Needs Analysis for Developing Culturally Responsive Narrative Reading Materials for Junior High School EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study examines the needs of junior high school students for developing English narrative reading materials that integrate local culture, drawing on perspectives from both learners and teachers. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings indicate that students perceive English as necessary to support their academic development and future opportunities, yet most demonstrate only basic proficiency. Students reported difficulties understanding narrative texts, particularly with vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and organising events. Narrative text emerged as the most frequently requested genre, and students preferred multiple-choice and short-essay assessments. The study also found a strong need for materials that reflect students' learning contexts, as they possess limited knowledge of local cultural heritage and currently have no access to English reading materials that incorporate local culture. Both students and teachers emphasised that integrating local cultural content, especially folklore, would not only strengthen language competence but also enhance motivation and cultural awareness. Based on these findings, the development of supplementary narrative reading materials grounded in local culture is recommended to ensure alignment with students' proficiency levels, address reading comprehension challenges, and foster meaningful, culturally responsive learning experiences.

Keywords: local culture; narrative reading materials; needs analysis; EFL learners; junior high school.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction and plays a critical role in developing students' literacy, academic performance, and long-term learning outcomes. In the context of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, reading instruction is expected not only to build linguistic competence but also to nurture cultural awareness, identity formation, and the ability to interact meaningfully with texts across diverse contexts (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). Contemporary perspectives on language

education increasingly highlight the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy, arguing that learning becomes more effective when instructional materials resonate with learners' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences (Gay, 2023; Paris & Alim, 2022). For junior high school students, especially those in linguistically and culturally diverse regions, the integration of local cultural elements into English reading materials is essential to ensure relevance, engagement, and deeper comprehension. Researchers have shown that culturally grounded materials activate learners' prior knowledge, enhance motivation, and foster stronger connections between language and identity (Lee, 2023; Rahimi & Zhang, 2021). Thus, the development of English narrative reading materials that meaningfully incorporate local cultural content is not merely a pedagogical preference but a necessity for supporting holistic literacy development and promoting equitable learning in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Building upon the growing emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy, recent research has demonstrated the value of integrating cultural content into EFL reading instruction. Studies show that culturally relevant texts activate learners' background knowledge, facilitate meaning-making, and promote deeper engagement with reading materials (Weninger, 2018). Within the Indonesian context, empirical evidence indicates that incorporating local culture into ELT materials enhances students' reading comprehension, supports identity development, and increases motivation. For example, Inderawati et al. (2020) found that reading materials incorporating regional culture significantly improved students' comprehension and interest by providing familiar contextual schemata. Similarly, Sopian et al. (2019) and Wulandari et al. (2018) reported that students responded positively to culture-based supplementary materials, which contributed to increased reading proficiency and cultural awareness.

International research further reinforces these findings. Scholars emphasize that culturally embedded literacy practices promote not only linguistic development but also reflective engagement, critical cultural understanding, and meaningful personal connection to texts (Kern, 2019; Krulatz & Neokleous, 2020). This body of research collectively demonstrates that culturally integrated materials provide cognitive, affective, and sociocultural benefits that align with contemporary EFL teaching principles. Despite this progress, the use of culture-based reading materials remains limited and uneven across regions and text genres, particularly for narrative texts, which constitute a major component of the junior secondary English curriculum.

Although several studies have examined the integration of local culture into ELT materials, essential gaps remain unaddressed. Existing works such as Inderawati et al. (2020), Wulandari et al. (2018), and Sopian et al. (2019) primarily focus on developing descriptive or general supplementary reading materials, leaving narrative texts—an essential genre in the junior secondary curriculum—relatively underexplored. Other research, such as Azizah et al. (2020), highlights the mismatch between students' cultural backgrounds and the generic content in available textbooks, yet still points to the need for more systematic needs analysis as a foundational step before material development. Despite widespread acknowledgment that needs analysis is crucial for ensuring contextual and pedagogical relevance (Brown, 2009; Richards, 2001), only a limited number of studies in Indonesia incorporate this stage comprehensively. Moreover, previous research tends to centre on specific regions, resulting in an uneven representation of Indonesia's diverse local

cultures; culturally rich areas such as Musi Banyuasin remain largely absent from the literature on ELT materials development. Consequently, learners in these contexts continue to rely on non-contextualised textbooks that do not reflect their local cultural schemata. These gaps collectively justify a systematic needs analysis to inform the development of narrative reading materials grounded in local cultural heritage.

