Promoting Vocabulary Building, Learning Motivation, and Cultural Identity Representation through Digital Storytelling for Young Indonesian Learners of English as a Foreign Language

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A B S T R A C T

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a globally accepted approach in teaching English. However, in the Indonesian EFL context, little attention has been paid to DST as a pedagogical approach, particularly its potential to create a bridge between the students' primary culture and that of English cultures. We report on how DST helped Indonesian junior-school students make meaning in English through a local culture-based DST narrative project. As part of a case study approach, we used various qualitative data collection methods, including focus group interviews, students' reflective journals, classroom observations, and the DST product itself. Finally, multimodal transcription and thematic content analysis were used to interpret the data. The study shows that the digital story is an effective tool to express the students' identity and make meaning through their local culture stories. Participating in these activities also increased student motivation. Working collaboratively in a group helped them to make meaning and focus on topics that resonated with them personally, reduced stress, and allowed them to focus on communication. Drawing on their local culture also assisted to build a bridge between the familiar lexical content and terminology and the less familiar English cultural content and vocabulary, resulting in enhanced engagement and achievement in English. Practically, the DST project-based learning assisted EFL teachers to integrate authentic and communicative learning experiences into a packed curriculum.

Keywords: digital storytelling; local culture; project-based learning; identity; vocabulary development

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Introduction

The literature suggests that teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Indonesia often rely on textbook materials to enhance students' language skills. They generally focus on exercise-based language activities which emphasize grammar practice allowing little space for English for communication purposes and, consequently, students tend to lack engagement and motivation when learning English, viewing it as a meaningless activity divorced from their everyday realities (Widodo, Budi, & Wijayanti, 2016). Since young learners are immersed in a world of social media and technology, they are accustomed to interacting multimodally through pictures, audio and video (Hafner, 2015) and engaging in digital meaning-making (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018). Young learners are also accustomed to sharing stories about their daily encounters within their social and cultural environment. Storytelling within a familiar context using digital tools such as digital video editor or photo editor can potentially build engagement within the EFL learning context (Lee, 2013). These digital tools are particularly useful for providing young learners with an avenue for expressing their unique cultural and social voices and identities (Hafner, 2015; Liontas & Mannion, 2021).

In this paper, we report on a study using digital storytelling and integrating local culture as part of a project-based learning pedagogy. Materials were developed through a process of negotiation with the student participants drawing on their own cultural experiences. Although there are numerous studies utilising digital storytelling in English language teaching, developing materials based on local culture at the junior high school level has received less attention in the Indonesian context. Therefore, this study explores the impact of digital storytelling and local-culture-based material and its potential to enhance students' engagement and learning in the English language classroom.

Literature review

Rationale of integrating local culture in material design

The value of locally contextualised digital storytelling can be traced back to the key neuroscientific research which suggests that learning is a matter of "making connection" and that the process of human learning is maximized if students can connect the current learning to a former concept or experience with a new concrete application (Cross, 1999). Learning is not only related to the ability to make connections between content and skills, but also to cultural and social norms. A lack of connection and resistance to the cultural norms of the target language could potentially hamper language learning (Peng & Patterson, 2021). Conversely, integrating local culture into language teaching and materials could motivate students and build a bridge between their cultural identities and that of the foreign language speakers (Chen & Le, 2019) since digital storytelling allows young learners to represent "themselves and their cultures in positive ways" (Liontas & Mannion, 2021, p. 81). Consequently, it is recommended that teachers create learning materials that are in harmony with students' prior knowledge and experience in their local culture. These learnings have recently been demonstrated by Kim and Li (2021) and Liontas and Mannion (2021) who showed that digital storytelling materials that linked with students' local cultures increased their individual identity development, ability to connect with each other, creativity and consequently motivation to learn.

More specifically, research suggests that connecting with a foreign language and culture is grounded in cultural conceptualization (Sharifian, 2011). Sharifian (2011) argues that cultural conceptualization is a cognitive process of schematization and categorization that occurs by sharing a common view or common conceptual world in a specific culture group. Then, language

becomes the means of negotiation for cultural conceptualization. Some examples of cultural conceptualization in a cultural group include funerals, weddings, and the creation of cultural artefacts. A cultural conceptualization can be a 'bridge' to learn a foreign language such as English (Chen & Le, 2019). For this reason, drawing on learners' local culture while learning a foreign language encourages pride in their own identity, localizes EFL pedagogy, and forms the basis of intercultural communication (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). However, it is the EFL teachers' role to have the creativity and sensitivity to determine what and how local culture can be adapted into EFL teaching. EFL classroom teachers need to experiment with teaching local culture to represent their identity to make meaning.

