



Utilizing Local Culture in Thematic Learning for First Grade Elementary Students

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Abstract. This study explores the development and implementation of culturally-based thematic multimedia learning materials for first-grade elementary students in Indonesia. Given Indonesia's rich cultural diversity, integrating local cultural elements into educational content is crucial for preserving heritage and fostering identity among young learners. The study employs a desktop research design, analyzing academic literature, educational reports, and existing multimedia content to assess best practices and challenges in implementing culturally responsive teaching materials. Findings indicate that culturally-based multimedia resources enhance student engagement, understanding, and retention of educational content. However, challenges such as technical limitations and ensuring cultural accuracy must be addressed. This study underscores the importance of collaborative efforts among educators, cultural experts, and multimedia designers, along with comprehensive teacher training, to optimize the effectiveness of these materials and enrich the learning experience for students.

Keywords: Local Culture, Elementary Education, Culturally-Based Multimedia Learning.

1 Introduction

Indonesia, as an archipelago, is home to a wide array of ethnic groups and religions spread across its many islands. This diversity contributes to the country's rich cultural tapestry and local wisdom. Local culture not only represents a nation's heritage but also its identity. According to Ode, "The cultural values found in Indonesia are priceless assets for the nation" [1].

The integration of local culture into the educational curriculum is essential for preserving cultural heritage and fostering a sense of identity among young learners. Including local cultural elements in education helps students understand and appreciate their cultural backgrounds, which is crucial in an increasingly globalized world. Incorporating these elements aligns with Gay's theory on culturally responsive teaching, which emphasizes the importance of integrating students' cultural references into all aspects of learning [2].

Banks also highlights that such culturally relevant pedagogy supports not only academic success but also the development of cultural competence among students [3]. In elementary education, particularly in the early grades, developing learning materials that are engaging, relatable, and reflective of students' cultural backgrounds is vital. This approach not only makes learning more interesting but also enhances students' cognitive and social development. According to Gay, culturally responsive teaching recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all

aspects of learning, which helps in promoting equity and inclusion in the classroom [2].

This study explores the development and implementation of culturally-based thematic learning multimedia for first-grade elementary students. By incorporating elements of their local culture into the educational content, the aim is to enhance students' learning experiences, making them more engaging and meaningful. Such integration can lead to better educational outcomes, as students are more likely to retain information and apply it in their daily lives.

Research by Banks highlights that culturally relevant pedagogy not only supports academic success but also helps in building cultural competence among students [3]. It is important to create educational content that resonates with students' lived experiences and cultural identities. This approach fosters a learning environment where students feel valued and understood, which is critical for their overall development.

In summary, the integration of local culture in education is not merely about adding cultural references to the curriculum. It involves a comprehensive approach to developing and implementing educational materials that are culturally responsive and reflective of the students' backgrounds. This study aims to contribute to this field by developing multimedia learning materials that are rooted in local culture, thereby enhancing the educational experience of first-grade elementary students.

2 Methods

This study uses a desktop research design to collect and analyze existing data and literature on integrating local culture into thematic multimedia learning. The research involves reviewing academic articles, educational reports, multimedia content, and case studies.

Data were collected from various secondary sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of culturally-based education and multimedia learning. Key sources included academic journals and books on culturally-based education, which provided theoretical and empirical insights into integrating cultural elements into educational content. Educational reports and case studies were also reviewed, documenting real-world applications and effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching strategies. Additionally, reports from government and non-governmental organizations offered context on current educational policies and cultural preservation initiatives. This synthesis aimed to build a thorough understanding of how culturally-based multimedia learning materials can be developed and implemented effectively.

The analysis focused on identifying best practices, common challenges, and successful strategies in developing and implementing culturally-based multimedia learning materials. It examined the integration of local cultural elements, their impact on student engagement and learning outcomes, and the methodologies used for evaluating these materials.

3 Results and Discussion

After collecting and analyzing data related to the integration of local culture in multimedia learning materials, this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and challenges of this approach. The focus of this research is on how culturally-based learning materials can enhance student engagement, understanding, and learning outcomes. By exploring various aspects of implementation, student engagement, learning outcomes, and encountered challenges, we gain a deeper understanding of the impact of using multimedia integrated with local cultural elements in elementary education. These analysis results aim to offer practical guidance for educators and policymakers to optimize the use of culturally-based multimedia learning materials and to identify areas that need further attention in their implementation. Key findings include:

3.1 Implementation: Collaborative Approach and Teacher Training

Successful implementation of culturally-based multimedia learning materials necessitates a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. This involves a concerted effort among educators, cultural experts, and multimedia designers to create content that is both pedagogically effective and culturally accurate. Such collaboration ensures that the materials are not only educationally sound but also deeply resonant with the students' cultural backgrounds. According to Kinuthia, integrating socio-cultural issues into instructional design through a multidisciplinary approach is crucial [4]. This method helps to ensure that educational content aligns with students' cultural experiences, making learning more relevant and engaging.

Additionally, the effective use of these multimedia resources relies heavily on thorough teacher training. As noted by Teni Nurrita, educational media serve as critical tools in the teaching and learning process by clarifying the messages conveyed and enhancing the overall learning experience [5]. Teachers play a key role in utilizing these materials effectively. They must be well-prepared to integrate multimedia resources into their curriculum, which requires equipping them with the appropriate skills and knowledge. This preparation allows educators to deliver content confidently and engage students more effectively.

Laur emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers, particularly in the context of authentic learning experiences [6]. Educators need continuous training to handle and implement culturally-based materials effectively. This professional development ensures that teachers can maximize the

impact of these resources, providing a dynamic and engaging learning environment for their students. As Halimah points out, such training is essential for achieving the full potential of culturally-based multimedia learning materials and enhancing the educational experience [7].