In response to these gaps, the present study offers a novel contribution by conducting a comprehensive needs analysis to inform the development of narrative reading materials that integrate local cultural heritage. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on descriptive texts or proceeded directly to material development without a systematic assessment of learners' needs, this study adopts Brown's (2009) needs analysis framework to generate a deeper understanding of students' linguistic challenges, cultural knowledge, and learning preferences. Furthermore, it brings forward a cultural context that has been largely absent in previous research by highlighting the potential of Musi Banyuasin folklore as a meaningful resource for constructing culturally grounded narrative texts. By incorporating the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, students, English teachers, content subject teachers, and school administrators, this study provides a more holistic and context-sensitive basis for material development. The combination of its specific cultural focus, genre emphasis, and methodological rigor positions the study as a timely and relevant contribution to efforts in strengthening culturally responsive EFL instruction in Indonesian junior secondary education.

If these gaps remain unaddressed, several negative consequences may continue to affect junior secondary EFL classrooms. Without culturally relevant reading materials, students are likely to struggle with meaning-making, as recent studies show that unfamiliar cultural contexts impede comprehension and limit learners' ability to connect new information with existing knowledge (Weninger, 2018; Yuliasri & Allen, 2020). The persistent use of generic textbooks may also reduce students' motivation and engagement, given that culturally disconnected materials provide fewer affective and cognitive entry points for learners (Krulatz & Neokleous, 2020). Teachers, in turn, may be constrained by the lack of context-appropriate resources, resulting in instructional practices that remain textbook-dependent and insufficiently responsive to students' sociocultural backgrounds, a challenge noted in recent Indonesian ELT research (Inderawati et al., 2020; Metboki, 2018). Over time, this misalignment risks marginalising local cultural knowledge within formal schooling and undermines the curriculum's aim to strengthen cultural literacy and character development (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). Addressing these gaps is therefore essential not only for improving students' reading comprehension but also for promoting equitable, culturally grounded English learning experiences that align with current educational standards.

In light of these issues, the present study aims to conduct a systematic needs analysis to identify the specific linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical requirements of junior high school students for developing local culture–based narrative reading materials. Guided by Brown's (2009) needs analysis framework, the study examines learners' proficiency levels, reading challenges, cultural knowledge, and preferred learning strategies, and incorporates insights from teachers and school stakeholders to ensure pedagogical relevance and contextual alignment. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the English learning needs of junior high school students for developing narrative reading materials that integrate local cultural content? By clearly identifying these needs,

the study provides an evidence-based foundation for designing culturally responsive narrative reading materials that support comprehension, engagement, and the curricular goals of the junior secondary EFL classroom.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive mixed-methods design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of learners' needs related to the development of local culture–based narrative reading materials. A mixed-methods design enables the integration of quantitative data, helpful in identifying patterns in students' proficiency levels, reading challenges, and learning preferences, with qualitative insights that provide depth and contextual interpretation of stakeholder perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach is particularly suitable for needs analysis in language education, as it enables researchers to triangulate data sources and capture both measurable tendencies and experiential dimensions of learning (Brown, 2009). By combining these two data sources, the study enables a more accurate diagnosis of learners' needs, which is essential for designing pedagogically sound, contextually relevant instructional materials.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted at a public junior high school located in Musi Banyuasin Regency, Indonesia, where English is taught as a compulsory subject under the national curriculum. The school context is significant because students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, making instructional materials a crucial source of language input. A total of 30 eighth-grade students participated in the quantitative phase of the study. These students were selected via convenience sampling based on class availability, a method commonly used in school-based research in which intact classes are studied as natural groups (Dörnyei, 2007).

