

Integrating South Sulawesi Local Cultural Values into English Language Teaching through Digital Platforms: Teachers' Suggestions and Challenges

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Abstract

This study examines English teachers' competency practices, perceptions, challenges, and expectations regarding the integration of local cultural values into English language teaching (ELT) in South Sulawesi. Using a descriptive qualitative design supported by quantitative indicators, the research investigates how teachers incorporate digital media, multimodal resources, and culturally relevant materials, and how these practices contribute to culturally responsive pedagogy. The findings show that teachers increasingly adopt digital tools, such as social media, YouTube, and e-modules to facilitate contextual and multimodal learning, reflecting a shift toward technology-supported and student-centered approaches. Teachers also demonstrate positive perceptions toward culture-based instruction, acknowledging its role in enhancing engagement, cultural awareness, and identity development. However, several challenges remain, including limited technological facilities, insufficient professional training, time constraints in preparing digital cultural materials, and the scarcity of authentic local cultural resources. Additional barriers include learners reduced cultural awareness and the influence of globalization, which diminishes interest in local values. Teachers propose several recommendations, including the development of culturally grounded teaching materials, sustained professional development aligned with TPACK principles, stronger curriculum support, improved school infrastructure, and increased community involvement in cultural learning. Overall, this study highlights that successfully integrating local culture into ELT requires coordinated efforts across pedagogical, technological, and institutional domains to ensure sustainable, culturally meaningful, and contextually relevant English language learning practices.

Keywords: Cultural Pedagogy, English Language Teaching, Local Culture, Teacher Perspectives.

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1. Introduction

In today's era of globalization and digitalization, English proficiency has become an essential requirement for Indonesia's younger generation to participate effectively in the global community. However, English language learning at the high school level often fails to take local cultural contexts into account, resulting in teaching materials that feel irrelevant to students' daily lives and potentially erode their cultural identity. Integrating local culture into English language teaching can increase student engagement and strengthen their understanding of their own cultural values, which in turn can enrich the language learning process (Sudartini, 2012).

In many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, including Indonesia, English language teaching has often relied heavily on materials rooted in Western culture, which may not resonate with students' sociocultural backgrounds (Zacharias, 2014). This reliance creates a gap between classroom learning and students lived experiences, reducing engagement and diminishing the meaningfulness of language learning (McKay, 2002). South Sulawesi has a wealth of culture, including noble values such as *sipakatau* (mutual respect), *sipakainge* (mutual reminder), and *sipakalebbi* (mutual honor). These values have long been a guide in the social interactions of the Bugis-Makassar community.

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Integrating these values into English language learning not only increases the relevance of the teaching material, but also contributes to the formation of students' tolerant and culturally aware character (Ramli, 2023).

The integration of local cultural content into ELT has been widely recognized as an effective approach to bridge this gap. Culturally contextualized pedagogy allows learners to engage with English through materials that reflect their own identities and environments (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Kramsch, 1993). Furthermore, such an approach not only supports language acquisition but also contributes to cultural preservation and the development of intercultural competence (Alptekin, 2002).

Despite this growing body of research, existing studies have primarily focused on the representation of local culture in teaching materials or the effects of culture-based instruction on students' learning outcomes and attitudes. Limited attention has been given to teachers as key agents of implementation, particularly regarding how they navigate the challenges of integrating local cultural values into ELT within increasingly digital learning environments. Moreover, little is known about how teachers in culturally diverse regions such as South Sulawesi perceive the practical demands of combining local culture, English instruction, and digital platforms. This gap is theoretically important because it extends current discussions on culturally responsive pedagogy beyond the design of instructional materials toward understanding the interplay between teacher agency, technology integration, and local cultural contexts in EFL settings.

Therefore, this study aims to explore teachers' suggestions and identify the challenges they encounter in implementing local culture-based ELT through digital platforms in South Sulawesi. By foregrounding teachers' voices, this study contributes empirical insights into how culturally responsive and technology-supported ELT can be enacted in multilingual and multicultural contexts, thereby enriching the broader discourse on the intersection of local culture, digital pedagogy, and English language education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Local Culture in English Language Teaching

The inclusion of local culture in ELT has been proposed as a strategy to enhance the relevance and authenticity of learning (McKay, 2002). Localized materials provide cultural mirrors through which students can reflect on their identities while simultaneously engaging with global communication needs (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999).

Recent studies have examined how local culture is represented in ELT materials and its role in shaping classroom practice. In the Indonesian context, Vanila, Ariyanto, and Suharjito (2023) reported that textbooks for junior high schools included local cultural content, yet it was mostly limited to cultural products such as food, clothing, and tourist attractions, while cultural practices and perspectives were underrepresented. Similarly, Hasnah et al. (2024) revealed that locally produced textbooks prioritized cultural products over perspectives, which narrowed opportunities for students to develop intercultural awareness. On the other hand, Miqawati, Wijayanti, and Intan Purnama (2024) demonstrated that integrating local performing arts into English lessons promoted cultural awareness and strengthened students' engagement with authentic learning materials.

Complementing these local findings, Hicham et al. (2025) in their study of culture-based ELT classes in Jordan and Morocco showed that integrating local and intercultural content could foster both language skills and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Their results highlight that local culture integration is not only a pedagogical choice in Indonesia but also a global practice with measurable impact on linguistic and cultural learning outcomes.

2.2. Benefits of Cultural Integration in ELT

Previous studies emphasize that cultural integration fosters learner motivation, promotes critical cultural awareness, and helps students appreciate both their own and other cultures (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). Research in Indonesian contexts also shows that students are more engaged when materials are contextualized with local traditions and everyday practices (Zacharias, 2014).

