

LOCAL VOICES, GLOBAL LANGUAGES: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON LOCALLY-BASED DIGITAL NARRATIVES AND MULTILINGUAL PRACTICES IN EARLY EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: The growing trend towards English-language education at earlier ages in multilingual societies demands a greater need to develop teaching strategies that are both culturally and linguistically responsive and developmentally appropriate. In this mixed-method research, this study aims to understand the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding the use of locally-based digital narratives and multilingual practices in EFL classes for early EFL learners. Data were collected through distributing questionnaires to early childhood EFL teachers, followed by semi-structured interviews with nine purposively selected participants. Data analysis was done quantitatively using descriptive statistics and qualitatively using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that teachers found locally-based digital narratives helpful in increasing engagement and

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confidence among learners due to their association with real-world contexts. Furthermore, teachers felt that multilingual practices would help reduce anxiety levels and support comprehension and vocabulary learning. However, teachers faced issues such as technological inadequacy and teacher training in implementing the above strategies in class. The study concludes that combining culturally grounded digital narratives with multilingual pedagogy holds significant promise for early EFL education and that providing institutional support is strengthened. These findings contribute empirical insights into teachers' perspectives and offer implications for curriculum development and teacher professional learning in multilingual contexts.

Keywords: Early EFL learners, locally-based digital narratives, multilingual development, teachers' perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Understanding English has become critical as the world becomes more interconnected. Some preschools across the globe have already begun teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to children at an increasingly young age (Liang et al., 2024). However, there is still a dispute in some education systems about how young children learn EFL, especially given multilingualism, teachers' management of the children's various developmental needs, and the children's social and cultural experiences. As young children become language users, the need for educationally sound, emotionally appropriate, and culturally relevant pedagogical approaches is growing.

Interactive Digital Narratives is one of the innovative approaches in early EFL instruction. Interactive digital narratives merge traditional narrative competence with new media capabilities to maintain interest. According to research findings, the narrative approach proves highly effective due to its contextualized and

emotionally charged input into language learning (Maruf & Halyna, 2023). By using digital practicalities to tell stories in an interactive way, storytelling becomes even more powerful in ensuring that learners are engaged and captured by the activity. This advantage of being interactive is especially important for young learners since they stand to gain from the interactivity in terms of maintaining their focus, increasing comprehension, and promoting language usage (Nasir et al., 2024). According to Abderrahim and González (2020), the inclusion of digital stories in class, even those with digital interactions, helps in acquiring new vocabulary and gaining confidence when learning English as a foreign language.

Locally-based digital narrative is viewed as the narrative that reflects the surrounding world of the learner, and in this particular case, contributes significantly to the cognitive benefits of narrative learning. Ratminingsih and Budasi (2018) found that learners exposed to a culturally familiar story recalled better the novel vocabulary and felt greater engagement during literacy classes, thereby confirming that cultural familiarity facilitates comprehension and recall. Similarly, Munajah et al. (2023) and Mardhiah et al. (2024) also carried out a study in Indonesian early childhood settings and found that narratives with local images and experiences produced a difference not only in vocabulary learning but also in enhancing writing and speaking skills. In summary, the authors noted that students were also able to retell stories with greater ease after experiential oral narratives. Within the retellings of narratives, students clearly had richer forms of language when the contexts were closer to their life experiences. Another example of work in this research area is Miao and Li's (2024) systematic review of the use of storytelling and digital narratives in EFL settings. The findings from their review indicate that digital narratives that are based on the cultural background of the learner result in more positive effects compared to those with no connection to the learner's culture.

It is important for EFL instruction not only to be culturally responsive but also linguistically inclusive, especially considering that most young students already have experience with multiple languages.

Current research supports our recent knowledge of the benefits of including students' local language(s) at school. For example, Ray (2021) has found that multilingual education, incorporating local languages, can improve young learners' understanding and proficiency in English. This approach improves learners' comprehension and confidence. Ollerhead and Pennington (2024) assert that multilingual narrative delivery significantly enhances the engagement of young emergent bilingual learners in early reading and writing activities, thereby affirming their home languages and cultural identities.