Digital storytelling in language learning

There are various definitions of DST based on its contexts and purposes. For example, Lambert (2013) describes a digital storytelling activity where learners share personal photos of experiences, are guided through the process of scripting of the story, storyboarding, and producing a short narrated personal film of two- or three-minutes length. However, numerous approaches have been taken. Although DST is not a new educational approach, it has some significant benefits for teaching and learning. DST is a powerful form of instruction that the teacher can use to explain complex concepts and content using narrative and metaphor (Oskoz & Elola, 2016; Sadik, 2008; Taylor, Marrone, Tayar, & Mueller, 2018), while students can express their identities and authentically make use of the target language during their production of language using multimodal narrative (Vinogradova, Linville, & Bickel, 2011).

DST projects support cooperative learning and the development of useful communicative skills (Czarnecki, 2009). Students enhance their speaking skills in the process of creating and presenting their stories. Students also practice listening through engaging with multimodal texts including film, songs, and other students' presentations. The students also practice writing stories in the development of their narrative projects (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013)

Liu, Tai, and Liu (2018) note that combining DST activities such as describing pictures can support students to produce oral narration and enhance students' speaking skills. Engaging students in digital learning activities can minimize anxiety as well as boost their motivation to learn a foreign language. This is particularly valuable in EFL settings such as in Indonesia, where students are sometimes unwilling to participate actively and have limited vocabulary.

However, DST does not necessarily result in the benefits described above. As Robin (2008) notes, using digital media does not mitigate against bad storytelling or a lack of effective pedagogy to guide the storytelling and therefore later proposed the explicit use of a theoretical model that focussed on the intersection of technology, content, and pedagogy with the aim of enhancing "the ability to think about and use technology in critical, creative, and responsible ways" (Robin, 2008, p. 50).

Previous studies on Digital Storytelling in an EFL context

Most previous studies reported on how DST had a positive impact on language learning such as English. However, as noted by Yang, Chen, and Hung (2020), it can be extremely difficult to integrate DST into EFL classrooms due to packed school curriculum, and the emphasis on textbook grammar exercises described above in the Indonesian context. Some teachers also lack the confidence to use technologies (Yang, Chen & Hung, 2020) and DST can easily lead to inappropriate use of copyright (Robin, 2008).

To avoid these issues, it is important that teachers try to integrate DST into the curriculum as much as possible and allow sufficient time to work together with students to problem-solve, think and build learning communities while working on authentic meaningful activities in order to enhance students' English Language proficiency and creative thinking (Robin, 2008; Yang, Chen & Hung, 2020). It is also suggested to focus on students creating their own images or navigating on the internet by mentioning the sources to avoid copyright issues.

As expressed by Liontas and Mannion (2021), one way of building an effective learning community is to encourage students to draw on their own cultural experiences and therefore use DST as a vehicle to express voice and identities. There have been limited studies exploring this aspect of DST in EFL teaching. Vinogradova et al. (2011) examined the implementation of DST in a multicultural classroom setting in learning a new concept and intercultural communication. Their study found that the intercultural discussion dynamic creates an inclusive pedagogy as a catalyst to achieve the new cultural concept and engage in authentic language practice. Vinogradova et al. (2011) also argued that by encouraging students participating in DST to express their 'voice' in their own national language/culture and compare this with the new culture, students were able to more effectively transfer skills, engage in the content, and participate in authentic English activities. Similarly, Anderson and Macleroy (2017) explored DST in a multilingual context and reported that DST actively engaged the young people in language learning and motivated them to develop an intercultural narrative story based on their voices, histories, and memories. Oakley, Pegrum, Xiong, Lim, and Yan (2018) also reported success in intercultural DST. They reported on interactions between middle school students in Australia and China who shared digital stories about their everyday lives and local cultures and traditional tales increasing engagement and motivation to learn the target language as well as enhancing vocabulary development. Kim and Li (2021) also examined how students expressed their voices and identities through DST's multimodal resources.

Like the current study, Kim and Li (2021) made use of multiple data sources including interview and observation and found that DST encouraged students to reflect on their learning experiences and articulate their identity as community members. All the studies mentioned above used DST to support language learning, but all were conducted in either multicultural or intercultural settings. We were interested to explore if local culture could be used as a bridge to EFL learning in a monocultural context, particularly in terms of enhancing motivation to learn and enhanced vocabulary development.

Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1.   How do students integrate and express identity in their local culture experience into their digital storytelling?

2.   How do images and multimodal resources engage students in active participation for making meaning?

3.   How does the digital local story project-based learning pedagogy affect students' vocabulary acquisition?

Methodology

Participants and context

The present research employed a case study approach which, as noted by Yin (2014), is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its

real-world context" (p.16). This study was conducted at one junior high school in East Java-Indonesia. Thirty students were recruited to voluntarily participate in this study. They were between 12 to 14 years old. There were 12 male students and 18 female students. They studied English two times in a week with 90 minutes per class. Based on an informal interview with the teacher and observation of the class prior to the study, we found that the students generally used the textbook as the sole source of knowledge for studying English and made use of the literal translation method. The teacher reported using grammar exercises to prepare the students for standardised examinations and tests and encouraged students to bring their Bahasa Indonesian-English dictionaries along to class to look up the meaning of words. We observed that the students appeared to lack confidence and proficiency in English and rarely communicated in English beyond drills and repetition exercises initiated by the teacher.

Ethics and initial contact

The following steps were taken to access the research site: Firstly, we contacted the school principal to obtain permission to conduct the research. Then, we consulted the Deputy Head of School Curriculum to confirm the learning schedule. After that, we interviewed the English teacher to find out whether or not both local culture materials and digital storytelling had previously been taught in the language classroom and informally observed a class, and finally we met the students to inform them about the study and the goals of the study. Written parental permission was also obtained. Students were assured of confidentiality, any photographs of faces taken were blurred, and they could withdraw from the study at any stage if they felt uncomfortable. In other words, their security and comfort were guaranteed (see Phelan & Kinsella, 2013).

Instructional Procedures

The research spanned ten weeks with one meeting per week with each class lasting 90 minutes. In this study, most of the student participants had a basic working knowledge of how to use devices such as a laptop, or smartphone. However, there were only 6 students who owned a laptop or smartphone. Another challenge was that none of the students knew how to use a digital stories creator application. Therefore, the students were assigned to work in groups and then they were taught how to use technology to create digital stories. The students also practiced using the digital tools in 6 meetings. They were divided into six groups of five students in which each group had access to at least one technological tool. They were put in groups with different roles which is viewed as an effective way in the literature of structuring DST groupwork (see Ferdiansyah, 2018; Tobin, 2012). To ensure the students were able to create a digital story based on students' local culture background, the researchers designed a project-based approach to scaffold the task. The culture based digital storytelling task was scaffolded over a period of ten weeks.

To begin with, in the first and second meeting the students were introduced to descriptive writing that incorporated local culture materials. The goals of these meeting were for student to understand the genre, lexico-grammatical knowledge and be able to draft 100 words of descriptive text. Then in the third week the students were introduced to the multimodal descriptive writing genre. The purpose was to make the students familiar with visual descriptive text and teach them about the copyright issue when accessing images obtained from the Internet. In the fourth and fifth meetings, the students were introduced to a storyboarding activity and software application to create a digital story. After that, in the sixth and seventh meetings, the students worked on creating new digital stories on selected topics. In the eighth and ninth meetings, the students received input on self-editing skills for grammatical accuracy and word choice and then revised their digital stories. Finally, in the tenth meeting the students were encouraged to present their

digital stories to other group members in order to enhance motivation and confidence. In this meeting students also published their final product of their digital story.

Data collection

The data collection methods employed in this study were (1) group interview, (2) reflective journals (3) classroom observation, and (4) the digital story telling product. The researchers conducted informal group interviews during the class activities in weeks four to ten while offering technical help and circulating within the classroom to identify students' experiences and language development during the process of learning English with DST in 15 minutes for each group. The questions in the group interviews centred around the following issues: (1) determining knowledge of vocabulary with questions like "What is the meaning of that word?"; (2) identifying the impact of multimodal text on task completion with questions like: "How did using this picture (or video or audio) impact on creating the story?; (3) determining students' experiences using digital tools and devices with questions such as "What did you think about using this technology?"; and (4) asking about the effect of drawing on local culture in their storytelling with questions such as "Did talking about X (local cultural topic) affect your work on this task? "Why?"

The students were also asked to write a reflective journal entry at the end of each of the ten classes. The format of the journal was three to five sentences about their experiences in the class. The pedagogical aim of the journal was for students to reflect on their own development in learning and identify their barriers in learning a foreign language, while as a research tool, it allowed dynamic insight into the students' experiences of DST.

