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FOLKLORE AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS' CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN A BIPA CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Intangible cultural heritage plays a crucial role in sustaining cultural knowledge, social values, and collective memory across generations. Among its most enduring forms are folklore narratives, which transmit cultural meanings through storytelling traditions embedded within everyday social life. While folklore has increasingly been used as cultural material in language education, relatively little research has examined how learners interpret narrative heritage within multilingual learning environments. This study investigates multilingual learners' responses to folklore-based instruction in a Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) classroom and explores how folklore functions as a medium of cultural heritage interpretation. The study adopts an interpretive qualitative design supported by descriptive quantitative data. Data were collected from eleven international learners through a perception questionnaire and written reflections. The analysis combines descriptive statistics with thematic analysis to examine how learners engage with Indonesian folklore narratives as cultural resources. The findings show that folklore narratives served as accessible entry points to cultural heritage. More importantly, they enabled learners to interpret cultural values through interaction rather than passive exposure. Cultural understanding emerged primarily through collaborative discussion and intercultural comparison rather than through individual reading alone. Multilingual interaction also played an important role in mediating heritage interpretation, allowing learners to negotiate meanings across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The study demonstrates that multilingual classrooms can function as contemporary spaces of heritage transmission in which narrative traditions circulate beyond their original cultural contexts and acquire new meanings through intercultural dialogue. By conceptualizing folklore as narrative heritage rather than merely instructional material, this research contributes to broader discussions on the interpretation and mobility of intangible cultural heritage within global learning environments.

KEYWORDS: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Folklore Narratives; Multilingual Classrooms; Intercultural Dialogue; BIPA.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage represents a key mechanism through which societies sustain collective memory, transmit social values, and negotiate cultural identity across generations. Contemporary heritage studies emphasize that heritage should not be understood as a static collection of inherited objects, but as a socially constructed and dynamic process shaped through interpretation, participation, and ongoing cultural negotiation (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013; Waterton & Watson, 2015). From this perspective, heritage emerges through practices of meaning-making that connect past traditions with present contexts, allowing cultural knowledge to be continuously reinterpreted across social and historical settings.

Among the most enduring forms of intangible cultural heritage are folklore narratives. Folktales constitute narrative traditions through which communities communicate moral values, social expectations, and symbolic understandings of human relationships. Through storytelling, cultural knowledge is transmitted in ways that connect everyday social experience with collective memory and moral imagination. Scholars of folklore studies have emphasized that storytelling functions not merely as the repetition of inherited narratives but as a performative cultural practice in which meaning is continually reproduced and negotiated within social interaction (Bauman, 1986; Finnegan, 2012; Zipes, 2012). Folklore therefore operates as a living cultural system in which narrative structures convey ethical reflection, social norms, and culturally specific ways of interpreting human experience.

Because of this narrative and symbolic richness, folklore has increasingly been explored within contemporary educational contexts. Educational environments can function as spaces in which cultural narratives are transmitted, interpreted, and discussed among learners who encounter cultural knowledge from outside their own social backgrounds. Within language education in particular, folklore narratives provide culturally embedded stories that enable learners to engage with moral values, cultural imagination, and narrative traditions associated with a particular linguistic community. Rather than presenting culture as static information about traditions or customs, folklore invites learners to interpret cultural meanings through narrative experience and discussion (Kramsch, 2013; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Norton, 2013). Folklore narratives therefore function not only as storytelling traditions but also as cultural frameworks through which communities transmit symbolic knowledge, ethical norms, and collective

memory across generations (Ben-Amos, 1999; Finnegan, 2012; Zipes, 2012).

The cultural dimension of folklore becomes especially significant in multilingual learning environments where learners bring diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the interpretive process. In such contexts, folklore narratives are not simply transmitted as cultural content but are actively interpreted by learners who draw upon their own cultural experiences when engaging with the stories. Multilingual classrooms therefore create spaces of intercultural dialogue in which traditional narratives are reinterpreted through cross-cultural interaction. Through discussion, storytelling, and collaborative interpretation, learners participate in processes of cultural meaning-making that extend beyond language acquisition to include intercultural understanding and cultural reflection (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014; Kramsch, 2009).