Translanguaging (i.e., allowing learners to use a full bilingual experience) has been shown to promote participation and language awareness (Falomir & Domínguez, 2025; Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021; Yolanda et al., 2024). These multilingual practices can also help diminish the learner's anxiety and help them feel at ease in experimenting with English. While it is often thought that learners will confuse their languages, studies report that structured multilingual practices acknowledge the learners' metalinguistic development and do not impede their second language literacy. When EFL teachers recognize and affirm the students' language identities, as well as make use of familiar languages as a scaffold, the early language learning classroom can be more inclusive, engaging, and meaningful.

Despite the strong theoretical background support, early EFL classrooms do not always adopt multilingual practices. Concerns remain about the potential confusion young learners can face in regard to simultaneous exposure to multiple languages, especially when L1 skills are still developing. Currently, evidence is emerging to challenge some of these misconceptions. Halimovna (2024) discovered that teachers have overall positive views about multilingualism among young learners, but seem limited by institutional or parental misconceptions or historical training. Haukås (2016) found that the Norwegian language teachers perceive multilingualism as an advantage that can be positively perceived by their students while collaborating with other students to improve learning, but it is not assumed as a natural result of the latter. More recently, Ray (2021)

revealed that teaching is helpful for the development of children in India only if done properly. To accomplish this task, teachers require adequate assistance in pedagogy (Oliveira & Jones, 2023).

While numerous studies demonstrate the cognitive and affective benefits of interactive digital narratives and multilingualism, little work has examined how these two practices operate in tandem—especially through the lens of early childhood teachers. Integrating digital narratives with multilingual practices is important in early EFL contexts because interactive storytelling provides rich multimodal input (Jiang & Hafner, 2025). Furthermore, multilingual strategies enable learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning, reduce anxiety, and deepen engagement (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024). The current literature predominantly emphasizes learner outcomes or theoretical frameworks (Abderrahim & González, 2020; Miao & Li, 2024; Nasir et al., 2024). However, little attention is paid to teachers' perspectives, who are accountable for the implementation of innovative pedagogies and practices. The literature reveals a notable gap in how kindergarten teachers see the implementation of locally-based interactive digital narratives to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism in their English classrooms.

In contributing to the current literature, this study examined young learner teachers' perceptions of locally-based interactive digital narratives and multilingual approaches in early childhood language classrooms. In particular, it looked at how teachers conceptualized, enacted, and responded to these pedagogical strategies, and how their perceptions are influenced or shaped by their own experiences, situated settings and resources available.

This research study is fundamentally based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defined language development as a socially constructed process influenced through mediating interactions with a more competent peer or adult and utilizing culturally meaningful tools, in situations supporting learners' sense of agency, and a desire to learn. In Vygotsky's framework,

locally-based interactive digital narratives not only act as a tool to provide comprehensible input but also as a cultural tool to mediate children's everyday experiences with the target language. By mediating in this way, learners internalize language structures and sociocultural meanings, rendering folktales a powerful pedagogical approach in early language development.

Also, this research employs García and Wei's Translanguaging Theory based on the understanding that multilingual learners do not compartmentalize their languages; rather, they access their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning and communicate (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging encourages learners to use their languages in a flexible and purposeful manner. By doing so, it recognizes students' linguistic practices as primary and valid. It makes sense to use such approaches to teach multilingual early childhood because the learners would be acquiring their first languages as well as a foreign one, and by using their first language and other known languages to them, anxiety levels can be minimized and understanding facilitated.

The two theories that we have discussed above would serve as an ideal basis for exploring the influence that locally-based digital narratives and multilingualism exert on early English language learning by taking into consideration their sociocultural context. Through the application of these two theoretical frameworks, we would be able to investigate the influence that cultural relevance and multilingualism have on early language acquisition experiences.

