeguarded for future generations. This aligns with Smith and Akagawa (2019), who argue that integrating Indigenous stories into educational settings is essential for cultural preservation and student engagement. The study's emphasis on the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF) as a mechanism for both language learning and cultural sustainability provides a contemporary application of these insights.

### ***The Edu-Tale Approach***

Findings from this study demonstrate that the Edu-Tale Approach enhances ESL learning by integrating interactive storytelling techniques, role-playing, and gamified elements. This aligns with Ali et al. (2021), who found that multimedia storytelling significantly improves learning engagement and comprehension.

The study's results also correspond with Mayer (2022), who emphasized that active learning strategies, such as storytelling, enhance problem-solving and critical thinking. Students who participated in role-playing and digital storytelling activities showed marked improvement in vocabulary retention and reading comprehension, reinforcing Swales' (1990) argument that rhythm and repetition in folktales strengthen linguistic acquisition.

Additionally, the study highlights how the Edu-Tale Approach aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) by facilitating collaborative learning, peer discussions, and storytelling activities within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This further supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), demonstrating that storytelling provides comprehensible input ( $i+1$ ), leading to improved language acquisition.

### ***Conceptual Framework: Enhancing ESL Learning through the Edu-Tale Approach***

The study findings confirm that the Edu-Tale Approach enhances ESL learning through motivation, culturally responsive teaching, sociocultural interactions, and comprehensible input. Motivation was significantly influenced by culturally relatable narratives, aligning with Dörnyei's (2001) work on the role of cultural relevance in learner engagement.

The study also affirms that including folktales in ESL education creates an inclusive learning environment, as proposed by Gay (2018) in his culturally responsive teaching model. Furthermore, the integration of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) in the framework validates the study's effectiveness in promoting language acquisition through storytelling and social interactions.



### **Previous Related Studies**

This study builds upon existing research that explores folktales as an educational tool in ESL learning. Similar to Safitri (2023) and Lwin (2015), findings confirm that folktales serve as authentic and engaging reading materials that enhance linguistic and cultural competence.

Additionally, the study aligns with Hastini et al. (2023), which advocates for the inclusion of local folktales in English language teaching materials to preserve regional wisdom. The findings reinforce those from ERIC (2023), emphasizing that oral traditions enhance ESL learning by providing engaging and culturally rich narratives.

However, this study adds novelty by introducing the structured Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework (NIFF), which systematically integrates digital storytelling, gamification, and interactive learning strategies into ESL curricula. Unlike previous studies that focus on general folktales, this research emphasizes how indigenous stories from the Nusantara region (Malaysia and Indonesia) can serve as tools for both ESL learning and cultural preservation.

By introducing a structured framework, this study bridges the gap between traditional storytelling and modern ESL pedagogical strategies, ensuring that language learning remains immersive, culturally relevant, and impactful.

The study's findings are strongly aligned with existing literature, reinforcing the educational value of indigenous folktales in ESL learning. Findings confirm that folktales enhance language skills, promote motivation, and preserve intangible cultural heritage, supporting previous research by Smith and Akagawa (2019), Ali et al. (2021), and Saad et al. (2024). Additionally, the study introduces a structured framework (NIFF) that integrates indigenous storytelling into ESL curricula, expanding on prior research by incorporating digital storytelling, role-playing, and interactive learning strategies. This innovative approach ensures that students not only learn English but also maintain and celebrate their cultural heritage. Future research should expand upon this study's findings by exploring long-term effects, technological innovations, cross-cultural applications, and curriculum integration of the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework. By continuing to investigate how indigenous narratives contribute to ESL learning, scholars can further strengthen the connection between language education, cultural preservation, and 21st-century learning methodologies.

Thus, the Nusantara Indigenous Folktales Framework represents a sustainable and transformative approach to ESL education, providing both linguistic and cultural enrichment while preserving intangible cultural heritage for future generations.

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