Group interactions were also observed and videotaped from the second meeting onwards after the researchers had established rapport with the students. We recorded the video in whole meeting in 90 minutes. The students were informed that the video would not be used to assess them, but merely to record the interactions for our research purposes. We observed the video recorded and transcribed the dialogue and then developed a narrative in response to the research questions. Finally, the students' digital storytelling products were also used as research artefacts. The participants selected the local cultural images and integrated this with music and their oral stories compiling the final digital story using the 'Inshot app'.

Data analysis method

We analysed the final product of digital stories, group interview interactions and video classroom observation through first undertaking multimodal transcription. Following Bezemer and Mavers (2011), the transcription process included framing, selecting, highlighting, and finally writing the transcription. We focused on the "framing" process to answer the three research questions to examine how students expressed their identity in storytelling about their local culture, how it impacted on their engagement and language acquisition in relation to vocabulary development. Then, we moved to the 'selecting' process. In this phase, we selected data including textual responses, speech, gesture and image and highlighted the interplay between these different types of text and transcribed oral and visual text into written description. The students' journal entries were already in the form of written text; therefore, no further transcription was required.

To analyse the transcribed data, we employed thematic analysis adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006) according to the following steps. The first step is familiarization of the data. In this step, we re-read the data set to understand the participants' responses based on their context and experience of implementing the DST process. This activity formed the basis for our next step of coding. In this step, we focused on and highlighted developing broad codes which created a pattern. The third step was searching for themes among the broad codes. In this step, we

examined the highlighted data to interpret pattens within the data. Then, the next process was reviewing themes. We critically reviewed the coded themes across the data set to see whether the themes were significantly reflected or represented in the data set and compatible with the research questions. To address the issue of possible coder bias, the three researchers independently coded the data and then compared results. The third researcher had not been present during the data collection phase and she served as an independent reviewer of the coding and discussed contextual issues with the other two researchers to come to a consensus. We took these steps, as recommended by Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), to ensure an auditable decision trail and enhance the trustworthiness of our thematic analysis in this qualitative study that parallels the criteria of validity and reliability in quantitative research (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Finally, we unpacked the themes by defining and naming the coded themes as demonstrated in the research findings and discussion section below.

Research findings and discussion

In line with the research questions, we divide the research findings and discussion into three sections: The students' expression of their identity through DST, student engagement, and the effect of DST pedagogy on student's vocabulary acquisition.

The students' expression of their identity through digital story making

The students used DST to convey their local culture through images and sounds and thereby expressed their emotions and identity. The students' expression of the emotion and identity can be seen in the Table 1 below taken from the example artefacts of their final DST products.

Table 1
Extract of Students' Digital Storytelling

Visuals	Narration
	Extract 1 I am **so scared when the tiger figure shows** on the stage, but **I always want to see** Barong dance every time they perform in my village. The tiger figure will be shown to end the show**. Interestingly, the tiger is possessed by the supernatural thing and tries to scare the audience.**
	Extract 2 I'm happy to meet old friends there. We are watching, laughing, eating snacks together. **I also glad when I heard the comedian told a hilarious story, it made me laugh. Everybody happy** when seeing the Barong dance. **Don't forget to watch yaaa...**
	Extract 3 I love watching it because the players were the same age as me. Even though I cannot dance**, I feel happy** when I watch it. Many people see and feel amazed. **The dancer moves so gently in harmony with the sound of music. This culture should be preserved so that it is not extinct**

In extract one, the student expressed her vivid experience. Even though she felt scared of the man who behaved like a tiger, she still eagerly anticipated the Barong dance performance. In the voice narration, she noted that she had a positive perspective of her local cultural belief through the use of the word "interestingly." She also emphasized that the show had a deeper cultural meaning in that people within her culture believed that an ancestor spirit possessed the man. Extract two emphasizes the importance of community in relation to cultural events. Although the student enjoyed listening to the comedian, they stressed that the Barong dance was not only a performance but provided a forum for people to interact and enjoy togetherness. In fact, the communal impact was so strong, the student needed to remind the audience to watch the show rather than just focus on interacting with each other.

In extract three, the role of local culture becomes even more significant. The student identified strongly with the "Gandrung" dancer both in terms of their age and their shared cultural background. Although she could not dance, she was part of the culture and could appreciate and preserve cultural heritage including the Gandrung dance. Therefore, the narrative ended with an appeal to preserve the culture.