This research is valuable in terms of implications for curricula, teacher training, and language education policy, particularly in multilingual settings, and provides a pragmatic dimension to theory in relation to the opportunities of interactive narratives in multilingual settings and examining teachers' perspectives. This research also addresses the need for further exploration into deeper local relevance, cultural awareness, and linguistic diversity in early English language teaching, which acknowledges that English is a means of connection across the globe rather than simply being a first language taught in classrooms.

In conclusion, the present study aims to examine the perspectives of kindergarten teachers on locally-based digital narratives and multilingualism in EFL settings for young learners. With their perspectives integrated into a holistic framework of theory and linked with pedagogically relevant issues, it is highly possible that knowledge will be transferred from theory to practice, as well as giving teachers the ability to offer better learning opportunities for English language learners.

METHOD

The current research focuses on analyzing the perceptions of kindergarten teachers towards locally-based digital narratives and multilingual approaches in EFL instruction for early childhood education. In order to achieve the research purpose, the methodology chapter covers several key elements such as research design, participant selection, data collection tools, procedures, and data analysis techniques.

Research Design

The present study employed a mixed-methods design to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of locally-based digital narratives and multilingual practices in early childhood EFL classrooms. Mixed-method research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure an in-depth comprehension of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of such a design was appropriate since the data from the questionnaires indicated trends in the teachers' attitudes, and the interview data helped understand their attitudes and problems. Combining both types of data facilitated methodological triangulation, thus providing both a broad and deep comprehension of teachers' views.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were kindergarten teachers in Indonesia who teach English to young learners in multilingual settings. An initial

questionnaire was distributed broadly to identify teachers whose professional experience aligned with the study focus and to provide a pool of potential interviewees. From the questionnaire phase, nine teachers (T1-T9) were purposively selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews based on some inclusion criteria: (1) currently teaching or having recently taught English in kindergarten; (2) working in a classroom where learners routinely use more than one language (e.g., Bahasa Indonesia and a local language, alongside exposure to English); (3) having used digital narratives and/or multilingual practices or expressing a clear interest and intention to adopt these practices in the future; and (4) willingness to participate in an interview and provide informed consent. All ethical procedures were observed throughout the study, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms to protect participants' identities (Miles et al., 2014).

Collecting Data Instruments

The data was collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. It was designed to elicit teachers' perceptions of locally-based digital narratives and multilingualism in early childhood EFL classrooms. This questionnaire was presented in Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and covered two sections. One section was related to digital narratives, which ranged from DN1 to DN8. Another section was related to multilingualism, which ranged from M1 to M8.

The construction of the questionnaire is informed by the Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the Translanguaging Theory (Garcia & Wei, 2014). The development of the digital narrative items (DN1-DN8) is grounded on the sociocultural theory that highlighted cultural mediation, contextualized meaning, learner engagement, and the development of learner confidence through the use of narratives. On the other hand, the development of the multilingualism items (M1-M8) is grounded on the Translanguaging Theory that highlights the use of the learners' repertoire, cognitive

development, affective support, and learner identity. Table 1 shows the correlation between each item and the grounded theories.

Table 1.
Questionnaire Items and the Grounded Theories

Item Code	Questionnaire Item (Translated)	Grounded Theory	Theoretical Construct Reflected
DN1	Local narratives increase children's engagement in English lessons.	Sociocultural Theory	Learning as socially mediated participation through culturally meaningful tools
DN2	Children learn more effectively when stories include familiar cultural elements.	Sociocultural Theory	Cultural mediation enhances meaning-making and internalization
DN3	Interactive digital narratives are developmentally appropriate for young learners.	Sociocultural Theory	Tool-mediated learning aligned with developmental stage
DN4	Familiar local narratives enhance children's confidence to use English.	Sociocultural Theory	Affective mediation and identity affirmation in learning
DN5	Locally-based digital narratives stimulate children's curiosity and interest in learning English.	Sociocultural Theory	Motivational scaffolding through mediated activity
DN6	I find it easy to integrate locally-based digital narratives into my English teaching.	Sociocultural Theory	Teacher enactment of cultural tools in mediated instruction
DN7	I receive sufficient institutional support to implement digital narratives.	Sociocultural Theory	Scaffolding conditions enabling mediated pedagogical practice
DN8	Locally-based digital narratives help connect English vocabulary to children's daily life.	Sociocultural Theory	Contextualized mediation linking language to lived experience

