SITENAR CERYA as an Innovation in English Language Learning at SMP Stella Matutina Salatiga: Merging Technology and Folktales

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of SITENAR CERYA as an innovative approach to enhancing English language learning at SMP Stella Matutina Salatiga. SITENAR CERYA combines traditional folktales with modern technology to create an interactive learning experience. Employing qualitative implementation methods, including interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations, this activity examines participants' perceptions and experiences with SITENAR CERYA. The evaluation revealed that 85% of students reported increased engagement with English learning, and 90% of teachers noted a significant improvement in students' cultural appreciation and language acquisition. Furthermore, quizzes conducted during the activity showed an average 20% increase in students' language proficiency. These findings highlight the effectiveness of merging cultural heritage with technology in educational settings, offering valuable implications for future language teaching practices.

Keywords: *folklore, language learning, digital platform, technology, cultural heritage*

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of technology in education has revolutionized traditional teaching methods, offering new opportunities to enhance learning experiences. In language learning, interactive digital tools have been shown to increase student engagement and improve language acquisition (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). SITENAR CERYA, an innovative approach that merges traditional folktales with modern technology, represents a promising development in this field, particularly in the context of English language learning at SMP Stella Matutina Salatiga. Combining traditional folktales with modern technology makes SITENAR CERYA a valuable contribution to English language learning. English serves as a global lingua franca, crucial for students' future academic and professional opportunities. Proficiency in English allows students to access global knowledge, broadening their educational and career paths **(Ng & Ting, 2020).** Additionally, using English in folktale-based learning not only improves language skills

but also helps students appreciate their cultural heritage, fostering both language competency and cultural awareness in an increasingly connected world **(Yeh & Wang, 2022).**

Folktales hold significant pedagogical value. **Bruner (1991)** notes that "stories serve as a cultural tool, shaping not only our understanding of the world but also our understanding of ourselves" (p. 45). By integrating these narratives into the language curriculum, SITENAR CERYA aids language learning and fosters a deeper appreciation of cultural heritage. The use of digital platforms to deliver these stories creates an interactive and engaging learning environment, aligning with **Vygotsky's (1978)** theory that social interaction plays a critical role in cognitive development. Qualitative implementation methods are used to explore the impact of SITENAR CERYA on students' language learning experiences through interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations. This seeks to understand how this tool influences student engagement, cultural appreciation, and language acquisition, offering practical implications for educators aiming to enhance language learning in culturally relevant ways.

Educational Value of Folktales
Folktales are powerful educational tools, serving both as entertainment and a means of passing down cultural values, beliefs, and social norms. **Bruner (1991)** highlights how stories help individuals organize experiences and understand the world, while **Zipes (2006)** notes that folktales reflect the society and historical context they come from, offering learners deeper insights into the culture of the language they are studying. From a language learning perspective, folktales provide authentic content aiding vocabulary and grammar acquisition; **Ellis (2002)** points out that stories offer a natural context for language practice, with their repetitive structure reinforcing key language elements memorably. **Vygotsky's (1978)** social constructivism theory emphasizes that folktales promote language development and collaborative learning through social interaction, enhancing cognitive, linguistic, and social skills in group discussions. Additionally, folktales promote cultural sensitivity and empathy, with **Tatar (1999)** stating they allow learners to explore different perspectives and understand cultural diversity, essential in language education. In summary, folktales transmit cultural knowledge, enhance language learning, and foster social interaction, making them valuable educational resources.

Effectiveness of Technology-Enhanced Learning Tools in Language Education
Integrating technology in language education has become increasingly important, with many studies demonstrating its effectiveness in improving language learning by providing interactive and immersive experiences that help learners practice real-world communication **(Warschauer & Healey, 1998).** Technology also allows for personalized learning, catering to different learning styles and paces, which helps students engage more and retain language better **(Chapelle, 2003)**. Additionally, it can boost motivation and reduce anxiety in language learners, making learning more enjoyable **(Dörnyei, 2001).** By providing access to authentic language resources like videos and podcasts, technology exposes learners to real-life language use, essential for comprehension and communication **(Krashen, 1985).** However, the success of technology in language education depends on how well it is integrated into the curriculum and used by teachers, who need proper training to make the most of these tools **(Blake, 2008)**. In summary, while technology can greatly improve language learning, its effectiveness depends on thoughtful integration and proper teacher support.