Through engaging in groups, the students also learned about and strengthened their cultural identity. For example, a student wrote in their reflective journal entry:

> *I also learned the story of Barong dance, and I never consider the story and the characters in the drama of Barong dance. Through the discussion with friends in making the digital story, it improves my understanding of the story of the Barong dance. (Student C, journal entry 1)*

Another student stated that:

> *There are so many cultures, traditional ritual or ceremony that I need to explore through digital storytelling. They are, the story "Ider Bumi" (practice to clean the bad atmosphere of the village, the story of the origin of the village, the philosophy of a traditional house of Osingnese people (all the students were part of the Osingnese cultural group) and other ceremonies. Ider Bumi, Gandrung, the origin of the village of Kemiren, customs, and philosophy of Omah Osing and other traditional ceremonies. (Student B, journal entry 1)*

To sum up, the digital story artefacts shown in Table 1 and the journal extracts reveal that DST became an effective tool to express the students' cultural identities and their responses to local culture.

Student engagement in meaning making through DST

The students worked on eight tasks to complete the project. The first task involved identifying related lexical content used in the selected cultural theme. They completed the vocabulary maps with words they knew. The students commented that this activity helped them understand the words in context as illustrated in the following group interview extract #1.

T:	How do you know this word? (Pointing at the word in the worksheet)
S1:	We don't know this word at first, but S2 (a friend) remembered that it was a crown in English.
T:	Do you know that this word is a part of the costume?
Ss:	Yes, we do. It is on the top of the costume
T:	That's great. What about this word? (Pointing at another word)
S2:	Ha..ha.. (Chuckled) we also don't know the word, so I took the dictionary.
T:	Did you tell the other members of the group about it?
S2:	Yes, I did and I asked S3 (Another member) to write in the balloon in the worksheet.
T:	Why did you ask him?
S2:	Because he is the secretary

(Group interview #1, 00:02:45)

This interview extract indicates that participating students helped each other to solve the problem of unfamiliar vocabulary. They used different strategies such as contextualization and dictionary as a tool to understand the meaning of the words. They also shared different responsibilities that allowed them to work together on the same task. Since the students were not given any instructions on how to engage in group work beyond the allocation of roles, their collaborative strategies were particularly interesting. In addition to this interview data, students' log journal also depicted how this collaborative project made them enjoy working with their group members and enhanced their engagement. A student commented:

> *I like learning English through this collaborative digital storytelling project because can learn with my group members. I found learning with group project helpful. We can exchange ideas and solve the problem together (Student A Journal Entry 4).*

In many educational contexts, collaboration fosters students learning engagement. From learning interaction among students, participating students can accommodate idea exchange and problem-solving matters. This is in line with Mickan's argument that "students need to develop the ability to adopt new practices, to adapt acquired social practices, and to contribute to the creation of practices for sustainable relationships and environments" (Mickan, 2006, p.8). In this study the collaborative digital storytelling benefitted students in the three ways suggested by Ferdiansyah (2018), it improved their engagement with the task, fostered sustainable peer support, and built awareness of group responsibility.

Besides fostering engagement through collaborative groupwork, in the process of creating a digital story, the students became more interested in their own culture as well as more engaged and motivated to learn English. As one student noted in their reflective journal entry:

> *Learning through digital storytelling is like the proverb: "Killing two birds with one stone". It means that we can get the two benefits in an action. First, I understand vocabulary that I did not know about my culture in English. Secondly, I can practice story about my culture by DST, then I become confident to give information to the foreigner so they can enthusiast [sic] to visit (Student C Journal Entry 10).*

This extract also shows that along with enabling students to build a bridge between their own culture and the culture/s of the target language, focusing their DST around local culture can also result in instrumental motivation. In the case above, the student expresses the value of being able to talk about their culture in communicating with foreigners and increasing their enthusiasm for the culture. The student below expresses instrumental motivation even more explicitly as they see a knowledge of English vocabulary related to local culture as a pathway to a job as a tourist guide:

> *I feel satisfied to create the digital story; I can use it to find money someday. I can be a tourist guide because so many foreign visitors come to see the culture, such as dance, traditional music or traditional ritual ceremony (Student F Journal Entry 8).*

Learning to talk about their own cultural heritage in English, also enhanced the students' interest in other cultures and potentially their motivation in learning English to better engage with other cultures. A student wrote:

> *Learning English is also a way for us to learn from each other's culture and to appreciate a difference culture. I can share my local culture experience and I want to hear and learn story from other cultures (Student C Journal Entry 6).*

Thus, as noted by Kumaravadivelu (2001) and Liontas and Mannion (2021) engaging in DST around the students' own culture builds a bridge with other cultures and increases motivation to

learn English as a foreign language. This enhanced motivation was reflected in the observation data where the students showed lively and noisy participation and discussions within the groups, yet all appeared to be on task and enjoying the activities. The photographs below show students working on their digital stories using laptops and mobile phones and various digital applications and tools.