For the qualitative phase, four English teachers, three content subject teachers, and two school stakeholders (the vice principal for curricular affairs and the vice principal for student affairs) were recruited using purposive sampling. This sampling strategy was appropriate because these participants hold direct responsibility for curriculum implementation, reading instruction, and cultural integration within the school, thereby offering insights that are both contextually relevant and experientially grounded (Palinkas et al., 2015). Their perspectives complement student data, ensuring that the needs analysis reflects a comprehensive and multi-level understanding of instructional realities.

Instruments

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire comprising 25 items was developed to collect quantitative data on students' needs regarding reading instruction and cultural integration. The questionnaire was constructed based on Brown's (2009) four-component needs analysis framework, which includes Target Situation Analysis, Deficiency Analysis, Present Situation Analysis, and Strategy Analysis. Items were presented using multiple-choice and Likert-scale formats to allow clear measurement of students' proficiency levels, reading challenges, cultural awareness, and preferred learning strategies. Designing a questionnaire grounded in an established theoretical model enhances construct validity and ensures that the

instrument captures relevant dimensions of learner needs (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2018). Before administration, the questionnaire underwent content validation by two ELT experts to ensure clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the study objectives.

Semi-Structured Interview Guides

Semi-structured interview protocols were developed to collect qualitative data from English teachers, content subject teachers, and school stakeholders. This interview format was chosen because it balances structured guidance with flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on their teaching experiences, perceptions of existing reading materials, challenges in teaching narrative texts, and expectations for integrating local culture (Kallio et al., 2016). The teacher and stakeholder interview guides consisted of open-ended questions organised around themes such as instructional practices, cultural relevance of materials, and perceived learner difficulties. The flexibility of this format supports richer, more nuanced data, which is essential for interpreting learners' needs within their sociocultural context.

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaire Administration

The data collection process began with administering a structured questionnaire to 30 eighth-grade students during regular English class time. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher provided clear verbal instructions and clarified item formats to ensure students' understanding and minimise response bias. Students completed the questionnaire individually within a supervised classroom setting, a recommended approach in school-based educational research to ensure accuracy, reduce external distractions, and maximise response rates (Cohen et al., 2018). The completed questionnaires provided quantitative data on students' proficiency levels, reading difficulties, cultural knowledge, and learning preferences.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the quantitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four English teachers, three content subject teachers, and two school stakeholders. The interviews were conducted in a quiet room at the school to ensure comfort and confidentiality. Each interview session lasted 30-45 minutes and was audio recorded with participants' informed consent. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they balance comparability across participants with flexibility to allow deeper exploration of individual experiences and perceptions (Kallio et al., 2016). The interviews explored participants' views on current reading instruction practices, challenges in teaching narrative texts, and the potential integration of local culture in English reading materials.

Document Analysis

To strengthen the credibility and contextual grounding of the findings, document analysis was conducted as a complementary data collection method. Relevant instructional documents, including English syllabi, textbooks, reading passages, and teacher-developed worksheets, were examined to determine the extent to which existing materials incorporated cultural elements. Document analysis is widely regarded as an essential component of comprehensive needs analysis research, as it provides objective evidence

about current instructional practices and resource availability (Richards, 2001). The findings from document analysis were triangulated with questionnaire and interview data to identify alignment or divergence across data sources.

Triangulation of Procedures

The integration of questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis ensured methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the needs analysis. Triangulation allows researchers to cross-verify findings from multiple sources, thereby producing a more accurate and contextually rich understanding of learners' needs (Flick, 2018). Through this triangulated approach, the study generated a robust evidence base to inform the development of locally culture-based narrative reading materials.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data derived from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequency distributions. These statistical measures were employed to summarise students' English proficiency levels, reading comprehension difficulties, cultural knowledge, and learning strategy preferences. Descriptive statistics are widely recommended in needs analysis studies because they provide transparent and interpretable profiles of learner characteristics and instructional needs (Dörnyei, 2007). The results from this phase served as the foundation for identifying dominant patterns and discrepancies in students' learning experiences.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interview data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis following the six-step procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019): (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) identifying potential themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. This analytic method was selected because it provides a systematic yet flexible approach for identifying recurring ideas, perceptions, and challenges expressed by teachers and stakeholders. Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for language education research as it allows researchers to interpret participants' experiences within their sociocultural and instructional contexts.