The integration of local culture into ELT has been consistently linked with multiple benefits. A systematic review conducted by Ratri, Widiati, Astutik, and Jonathan (2024) across Southeast Asia reported that embedding cultural content in language teaching enhanced learners' engagement and cultivated positive attitudes towards English learning. Similarly, Miqawati et al. (2024) emphasized that authentic cultural materials rooted in local traditions promoted deeper awareness of students' own identities and made English learning more meaningful. Empirical classroom studies in Indonesia also revealed that using local cultural contexts improved speaking skills and fostered pride in local heritage

(Lectura Journal, 2023). On a broader scale, Hicham et al. (2025) found that culture-based ELT classes significantly contributed to the development of ICC dimensions, particularly in students' ability to interpret and relate cultural references while using English. Taken together, both local and international evidence suggest that cultural integration in ELT supports linguistic competence, strengthens cultural identity, and fosters intercultural awareness, thereby providing a holistic foundation for language education.

2.3. Challenges in Cultural-Based Pedagogy

Despite these benefits, the implementation of cultural-based ELT faces several barriers. These include a lack of culturally relevant teaching resources, insufficient teacher training, and limited institutional support (McKay, 2002; Alptekin, 2002). In contexts of rapid globalization, the dominance of foreign cultural products also competes with efforts to foreground local traditions (Kramsch, 2013).

The implementation of culture-based pedagogy continues to face substantial challenges. Indonesian teachers often express positive attitudes towards cultural integration but report difficulties due to insufficient training and lack of culturally relevant teaching resources (Novita & Purwati, 2023). Natasya and Kembaren (2025) similarly observed that adapting English materials for multicultural classrooms was hindered by disparities in students' proficiency, diverse learning preferences, and frequent curricular revisions. Textbook analyses (Hasnah et al., 2024; Vanila et al., 2023) further indicate that cultural representation remains superficial, with a focus on artifacts rather than practices and perspectives that foster intercultural competence.

At the international level, Hossain (2024) identified similar challenges, emphasizing that educators struggle with the lack of clarity in defining "culture" for practical pedagogy, insufficient preparation for teachers, and the dominance of target-culture materials over local content. Hicham et al. (2025) also highlighted that although culture-based classes enhanced ICC, the limited scope of cultural materials and inconsistency in instructional methods constrained the overall impact. These challenges underline the necessity of systemic support through curriculum design, teacher training, and the provision of culturally balanced resources to make culture-based pedagogy sustainable and effective.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design supported by quantitative indicators, employing a concurrent nested mixed-methods approach in which the qualitative strand served as the primary component. This design was chosen to capture the depth and richness of teachers' narratives regarding their suggestions and challenges in integrating local cultural values into English language teaching (ELT) through digital platforms, while simultaneously allowing quantitative indicators derived from closed-ended survey items to provide descriptive statistical support for broader patterns in teachers' competency practices, digital tool usage, and perception trends. By combining these two strands, the researchers were able to contextualize teachers' voices within measurable patterns, aligning with the study's overarching goal of examining practices, perceptions, challenges, and expectations within the South Sulawesi educational context (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2. Research Participations

The study was conducted in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, a region widely recognized for its pronounced cultural heterogeneity, particularly reflected in the Makassar, Bugis, and Toraja cultural traditions, which provided a relevant setting for examining the integration of cultural dimensions into ELT through digital means. The participants comprised English language teachers from various secondary schools, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in ELT practices, curriculum innovation, and accessibility to digital teaching platforms. Their professional roles and pedagogical responsibilities positioned them as key informants capable of offering substantive insights into culturally responsive and technology-supported instructional approaches within the regional educational context, ensuring that the data collected would be both relevant and richly informative.

3.3. Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured online questionnaire, developed specifically for this study through a rigorous multi-stage process. Initially, an item pool was generated based on a comprehensive review of

literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), local culture-based ELT, and digital platform integration. To establish content validity, the preliminary draft was submitted to two senior academics specializing in ELT curriculum development and educational technology, who evaluated the instrument for relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Based on their feedback, ambiguous items were reworded, and the questionnaire was refined into three main sections: demographic background, quantitative indicators comprising closed-ended 4-point Likert-scale items measuring perceptions and self-reported digital competency, and qualitative open-ended prompts eliciting detailed suggestions and challenges. The revised instrument then underwent a pilot test with three English teachers who were not part of the main sample to assess face validity and practicability; minor adjustments were made to the phrasing of the open-ended prompts to ensure they effectively elicited rich responses without leading the participants. For the quantitative section, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha during the pilot phase, yielding an acceptable value of 0.82, while the trustworthiness of the qualitative section was subsequently ensured through member-checking and peer debriefing.

Data were collected through the validated questionnaire, which was distributed online via Google Form to accommodate teachers' schedules and ensure accessibility, with the link shared through teacher professional networks and official school communication channels. The closed-ended items collected quantitative data on the frequency of digital tool usage such as social media, YouTube, and e-modules and perception levels, while the open-ended prompts specifically asked for suggestions for developing local culture-based ELT through digital platforms and the challenges encountered in this integration. This method allowed participants the flexibility to provide detailed written responses in their own words without time constraints. Additionally, to enhance data credibility, informal follow-up communication via short messaging services was conducted with selected teachers to clarify ambiguous questionnaire responses, probe deeper into specific digital strategies, and verify initial interpretations, a process serving as a form of member checking that strengthened the authenticity of the findings.

3.4. Data Analysis

To address the dual nature of the data, a two-pronged analytic approach was employed. For the quantitative indicators, data from the closed-ended Likert-scale and frequency items were extracted and analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations via SPSS software, producing numerical summaries that supported and contextualized the qualitative findings. For the primary qualitative component, the open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, strictly adhering to the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process began with the researchers transcribing all written responses verbatim and reading them repeatedly to gain a holistic understanding of the content. Subsequently, the data were systematically segmented and assigned descriptive codes, such as "using TikTok for vocabulary," "lack of projector access," and "student disinterest in folklore." These codes were then collated and grouped into broader potential themes, such as "Digital Material Adaptation," "Infrastructural Constraints," and "Pedagogical Shifts toward TPACK," which were subsequently reviewed against the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure coherence and accurate representation of the teachers' voices. Once the final thematic map was established, each theme was clearly defined and refined, and the findings were written up by integrating vivid direct quotations from participants to support thematic assertions while triangulating them with the quantitative indicators. Throughout this analytic process, the researchers engaged in peer debriefing sessions to challenge subjective biases and ensure the dependability and confirmability of the interpretations.