M1	Introducing more than one language in early childhood benefits cognitive development.	Translanguaging Theory	Cognitive flexibility through full linguistic repertoire use
M2	The use of the mother tongue supports children's English learning.	Translanguaging Theory	Strategic use of L1 as legitimate meaning-making resource
M3	Multilingual narratives enhance children's language awareness.	Translanguaging Theory	Development of metalinguistic awareness
M4	Young children can distinguish multiple languages at an early age.	Translanguaging Theory	Dynamic management of linguistic repertoires
M5	I feel confident using multiple languages when teaching English.	Translanguaging Theory	Pedagogical agency in translanguaging practice
M6	Parents support the use of multilingual approaches in English class.	Translanguaging Theory	Ideological and ecological support for repertoire-based pedagogy
M7	Exposure to multiple languages may confuse young learners. (Reverse item)	Translanguaging Theory	Beliefs aligned with or resisting monolingual ideology
M8	Developing multilingual competence should be an important goal in early English education.	Translanguaging Theory	Orientation toward legitimizing multilingual identities

Semi-structured interviews were carried out using Bahasa Indonesia, which enabled the respondents to share their experiences and views comfortably. The interviews were centered on the practices, advantages, and difficulties faced by the teachers, as well as the issues related to the implementation of locally-based digital narratives and multilingual approaches. The use of the two approaches enabled triangulation of the trends in the perception data and experience data. Table 2 shows the example of the questions.

Table 2.
Examples of Interview Questions

Grounded Theory	Questions (Translated)
Sociocultural Theory	How do local or culturally familiar stories influence children’s engagement in your English class? In what ways do interactive digital elements (images, audio, animation) affect children’s participation and understanding? Can you describe a situation where storytelling helped children understand English vocabulary or expressions better? What challenges do you face when using locally-based digital narratives in your classroom?
Translanguaging Theory	How do you use Bahasa Indonesia or local languages when teaching English? What happens when children mix languages during storytelling activities? In your experience, does allowing the mother tongue help or hinder English learning? Why? What challenges do you face in implementing multilingual practices in your classroom?

Collecting Data Procedure

The process of data collection was done in two phases. First, the questionnaire was administered on a large scale to kindergarten teachers of English in multilingual settings. This was done to get an overview of the perceptions of the teachers and to find the data subjects that match the criteria of the present study. Based on the data obtained, nine teachers (T1-T9) were purposively chosen for the next stage of the data collection process. This was done after the data subjects were filtered according to the predetermined criteria. In the next stage, the data subjects were interviewed to get more insights into the subject matter.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively to identify overall trends in teachers’ perceptions. Mean scores were calculated for each Likert-scale item to determine the level of agreement across the

two dimensions: digital narratives and multilingualism. The interview was analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. The analysis started with the step of gaining familiarity with the information through several readings of the data. This was followed by the creation of codes for the relevant content to be used in the data analysis process. The codes were later grouped into possible themes. The themes were subsequently defined and named to clearly represent the underlying patterns in teachers' perceptions. Finally, the findings were produced by selecting representative excerpts and systematically reporting the themes in relation to the research objectives. This analytical approach enabled both structured interpretation of quantitative trends and in-depth exploration of qualitative insights.

FINDINGS

The study was intended to explore the perception of kindergarten teachers concerning locally-based digital narratives and multilingual practices in early childhood EFL education. To achieve the objective, the study employed a two-stage approach in collecting the required data. First, the study employed a questionnaire to gather the required data, and the overall trends in the perception of the teachers were identified. Then, nine teachers (T1-T9) were purposively selected based on the required conditions. The findings in this section are presented based on the data sources: questionnaire and interview.

Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire was designed using Likert-scale (1-5) items covering two main dimensions: perceptions toward digital narratives (DN1-DN8) and multilingualism (M1-M8). Table 3 presents the average score of each item.

Table 3.
The Summary of Questionnaire Results

Item Code	Simplified Description	Average Score
DN1	Local narratives increase children's engagement in English lessons.	4.00
DN2	Children learn more effectively when stories include familiar cultural elements.	4.22
DN3	Interactive digital narratives are developmentally appropriate for young learners.	4.00
DN4	Familiar local narratives enhance children's confidence to use English.	4.11
DN5	Locally-based digital narratives stimulate children's curiosity and interest in learning English.	4.00
DN6	I find it easy to integrate locally-based digital narratives into my English teaching.	3.33
DN7	I receive sufficient institutional support to implement digital narratives.	3.11
DN8	Locally-based digital narratives help connect English vocabulary to children's daily life.	3.89
M1	Introducing more than one language in early childhood benefits cognitive development.	4.56
M2	The use of the mother tongue supports children's English learning.	4.00
M3	Multilingual narratives enhance children's language awareness.	4.11
M4	Young children can distinguish multiple languages at an early age.	3.78
M5	I feel confident using multiple languages when teaching English.	3.78
M6	Parents support the use of multilingual approaches in English class.	3.78
M7	Exposure to multiple languages may confuse young learners. (Reverse item)	3.00
M8	Developing multilingual competence should be an important goal in early English education.	4.11

On the 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), teachers' responses to the digital narrative items (DN1–DN8) were generally positive. The highest level of agreement was reported for DN2, "Children learn more effectively when stories include familiar cultural elements" (M = 4.22), followed by DN4, "Familiar local narratives enhance children's confidence to use English" (M = 4.11). The remaining core pedagogical items—DN1 (engagement), DN3 (developmental appropriateness), and DN5 (curiosity)—also received high ratings (all M ≥ 4.00). In general, the above-mentioned findings confirm the teachers' favorable attitudes towards the use of digital stories based on local context in their early English classes in relation to engaging and boosting the learners' confidence.

Additionally, it should be noted that the respondents held positive attitudes to multilingual approaches. In the case of the variables related to multilingualism (M1–M8), the average ratings ranged between 3.00 and 4.56. The highest score belonged to the item "Introducing more than one language in early childhood benefits cognitive development" (M1; M = 4.56). High ratings were obtained for M2 ("The use of the mother tongue supports children's English learning"; M = 4.00), M3 ("Multilingual narratives enhance children's language awareness"; M = 4.11) and M4 ("Young children can distinguish multiple languages at an early age"; M = 3.78).

Interview Data

After the analysis of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were carried out with nine participants (T1–T9) selected purposefully based on some criteria in order to obtain a deeper understanding of their views and practices. The thematic analysis identified two prominent themes related to the research focus: (1) locally-based digital narratives as engagement-promoting tools, and (2) multilingual practices as affective and instructional support.

Theme 1: Locally-based Digital Narratives Enhance Engagement and Confidence

The interview findings corroborated the questionnaire findings that indicated that locally-based digital narratives were regarded as valuable for early EFL learning by the teachers. This perception was consistently held by all the interviewees (T1-T9). In particular, this perception was linked to learner motivation, curiosity, self-confidence, and vocabulary learning. T5 elaborated, "The children get more excited since they know the stories." Even though they do not fully understand the language, the familiar characters or places trigger their enthusiasm to learn." Similarly, T9 stated that children responded positively because "their curiosity increased and various useful questions appeared, which helped enrich their English vocabulary." T8 also emphasized that local narratives supported vocabulary recall, stating that stories made children "remember vocabulary more easily, like leaving memory traces through a complex story."

Participants also noted that digital elements could make narratives more attractive for young learners, especially when supported by visuals, animation, and familiar characters. Still, they also shared some challenges associated with implementing them. According to T5, "digital stories may become very distracting for kids who pay too much attention to the technology." Similarly, according to T9, the lack of facilities was a challenge because "not all classrooms have access to smart TVs and LCDs." Moreover, according to T1, "teachers need to become better in English before delivering the story." All in all, teachers found culturally-relevant digital stories appealing, but their implementation requires the necessary skills from the educators.