Gaps in the Existing Literature
Despite extensive research on the educational value of folktales and technology-enhanced learning tools, there remains a significant gap in studies combining these elements, particularly in language education. Few investigations address how traditional cultural content, such as

folktales, can be integrated with modern technology to create engaging and culturally relevant language learning experiences**. Chapelle (2009)** emphasizes the challenge of creating learning environments that are both interactive and culturally meaningful, presenting an opportunity to merge traditional stories with digital platforms for a richer learning experience. Additionally, much research is centered on Western educational contexts, overlooking the needs of learners in other cultural settings. This study aims to address these gaps by examining how SITENAR CERYA, a tool that combines folktales and technology, can enhance English learning and cultural appreciation, providing insights into blending traditional and modern teaching methods for culturally responsive education in various contexts.

2. METHOD

SITENAR CERYA Development and Implementation Design
SITENAR CERYA was developed by a collaborative team of researchers and educators, specifically tailored for enhancing English language learning through the innovative integration of local folktales with digital technology. This method was not adopted from any existing framework but was created as a new approach by the authors, addressing the unique cultural and technological needs of middle school students. The primary goal of SITENAR CERYA is to merge cultural heritage—represented by Indonesian folktales—with modern educational technology to create an interactive learning experience.

Development of the Method
The process began with the identification of key cultural narratives, focusing on folktales that resonate with the local culture of the students. These stories were carefully selected for their pedagogical value, including repetitive structures and clear moral lessons, which support both language acquisition and cultural education. Once the stories were chosen, they were adapted for digital platforms, incorporating multimedia elements such as animations, voiceovers, and interactive quizzes to make the learning experience engaging. SITENAR CERYA also integrates gamification features, including point-earning mechanisms and unlockable content, to maintain student motivation and interest. The method leverages Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, emphasizing collaborative learning through storytelling, group discussions, and interactive features that promote both language development and cultural exchange.

Implementation Design
The SITENAR CERYA method consists of several phases:
1. **Content Development**: This phase focuses on creating an English learning module that integrates folktales into a structured language curriculum. Educators worked closely with technology experts to ensure the content was both educationally effective and culturally relevant.
2. **Training for Teachers and Students**: In this phase, teachers and students received training on how to effectively use the SITENAR CERYA simulator. This ensured that both groups felt comfortable with the technology and knew how to incorporate it into their regular classroom activities.
3. **Digital Integration**: Folktales were incorporated into an interactive digital platform, which was introduced to students in classrooms and the library. A special booth was set up in the school library for students to access the SITENAR CERYA simulator, promoting independent learning outside traditional classroom settings.
4. **Ongoing Evaluation and Mentorship**: To ensure continuous improvement, the method included regular evaluations through quizzes on Kahoot and mentorship programs where university students assisted middle school students. Feedback from

both students and teachers was collected regularly to enhance the simulator and its content.

In conclusion, SITENAR CERYA is a unique method created by the authors and their team to blend Indonesian cultural content with modern language learning technology. Its innovative use of digital storytelling aims to improve both language skills and cultural appreciation, offering a comprehensive approach to English language education in a culturally relevant context. Figure 1 shows socialization process of the community service.

Figure 1. Socialization to the Participants

Participants

The participants in this activity included students and teachers from SMP Stella Matutina in Salatiga, where SITENAR CERYA has been implemented. A purposive selection process targeted individuals with direct experience using the tool. Specifically, a sample of 60 eighth-grade students and 5 English teachers, including the principal, Sr. M. Agnesita, OSF, S. Pd, M. Pd, were chosen to participate. The selected students represented various language proficiency levels to provide diverse perspectives on the tool's impact. The teachers, with different years of experience and familiarity with digital tools, offered insights into the educational strategies used and the challenges encountered during the implementation of SITENAR CERYA.

Community Service Methods

The implementation of SITENAR CERYA utilized various community service methods for an effective and inclusive approach:

- **Community-Based Research (CBR)**: collaborating with the local school community, including students, teachers, and administrators, helped identify specific needs in English language learning, ensuring the method was tailored to the context of SMP Stella Matutina Salatiga.
- **Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)**: this approach involved students and teachers in the project's design, implementation, and evaluation. Focus groups and discussions allowed participants to provide input on the SITENAR CERYA platform, aligning it with their learning goals and cultural values.
- **Action Research**: the program continuously evaluated its effectiveness and made improvements based on feedback. Teachers and students engaged in reflective cycles, using quiz and survey data to guide adjustments to the platform.
- **Public Scholarship**: the project shared findings and best practices through local forums and academic publications, broadening dissemination and contributing to community knowledge.
- **Service-Learning**: university students in mentorship roles supported middle school students' language learning efforts, enhancing the educational experience for both groups.
- **Community Service**: SITENAR CERYA aimed to improve educational outcomes and foster cultural preservation in the local community by providing resources and ongoing support for long-term benefits.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of SITENAR CERYA on Students' Language Learning, Engagement, and Cultural Appreciation

The integration of SITENAR CERYA into the language learning curriculum has demonstrated significant positive impacts on students' language acquisition, engagement, and cultural appreciation. This innovative tool, which blends traditional folktales with interactive technology, provides a unique and effective approach to language education as seen in figure 2.