Despite growing interest in culturally responsive teaching and intercultural language education, empirical research has often focused primarily on instructional strategies or learning outcomes rather than on how learners themselves interpret cultural narratives within multilingual classrooms. In particular, relatively little research has examined how folklore narratives function as cultural mediation resources when introduced in foreign language learning environments. While studies in language pedagogy frequently address cultural content in textbooks or classroom materials, fewer investigations explore how learners interpret the cultural meanings embedded within narrative heritage when they encounter such narratives in intercultural learning contexts (Byram, 2021; Kramsch, 2013; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Within language education, narrative-based cultural materials have been shown to facilitate intercultural reflection by enabling learners to interpret cultural meanings embedded within stories rather than encountering culture as abstract information (Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013; Kramsch & Hua, 2016; Risager, 2018).

More broadly, research on folklore and education has rarely examined how traditional narrative heritage is reinterpreted when it is introduced into transnational learning environments where learners from diverse cultural backgrounds encounter and negotiate cultural meanings embedded in folklore. Understanding this process is important because the educational use of folklore does not merely introduce cultural material into the classroom; it repositions traditional narratives within new interpretive contexts where cultural meanings are reconstructed

through intercultural interaction. In such environments, folklore can function as a bridge between heritage knowledge and contemporary global learning spaces.

This study addresses this gap by examining multilingual learners' responses to folklore-based instruction in a Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) classroom. Indonesian folktales were used as narrative learning materials designed to introduce learners to cultural values, moral relationships, and storytelling traditions embedded within Indonesian culture. Rather than approaching folklore solely as instructional content, the study conceptualizes folklore as a form of intangible cultural heritage that facilitates cultural interpretation and intercultural dialogue within multilingual educational environments. Multilingual learning environments provide particularly rich contexts for such interpretation because learners bring diverse linguistic repertoires and cultural perspectives that shape how narrative traditions are understood and reinterpreted (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014; Kramsch, 2009).

By examining how learners interpret Indonesian folklore narratives, the study contributes to broader discussions on how intangible cultural heritage continues to circulate and acquire new meanings within contemporary transnational learning environments. The study therefore provides insight into how narrative heritage can function as a cultural mediation resource through which learners engage with cultural values while participating in multilingual communication. In this study, folklore is not treated merely as cultural content but as a form of intangible cultural heritage understood as a dynamic interpretive process involving meaning-making, negotiation, and circulation across contexts. The multilingual classroom is therefore conceptualized not only as a site of learning, but as a space where heritage is actively reconstructed and recontextualized through intercultural interaction.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do multilingual learners respond to folklore-based instruction in a foreign language classroom?
2. In what ways do learners perceive folklore narratives as supporting their engagement with Indonesian culture and classroom communication?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts an interpretive qualitative

research design supported by limited descriptive quantitative data to examine how multilingual learners interpret folklore narratives within a foreign language learning environment. Grounded in an interpretive research tradition, the study focuses on how learners construct meaning from cultural experiences rather than measuring causal relationships or instructional outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Learners' responses are therefore understood as situated interpretive processes through which cultural meanings are negotiated in classroom interaction.

The research was conducted as a classroom-based inquiry in a Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) course, where Indonesian folktales were used as cultural learning materials. The study conceptualizes folklore not merely as instructional content but as a form of intangible cultural heritage through which learners engage in interpretation, discussion, and cultural reflection within a multilingual setting. A teacher-researcher approach was employed, in which the instructor facilitated learning activities while documenting learners' responses. To reduce potential bias associated with this dual role, the study applied several strategies, including anonymous data collection, delayed data gathering after course assessment, and the use of analytic memos to support reflexive interpretation (Borg, 2015; Burns, 2010).

Given the relatively small number of participants ($n = 11$), the study is explicitly framed as an interpretive qualitative case study that prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalization. Small, context-specific samples are considered appropriate in qualitative classroom research when the aim is to explore meaning-making processes in situated contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Accordingly, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalizable but to offer analytically transferable insights into how folklore as intangible cultural heritage is interpreted in multilingual learning environments. However, the limited sample size and single classroom context constrain broader applicability; therefore, the findings should be understood as context-bound and exploratory. Future research across multiple contexts is recommended to extend these insights.

2.2. Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in a tertiary-level Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program in Indonesia. BIPA programs are designed to support international learners in acquiring Indonesian language proficiency while

simultaneously developing cultural understanding of Indonesian society and traditions. Within this course, folklore narratives were introduced as cultural learning materials in order to expose learners to Indonesian narrative traditions and social values embedded in storytelling practices.