Theme 2: Multilingual Practices Reduce Anxiety and Support Understanding

The interview data also reinforced the questionnaire findings on multilingualism, particularly teachers' positive views of the mother tongue and local language as learning support. This theme was

expressed across participants (T1-T9), especially in relation to comprehension, emotional comfort, confidence, and gradual exposure to English. T6 explained, "We need to know the children's language level first because sometimes they do not fully understand even their mother tongue. The mother tongue becomes a bridge to explain the meaning of the story." T8 added that the most important step was "to appreciate each child and make them comfortable first, so later they become more confident to ask questions."

Participants described multilingual practices as purposeful rather than accidental. T3 suggested that teachers should begin with "the closest things, namely children's mother tongue and culture," and use "gradual and clear language switching." Meanwhile, T2 stated that teachers should "stick to two languages, the mother tongue and English." These responses indicate that teachers viewed multilingual practices as useful for reducing anxiety, supporting understanding, and helping children participate more confidently in English learning. At the same time, participants also implied that multilingual practices require careful planning so that children receive sufficient English exposure while still being supported by familiar languages.

In general, the information from the interviews further supported the results by proving how the teachers' positive perceptions of locally-based digital narratives and multilingualism were revealed in their classroom reasoning and practices. It was also proved that both methods could be considered useful and effective only when using appropriate pedagogical techniques and being ready for the process.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the attitudes held by young learner teachers towards locally-based interactive digital narratives and multilingualism in early childhood English language classrooms were investigated. Results indicate that, on the whole, young learners' teachers have positive attitudes toward locally-based digital narratives

and multilingualism, appreciating pedagogical benefits as well as some difficulties associated with such approaches.

Cultural Relevance Strengthens Engagement and Confidence

The teachers agreed strongly that familiarity with culture helped in learning and that familiar stories boosted the confidence of the children. A teacher said, "Children show more enthusiasm when the characters or places are familiar to them. Even if they don't fully understand the English words, they stay connected to the story" (T3). Another teacher noted, "When the story reflects their daily life, they are braver to speak and try new English words" (T7). This is in line with strong inter-rater agreement in questionnaire items on cultural familiarity (DN2, M = 4.22) and confidence-building in locally-based digital narrative use (DN4, M = 4.11). This theory implies that local content contributes to the emotional involvement of kids in using EFL materials. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) proposes that the process of learning becomes more effective when learners use culturally familiar instruments such as local stories. This is consistent with current literature that has shown that acknowledging learners' cultural identities within instructional materials creates engagement and confidence (Mardhiah et al., 2024; Munajah et al., 2023; Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018; Ray, 2021). The following study supports this argument. For example, Miao and Li (2024) conducted a systematic review of research on the relationship between cultural context and potential learning effect, and determined that culturally relevant grounded digital narratives not only provided an international perspective for EFL but also enhanced learner engagement and confidence in various EFL contexts.

In summary, these findings suggest that the concept of locally-based digital narrative is contextually grounded and supports both theory and practice in the classroom environment. Given that there is clear consistency between the teachers' perceptions and theoretical assumptions, locally-based digital narratives present an opportunity to

mediate the process of sociocultural mediation and enable learners to acquire language.

Digital Narratives Encourage Curiosity – But Requires Support

Teachers generally agreed that digital narratives are developmentally appropriate and stimulate curiosity. However, their confidence declined regarding ease of integration and institutional support. As one participant stated, "The children are excited with digital stories, but sometimes I feel unsure how to use them effectively" (T2). In line, another teacher shared, "We need more guidance. At times, the media turns into entertainment only without any learning aspect" (T8). These results are consistent with the findings of the questionnaire that digital narratives are suitable for young students (DN3, M = 4.00) and they spark curiosity (DN5, M = 4.00), but the classroom implementations required pedagogical control (DN6, M = 3.33) and sufficient support (DN7, M = 3.11). It is apparent that even though teachers understand the value that can be provided from the use of digital narratives in early EFL, most teachers do not have the necessary means, resources or institutional support to incorporate digital narratives.