Triangulation

To enhance the credibility, validity, and robustness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by comparing data from three sources: questionnaire results, interview responses, and document analysis. Triangulation enables cross-validation of findings, reduces the risk of bias, and strengthens the interpretation of learners' needs by integrating multiple perspectives (Flick, 2018). Through this multi-source approach, the study established a comprehensive, contextually grounded understanding of the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical needs relevant to the development of locally culture–based narrative reading materials.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings and an integrated discussion informed by relevant theoretical and empirical literature. The analysis draws on data from student

questionnaires, teacher and stakeholder interviews, and document reviews, enabling a comprehensive interpretation of learners' linguistic, reading, and cultural needs. Consistent with the objectives of a needs analysis framework (Brown, 2009), the findings are organised thematically to reflect the major patterns that emerged across the quantitative and qualitative data. Presenting the results in thematic clusters facilitates a clearer understanding of how different dimensions of learners' needs intersect and how they collectively inform the development of locally culture-based narrative reading materials. Each theme is accompanied by a discussion that connects the empirical evidence to established scholarship in language education, materials development, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Through this approach, the section aims to provide an analytically grounded and contextually meaningful account of the needs identified in the study.

Students' Needs in English Learning

Table 1 summarises the quantitative findings regarding students' linguistic goals, reading challenges, and cultural expectations. As shown in Table 1, a substantial majority of students (83.3%) considered English necessary for their future academic and career pathways, and an even higher proportion (90%) expressed a desire to understand and retell narrative texts in English. Additionally, more than half of the students (53.3%) believed that achieving at least an intermediate level of proficiency is necessary for broader communication. These findings demonstrate that students perceive English not solely as a school subject but as a meaningful tool for long-term personal and academic development. This aligns with Brown's (2009) notion of Target Situation Analysis, which stresses that learners' perceptions of future needs must directly inform the development of learning materials. Their specific aspiration to engage with narrative texts further resonates with Grabe and Stoller's (2013) position that narrative literacy plays a central role in supporting vocabulary growth, discourse competence, and reading fluency.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Linguistic, Reading, and Cultural Needs

Construct	Indicators	Percentage
Linguistic Needs	Importance of English for future goals	83.3%
	Desire to understand and retell narratives	90%
	Target proficiency: at least intermediate	53.3%
Reading Challenges	Difficulty with vocabulary	46.7%
	Difficulty identifying main ideas	43.3%
	Difficulty sequencing events	30%
	Difficulty locating details	23.3%
Cultural Knowledge	Knowledge of local culture is only "adequate."	73.3%
	Folklore is the most recognised element	83.3%
Cultural Preferences	Desire for local culture reading materials	70%
	Preference for familiar topics	80%
	Desire for Musi Banyuasin folktale integration	56.7%

Table 1 also highlights several key reading difficulties that students encounter. Vocabulary posed the most significant challenge (46.7%), followed by problems identifying

main ideas (43.3%), sequencing events (30%), and locating supporting details (23.3%). These findings indicate that students struggle with both surface-level and deeper-level comprehension processes, reflecting the core reading components identified by Cooper et al. (1988), including lexical knowledge, main-idea identification, and narrative structuring. Moreover, the fact that 60% of students identified themselves as beginners and 73.3% rated their comprehension as only "fair" suggests a mismatch between their current reading proficiency and the demands of existing instructional materials. This is consistent with schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), which argues that reading comprehension is facilitated when the text aligns with learners' prior knowledge and linguistic resources. When vocabulary and conceptual load exceed students' readiness, comprehension breakdowns become inevitable.

With respect to cultural dimensions, Table 1 shows that students have limited knowledge of Musi Banyuasin culture, with 73.3% reporting only general familiarity. However, their preference for culturally integrated materials is strong: 70% wanted reading texts based on local culture, 80% preferred familiar topics, and 56.7% explicitly requested Musi Banyuasin folktales. These preferences reinforce Tomlinson's (2012) argument that culturally relevant materials enhance motivation and emotional engagement by activating learners' existing schemata. Students' expectations for culturally grounded texts also reflect what Kramsch (1998) terms symbolic competence, the ability to use a foreign language to represent and communicate one's cultural identity. The desire to learn about and preserve local culture through English further demonstrates how language learning can support not only cognitive but also socio-cultural development.