Finally, the researchers adhered strictly to fundamental ethical principles governing research involving human subjects. Prior to data collection, formal ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee and the relevant regional education authorities, ensuring compliance with national guidelines for educational research. A detailed information sheet was embedded at the beginning of the Google Form, transparently explaining the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, the estimated time commitment, and the participants' absolute right to withdraw at any point without penalty; only after participants actively ticked a consent box confirming they had read and understood the information were they allowed to proceed to the questionnaire. To protect participants' identities, all data were anonymized, with pseudonyms used in all reporting and any identifying details such as specific school names or personal contacts removed. Furthermore, all collected data were securely stored in a password-protected digital repository accessible only to the research team and will be securely destroyed upon the completion of the study, ensuring confidentiality throughout the research process.

4. Result and Discussion

This section presents and interprets the results of questionnaires administered to English teachers at senior high schools across South Sulawesi. The purpose of these findings is to examine teachers' recommendations and uncover the challenges encountered in integrating local cultural values into English language teaching through digital platforms. The discussion is structured thematically, beginning with an overview of respondents' demographic profiles, followed by a detailed presentation of the key themes emerging from the data analysis.

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

To enhance understanding of the research context, this subsection outlines the demographic characteristics of the English teachers involved in the study. The demographic data include gender, age, educational background, teaching experience, region of origin, and ethnicity. These are crucial for interpreting the results, as teachers' cultural identities and backgrounds may shape their perceptions, experiences, and recommendations regarding the integration of local cultural values into English language instruction through digital platforms. The summary of the respondents' demographic profiles can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	20	33%
	Female	41	67%
Age	20-30 years old	8	13%
	31-40 years old	27	44%
	41-50 years old	24	40%
	>50 years old	2	3%
	<5 years	7	11%
Teaching Experience	5-10 years	15	25%
	11-20 years	26	43%
	>20 years	13	21%
Level of Education	Bachelor degree (S1)	41	67%
	Master degree (S2)	20	33%
Ethnicity	Bugis	45	74%
	Makassar	11	18%
	Mandar	4	6%
	Toraja	1	2%

Table 1 shows that the majority of the participants were female teachers (67%), while male teachers represented 33% of the total respondents. This gender distribution, while typical for the language teaching profession, suggests that the resultant perspectives on digital culture integration might be predominantly shaped by female pedagogical experiences, warranting consideration in future subgroup analyses. In terms of age, most teachers were within the 31–40 years (44%) and 41–50 years (40%) categories, suggesting that the respondents were largely within the productive working age. Notably, this concentration in the middle-age bracket implies that these teachers possess sufficient digital literacy to engage with contemporary platforms while retaining the experiential maturity necessary to critically evaluate cultural content. Concerning their teaching experience, nearly half of the teachers (43%) had between 11–20 years of experience, followed by 21% who had taught for more than 20 years, indicating that most participants were seasoned educators with considerable classroom experience.

Given that over 60% have taught for more than a decade, their responses likely reflect well-founded pedagogical convictions, yet this depth of experience could also mean they exhibit cautiousness toward untested digital innovations compared to novice teachers. Regarding educational background, 67% of respondents possessed a Bachelor's degree (S1) and 33% held a Master's degree (S2), reflecting that all participants were academically qualified to teach at the senior high school level. The substantial proportion holding postgraduate qualifications is analytically significant, as it points to a workforce inclined toward academic rigor and possibly more receptive to integrating theoretical frameworks into practical digital teaching strategies. According to the teachers' ethnicity, the findings show that the majority of teachers identified as Bugis (74%), followed by Makassar (18%), Mandar (6%), and Toraja (2%). This composition

illustrates the cultural diversity among the respondents and provides meaningful contextual insight into how teachers' cultural backgrounds may influence their views on incorporating local cultural values into English language teaching through digital platforms. However, the marked predominance of the Bugis ethnicity inevitably positions their cultural norms as the primary reference point in the data, which may obscure the distinct perspectives of the smaller Mandar and Toraja groups, suggesting that findings should be interpreted with an awareness of this demographic skew.

Moreover, the respondents in this study originated from different areas across South Sulawesi Province, indicating the teachers' diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds. The distribution of identified ethnic groups represents various regions within the province, reflecting the cultural richness of South Sulawesi. A visual mapping of the respondents' regions of origin is presented in Figure 1.

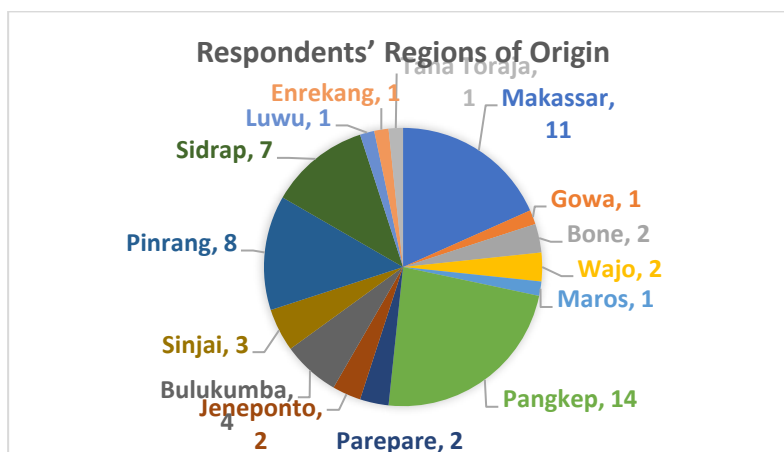


Figure 1. Respondents' Regions of Origin

The wide geographical distribution of respondents across South Sulawesi is shown in Figure 1. The majority were from Pangkep (14) and Makassar (11), followed by Pinrang (8) and Sidrap (7). Smaller proportions of participants came from regions such as Bulukumba, Sinjai, Jenepono, Maros, Wajo, Bone, and Tana Toraja. This distribution highlights the diverse regional representation of teachers participating in the study. This geographic breadth is analytically significant, as it strengthens the generalizability of the findings across South Sulawesi. Moreover, it provides a valuable lens for examining how varied local cultures and infrastructural conditions across these regions might shape teachers' professional experiences and perspectives.