Participants consisted of eleven international learners enrolled in the course. The learners represented diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such diversity created a multilingual classroom environment in which learners brought different cultural perspectives and linguistic repertoires into the interpretation of folklore narratives.

Based on institutional placement procedures and classroom observation, learners' Indonesian proficiency ranged from lower-intermediate to intermediate levels, corresponding approximately to levels A2–B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Participants reported varying lengths of exposure to Bahasa Indonesia, ranging from six months to approximately two years of formal language study. Their duration of residence in Indonesia also varied, from short-term academic exchange programs to longer stays exceeding one year.

Learning activities during the course were organized around Indonesian folktales as narrative learning materials. The selected folktales were presented through multiple formats, including guided reading, video storytelling, visual narrative representations, and group discussion activities. Classroom tasks encouraged learners to retell stories, identify moral messages, and discuss cultural meanings embedded within the narratives. Through these activities, learners were invited to interpret folklore not only as stories but also as expressions of Indonesian cultural values and social norms.

2.3. Instructional Design of Folklore-Based Learning

The folklore-based instruction in this study was implemented through a structured sequence of pedagogical activities designed to support cultural interpretation and language development.

The instructional framework consisted of four stages:

1. Narrative Exposure

Learners were introduced to Indonesian folktales through multimodal input, including written texts, video storytelling, and visual representations.

2. Guided Comprehension

Learners engaged in guided reading and listening activities supported by vocabulary scaffolding and comprehension questions.

3. Interpretive Discussion

Learners participated in group discussions to identify moral values, cultural meanings, and narrative structures. Multilingual resources were allowed to support understanding.

4. Intercultural Reflection

Learners compared Indonesian folklore with stories from their own cultures and reflected on similarities and differences in cultural values.

This sequence was designed to move learners from initial engagement toward deeper cultural interpretation and intercultural dialogue.

2.4. Data Collection

Data were collected using two complementary instruments in order to capture both general response patterns and detailed interpretive perspectives.

The first instrument was a learner perception questionnaire administered at the end of the instructional sequence. The questionnaire consisted of 15 Likert-scale items using a four-point response format (strongly disagree to strongly agree), designed to capture four dimensions of learners' engagement with folklore-based learning: affective engagement, communicative participation, multilingual mediation, and cultural understanding. The instrument was developed as an exploratory tool to identify general response patterns rather than to support inferential statistical analysis (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). To enhance methodological transparency, the full set of questionnaire items is provided in Appendix A.

The second source of data consisted of open-ended written reflections completed by the learners. Learners were asked to describe their experiences in learning Indonesian folklore, the cultural insights they gained from the stories, the languages they used during classroom discussion, and the challenges they encountered while interpreting the narratives. These reflections provided qualitative insight into learners' interpretive experiences and allowed participants to articulate their perspectives in their own words. Combining questionnaire data with written reflections allowed the study to capture both general tendencies and deeper interpretive insights into how learners engaged with folklore narratives as forms of cultural heritage.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved two complementary procedures: descriptive quantitative analysis and qualitative thematic analysis.

Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively to identify general response patterns across the fifteen items. Because of the small sample size ($n = 11$), the analysis focused on frequency distributions and dominant response tendencies rather than inferential statistical testing. Questionnaire items were grouped into conceptual categories corresponding to the four analytical dimensions of the study: affective engagement, communicative participation, multilingual mediation, and cultural understanding.

Qualitative data from learners' written reflections were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021). This approach is widely used in qualitative research to identify patterns of meaning across textual data.

The analysis proceeded through several stages. First, the reflections were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the dataset. Second, initial codes were generated to capture recurring concepts, expressions, and interpretive perspectives expressed by learners. Third, related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories representing key dimensions of learners' experiences in interpreting folklore narratives. Finally, themes were reviewed and refined through iterative comparison across the dataset to ensure coherence and conceptual consistency.

Particular attention was given to preserving diverse learner perspectives, including both positive responses and expressions of difficulty. This approach allowed the analysis to capture the complexity of learners' experiences, including both cultural engagement and linguistic challenges encountered during folklore-based learning activities.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, several strategies were implemented. Data triangulation was achieved by integrating questionnaire responses with qualitative reflections. Analytic memos were maintained throughout the coding process to document theme development and interpretive decisions. In addition, emerging thematic interpretations were discussed with a colleague experienced in qualitative language education research as a form of peer debriefing (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.6. Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all learners were informed about the purpose of the research before data collection began. Participants provided informed consent and were assured that their responses would not influence their academic evaluation in the course.