Taken together, the data presented in Table 1 and the subsequent interpretation illustrate a coherent pattern: students aspire to develop meaningful communicative competence yet face persistent reading challenges that hinder comprehension and engagement. At the same time, their strong preference for culturally grounded materials suggests that integrating Musi Banyuasin culture into narrative texts can simultaneously address linguistic gaps and enhance relevance and motivation. These findings underscore the need for narrative reading materials that are linguistically accessible, pedagogically scaffolded, and culturally meaningful to support students' reading development and foster a stronger connection between English learning and their cultural identity.

Teachers' and Stakeholders' Perceptions of Existing Materials and Student Needs

Table 2 presents a summary of the qualitative findings derived from interviews with English teachers, content subject teachers, and school stakeholders. As shown in the table, all English teachers agreed that English plays an essential role not only for examinations but also for students' future academic and career opportunities. However, they consistently reported that the existing reading materials were not sufficiently contextualised, with topics often perceived as too general and disconnected from students' lived experiences in Musi Banyuasin. Teachers also indicated that students frequently struggled with vocabulary and comprehension because the materials were not aligned with their proficiency levels. Moreover, although teachers recognised the value of integrating local culture into reading texts, they acknowledged that such materials were not available at the school, and none had previously developed their own culturally based supplementary materials due to time constraints and limited confidence in doing so.

Table 2. Summary of Teachers' and Stakeholders' Perceptions

Focus Area	Key Perceptions	Frequency / Evidence
Role of English	Essential for academic and future career pathways	All teachers & stakeholders
Relevance of Existing Materials	Materials are too general; not contextualised to the students' culture	4 of 4 English teachers
Student Reading Challenges	Vocabulary difficulty, low comprehension, and limited cultural familiarity	Repeated across interviews
Availability of Local-Culture Materials	No existing English reading materials based on Musi Banyuasin culture	All teachers & stakeholders
Teachers' Capacity to Develop Materials	Lack of time, limited training, low confidence	3 of 4 English teachers
Stakeholder Expectations	Desire for materials integrating culture and supporting character education	2 school stakeholders

The data in Table 2 reveal a consistent pattern across participants: there is a clear recognition that current reading resources fail to address students' linguistic and cultural needs. Teachers' concerns regarding the lack of contextualisation align with McDonough et al. (2013) argument that effective learning materials should reflect learners' backgrounds, interests, and environments. When materials are disconnected from students' realities, learners may struggle to engage meaningfully with texts, resulting in lower comprehension and reduced motivation. This concern was evident in teachers' observations that students' difficulties often stemmed from vocabulary overload and unfamiliar content.

Furthermore, all teachers highlighted the absence of culturally grounded reading materials, echoing Richards' (2001) observation that many commercially produced textbooks prioritise global content at the expense of local relevance. This lack of culturally aligned texts limits opportunities for activating learners' prior knowledge, which is crucial for making sense of narrative structures and thematic content. As Kramsch (1998) emphasises, cultural relevance in language materials enhances symbolic competence, enabling learners to negotiate meaning in ways that reflect their identity and experiences.

Teachers' reported challenges in material development, minimal time, insufficient training, and low confidence, are consistent with findings from earlier Indonesian studies, such as Haryanti (2020) and Metboki (2018), which demonstrated that many teachers are not equipped with the knowledge or institutional support needed to produce high-quality, local-culture-based teaching materials. This structural limitation contributes to the continued reliance on generic textbooks, despite teachers' awareness that these resources do not adequately support students' needs.

Stakeholders further reinforced these concerns by noting the absence of English materials that integrate Musi Banyuasin's cultural heritage. They emphasised that contextualised materials would not only support English literacy but also strengthen students' understanding of local wisdom and cultural identity, an expectation consistent with educational policy directions promoting character development and cultural preservation. The perspectives presented in Table 2 highlight a misalignment between existing instructional resources and learners' linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs. Both

teachers and stakeholders agree that integrating local cultural content into narrative reading materials is not only beneficial but necessary to support meaningful literacy development. These insights strongly justify the development of supplementary reading materials that are culturally responsive, pedagogically appropriate, and contextually aligned with students' backgrounds.