4.2. Teachers' Practices and Competencies in Culturally Integrated English Teaching

This section presents the teachers' practices and competencies in integrating local culture into English language teaching through digital platforms. The data is summarized in three main aspects, such as (1) English language learning practices, (2) digital and cultural competencies, and (3) teachers' perceptions of learning innovation. These findings provide a comprehensive picture of how teachers in South Sulawesi implement, adapt, and view English language teaching integrated with local culture in the digital age.

Figure 2 shows that the majority of teachers demonstrate active engagement with digital media in English language teaching, with 49.2% using it often and 18% always. The incorporation of local cultural elements is also fairly frequent (44.3% often, 8.2% always). Meanwhile, the use of YouTube and e-modules appears moderate, whereas social media is more widely utilized (39.3% often, 14.8% always). Overall, these findings suggest that teachers display a strong tendency to integrate digital platforms into their English teaching practices. The notably higher adoption of social media over structured e-modules implies a pedagogical preference for dynamic, student-centered interaction rather than relying solely on pre-packaged instructional content. Furthermore, the deliberate pairing of local cultural elements with digital tools indicates that educators are leveraging technology not just for language drills, but to foster culturally responsive and contextually meaningful learning experiences.

In addition to teaching practices, this study examined teachers' digital and cultural competencies to understand their readiness to implement technology-based teaching integrated with local culture. The results are shown in Figure 3.

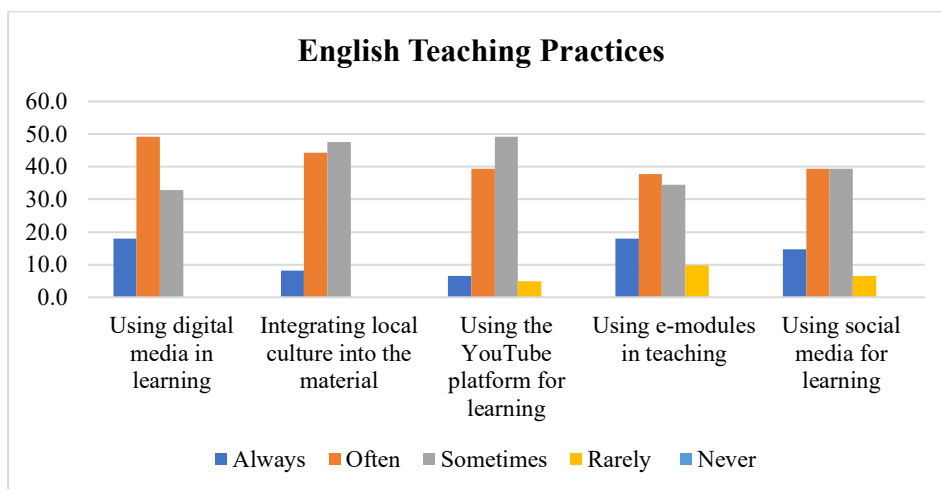


Figure 2. English Teaching Practices

Most teachers have good digital and cultural competencies. A total of 63.9% are rated as good and 24.6% as very good in operating digital technology. Knowledge of South Sulawesi culture is also strong, with 65.6% rated as good and 9.8% as very good. However, the ability to create digital content is more varied (42.62% good, 44.26% adequate), while the ability to integrate culture into learning is generally positive (62.3% good, 6.56% excellent). Overall, teachers demonstrate positive competencies, although improvements are still needed in digital content creation. This disparity highlights a crucial "knowing-doing" gap: high proficiency in operational tech and cultural theory does not automatically translate into the practical synthesis of both into digital pedagogy. Consequently, targeted upskilling must pivot from basic tool training to applied instructional design, specifically focused on transforming passive cultural knowledge into active, student-centered digital learning experiences.

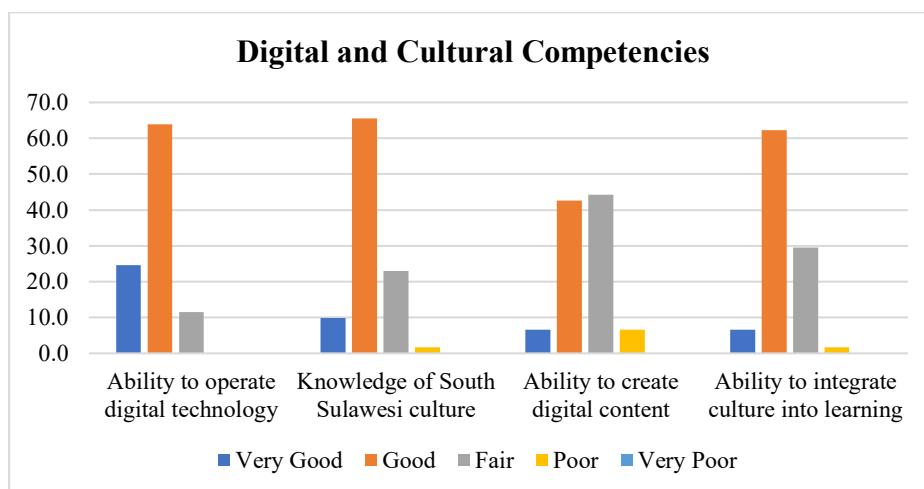


Figure 3. Teachers' Digital and Cultural Competencies

Furthermore, this study also examines teachers' perceptions of learning innovations to understand their attitudes toward the use of digital platforms and the integration of local culture in English language teaching. Findings related to these perceptions are shown in Figure 4.