To protect participants' privacy, questionnaire responses and written reflections were collected anonymously. Pseudonyms were used when reporting qualitative excerpts, and all data were used exclusively for research purposes. These procedures follow standard ethical guidelines for educational research involving human participants.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings in relation to the two research questions guiding the study. The findings integrate descriptive questionnaire results with qualitative insights from learners' written reflections in order to examine how folklore narratives functioned as resources of intangible cultural heritage within the multilingual learning environment. An overview of learners' responses to folklore-based learning activities is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Learners' Responses to Folklore-Based Learning Activities.

Dimension	Questionnaire Focus	Dominant Response	Interpretation
Affective engagement	Enjoyment of folklore-based activities	Strong agreement	Folklore created an engaging learning environment
Cultural understanding	Understanding Indonesian cultural values	Agreement	Stories facilitated interpretation of Indonesian social norms
Communicative participation	Participation in storytelling discussions	Agreement	Narrative activities encouraged classroom interaction
Multilingual mediation	Use of multiple languages during discussion	Frequent use	Multilingual interaction supported meaning negotiation
Vocabulary learning	Acquisition of new Indonesian vocabulary	Moderate agreement	Folklore narratives introduced culturally embedded vocabulary

3.1. Folklore As a Cultural Encounter with Intangible Heritage

Overall, learners responded positively to the use of folklore narratives in the classroom, as reflected in

strong agreement across questionnaire items related to enjoyment and comfort during the learning process. While these responses indicate high affective engagement, a deeper examination suggests that such engagement functioned as an initial condition for cultural interpretation rather than as an outcome in itself.

Learners' written reflections reveal that folklore narratives were not only perceived as interesting stories but also as meaningful cultural representations. For example, one learner noted that "the story makes me understand that Indonesian stories often teach moral lessons about family and responsibility" (Learner 3), while another stated that "learning culture through stories feels more real than reading explanations in textbooks" (Learner 7). These responses indicate that learners did not simply consume narrative content but began to interpret folklore as a form of culturally embedded meaning.

For example, during one classroom activity, learners were asked to retell the folktale *Malin Kundang* and identify its moral message. In group discussions, learners compared this story with similar narratives from their own cultures that emphasize filial respect. This activity encouraged learners not only to practice narrative language but also to engage in intercultural meaning-making.

From a heritage perspective, this shift from engagement to interpretation is significant. Rather than functioning as supplementary teaching material, folklore operated as an entry point into intangible cultural heritage by enabling learners to encounter cultural values through narrative experience. This finding aligns with heritage scholarship that conceptualizes cultural heritage not as a fixed body of knowledge but as an interpretive process through which meanings are actively constructed in social contexts (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013). In this sense, learners' engagement with

folklore can be understood as an early stage of heritage interpretation, where narrative exposure initiates meaning-making rather than merely transmitting cultural information.

Importantly, the data also suggest that engagement alone did not guarantee immediate comprehension. Several learners reported difficulty in understanding specific narrative details due to unfamiliar vocabulary or cultural references. This indicates that access to narrative heritage involves a layered process in which affective engagement, linguistic mediation, and cultural interpretation interact dynamically. Drawing on intercultural language education perspectives (Kramsch, 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), this finding highlights that encountering cultural narratives requires not only emotional involvement but also interpretive support to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that folklore narratives functioned as more than engaging classroom activities; they operated as interpretive sites where learners began to negotiate meaning, recognize cultural values, and position themselves in relation to unfamiliar cultural knowledge. This suggests that in multilingual learning environments, the initial affective appeal of folklore plays a crucial role in activating deeper processes of heritage interpretation, thereby transforming storytelling into a form of experiential cultural engagement.

3.2. Interpreting Cultural Values Through Narrative Heritage

Analysis of learners' written reflections revealed several recurring themes related to how participants interpreted Indonesian folklore narratives as expressions of cultural heritage. These themes are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes Emerging from Learners' Interpretations of Folklore Narratives.