Photo 1   Photo 2

The students appeared to find using these technologies challenging but exciting. The first photo (Photo 1) shows two young male students actively working on their task. Although they appeared to be whispering, a closer observation revealed that they were completely on task trying to adjust the effects they were applying to their chosen pictures using a laptop and a phone. Photo 2 shows students enthusiastically creating their story digitally using a software application in their laptop. One member of the group was attempting to import pictures into the application while the other two were observing and giving suggestions. The researcher served as a guide who monitored the students' activity and helped whenever students experienced problems.

The following group interview extract #2 showed how students increasingly became motivated through their active participation in the digital storytelling project.

T:	How did you experience using the technology?
Ss:	It was fun but sometimes challenging.
T:	How can it be fun? And what's the challenge?
S1:	Because we can choose pictures and change the appearance of the pictures in the screen.
S2:	Also, we can make the story alive because the tool (application) can mesh together sound and images. The challenge is sometimes it takes much time for us to adjust the time and the visual move.
T:	That's great. So, are you looking forward to the next task?
Ss:	Yes!…

(Group interview #2, 00:15:23)

The interview extracts showed that the students became more motivated because of the multimodal nature of the task including pictures, sounds, and text. The interview also revealed that although the students found the task time-consuming and challenging, they still experienced it as fun. Therefore, this study confirms Widodo's (2016) view that digital storytelling that involves audio, video, and animation promotes an active learning environment and increases student motivation.

The effect of local digital story project-based learning pedagogy on vocabulary acquisition

The main impact on language acquisition appears to be on vocabulary development. In their digital storytelling projects, the students focused on local culture specifically around the topics of traditional dances, celebrations, and local music to focus on content students were familiar with. The aim was for students to be able to compare and extrapolate lexical items and content they were familiar with from their first language to that of the target language. The tasks required the participating students to work in groups and to brainstorm words from their first language, identify their meaning and form in the target language and then to use the words in context. Observations of the students' increased use of target vocabulary items in discussions and in the final digital stories suggest that rapid vocabulary enhancement occurred. The students also appeared to have a deeper understanding of the vocabulary as can be seen in the following extract from a student's individual log journal.

> *The teacher gave me an opportunity to use my first language which helped me construct the story. When I finished the draft, I translated the language into English with the help of my friends and dictionary. With local culture materials, now I can understand the words related to Barong dance performance in English. I know the words like crown, wings, perform, celebrate, preserve, and many others so I can tell Barong dance in English now even in simple words (Student E Journal Entry 8).*

The excerpt shows that students writing in their first language in the first instance allowed them to feel more comfortable with the content and served as a foundation for their target language learning. This confirms Storch and Aldosari's (2010) view that "the use of the L1 by the learners seems to serve important cognitive, social, and pedagogical functions" (p. 372). In addition, the log journal also shows that the emphasis on local culture in the content of the vocabulary supported students' ability to explain the words clearly and simply because they had sufficient lexical input. The use of pictures in the digital storytelling tasks also helped the students to collaboratively draft sentences and develop meaningful paragraphs using the vocabulary items in context. The group interview excerpt #3 below shows how students benefited greatly from the use of pictures.

T:	How did the use of pictures affect your completion of the task?
Ss:	<u>It was very helpful.</u>
T:	How can it be of such help?
S1:	We can focus on what to write.
T:	What do you mean?
S1:	By looking at the picture we can see the objects being described.
T:	Can you give me an example?
S2:	We can focus on the front part of the costume, the sides, and the top.
S3:	We can also look at the colors, detail accessories, and the materials.
T:	So, it will help you what to start first and go on what's next. Is that right?
Ss:	Yes, definitely

<div align="center">(Group interview #3, 00:52:10)</div>

The pictures used by the participating students in the writing task became a catalyst for them to develop ideas. Larragueta and Ceballos-Viro (2018) argue that images function "as a reference context" (p. 2). The students also expressed that the use of pictures was effective to guide them to organize their thoughts. They were able to organize the ideas by looking at the features and details of a particular object. This confirms Weninger and Kiss's (2013) perspective that the interplay between text and images can serve as an important tool in language learning.