Teachers generally hold positive perceptions toward innovative learning. A total of 55.74% agree and 36.07% strongly agree that the integration of local culture is important. Similarly, 59.02% agree and 32.79% strongly agree regarding the effectiveness of digital platforms. Teachers also believe that culture-based learning increases student enthusiasm (60.66% agree, 11.48% strongly agree) and that digital media improves learning outcomes (65.57% agree, 22.95% strongly agree). In addition, 65.57% agree and 27.87% strongly agree that culture-based learning strengthens student identity. These findings confirm teachers' strong support for learning that combines local culture and digital technology. Notably, while both local culture and digital platforms receive near-identical approval for their general importance

(around 92%), a closer look reveals that teachers place significantly higher trust in digital media for directly improving measurable learning outcomes (88.5%) compared to culture-based methods for merely boosting enthusiasm (72.1%). This disparity implies that teachers view technology as a primary driver of academic performance, whereas cultural integration is primarily valued for its socio-emotional and identity-reinforcing benefits, suggesting that the most effective innovative learning models should deliberately combine both to address distinct educational goals.

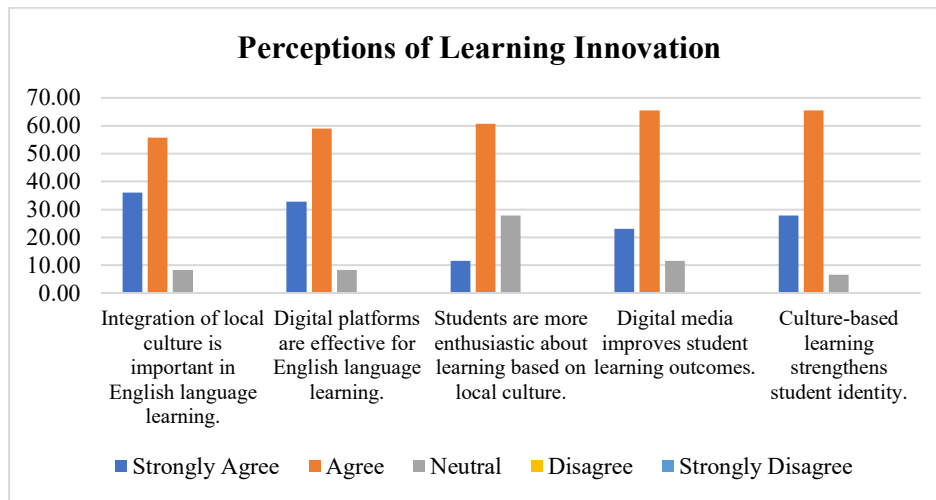


Figure 4. Teachers' Perception of Learning Innovation

The data above indicate that digital platforms and media have become an integral part of English language learning practices, as reflected in the high frequency of responses across multiple indicators. This trend aligns with the principles of Digital Learning Theory, which postulates that the integration of digital tools facilitates learner engagement, interaction, and autonomy (Siemens, 2005; Anderson, 2011). The frequent use of social media, YouTube, digital media, and E-modules suggests that learners and teachers have shifted toward multimodal and technology-driven learning environments, which support both formal and informal learning contexts.

The high utilization of social media for learning reflects the notion of connectivism, as proposed by Siemens (2005), who emphasizes that learning in the digital age occurs through networks and community participation rather than solely through traditional classroom settings. Social media platforms provide access to authentic language exposure, real-time communication, and global interaction, reinforcing L2 input and output as promoted by *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)* principles. The increasing adoption of E-modules and YouTube-based instruction can also be associated with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2009), which affirms that learning is more effective when verbal information is paired with visual stimuli. This multimodal approach stimulates dual coding (Paivio, 1991), which enhances comprehension, retention, and learner motivation, particularly for abstract linguistic concepts.

Moreover, the dominant use of digital media aligns with the pedagogical transition to 21st Century Learning Skills (4C's: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity), as articulated by Trilling and Fadel (2009). Through digital media integration, both teachers and students demonstrate the ability to adapt and utilize technological literacy as a core learning competency. This confirms that English language learning has evolved beyond textbook-based instruction to experiential, technology-mediated, and student-centered learning environments.

The strong results in integrating local culture into English language materials provide evidence of alignment with the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This integration reflects awareness of cultural identity, contextual relevance, and meaningful learning experiences. Embedding local culture into instructional materials contributes to affective engagement, which Vygotsky (1978) identifies as essential in sociocultural learning. It also aligns with Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2004), emphasizing equality, identity, and values in knowledge construction.

Despite these positive trends, the variation in frequency, particularly regarding YouTube usage where "Sometimes" appeared as the largest category suggests that digital integration is not fully institutionalized. This may relate to technological readiness, teacher self-efficacy, or access issues, which scholars such as TPACK framework proponents (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) highlight as critical determinants for successful technology-based instruction.

Taken together, these illustrate that teachers are making meaningful progress in adopting technology supported and culturally grounded instructional approaches, although the extent of integration remains uneven across different practices. This variation suggests the presence of underlying factors that shape teachers' ability to consistently implement digital tools and local cultural content within English language teaching. As the discussion transitions from the patterns of competency and perception to a deeper analysis, it becomes essential to identify the specific obstacles that may hinder the full institutionalization of these approaches. The following section therefore, examines the key challenges encountered by teachers in integrating local cultural elements into ELT, offering a more detailed understanding of the constraints that influence classroom implementation.