Theme	Description	Example Learner Reflection
Cultural encounter	Folklore introduces learners to Indonesian storytelling traditions	"The stories help me understand Indonesian culture."
Moral interpretation	Learners identify ethical lessons in narratives	"The story teaches that children should respect their parents."
Intercultural comparison	Learners compare Indonesian stories with narratives from their own cultures	"In my country we also have stories about honesty."
Multilingual mediation	Learners use multiple languages to interpret stories	"We sometimes explain the story in English before discussing in Indonesian."
Linguistic challenge	Vocabulary limitations influence comprehension	"Some words are difficult but I still understand the message."

Analysis of learners' written reflections indicates that engagement with folklore narratives extended beyond story comprehension toward the

interpretation of culturally embedded values. While questionnaire responses suggest that learners perceived folklore as supporting cultural

understanding, qualitative data reveal that this understanding emerged through active processes of meaning-making rather than passive reception.

Learners consistently identified moral values such as respect for parents, responsibility, honesty, and social harmony within the narratives. For instance, one learner noted that “the story teaches that children should respect their parents and listen to their advice” (Learner 4), while another observed that “many stories show that people must take responsibility for their actions” (Learner 9). Rather than merely recalling narrative content, these responses demonstrate that learners were engaged in interpreting folklore as a system of cultural values.

In another activity, learners were asked to identify key values from a selected folktale and present them to the class. One group highlighted the value of honesty and connected it to a similar story from their home country. This comparison enabled learners to articulate cultural meanings more explicitly and to position Indonesian folklore within a broader intercultural perspective.

From a heritage perspective, this interpretive activity is central. Folklore narratives functioned not simply as representations of cultural knowledge, but as semiotic resources through which learners accessed and reconstructed intangible cultural heritage. In line with contemporary heritage theory, cultural heritage is not transmitted as fixed meaning but is continuously reinterpreted through acts of engagement, interpretation, and social interaction (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013; Waterton & Watson, 2015). The learners’ ability to identify and articulate moral meanings suggests that heritage understanding was produced through interpretive participation rather than informational acquisition.

Importantly, the data show that cultural interpretation was not an individual cognitive process but a socially mediated one. Learners frequently reported that classroom discussion played a key role in helping them understand narrative meanings, particularly when encountering

unfamiliar cultural references. Through peer interaction, learners negotiated interpretations, clarified meanings, and compared perspectives. This process reflects the notion of heritage as a dialogic and participatory practice, in which meaning emerges through collective interpretation rather than unilateral transmission.

In addition, learners’ interpretations often involved intercultural comparison, where values embedded in Indonesian folklore were related to similar narratives in their own cultural backgrounds. Such comparisons indicate that learners were not only interpreting Indonesian cultural values but also positioning them within broader cross-cultural frameworks. This process aligns with intercultural communication theory, which emphasizes that cultural understanding develops through the recognition of both difference and similarity across cultural systems (Byram, 2021; Kramsch, 2013). From a heritage standpoint, this suggests that folklore narratives become sites of transnational meaning-making, where cultural values are not only understood but also recontextualized.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that folklore-based learning enabled learners to engage in heritage interpretation as an active, socially mediated, and intercultural process. Rather than functioning as static cultural artifacts, folklore narratives operated as dynamic meaning-making systems through which learners constructed, negotiated, and reinterpreted cultural values within a multilingual classroom environment.

3.3. Intercultural Dialogue in Multilingual Story Interpretation

During classroom discussions, learners frequently identified moral values embedded in the folklore narratives and compared them with values found in their own cultural traditions. The cultural values interpreted by learners across the narratives are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Interpretation Of Intangible Cultural Heritage Values in Indonesian Folklore Narratives.

Folklore Narrative Element	Intangible Cultural Heritage Value	Interpretive Dimension	Intercultural Comparison
Disobedient child punished in the narrative	Respect for parents and family hierarchy	Learners interpreted the story as emphasizing moral responsibility toward parents and elders	Several learners noted similar moral lessons in folktales from their own cultures
Characters rewarded for honesty and integrity	Honesty as a fundamental social virtue	Learners interpreted honesty as a key value that regulates social trust within communities	Participants compared the story with similar honesty narratives in their national folklore traditions
Consequences faced by characters for unethical actions	Moral accountability and ethical behavior	Learners interpreted the narrative as illustrating the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions	Some learners identified parallel stories in their cultures that emphasize moral consequences

Community cooperation in resolving conflict	Social harmony and collective responsibility	Learners interpreted the narrative as reflecting the importance of maintaining social balance within the community	Participants discussed comparable communal values present in storytelling traditions in their home societies
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Taken together, these findings demonstrate that folklore-based learning enabled learners to engage in heritage interpretation as an active, socially mediated, and intercultural process. Rather than functioning as static cultural artifacts, folklore narratives operated as dynamic meaning-making systems through which learners constructed, negotiated, and reinterpreted cultural values within a multilingual classroom environment.