3.2 Student Engagement: Increased Engagement with Cultural References

Research consistently demonstrates that students exhibit higher levels of engagement when learning materials feature familiar cultural references. This is particularly evident in educational settings where students encounter content that reflects their own cultural backgrounds. Klein and Kirkpatrick found that incorporating multimodal literacies—educational materials that use various forms of media, such as text, images, audio, and video—significantly enhances student engagement [8]. By integrating multiple media formats, educators can create a richer, more dynamic learning experience that captures students' interest and keeps them actively involved.

In the context of Indonesia, a country with a diverse array of ethnicities, cultures, and languages, the unique behaviors and lifestyles of each region highlight the distinct cultural identity of different areas. This cultural diversity is reflected in local traditions and practices, which can be effectively utilized in educational materials. The presence of literature within these culturally rich communities acts as a vital tool for conveying moral lessons and values. Ihsan underscores the role of literature in character education, emphasizing that it helps instill important values and guides students towards becoming more responsible and ethical individuals [9].

When educational content includes elements from students' own cultures, it becomes more relatable and engaging. This connection to familiar cultural references enhances students' motivation to learn and makes the educational process more meaningful. Interactive features, such as animations, games, and storytelling, play a crucial role in this context. These elements provide an immersive learning experience that captures students' attention and encourages active participation. Halimah notes that such interactive features not only maintain students' interest but also deepen their connection with the material, thereby supporting a more effective and engaging learning experience [7].

By leveraging the cultural backgrounds of students and incorporating interactive, multimodal elements into educational materials, educators can create a more engaging and impactful learning environment. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also fosters a stronger connection between students and the content they are studying.

3.3 Learning Outcomes: Improved Understanding and Retention

Clear and informative signs are essential for successful communication within a subdistrict [9]. Case studies indicate that students exposed to culturally-based thematic learning materials exhibit improved understanding and retention of educational content. For example, the study on developing Sundanese local culture

literacy in elementary schools demonstrated that integrating local cultural elements into the curriculum helps students relate new knowledge to their own cultural experiences. This connection not only makes learning more meaningful but also aids in the retention of information.

Using interactive learning media that incorporates local wisdom can significantly improve students' understanding of local culture. This is because young children tend to enjoy interactive media more than traditional manual learning methods. This finding is supported by Sularso, who argues that integrating local wisdom into education is essential, as this wisdom is increasingly overlooked [10]. The decline in local wisdom is observable in everyday behaviors, where the values of local traditions are diminished by a lifestyle focused on pragmatic and capitalistic values. The materials support cognitive development by linking abstract concepts to tangible cultural references, thereby enhancing the overall learning process and making education more effective and memorable for students [7].

3.4 Challenges and Considerations: Technical Issues and Cultural Accuracy

Implementing multimedia learning materials presents several significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure their effectiveness. One of the primary issues is technical limitations, which include restricted access to digital devices and unreliable internet connectivity. These technical barriers can severely impede the implementation and use of multimedia resources in educational settings, particularly in underserved or remote areas. McKnight et al. highlight that such technical challenges can undermine the effectiveness of digital learning tools, as students and educators may struggle to access or use these resources effectively [11]. Without adequate technological infrastructure, the potential benefits of multimedia learning materials may be lost, affecting overall educational outcomes.

Another critical challenge is ensuring that the multimedia content is culturally accurate and sensitive. Ensuring cultural sensitivity in e-learning translation is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and ensure that content is meaningful and appropriate for the target audience [12]. They emphasize the need for meticulous attention to cultural nuances and the importance of collaboration with cultural experts to achieve accuracy and respect for local traditions. The significance of reimagining curricula to include culturally sensitive content, particularly in terms of its impact on student engagement and the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives to prevent cultural insensitivity [13].

The integration of local culture into educational materials requires meticulous attention to detail to avoid misrepresentation or oversimplification of cultural elements. This necessitates collaboration with cultural experts who can provide insights and guidance to ensure that the content accurately reflects cultural nuances and respects local traditions. Halimah emphasizes the importance of involving diverse perspectives in the content creation process to achieve cultural sensitivity. Thorough vetting processes are essential to review and refine the materials, ensuring that they are not only educationally effective but also culturally appropriate and respectful.

Addressing these challenges involves not only overcoming technical limitations but also committing to cultural accuracy and sensitivity. By focusing on these areas, educators and developers can create multimedia learning materials that are both effective and respectful of the cultural contexts in which they are used. This comprehensive approach helps in maximizing the educational impact of multimedia resources and ensures that they contribute positively to the learning experience.

4 Conclusion

The integration of local culture into multimedia learning materials for first-grade elementary students offers significant benefits, enhancing engagement, understanding, and retention of educational content. This approach aligns educational content with students' cultural backgrounds, making learning more relatable and meaningful. The study reveals that incorporating familiar cultural references and interactive elements, such as animations and games, plays a crucial role in fostering a deeper connection with the material. However, the implementation of culturally-based multimedia resources is not without challenges. Technical issues, such as limited access to digital devices and unreliable internet connectivity, can hinder their effectiveness. Additionally, ensuring cultural accuracy and sensitivity is paramount to avoid misrepresentation and respect local traditions.

To address these challenges, a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach involving educators, cultural experts, and multimedia designers is essential. Thorough teacher training and ongoing professional development are also critical for the successful integration of these materials into the curriculum. By overcoming technical limitations and committing to cultural sensitivity, educators and developers can maximize the educational impact of multimedia resources. This comprehensive approach not only enhances the learning experience but also supports the preservation and appreciation of local cultural heritage, contributing positively to the students' overall development and education.

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