4.3. Challenges to Integrating Local Culture-Based ELT

The integration of local cultural content into English language learning, while increasingly recognized as pedagogically valuable, remains challenged by a variety of structural and instructional constraints. To understand the specific barriers that teachers encounter in implementing culture-based ELT, quantitative data were collected to capture their perceptions across several key dimensions. The indicators presented in the chart below provide an empirical overview of the most prominent challenges, ranging from technological limitations to pedagogical and material-related issues. These insights form the basis for examining the conditions that influence teachers' readiness and capacity to adopt culturally responsive practices in the classroom.

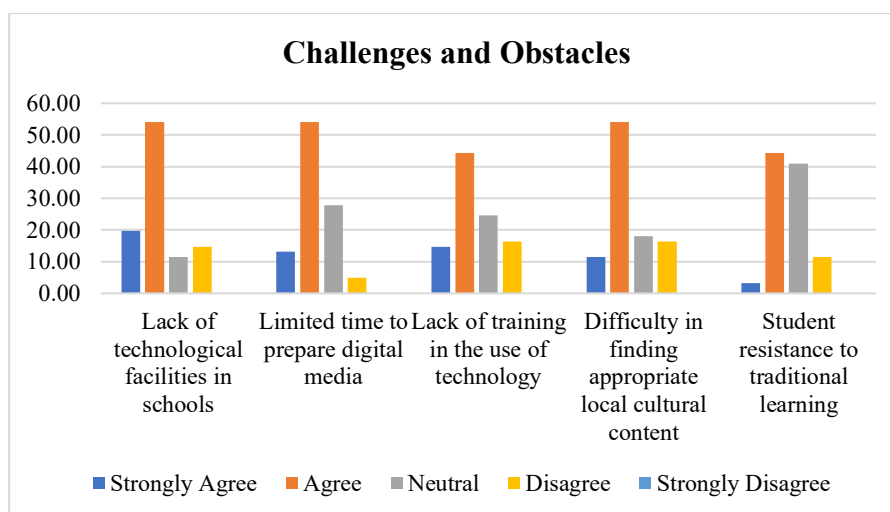


Figure 5. Teachers' Challenges and Obstacle

The data in figure 5 indicate several key challenges faced by teachers in integrating digital and cultural-based English teaching. The majority of teachers agreed that limited technological facilities (54.1% agree, 19.67% strongly agree) and lack of preparation time (54.1% agree, 13.11% strongly agree) are major obstacles. Similarly, many teachers pointed out insufficient training in technology use (44.26% agree, 14.75% strongly agree) and difficulty finding suitable local cultural content (54.1% agree, 11.5% strongly agree). Meanwhile, 44.26% agreed that students still show resistance to traditional learning approaches. These patterns underscore the need for systemic interventions, including improved technological infrastructure, enhanced teacher training, and the development of accessible cultural learning materials to support effective local culture-based ELT. Crucially, these obstacles are deeply interconnected, as inadequate training and infrastructure directly amplify the time teachers spend sourcing cultural materials, inadvertently heightening burnout and student resistance. This interdependence suggests that isolated, piecemeal interventions will likely fail; instead, a holistic strategy that simultaneously upgrades technology, provides sustained mentoring, and co-develops localized content repositories with teachers is imperative to break this vicious cycle.

In addition to the quantitative data presented in Figure 5, further insights were obtained through open-ended responses, where 61 participating teachers described in their own words the challenges, they encountered in integrating local culture into English teaching. The qualitative data were systematically analyzed and mapped into eight major themes, reflecting the multidimensional nature of the issues faced in practice.

The first and most dominant theme concerns the limited availability of learning resources and instructional materials. Teachers reported difficulties in accessing relevant and contextual materials that incorporate local cultural elements,

both in printed and digital forms. The scarcity of English texts, modules, and supplementary media grounded in local culture has led to a reliance on general or foreign-based materials, thereby reducing cultural relevance in classroom practices. The second theme relates to teachers’ competence, knowledge, and professional readiness. Many teachers acknowledged limited understanding and pedagogical skills in embedding cultural aspects within English lessons, a condition aggravated by the lack of systematic training and professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy.

A third recurring theme involves students limited cultural awareness and motivation. Teachers observed that many students display minimal appreciation of their local heritage and tend to be more attracted to global cultural trends, which diminishes their engagement and cultural identity. Closely related to this is the fourth theme, globalization and modernization, identified as key external factors influencing students’ preferences and perceptions of local culture. The widespread exposure to foreign media and entertainment has gradually shifted learners’ cultural orientation away from local values.

The fifth theme highlights inadequate technological facilities and digital infrastructure, which hinder the implementation of culture-based English learning. Schools often lack sufficient media, platforms, and tools to support the development of localized digital materials. The sixth theme addresses the diversity of students’ cultural backgrounds, which complicates the selection of cultural content that is inclusive and representative for all learners. The seventh theme concerns curricular and institutional barriers, including inconsistent curriculum policies, limited institutional support, and the absence of structured guidelines for cultural integration. Finally, the eighth theme involves psychological and motivational constraints, such as students’ low enthusiasm, limited engagement, and inconsistent participation in culture-based learning practices.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the integration of local culture into English language teaching is a multidimensional challenge, involving pedagogical, institutional, technological, cultural, and psychological aspects. The results imply the necessity of adopting a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that includes capacity building for teachers, the development of culturally relevant learning materials, improvement of institutional support, and reinforcement of cultural identity in teaching practices aligned with 21st-century learning demands.

4.4. Teachers’ Suggestions for Developing Local Culture-Based ELT

This section presents English teachers’ suggestions and identified needs for developing English Language Teaching (ELT) that integrates local cultural values through digital platforms. The findings highlight three main components, such as (1) teachers’ professional development requirements, (2) their preferred digital tools for facilitating English learning, and (3) the cultural elements viewed as most relevant for incorporation into classroom practices. Collectively, these insights offer a comprehensive understanding of teachers’ perspectives on enhancing digital and culture-based English teaching in South Sulawesi.