3.4. Linguistic Mediation of Heritage Understanding

Although folklore narratives facilitated cultural engagement, learners also reported linguistic challenges that influenced their interpretive experiences. Questionnaire responses indicate that many participants agreed that they learned new vocabulary from the stories. At the same time, vocabulary limitations were the most frequently mentioned difficulty in the written reflections.

Several learners explained that unfamiliar words sometimes made it difficult to follow the narrative, particularly during listening activities. One participant wrote, “Sometimes I cannot understand the whole story because there are many new words” (Learner 5). Another learner noted, “I understand the message of the story but not every detail because my vocabulary is still limited” (Learner 8).

These linguistic challenges illustrate that access to intangible cultural heritage narratives in foreign language contexts is mediated by linguistic comprehension. Understanding narrative heritage therefore involves both cultural interpretation and linguistic competence, particularly when learners engage with stories in a language that is not their first language (Kramsch, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Nevertheless, these difficulties did not prevent learners from participating in the interpretive process. Many participants relied on contextual clues, peer explanations, or visual storytelling elements to interpret the narratives. Multilingual interaction often supported comprehension, as learners used English or their first languages to clarify meanings during discussion. Such multilingual mediation enabled learners to remain

engaged in the interpretation of narrative heritage while gradually expanding their Indonesian language resources (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014).

Taken together, the findings indicate that folklore narratives functioned as cultural mediation resources within the multilingual classroom. While linguistic limitations sometimes constrained comprehension, the narrative structure of folklore enabled learners to encounter Indonesian cultural values, participate in interpretive discussion, and compare storytelling traditions across cultures. In this sense, folklore operated not merely as instructional material but as a living form of intangible cultural heritage through which cultural meanings were explored and negotiated within a contemporary multilingual learning environment.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that folklore narratives function as intangible cultural heritage within multilingual educational environments not as static cultural representations, but as dynamic processes of interpretation, negotiation, and circulation. This supports the view that heritage is actively constructed through social interaction and interpretive engagement rather than transmitted as fixed knowledge (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013; Waterton & Watson, 2015). In this study, learners' engagement with folklore illustrates how narrative heritage is interpreted, negotiated, and recontextualized within classroom interaction.

As demonstrated in Section 3.1, learners' affective engagement with folklore narratives functioned as an entry point into heritage interpretation. Enjoyment and emotional involvement did not constitute the end of the learning process but instead enabled learners to move toward deeper interpretive engagement. This finding supports the idea that heritage encounters are often initiated through experiential and affective dimensions, which then develop into processes of meaning-making. In this sense, storytelling created conditions for what may be understood as early-stage heritage interpretation, where narrative exposure stimulates the recognition of culturally embedded meanings.

Building on this, the findings in Section 3.2 show that learners did not simply understand folklore as narrative content but engaged in interpreting it as a system of cultural values. Learners identified themes such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and social

harmony, demonstrating that they were actively constructing meaning from the narratives rather than passively receiving cultural information. This aligns with contemporary heritage theory, which conceptualizes cultural heritage as something that is produced through interpretive participation rather than transmitted as static knowledge (Smith, 2006; Waterton & Watson, 2015). The classroom, therefore, functioned as a site where narrative heritage was actively interpreted, negotiated, and reconstructed through learner engagement.

Importantly, the findings also indicate that this interpretive process was inherently social. As shown in Section 3.2, learners relied on discussion and interaction to interpret unfamiliar cultural references and clarify meanings. This supports the notion that heritage is dialogic and participatory, emerging through collective processes of interpretation rather than individual cognition alone (Harrison, 2013; Waterton & Watson, 2015). In this context, the multilingual classroom becomes a space where cultural meanings are co-constructed through interaction.

The intercultural dimension of this process is further illustrated in Section 3.3, where learners engaged in comparing Indonesian folklore with narrative traditions from their own cultures. These comparisons reflect the development of intercultural interpretive competence (Byram, 2021), in which learners interpret unfamiliar cultural meanings by relating them to their existing cultural frameworks. At the same time, learners demonstrated elements of symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2009; 2013) by recognizing how cultural values are embedded within narrative structures and by interpreting meanings beyond the literal level of the text. Through these processes, folklore narratives became sites of intercultural meaning-making, where cultural similarities and differences were explored, negotiated, and reinterpreted.