Implications for Designing Local-Culture-Based Narrative Materials

The combined findings from students, teachers, and stakeholders (summarised in Table 3) point to a strong and consistent need for the development of culturally grounded narrative reading materials. From the students' perspective, limited proficiency, persistent reading challenges, and a strong preference for familiar cultural content create a learning environment in which generic and decontextualised materials are insufficient. Teachers' testimonies reinforce this gap: despite recognising the importance of contextual learning, they lack the time, resources, and confidence to design materials that reflect students' linguistic levels and cultural backgrounds. Stakeholders also expressed clear expectations that English learning should contribute to both literacy development and cultural identity formation.

Table 3. Summary of Implications for Materials Development

Dimension	Implication	Source of Evidence
Linguistic Readiness	Materials must align with beginner–intermediate proficiency, include vocabulary scaffolding, and provide narrative structures accessible to learners.	Student self-reports; teacher observations
Reading Skill Needs	Activities should target the identification, sequencing, inference, and comprehension of main ideas and vocabulary.	Students' reading difficulties
Cultural Relevance	Integrating Musi Banyuasin folktales and cultural elements will enhance engagement and activate prior knowledge.	Students, teachers, stakeholders
Teacher Capacity	Materials must be ready-to-use, adaptable, and supported by clear pedagogical guidance, given teachers' limited time and training in materials development.	Teacher interviews
Institutional Expectations	Materials should support character education, cultural preservation, and curriculum alignment.	Stakeholder interviews

Taken together, these implications demonstrate that the development of new reading materials must go beyond simply adding local content. Instead, materials should be strategically designed to scaffold comprehension, embed cultural narratives, and accommodate learners' linguistic profiles. This aligns with Tomlinson's (2012) call for meaningful, engaging, and culturally situated materials, as well as with Anderson and Pearson's (1984) emphasis on activating schema to improve comprehension. Moreover, the integration of local culture, particularly Musi Banyuasin folktales, serves an additional pedagogical purpose. Culturally grounded narratives can bridge students' prior knowledge with new language input, supporting deeper comprehension and enhancing motivation. As Kramsch (1998) notes, culturally resonant texts enable learners to construct meaning that

is emotionally and symbolically significant, positioning language learning as a medium for expressing identity.

Equally important are the institutional implications. Schools and teachers require materials that are practical, flexible, and aligned with the Independent Curriculum, which emphasises culturally responsive learning and character development. Because teachers face time and expertise constraints, supplementary materials must be designed to be easily integrated into existing classroom routines without requiring extensive adaptation. Thus, evidence in Table 3 emphasizes a pressing need for narrative reading materials that are linguistically accessible, culturally meaningful, and instructionally manageable. Meeting these needs is not only beneficial for improving reading comprehension but also essential for supporting cultural literacy and student identity. Such materials would fill a critical gap in the current instructional landscape and directly address the learning challenges identified in this study.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that junior high school students in Musi Banyuasin require reading materials that are linguistically accessible, pedagogically scaffolded, and culturally meaningful. Students expressed clear aspirations to enhance their English proficiency and narrative comprehension. Yet, their current reading challenges—particularly in vocabulary, main-idea identification, and text sequencing—suggest that existing materials do not align with their proficiency levels or learning needs. At the same time, both teachers and stakeholders highlighted the limited availability of culturally relevant English materials. They emphasised the importance of integrating local cultural heritage into classroom resources to strengthen engagement, identity formation, and comprehension. These converging perspectives underscore an urgent need for supplementary narrative reading materials grounded in the local culture of Musi Banyuasin. Such materials would play a dual role: addressing students' linguistic gaps while promoting cultural awareness and supporting character-building goals outlined in the national curriculum. In light of these findings, the development of Musi Banyuasin local-culture-based narrative reading materials represents a timely and necessary instructional innovation that can enrich the English learning experience, enhance reading comprehension, and foster students' connection to their cultural identity.

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