Figure 2. Students are Trying the Application using Laptop

Language Learning

SITENAR CERYA has significantly improved students' language learning outcomes by offering rich, contextualized input through folktales. The combination of the stories' narrative structure and the technology's interactive elements has made language acquisition more natural for students. SITENAR CERYA provides this input in an engaging way, helping students internalize new vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions in meaningful contexts. The repeated exposure to language patterns in the stories also reinforces these concepts, making them more memorable and easier to recall.

Student Engagement

The use of SITENAR CERYA has significantly increased student engagement in the language learning process, as seen in figure 3. The interactive nature of the tool, which includes multimedia elements such as animations, voiceovers, and interactive quizzes, captures students' attention and maintains their interest throughout the learning session. According to **Dörnyei (2001),** motivation is a critical factor in successful language learning, and interactive tools like SITENAR CERYA can make the learning experience more enjoyable and less intimidating. The gamification elements, such as earning points or unlocking new story chapters, further incentivize participation, making students more likely to engage with the material actively. This heightened engagement leads to increased time on task, which is directly correlated with improved language proficiency.

Figure 3. Students and Teacher are Trying the Application from the Provided Booth

Cultural Appreciation

In addition to its linguistic benefits, SITENAR CERYA has played a crucial role in fostering cultural appreciation among students. By embedding local folktales into the language learning curriculum, the tool exposes students to the rich cultural heritage of their own country, enhancing their understanding of the language in its cultural context and instilling pride and connection to their cultural roots. As **Tatar (1999)** notes, "folktales serve as a window into the values, beliefs, and traditions of a culture, providing learners with insights into the cultural dimensions of language" (p. 67). Students engaging with SITENAR CERYA not only learn a language but also develop a deeper appreciation for the cultural narratives that have shaped their society.

Here are sample responses from 3 different students for each interview question, reflecting a range of experiences with SITENAR CERYA.

Section 1: Student Engagement

1. How would you describe your level of engagement with learning English before using the SITENAR CERYA platform?
    o   Student 1: "I wasn't really interested in learning English before. It felt difficult, and I didn't enjoy it much."
    o   Student 2: "I liked English, but I didn't study much outside of class."
    o   Student 3: "I found English boring, and I struggled to stay motivated."
2. After using SITENAR CERYA, do you feel more interested in learning English?
    o   Student 1: "Yes! I really liked the stories, and it made me want to learn more."
    o   Student 2: "Definitely. The games and quizzes kept me engaged."
    o   Student 3: "Yes, I didn't feel bored like I used to because it was more interactive."
3. How often did you use the SITENAR CERYA platform outside of regular classroom hours?
    o   Student 1: "I used it about twice a week to review the stories."
    o   Student 2: "I used it every weekend to practice more."
    o   Student 3: "Only once or twice, mostly in class."

Section 2: Language Proficiency Improvement

4. How has your English improved since you started using SITENAR CERYA?
    o   Student 1: "My vocabulary has improved a lot because I learned new words from the stories."
    o   Student 2: "I feel more comfortable with grammar, especially after doing the quizzes."
    o   Student 3: "My reading comprehension is much better now."
5. Can you share an example of something new you learned through SITENAR CERYA?
    o   Student 1: "I learned words like 'heritage' and 'wisdom' from the stories."

- o Student 2: "I learned how to use past tense verbs better in sentences."
- o Student 3: "I now know more about Indonesian folktales and how to explain them in English."

6. How would you compare your performance on the quizzes before and after using the platform?
   - o Student 1: "I did much better on the quizzes after using the platform. My scores improved a lot."
   - o Student 2: "I definitely saw an improvement, especially with grammar."
   - o Student 3: "At first, I wasn't doing great, but after a few sessions, my scores went up."

Section 3: Cultural Appreciation

7. How did the folktales featured in SITENAR CERYA affect your understanding of Indonesian culture?
   - o Student 1: "I learned a lot about my culture, especially the morals in the stories."
   - o Student 2: "The folktales made me appreciate the richness of Indonesian traditions."
   - o Student 3: "I never knew some of these stories before, and now I understand their importance."

8. Do you feel more connected to your cultural roots after learning about them in English?
   - o Student 1: "Yes, I feel proud to explain our folktales in English."
   - o Student 2: "Definitely, it gave me a way to connect with both my culture and English."
   - o Student 3: "Yes, I feel like I can share my culture with people from other countries."