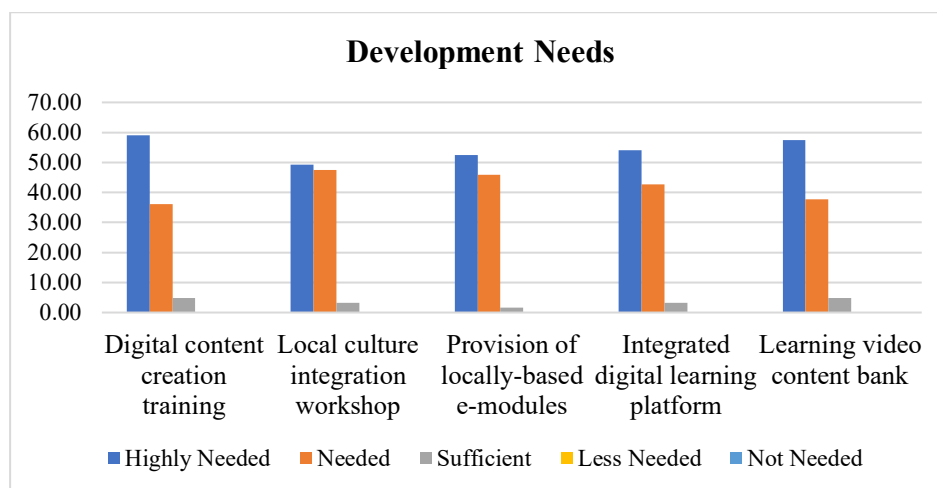


Figure 6. Teachers’ Development Needs

Figure 6 illustrates that most teachers express a very high need for both training and the availability of digital and culture-based learning resources. The highest needs include training in digital content creation (59.02%), video content banks (57.38%), and integrated digital learning platforms (54.1%). Similar urgency appears for workshops on cultural

integration (49.18%) and e-modules based on local culture (52.46%). This indicates that professional development and resource availability remain top priorities for teachers aiming to combine digital and cultural dimensions in ELT. Interestingly, the slightly higher urgency for purely technical digital skills (59.02%) over direct cultural integration workshops (49.18%) suggests that teachers may perceive robust digital infrastructure and content-creation capabilities as the foundational prerequisite—without which, embedding local culture into digital formats remains practically unattainable. Simultaneously, the fact that all needs cluster above 49% underscores that teachers do not view digitalization and cultural contextualization as separate tracks, but rather as an inextricably linked pedagogical package requiring holistic, concurrent professional development.

This study further investigated the teachers’ preferences for the most effective digital platforms to support English language learning. The data can be seen in figure 7.

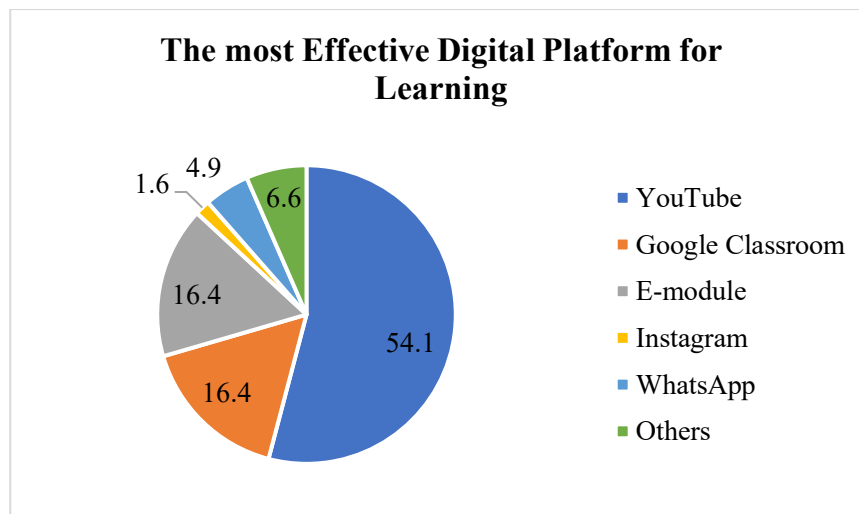


Figure 7. Effective Digital Platform for Learning

The data above shows that YouTube is considered the most effective digital platform, chosen by 54.1% of respondents. It is followed by Google Classroom and E-modules, each chosen by 16.4% of teachers. Meanwhile, WhatsApp and other platforms received lower preferences, at 4.9% and 6.6% respectively, with Instagram being the least chosen at 1.6%. These findings indicate that teachers prefer platforms that are easily accessible, rich in media, and suitable for integrating cultural and interactive learning content. The overwhelming dominance of YouTube, capturing over half of all preferences, highlights a pronounced teacher inclination toward authentic, visually-driven content as a cornerstone for engaging learners, rather than merely depending on administrative or text-heavy interfaces. Conversely, the minimal reliance on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram implies that teachers draw a clear distinction between informal communication tools and dedicated educational resources, favoring the latter for their structured scaffolding and focused learning environments.

The next part of this analysis explores teachers’ views on the aspects of local culture that they consider most suitable for integration into English language learning. This exploration aims to uncover which cultural dimensions teachers consider most relevant and adaptable to classroom teaching practices, reflecting their understanding of how local values can enrich English language teaching.

The data shows that folklore (39.34%) and cultural tourism (34.43%) are considered the most suitable aspects of local culture to be integrated into English language learning. These aspects are followed by cuisine (9.84%), history (8.2%), and arts and traditions (4.92%), while other cultural aspects contribute 3.28%. Overall, these findings indicate that teachers view the narrative and experiential elements of local culture as the most interesting and contextually rich material to support English language learning. This pronounced preference for folklore and tourism over static historical or artistic facts implies that teachers strategically prioritize cultural elements offering immersive narratives or practical interactive scenarios, likely viewing them as more effective vehicles for developing communicative fluency than purely declarative knowledge.