Such an observation concurs with findings that highlight the need for professional development and learning in terms of technology-enhanced learning (Halimovna, 2024; Haukås, 2016; Oliveira & Jones, 2023). With the Vygotsky approach of learning and development, one will have to create a supportive learning environment. Teachers need to be introduced to digital narratives; in addition to this, teachers need to be scaffolded within the "Zone of Proximal Development" through the efforts of some other individual, such as a mentor, peers, the curriculum, among others. (Lavin, 2019). If teachers were simply trying to implement practical aspects of digital narratives without appropriate levels of scaffolding, that could lead to frustration, poor understanding and ineffective use, which could lessen their pedagogical potential.

Mali (2025) indicated that teachers often faced issues related to technology, such as the lack of training and access to the technology itself. Moreover, Maruf and Halyna (2023) showed that teachers' perceptions of digital narrative are shaped by both pedagogical potential and implementation constraints. This highlights the finding in the present study that suggests structured support. Therefore, systemic solutions are needed, including training in digital tools, digital narrative resources, and practical models for integrating multilingual digital narratives into early EFL practice.

Multilingualism Supports Cognitive Development and Metalinguistic Awareness

Multilingualism was highly valued by teachers for both cognitive and emotional reasons. Teachers were of the opinion that multilingualism improves cognition and raises language consciousness, and they mostly dismissed the notion that multiple languages confuse children. Interview responses reinforced these perceptions. One teacher explained, "When I use Bahasa Indonesia first, they feel safe. Then slowly we move to English" (T5). Another stated, "Switching languages helps them understand better. It makes them confident" (T1). The questionnaire also shows high average score in the statement that multilingualism supports cognition (M1, M = 4.56) and multilingual narratives support language awareness (M3, M = 4.11).

Overall, the results support Cummins' (2000) The Interdependence Hypothesis that the strong first language (L1) development will help ensure additional language acquisition. Teachers stated that telling narratives in children's languages reduced anxiety, therefore supporting Krashen's (2002) Affective Filter Hypothesis, as it provided low stress learning processes.

New multilingual EYL studies in the available literature are parallel to these observations. Making significant improvements in metalinguistic awareness, Yolanda et al. (2024) reported that translanguaging practices can support language awareness. Moreover,

Falomir and Domínguez, (2025) showed that pedagogical translanguaging can enhance young multilingual learners' pragmatic awareness. These findings challenge the assumption that multilingual exposure necessarily creates confusion for young learners.

Although teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism were good, their confidence level in implementing multilingualism was lower. As one participant reflected, "I believe multilingualism is good, but sometimes I am unsure how much of the local language I should use" (T6). This study's findings are consistent with Ray (2021) who found that multilingual education can be beneficial for young learners but requires appropriate implementation and support.

From a translanguaging viewpoint, García and Wei (2014) promote pedagogical structures which aim to use languages in a fluid and purposeful way. The findings of the present study indicate that teachers conceptually support this educational model, but they do not feel confident in implementing it in a structured way. Evidence provided by Yazıcı and Dikilitaş (2024) and Herrera (2023) reveal that types of targeted training on translanguaging pedagogies increased teacher and student confidence, indicating a clear way forward.

Intersecting Multiculturalism and Multilingualism: Toward Inclusive Education

The two major findings of this study suggest that locally-based digital narratives and multilingual practices are not separate pedagogical concerns, but mutually reinforcing approaches. With digital narratives—especially culturally and linguistically inclusive ones—not only is language extended, but socio-emotional development can occur as well. By integrating narratives and multilingualism, educators can design learning opportunities that reflect identity and advance cognitive engagement. This is consistent with identity-centered theories, such as Norton's (2000) Investment Theory, showing autonomy of language. Teachers in the study consistently indicated that multicultural digital narratives allow their

learners to identify and value their own identity, which provided language and emotional support.