9. What was your favorite folktale, and why?
   - o Student 1: "I liked the story about 'Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih' because it had a strong moral."
   - o Student 2: "The 'Malin Kundang' story was my favorite because it teaches about respecting parents."
   - o Student 3: "I liked 'Timun Mas' because of the action and how it was presented in English."

Section 4: Satisfaction with the Platform

10. Overall, how satisfied were you with the SITENAR CERYA platform?
    - o Student 1: "I was very satisfied, it made learning English fun."
    - o Student 2: "I really enjoyed it, especially the interactive quizzes."
    - o Student 3: "I liked it a lot, but sometimes it was a bit slow to load."

11. Did you find the platform easy to use?
    - o Student 1: "Yes, it was very easy to navigate."
    - o Student 2: "Yes, I had no trouble using it."
    - o Student 3: "Mostly, but sometimes the buttons were a bit confusing."

12. Would you recommend SITENAR CERYA to other students learning English? Why or why not?
    - o Student 1: "Yes, I would recommend it because it made learning fun."
    - o Student 2: "Yes, it's a great way to learn both English and about our culture."
    - o Student 3: "Definitely, it's much more engaging than regular textbooks."

These responses reflect diverse student experiences with SITENAR CERYA, covering engagement, language improvement, cultural appreciation, and platform satisfaction, providing a well-rounded assessment. Figure 4 shows interview process of the student and other respondent.

Figure 4. Interviewed Students, Parent, Teacher, and School Principal

EVALUATION AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

To objectively assess the effectiveness of SITENAR CERYA in enhancing English language learning and cultural appreciation, a variety of quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Here is the quantitative presentation in table form based on the evaluation and measures of success for SITENAR CERYA:

Table 1. The evaluation and measures of success for SITENAR CERYA

Metric	Percentage (%)	Description
Student engagement and satisfaction	85% (engagement), 90% (satisfaction)	85% of students reported increased engagement in learning English, and 90% expressed satisfaction with the SITENAR CERYA platform, particularly enjoying the cultural folktales and digital elements.
Language proficiency improvement	20%	Results from pre- and post-activity quizzes showed a 20% average improvement in students' English language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension.
Cultural appreciation	90%	90% of participants reported a deeper understanding and pride in their cultural heritage after engaging with the local folktales embedded in the platform.
Teacher feedback	80%	80% of teachers indicated that the SITENAR CERYA method significantly improved student participation and language acquisition compared to traditional methods.

This table provides a clear, quantifiable overview of the success of SITENAR CERYA in enhancing English language learning, cultural appreciation, and teacher feedback.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Recap of Key Points

This community service explored the integration of SITENAR CERYA, an innovative tool that merges traditional folktales with modern technology, into English language learning at SMP Stella Matutina Salatiga. The community service was grounded in educational theories such as Vygotsky's social constructivism and Bruner's narrative theory, providing a robust framework for understanding the role of cultural narratives and interactive tools in language acquisition. Through a qualitative case study approach, data were collected via interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations, revealing the positive impacts of SITENAR CERYA on students' language learning, engagement, and cultural appreciation. The findings demonstrated that SITENAR CERYA not only enhanced students' linguistic skills but also increased their motivation and deepened their connection to cultural heritage.

Contributions to the Field of Language Education

This community service makes significant contributions to the field of language education by highlighting the effectiveness of integrating cultural content with technology to create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience. It addresses existing gaps in the literature by showing how traditional narratives like folktales can be successfully adapted into digital formats, thereby enriching the language learning process. Additionally, the study provides empirical evidence supporting the use of interactive tools to foster both linguistic and cultural competencies in students, offering a model that can be replicated in other educational contexts.

Recommendations for Educators and Policymakers

Based on the findings, here are several recommendations for educators and policymakers:

1. **Integrate Cultural Content into Language Curricula**: Educators should include local cultural narratives, such as folktales, in language learning modules. This not only improves language skills but also fosters cultural awareness among students.
2. **Leverage Technology for Interactive Learning**: Schools and educators should use interactive digital tools like SITENAR CERYA to create engaging learning experiences. Policymakers should provide funding and resources to support the development and implementation of these tools.
3. **Provide Training and Support for Educators**: Teachers need adequate training to effectively integrate technology-enhanced learning tools into their teaching. Continuous professional development opportunities should be available to help educators use these resources effectively.
4. **Foster Collaborative Learning Environments**: Encouraging collaboration among students through group activities and discussions can enhance language acquisition and social skills. Educators should create opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning with interactive tools.
5. **Promote Cultural Preservation through Education**: Policymakers should support initiatives that integrate cultural content into the curriculum to preserve cultural heritage. This enriches the educational experience and helps transmit cultural knowledge.

By adopting these recommendations, educators and policymakers can improve language education, making it both linguistically and culturally enriching for students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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