The analysis of respondents’ suggestions indicates that teachers perceive the development of local culture-based English language teaching (ELT) as an effort that requires simultaneous strengthening across pedagogical, curricular, technological, and institutional domains. A dominant pattern in the data is the repeated call for the availability of culturally grounded instructional materials including textbooks, digital modules, folk stories, contextual texts, and multimedia resources. Teachers emphasize that such materials should authentically reflect local cultural identities to ensure relevance and meaningful engagement. This aligns with recent evidence showing that culturally contextualized ELT materials significantly enhance student motivation, identity formation, and comprehension (Azhary & Fatimah, 2023).

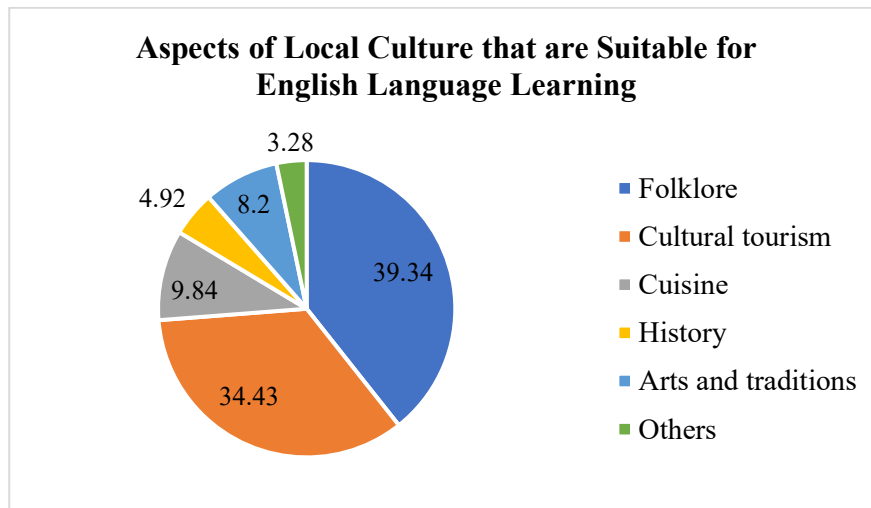


Figure 8. Aspect of Local Culture for English Language Learning

Closely connected to this is the strong recommendation for continuous professional development. Teachers report the need for structured workshops, webinars, and hands-on training to improve their competence in integrating cultural elements into ELT. These findings echo research indicating that teachers often feel underprepared to design and deliver culture-based instruction, particularly due to limited training in culturally responsive pedagogy and technology-supported learning. Recent applications of the TPACK framework also affirm that effective integration of cultural content requires teachers to blend technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge in sophisticated ways (Andriany & Adnan, 2022).

Another important thing is the need for stronger curricular alignment, as many respondents argued that cultural content should be explicitly embedded in the curriculum, rather than left to individual teacher initiative. This view is supported by studies that highlight how culturally responsive curriculum design must be institutionalized through policy mechanisms to ensure sustainability and collective responsibility. Interdisciplinary collaboration with subjects such as history, arts, and social sciences is also seen as essential for embedding culture holistically.

The data further show that teachers recognize the role of technology as an enabler of cultural learning, recommending the development of digital platforms, online repositories, and social-media-based content to improve access to local cultural resources. This aligns with recent findings demonstrating that digital multimodal materials substantially enhance cultural engagement and support diverse learning pathways in ELT contexts. However, respondents simultaneously reported infrastructural challenges, such as weak internet access, limited devices, and inadequate school facilities barriers widely documented in contemporary studies of educational technology implementation (Rahman & Akter, 2021).

In addition, respondents emphasize the value of community engagement and experiential learning. Recommendations such as cultural field trips, collaborations with local cultural practitioners, and project-based learning indicate that teachers view real-world exposure as crucial for deepening students’ cultural understanding. This perspective is consistent with sociocultural learning theory, which posits that learning becomes more meaningful when connected to authentic cultural contexts, a relationship confirmed in recent empirical studies of community-embedded English learning (Nguyen. et al, 2023).

The final recurring theme in the data relates to enhancing students' cultural motivation and identity awareness. Suggestions such as integrating traditional games, local songs, storytelling, and folklore into ELT activities reflect teachers' belief that culturally meaningful instruction increases student engagement and fosters cultural pride. Research in recent years similarly notes that culturally relevant instructional practices positively influence students' motivation and reinforce their sense of cultural identity (Azhary & Fatimah, 2023).

Overall, the findings show that teachers view culture-based ELT as both relevant and necessary, but contingent upon improvements in resource development, training, curriculum support, digital infrastructure, community participation, and learner motivation. When interpreted alongside recent literature, these findings underscore that the success of local culture-based ELT depends not only on teacher initiative but also on systemic and institutional conditions that enable culturally responsive pedagogy to flourish in a sustainable manner.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating local culture into English Language Teaching (ELT) through digital platforms is both valuable and feasible for promoting student engagement, cultural awareness, and identity formation. Teachers showed positive perceptions and strong commitment to implementing culturally responsive practices using digital media and multimodal resources. Nevertheless, the findings also revealed several persistent challenges, including limited technological infrastructure, insufficient professional training, restricted preparation time, inadequate access to authentic cultural materials, and limited curriculum support.

Beyond the context of South Sulawesi, these findings highlight the need for educational policies that systematically embed local cultural content into ELT curricula while strengthening teachers' technological and pedagogical capacities through sustained professional development. The study also contributes to the theoretical understanding of how culturally responsive pedagogy can be enacted in digital EFL settings by linking local culture integration with sociocultural perspectives and technology integration frameworks. These insights may inform future research and practice in other multilingual and multicultural educational contexts facing similar challenges in balancing global language learning with local cultural preservation.

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