From a heritage perspective, these findings suggest that when folklore is introduced into multilingual learning environments, it does not remain a stable representation of national culture. Instead, it becomes recontextualized through learners' interpretive frameworks and intercultural dialogue. This supports the view that cultural heritage is dynamic and mobile, acquiring new meanings as it circulates across cultural and linguistic contexts (Harrison, 2013; Holtorf, 2011; Logan, 2012).

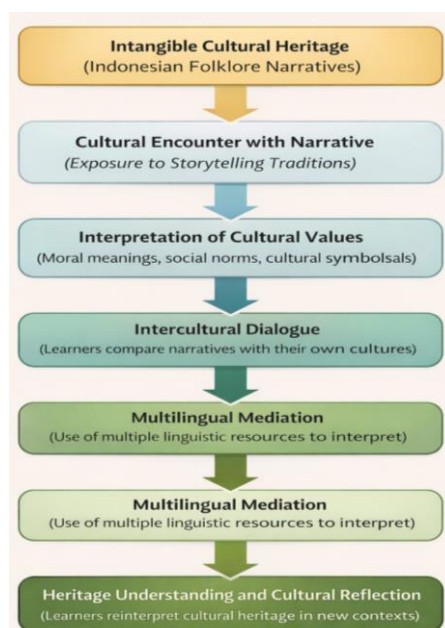


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Heritage Interpretation in Multilingual Learning.

The interpretive process identified in this study is conceptualized in Figure 1, which illustrates how folklore narratives function as an initial point of cultural encounter that leads to interpretive reflection and intercultural dialogue. The model shows that engagement with narrative heritage begins with affective involvement, develops into interpretive meaning-making, and expands into intercultural comparison and dialogue. This process highlights the transformation of folklore from narrative content into a dynamic form of cultural heritage that is actively interpreted within multilingual contexts.

An important dimension of this interpretive

process concerns the role of language in mediating cultural understanding. The findings show that learners frequently relied on multiple linguistic resources to interpret the narratives and communicate their interpretations during classroom discussions. This process is illustrated in Figure 2, which conceptualizes language learning as a mediating mechanism in cultural heritage interpretation. In multilingual settings, linguistic mediation often plays a crucial role in enabling participants to interpret cultural meanings collaboratively through translanguaging and intercultural dialogue (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014; Kramsch & Hua, 2016).

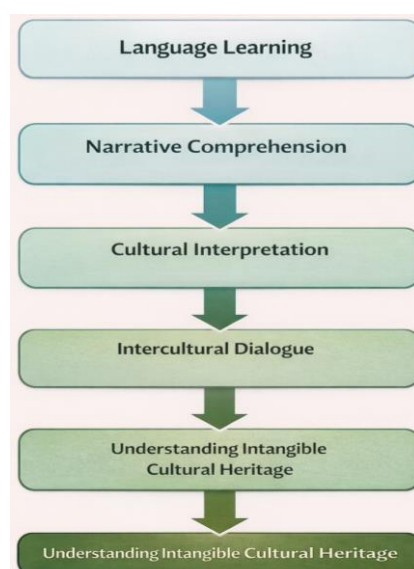


Figure 2: Language As Mediation in Cultural Heritage Interpretation.

In addition, the role of language as a mediating mechanism in heritage interpretation is illustrated in Figure 2. As discussed in Section 3.4, learners relied on multiple linguistic resources to interpret narrative meanings and participate in discussion. This supports the view that language learning in multilingual settings involves translanguaging practices that enable learners to construct meaning collaboratively (García & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2013). Language, therefore, functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a tool for cultural interpretation and intercultural negotiation (Kramsch, 2009).

At the same time, the presence of linguistic challenges highlights an important dimension of heritage interpretation in foreign language contexts. Learners' limited vocabulary sometimes constrained detailed comprehension, yet did not prevent engagement with broader narrative meanings. This suggests that access to intangible cultural heritage is mediated rather than determined by linguistic proficiency, and that interpretive understanding can still emerge through contextual inference and collaborative interaction.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that folklore-based learning environments can function as contemporary sites of heritage transmission and reinterpretation. Multilingual classrooms do not simply introduce cultural content but create conditions for the active reconstruction of cultural meaning through interpretation, interaction, and intercultural dialogue. In this way, folklore narratives operate as living cultural resources that continue to circulate, evolve, and acquire new meanings within global educational contexts.