A key value of the use of digital storytelling is its importance in enhancing meaning-making. Using images to visualize the story enabled students to achieve a deeper level of meaning-making

compared to traditional storytelling. In their project-based learning activities, the participating students were required to find pictures that related to their story theme. They could use their own photos or collect them from internet. However, they were reminded to keep the source of the website in their written draft in order to acknowledge the ownership of the photographs. Based on their pictures, they wrote captions of between 3 and 4 sentences per picture to create a complete story. Finally, they meshed the images and narration using their selected digital tools. While Photo Story 3 was installed and utilized by the groups which used laptops, the Viva Video mobile application was installed and utilized by the groups which used android-based mobile phone. The following extracts from students' storyboards (see Table 3) depict how students worked with images and story narratives.

Table 3
Extract of Students' Digital Storytelling

Visuals	Narration
	This is the Barong dance culture. This Barong dance comes from Kemiren Banyuwangi. It performs during the Ider Bumi festival.
	The Barong costume consists of three dominant colors, they are green, red, and yellow. It has a crown at the top and two wings on each side.
	The Barong dance is accompanied with some traditional musical instruments such as gong, triangle, drum, and any others. The music players play in a dynamic beat.

From the provided extract, it can be seen that students' narration effectively accompanied the pictures they had selected. For instance, when students saw a picture of crown on the Barong costume, they described it properly and used the vocabulary appropriately in context. In general, the students who worked on this project were able to tell their story by effectively combining texts and pictures. In other words, the pictures assisted the students to develop their ideas and thoughts into complete story. Reflections by the teacher involved suggested that the students' work was of far higher quality than that of students in previous groups and that there was a significant improvement in meaningful communication rather than memorization and repetition from source documents. As one student noted in their log journal:

> *I think the use of picture is helpful to guide me and my friends draft the story because we can see the objects. We can write one word at first by referring to a particular object and then we continue developing it by looking at the colors, the other objects next to it, or the other things that may relate to it. (Student G Journal Entry 3)*

From the excerpt, it is clear that the pictures helped the student to draw on their background knowledge and use the lexical inputs within the context. As Larragueta and Ceballos-Viro (2018) suggest, pictures can serve as a tool for effective vocabulary learning because students can learn better when they can correspond text with image. Moreover, the pictures allowed the students to

construct the ideas into a narrative structure. The following focus group interview excerpt #4 also highlights the value of the visual input in meaning-making:

T:	Do you think the pictures help you?

T: Do you think the pictures help you?
Ss: Yes.
T: Why?
S1:   Because we can see the object.
T: What else?
S2:   We can find the words that denote the object.
T: Ok, can you tell me the reasons why you chose the pictures?
S3:   First, we look for the picture that has more objects to tell so that we have more ideas to develop.
T: Any other reasons?
S4:   We avoid the pictures that we don't know the meaning in English.
T: One more reasons? Why do you choose your pictures?
S5:   We vote when the members have two identical pictures
                        (Group interview #4, 01:20:11)

The excerpt suggests that the pictures allowed the students to generate ideas. The interview excerpt also shows how students creatively developed strategies in choosing the pictures and for working together. They also selected language based on their language resources which is a useful coping mechanism for meaning making in a foreign language.

Conclusion and recommendations

This research study suggests that local culture-based digital storytelling tasks were effective to engage students in language learning. First of all, collaborative digital storytelling project helped students engage in collaborative learning in three ways, they helped each other in solving problems, shared equal responsibilities in completing the task, and respected the ideas of each member of the group. Secondly, it reveals that digital storytelling project has improved students' motivation in learning language because they found learning through technology enjoyable and challenging. Although it helped develop their technology and digital literacy, they found working with technology time consuming and complicated. However, as they become more familiar with the tools, it is likely that there will be an increasing focus on pedagogy rather than technology. A major theme in the data was that the inclusion of local culture-based materials in the digital storytelling enabled students to acquire related vocabulary in the target language as well as building a bridge between cultures. This was primarily because a series of scaffolded tasks fostered lexical input development as well as an increasing interest in their own and other's cultures. In particular, pictures with more objects or details that were familiar to students as part of their socio-cultural background were helpful in developing the narration. In addition, the use of pictures has also benefited the students in exploring the objects being described. Finally, students learned strategies to make meaning through the use of pictures that could serve them in other language learning contexts.

Based on this experience, we strongly recommend the implementation of collaborative digital storytelling in the English language classroom. It not only helps students engage in learning but also fosters learning motivation. Theoretically speaking, it is also recommended that teachers can incorporate local culture-based materials in language learning because it allows students to build their capacity in expressing the idea of local culture using the target language. The use of digital images is also suggested in learning language because it will help students develop their learning creativity particularly in the twenty first century.

Teachers also can combine the digital storytelling with outside classroom activities to further engage the students. For example, teachers could ask the students to go outside of classroom to take pictures and interview the principal or staff. Then, they could follow up by creating a story about their school, describing the school, sharing the school's culture (symbol, activities, and traditions), or retelling history of the school. Even though this study was employed in a mono-cultural context, digital storytelling also could be implemented in a multicultural classroom setting. The dynamic of the sharing of the students' stories in digital platform would provide an intercultural learning opportunity that could enhance their ability to use a foreign language.

While this research yielded positive results and provided meaningful insights in English language teaching and learning, it has two major limitations. Firstly, a more detailed examination of the development of specific language skills such as writing is required to truly gauge the impact of this method of language teaching on language acquisition. For this to occur, a longitudinal study is required. Secondly, the results cannot be generalized to other Indonesian contexts because of the comparatively small number of participants. Thus, future research could potentially include a larger number of participants across different regions of Indonesia and in different learning contexts as well as tracking student language acquisition more systematically over a longer period of time.

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Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1

Sample Answers of DST Tasks

Task 5. The following grammar practice will help you learn how to construct sentences more accurately. Change the verb in the parentheses with the correct forms of words.

1. The farmers (make) _____ a tall hut called a *paglak*.
2. The birds (try) _____ to feed from the paddy.
3. They (play) _____ angklung paglak near the paddy field.
4. They (watch) _____ the birds from the hut.
5. Mr. Sulaiman (be) _____ a farmer and he can play angklung.

Task 6. Find 4 pictures related to angklung paglak from the Internet. Put them in the storyboard provided. Write two to three sentences that best describe the pictures. Please remember that you need to give the photo copyright details to respect the owners.

Source: https://www.osingdeles.com/mengenal-angklung-paglak-banyuwangi-yang-merupakan-kesenian-khas-banyuwangi/	Look!, some men are playing angklung paglak. They beat the Angklung which made from bamboo. One man beat the "Kendhang". Kendhag is an music instrument made from cow's skin tied on the coconut wood.
Source: http://travel.kompas.com/read/2014/08/16/123200627/Aluman.Angklung.Paglak.Menemani.Wong.Using.Panen.Padi.di.Banyuwangi	The angklung paglak is near the paddy fields. The place of anggklung paglak is a small, it's just a small hut, if you want to go up you have to use a ladder and climb it . The hut for angklung paglak is Made from bamboo and the roof is from leaves or bushes
http://www.antarajatim.com/foto/41566/potensi-kesenian-suku-osing-banyuwangi	Mr. Sae's paddy field is harvesting time at the moment. There is an angklung paglak near the paddy fields . They are very happy to harvest and play Angklung Paglak

Task 7. Find 4 pictures related to angklung paglak from the Internet. Put them in the storyboard provided. Write two to three sentences that best describe the pictures. Please remember that you need to give the photo copyright details to respect the owners.

Angklung paglak (AP) is a traditional musical instrument that comes from Banyuwangi regency, East Java. AP is the oldest art in Banyuwangi. Source of picture: http://encyclopedia.jakarta-

The art of angklung paglak begins with the sound of kotekan bambu which is intended to drive birds in the rice fields when the rice season has arrived. One angklung paglak consists of fifteen bam https://www.kabarbanyuwangi.info/angklung-paglak-salah-satu-seni-musik-tertua-di-

The name paglak behind the word angklung refers to a simple building (small hut) located around the rice fields. Paglak height 10 meters, has a floor of woven bamboo keprek called plonco. Source of picture: https://radarbanyuwangi.jawapos.com/read/2018/

The roof is made of coconut leaves, or woven bamboo called welit. AP is usually played by four people while singing in black traditional clothing. Source of picture: https://gasbanter.com/alat-musik-jawa-timur/

Task 8. Assess your own group work on task 6 by giving one of the responses that best match your group opinion.

Description	Response	
1. My group has chosen the best pictures	Yes	no
2. We have a good title for our descriptive text	Yes	no
3. We have classified the identification and description parts of the text	Yes	no
4. We have written two to three sentences describing the picture	Yes	no
5. We have some adjectives to describe the object	Yes	no
6. We have used appropriate words according to the context in the sentences	Yes	no
7. We have double checked the grammar, verbs and be	Yes	no
8. We have mentioned the picture source	Yes	no