For example, one teacher simply said, "When I tell a story in English and in the local language, the children are proud. They see their culture and feel proud when they try words in a new language" (T4). This reflects culturally sustaining pedagogies strive for pedagogies that give significance to students' linguistic and cultural identities (Falomir & Domínguez, 2025; Herrera, 2023). These dual language narrative delivery aspects represent how theory can metamorphose into inclusive pedagogy.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

On a theoretical level, these findings are consistent with Vygotsky's position on the inseparability of language and culture as cognition, again underscoring the value of culturally relevant mediation in early EFL learning. Teachers' beliefs in the value of cultural familiarity and confidence tie in with this position and extend into the area of digital media contexts. At the level of translanguaging theory, the study supports the idea of purposeful bilingual narratives by showing that it can deal with early learning cognitive and emotional domains. However, the findings also show that teacher readiness and institutional support are essential conditions for translating theory into practice.

On a practical level, the findings suggest three significant recommendations. Firstly, develop, support, sustain and disseminate, on a broad scale, culturally appropriate local digital narrative resources that combine visual and narrative modes of delivery with multilingual affordances for culture-appropriate EFL contexts. Secondly, teacher training must address the technical features of particular literacies and pedagogical decisions. Offering scaffolded professional development, role-model lesson plans, and communities of practice can reduce teacher anxiety and increase efficacy. Third, multilingual curriculum frameworks must validate home languages alongside English,

equipping teachers with translanguaging strategies to scaffold L2 learning without eroding L1 development or causing confusion.

Broader Impact and Future Directions

This research also adds value to broader debates on bilingualism and digital pedagogy in early childhood education, by offering an empirical understanding of teachers' perceptions – the often undervalued but crucial dimension within the field of education. This study also seeks to subvert deficit-based discourses on children's engagement with digital technologies and multilingualism in multicultural contexts. Instead, it shows that both can become productive resources when supported by appropriate pedagogy.

Further research might look into student effects after teacher-based digital narrative activities that employ multilingualism, or even parent reports for ecological validity. As well, a comparative study could explore the regional and/or national contexts of policies on language practice, to focus on how policy shapes teacher agency in terms of gender, class, race, or systemic inequalities as the basis for developing and/or responding to these approaches.

In summary, this research investigation shows that young learner teachers in multilingual EFL classrooms value the educational possibilities of locally-based digital narratives and multilingual language practices. Although their perceptions validated the theoretical paradigms of Sociocultural and Translanguaging theories, transforming their realities from theories into practice depends on providing teachers with training, institutional support, and protection for culturally responsive curriculum. Overall, this clarity afforded by the dual notions of theory and practice can serve as a premise for future working towards inclusive, identity-affirming early language learning.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the views of kindergarten teachers concerning locally-based digital narratives and multilingualism in early childhood English as a foreign language (EFL)

classes. The results, based on data collected from nine purposely chosen teachers, demonstrate overall positive views about these methods. The teachers regarded locally-based digital narratives as an efficient means to increase students' engagement and develop confidence because local content made learning English more relevant and understandable for children. Multilingualism, in turn, especially mother tongue use, was seen by the teachers as helpful in reducing students' anxiety and ensuring understanding.

Nevertheless, there were some barriers that made implementation more difficult for the participants. Such obstacles might include limited access to digital materials, a lack of training in digital material utilization, and confusion concerning how to implement the use of multilingualism within their classroom routines. Consequently, it was clear to see that teachers felt that further institutional support was necessary.

The limitations of this study include the use of a small sample size and self-reporting methods. There was no use of observations in the classroom setting or any learner-based data in this study. Further studies need to consider using a bigger sample size and more diverse populations of teachers, incorporating observational and learner-based data, as well as testing the effectiveness of teacher training and culturally responsive multilingual materials.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT 5.5 and Grammarly for optimizing language and readability. The authors have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication after the use of this tool/service.

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