These findings reinforce the view that heritage is not confined to its original cultural communities but continuously circulates and acquires new meanings as it moves across cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013; Waterton & Watson, 2015). While the insights generated are context-specific and not intended for statistical generalization, they offer a compelling account of how learners actively engage in interpreting folklore as intangible cultural heritage. Theoretically, this study advances heritage and intercultural language education by positioning folklore in multilingual classrooms as a dynamic site of interpretive cultural practice rather than static content. It demonstrates that intangible cultural heritage is actively constructed through learners' interpretive participation, intercultural comparison, and multilingual mediation, thereby reconceptualizing the multilingual classroom as a

critical space of heritage recontextualization where cultural meanings are continuously negotiated and transformed.

Based on the findings, this study proposes a simple pedagogical model in which folklore-based learning progresses through three interconnected stages: engagement, interpretation, and intercultural dialogue. This model highlights how narrative materials can support not only language learning but also cultural meaning-making in multilingual classrooms.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that folklore can function not merely as classroom content but as a living form of intangible cultural heritage within multilingual educational environments. By examining learners' responses to Indonesian folktales in a BIPA classroom, the study demonstrates that narrative traditions continue to operate as cultural resources through which values, moral frameworks, and collective meanings are encountered, interpreted, and recontextualized. In this sense, folklore-based learning does not simply support language development; it also enables learners to engage with heritage as an ongoing process of cultural interpretation and transmission.

The findings indicate that learners responded positively to folklore narratives as culturally meaningful and emotionally engaging forms of heritage encounter. Through storytelling, discussion, and comparison with their own cultural traditions, learners interpreted Indonesian folktales as carriers of values such as respect, honesty, responsibility, and social harmony. These processes reveal that cultural understanding emerged not through the passive reception of cultural information but through collaborative interpretation and intercultural dialogue. Even when learners faced linguistic limitations, multilingual mediation enabled them to remain involved in the interpretive process, showing that language functioned as a bridge to heritage understanding rather than as an end in itself.

The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that multilingual classrooms can serve as contemporary sites of heritage transmission, where traditional narratives circulate beyond their original communities and acquire new meanings in transnational contexts. The study therefore contributes to broader discussions in heritage studies by showing how intangible cultural heritage can remain dynamic, mobile, and socially meaningful within global learning environments. Folklore, in this perspective, emerges not as a static cultural artifact

but as a living narrative heritage continuously reinterpreted through intercultural interaction.

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Dewi; original draft preparation, Prima Vidya Asteria; review and editing, Syafiul Anam, Ahmad Rofiuddin, Wati Istanti, and Deshinta Arrova Dewi; visualization, Ari Pujosusanto; supervision, Deshinta Arrova Dewi; project administration, Prima Vidya Asteria; funding acquisition, Ahmad Rofiuddin, Syafiul Anam, and Wati Istanti. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

The following questionnaire items were used to examine learners' perceptions of folklore-based learning in the BIPA classroom. Responses were recorded on a four-point Likert scale.

No.	Dimension	Statement	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (A)	4 (SA)
1	Affective Engagement	I enjoyed learning Indonesian through folklore stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Affective Engagement	The folklore activities made the lesson more interesting.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Affective Engagement	I felt comfortable participating in folklore-based activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Communicative Participation	I actively participated in discussions about folklore stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Communicative Participation	The storytelling activities encouraged me to speak Indonesian.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Communicative Participation	I felt confident sharing my ideas during folklore discussions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Multilingual Mediation	I used other languages (e.g., English or my first language) to help understand the stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Multilingual Mediation	Using multiple languages helped me understand the folklore better.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Multilingual Mediation	I sometimes explained the stories to others using another language.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Cultural Understanding	The folklore stories helped me understand Indonesian culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Cultural Understanding	I learned about Indonesian values through the stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Cultural Understanding	The stories helped me understand social norms in Indonesia.	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Vocabulary & Comprehension	I learned new Indonesian vocabulary from the stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Vocabulary & Comprehension	Some parts of the stories were difficult to understand.	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Vocabulary & Comprehension	I was able to understand the main message of the stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree