

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ANIMATING IDENTITY: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PAK-PAK FOLKLORE IN LOCALIZED DIGITAL TEACHING MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of localized digital teaching materials using animated Pak-Pak folklore, reframed through a discourse analysis perspective. While the current research focuses on the pedagogical benefits of animation in enhancing students' understanding and engagement with local culture, this paper extends the discussion by analyzing the discursive elements embedded in storytelling, teacher narration, and student interpretation. Using qualitative methods—literature analysis, classroom observation, interviews, and student responses—the study examines how folklore as discourse transmits cultural values, shapes identity, and promotes moral reasoning in eighth-grade classrooms. Results indicate that animation enhances comprehension of narrative elements, such as setting, characters, and values. More importantly, students engage in reflective discussions where values like courage, honesty, and cooperation are expressed and negotiated in their own language. Teachers also act as discourse mediators, framing cultural messages through narration and prompting. The study shows that discourse, visual storytelling, and interactivity work together to turn folklore into a living cultural experience rather than static heritage. Despite challenges such as limited teacher digital skills and infrastructure gaps, the findings highlight the promise of integrating discourse-sensitive animated materials into the Merdeka Curriculum. Future research is recommended to explore how localized narratives in digital formats influence language use, value expression, and cultural identity formation in various Indonesian classrooms. This approach contributes to both educational media development and critical discourse studies by bridging visual literacy, cultural storytelling, and classroom interaction.

Introduction

In today's digital age, the integration of technology into educational practices has become not only relevant but increasingly urgent in order to meet the evolving needs of learners. The rapid advancement of digital tools offers educators various opportunities to enhance the learning experience through the use of innovative and interactive media. Among these, animation stands out as a compelling medium that can significantly increase student engagement and motivation while also facilitating a deeper and more meaningful understanding of complex concepts. According to Nurmadiyah (2016), learning media serves as a crucial instrument that aids educators in both the planning and implementation of effective instruction. When utilized appropriately, media can serve not only as a support for content delivery but also as a mechanism to reduce disruptive behaviors, thus fostering a more conducive learning environment. Furthermore, proper application of instructional media can improve students' comprehension and retention of the material being taught (Nurmadiyah., 2016).

In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology officially introduced the *Merdeka Curriculum* (Independent Curriculum) as a response to various challenges found in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. This new curriculum was developed with the aim of offering a more flexible, relevant, and student-centered learning experience. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes essential competencies and encourages differentiated instruction that aligns with the developmental stages or phases of learners. Unlike its predecessor, which often focused heavily on content coverage, the Merdeka

Curriculum prioritizes depth over breadth and fosters the holistic development of learners through more contextual and meaningful learning experiences. Central to the Merdeka Curriculum is the idea that learning should be both enjoyable and purposeful. The curriculum framework encourages educators to design and deliver lessons that not only cover core subject matter but also promote active engagement, critical thinking, and student autonomy. Teaching materials, therefore, are expected to serve as dynamic tools that enrich the learning process by making it more relevant to students' lives and aligned with their unique interests and abilities. In this regard, the curriculum provides greater autonomy to schools and teachers in selecting, developing, and modifying learning resources based on their classroom context and student needs.

The role of the teacher in this curriculum becomes increasingly strategic, as educators are required to exercise professional judgment in selecting teaching materials that best support students' learning objectives. Teachers must be able to analyze learners' characteristics, identify learning gaps, and choose materials that are pedagogically appropriate and aligned with the intended learning outcomes. "Teachers are required to be able to choose teaching materials that are suitable for student learning needs in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes," as stated by Abidin. This shift calls for improved teacher competence in curriculum planning, material development, and classroom management, as well as ongoing professional development to ensure that instructional practices remain responsive and impactful (Abidin., 2021).

Teaching materials play an important role in teaching and learning activities. Widodo states that teaching material is a set of learning tools that contain material, methods, limits, and evaluations that are systematically designed and attractive to achieve learning objectives. In the context of local language learning, such as Pak-Pak language, the use of animation and technology-based teaching materials can be an effective strategy to preserve and teach the language (Widodo., 2020). Works of fiction, often referred to as literature, are the result of a combination of feelings and thoughts of the author. Works of fiction can be defined as narratives or settings derived from the imagination. setting that comes from the imagination. Although fiction is a story created based on the author's imagination, it contains valuable lessons on how to face challenges in everyday life (Yuhdi et al., 2025). Fiction is also part of the Merdeka curriculum for junior high school grade 8, which is taught to develop students' literacy skills. This material includes various types of literary works, such as short stories, novels, and folktales, which aim to enrich cultural insights, as well as hone students' critical thinking skills and literary appreciation (Zulkifli & Ridwan, 2019).

In the context of education in Dairi Regency, particularly at SW Lumban Gambiri Junior High School, the implementation of learning materials still faces several challenges. Based on interviews and observations conducted by the author as a teacher at the school, it was found that the teaching materials currently in use are less relevant to the cultural context of the local community, specifically the Pakpak Dairi ethnic group. The content presented in textbooks tends to be generalized, with limited attention to the cultural specificity of the learners' environment. As a result, students are not adequately exposed to the richness and uniqueness of their local traditions, values, and heritage, which are essential elements in building cultural identity and pride. Furthermore, the fictional stories included in the teaching materials—such as *Uncle Tom*, *Park's Magic Box*, and *Egg Allergy*—are narratives that originate from foreign or non-local contexts and are devoid of elements related to Pakpak culture. While these stories may serve literary purposes, they do not contribute meaningfully to the preservation or promotion of local wisdom. The absence of localized content, especially in genres such as procedure texts and fictional stories, represents a missed opportunity for integrating indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values into the formal education process.

This condition highlights the urgent need for the development of teaching materials that are rooted in Pakpak folklore and cultural expressions. Local wisdom, particularly in the form of traditional stories, legends, and cultural practices, contains moral values, life lessons, and social norms that are highly relevant to the everyday lives of students in the region. By incorporating these elements into instructional texts, educators can make learning more meaningful, relatable, and contextually grounded for their students. Moreover, such materials can serve as a medium for cultural preservation in the face of globalization and

homogenized educational content. In alignment with the goals of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which encourages contextualized and student-centered learning, the development of teaching materials based on Pakpak folklore is both a pedagogical and cultural necessity. This initiative seeks not only to enhance students' reading and comprehension skills through familiar and engaging content but also to cultivate a sense of identity and belonging among learners. Teaching materials that reflect the students' own cultural background will likely increase their motivation to learn, foster deeper understanding, and contribute to a more holistic educational experience. Therefore, this effort is expected to yield innovative, attractive, and curriculum-relevant materials that support both academic achievement and cultural literacy. Referring to the opinion of Dinda, K.N. et al (2020), the development of teaching materials based on local wisdom is an important step to improve learning outcomes and facilitate students in understanding the cultural wealth of their region (Dinda, K. N., 2020).

The development of teaching materials based on Pakpak folklore is needed to overcome the lack of teaching materials that contain elements of local culture at SW Lumban Gambiri Junior High School. Although Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented, the current materials are still general in nature and have not been able to introduce the richness of Pakpak culture to students. The use of animation as a learning medium is considered effective to increase students' interest in learning and understanding of local culture-based fictional works. By integrating Pakpak folklore in learning, it is expected to increase student engagement, strengthen their cultural identity, and preserve Pakpak cultural heritage amid the challenges of globalization (Zulkifli Zulkifli et al., 2019).

Materials and Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method that aims to analyze the development of animation-based teaching materials with a focus on Pak-Pak folklore for grade VIII students. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena in depth by extracting data from various sources, such as literature, interviews, and observations. The research process began with a literature study, which aimed to understand relevant concepts related to the development of local culture-based teaching materials and the use of animated media in education. This literature study was conducted by reviewing various references, such as scientific journals, academic books, and research reports published in the last five years. The references were used to strengthen the theoretical basis in developing contextual and effective teaching materials (Khan, 2024).

The next step was the material analysis of Pak-Pak folklore, which aims to identify important elements in the story, such as themes, moral values, characters, and storylines that can be developed into animation. This analysis was conducted by reading and documenting various versions of Pak-Pak folktales available in books and online sources. The selection of the right story considers the educational aspects and relevance to the basic competencies that must be achieved by grade VIII students. After the material analysis process, the design of the animated media was carried out, where a storyboard was prepared to design the visual scenario of the selected story. This design was created using easy-to-use animation software, such as PowToon and Animaker, which allows for visual and interactive presentation of the story in accordance with students' learning characteristics.

Next, a validation test was conducted involving Indonesian language teachers and grade VIII students as research subjects. Teachers were asked to provide input related to the suitability of the material with the curriculum, while students were asked to assess the attractiveness and effectiveness of the animation in helping their understanding of folklore. The validation process was conducted through in-depth interviews and questionnaires to evaluate aspects such as readability, student engagement, and the level of understanding of the values contained in the story. The data obtained from the validation results were analyzed qualitatively with a descriptive approach to understand the effectiveness of animation-based teaching media as well as the barriers faced in its use in the learning environment.

The obstacles identified during this research include the limited skills of teachers in using animation technology and time constraints in the media making process. To overcome these obstacles, discussions were held with teachers to provide recommendations related to training in developing more practical and applicable animation-based teaching media. Thus, this research method is expected to provide a

comprehensive overview of the development and implementation of teaching materials based on Pak-Pak folklore in the form of animation as an innovative and contextual learning media for grade VIII students.

To deepen the analysis, this study integrates discourse theory, drawing on the works of Norman Fairclough, James Paul Gee, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Discourse theory allows for the examination of how language constructs social and cultural identities, power relations, and meaning within educational materials.

- Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to explore how the animation scripts and teaching materials reflect and reproduce cultural values and ideologies embedded in Pak-Pak folklore.
- Gee's narrative discourse framework helps analyze how storytelling in the animation constructs identity and social roles, especially focusing on how students engage with cultural narratives.
- Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is applied to identify multiple voices and perspectives within the folklore narratives, highlighting heteroglossia—the coexistence of diverse voices and values in the text.

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the research conducted, the development of animation-based Pak-Pak folklore teaching materials shows great potential in increasing the interest and understanding of grade VIII students towards local cultural heritage. Through the process of analysis, design, and evaluation, it was found that students are more enthusiastic in learning folklore when presented in the form of interactive animation. The animation used in learning is able to present interesting visualizations, clarify the storyline, and strengthen the moral messages contained in Pak-Pak folklore (Zulkifli et al., 2024). The use of animation media in this learning is based on the cognitive approach proposed by Herawati, et al (2024), where the combination of text and visual elements in the form of animation can improve students' information retention. Students' responses show that they understand the characters, settings, and values contained in the story more easily compared to conventional methods such as reading the narrative text alone. This can be seen from the results of the questionnaire given to 50 students, where as many as 85% of students stated that the animation helped them understand the storyline better than the textbook (Herawati et al., 2024).

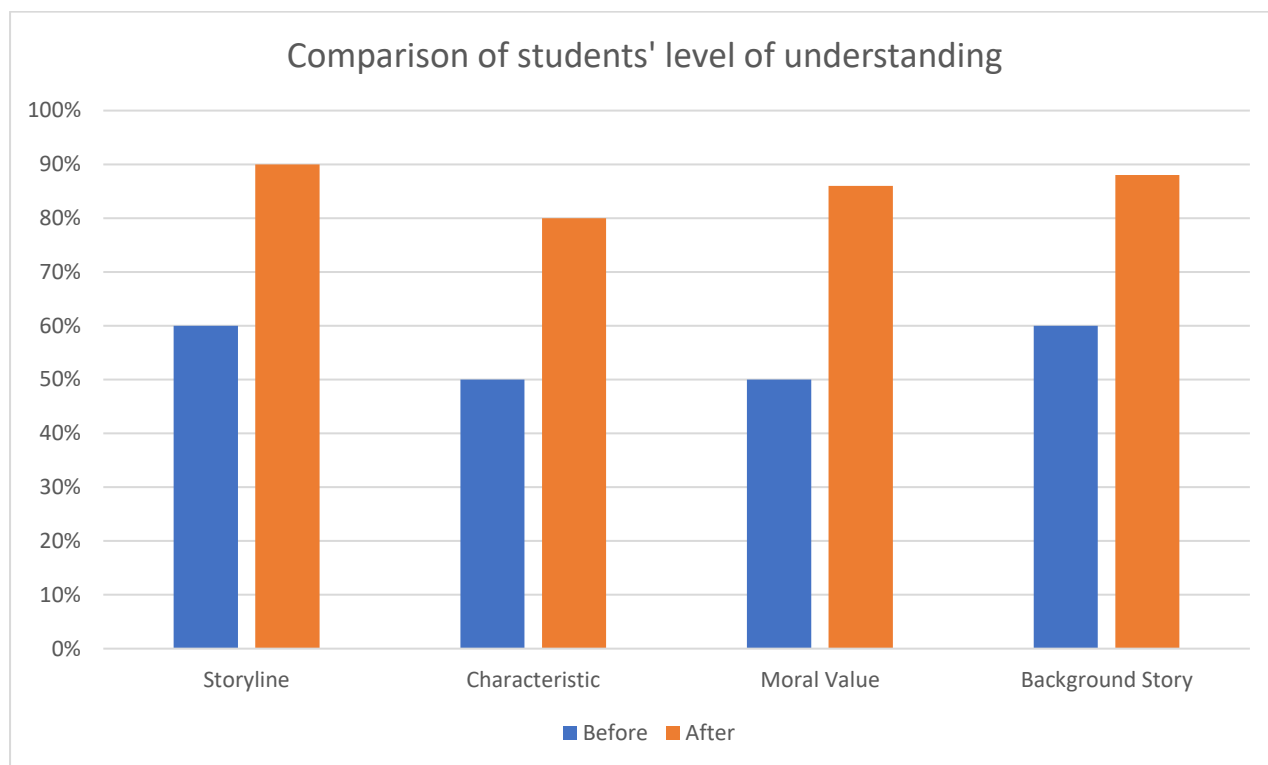
In addition, the aspect of students' involvement in learning also experienced a significant increase. Before the use of animation, only 60% of students were active in class discussions during folklore learning. However, after the implementation of animation media, the student participation rate increased to 90%. This increase shows that the animation is able to attract students' attention and create a more interactive learning atmosphere. Some students also gave positive feedback related to the use of sound and visual effects which were considered to help understand the characters in the story better (Harahap, S. H., Sunendar, D., & Damayanti, 2022).

From the teacher's side, the use of animation is considered an effective solution in overcoming the limited time to explain the details of folklore manually. The results of the interviews with teachers showed that 80% of the teachers felt that the animation was very helpful in explaining the cultural and moral context in Pak-Pak folktales. In addition, they also considered that this media can be an alternative to technology-based learning that is aligned with the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the use of technology to increase the attractiveness of learning (Tampa et al., 2024).

However, this study also found some challenges in developing animation-based teaching materials. The main challenge is teachers' limited technical skills in developing animations independently. Most teachers felt that they needed additional training in the use of animation software such as PowToon or Animaker. The proposed solution is to organize workshops for teachers to improve their digital literacy so that they can be more optimal in utilizing animation-based learning media.

Aspect	Before	After
Storyline	60%	90%
Characteristic	50%	80%
Moral Value	50%	86%
Background Story	60%	88%

Table 1. Comparison of students' level of understanding before and after the use of animated media



Graphic 1. Comparison of students' level of understanding

From the table and graph above, it can be concluded that all aspects of student comprehension experienced a significant increase after the use of animation. The understanding of the storyline showed the highest increase, from 65% to 90%. This confirms that the visualization presented through animation is able to clarify the structure of the story and strengthen students' memory of the material learned. The use of animation in learning Pak-Pak folktales for grade VIII students has a real positive impact in improving understanding, engagement and learning motivation. Although there are technical constraints in implementation, teacher training strategies and the utilization of simpler software can be a solution for wider application in various schools.

Pak-Pak folktales have great potential as teaching materials because they contain cultural values that are relevant to students' daily lives. Values such as courage, honesty and cooperation can be internalized by students through interesting approaches, such as animation. In the learning process, students often find it easier to understand concepts when presented in an attractive visual form compared to narrative text alone. In addition, the use of folklore in Indonesian language learning supports the strengthening of cultural literacy among students. According to research by Andriyanto, et al (2024), folklore can help students understand local culture while strengthening language skills such as reading, writing and speaking. Teachers can utilize folklore as a means to increase students' appreciation of their own cultural heritage (Andriyanto et al., 2024). The process of developing teaching materials for animation-based Pak-Pak folklore is carried out through several important stages involving needs analysis, media design, development, and testing (Nafiah & Wuryandani, 2024). The steps taken include:

1. Needs Analysis. In this stage, the needs of students and teachers related to folklore learning were identified. The results of the analysis show that teachers have difficulty in arousing students' interest using traditional methods.
2. Material Design. Storyboarding is an important step in designing a storyline that can be visualized in the form of animation. This process involves selecting visual elements such as characters, settings, and storylines that are in line with Pak-Pak local culture.
3. Animation Development. Animation development is done using software such as PowToon and Animaker, with narration that is appropriate to the dialect and typical language style.
4. Evaluation and Revision. After the animation was created, classroom trials were conducted and evaluated by teachers and students. The evaluation results showed that students better understood the moral message of the story through the visualization provided.

Although animation offers various advantages, there are several challenges in its implementation in schools. One of the main obstacles is the limited resources of teachers in operating animation software. Many teachers are not accustomed to using technology so they need special training. In addition, infrastructure such as the availability of computer devices and internet access in some schools is still an obstacle to the optimal use of animation. Therefore, support from the school and government is needed to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure. Solutions to Implementation Challenges

Some solutions that can be implemented to overcome these obstacles include:

1. Teacher Training: Conducting workshops on creating simple animations using user-friendly software such as Canva and PowToon.
2. Integration in Curriculum: Incorporating animation-based teaching into lesson plans to make it more systematic.
3. Collaboration with External Parties: Working with digital communities and higher education institutions to assist in content development.

Most of the teachers who participated in this implementation gave positive responses. They acknowledged that the use of animation can help them in explaining folklore concepts more effectively. However, some teachers stated that they need more time to adjust to this new method. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that the development of animations be carried out by paying attention to higher interactivity aspects, such as interactive quizzes and folklore-based educational games. In addition, the development of learning modules integrated with animations is also an important need to support more effective learning.

Discussion

The development of animation-based teaching materials for Pak-Pak folklore has great potential in increasing students' interest and understanding of local culture (Hasibuan et al., 2024). Folklore as part of cultural heritage not only functions as entertainment, but also as an educational medium rich in moral, ethical, and social values. In the context of grade VIII students, Pak-Pak folklore can be used as an effective learning resource because its content is full of moral messages such as hard work, honesty, and social solidarity. Animation as a storytelling medium allows students to more easily understand the storyline and moral messages contained in it. In this study, it was found that students were more interested in dynamic visualization compared to conventional learning methods such as reading story texts in textbooks (Barli et al., 2024).

The use of animation in teaching materials provides a more interactive and interesting learning experience for students. As stated by Mendygaliyeva, et al., (2024), animation can help clarify concepts and improve student memory through a combination of visual and auditory elements (Mendygaliyeva et al., 2024). The observation results in this study show that students who learn with animation media are more enthusiastic and able to remember the details of the story better than students who only read narrative text. In addition, the use of animation also helped in explaining folklore elements such as setting, characters, and conflict in more detail. Thus, it can be concluded that animation provides advantages in improving the understanding of abstract concepts to be more concrete and easily digested by students (Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

The steps of developing animation-based teaching materials began with a needs analysis conducted through interviews with Indonesian language teachers and grade VIII students. Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that the main challenge in learning folklore is the lack of student interest in the material which is considered ancient and irrelevant to their lives today. Therefore, an animation-based approach is considered a solution that can bridge the gap between tradition and the digital era (Arisoy Gedik & Ceyhan, 2024). In the animation development process, the research team worked closely with teachers to ensure that the animation content remained in accordance with the applicable curriculum, especially in the linguistic aspects and cultural values to be conveyed (Massa et al., 2024).

The animation design was done by paying attention to visual elements that are in accordance with the Pak-Pak cultural character. Colors, motifs, and cultural symbols in Pak-Pak folklore were integrated into the animation to provide an authentic learning experience. The use of a narrator's voice from a native speaker also adds to the authenticity and appeal of the animation for students. According to Zhang & Ren (2024), cultural authenticity in learning media is very important to increase students' cultural awareness and strengthen their identity as part of a culturally rich society. From the results of the pilot test of teaching materials, students showed a positive response to the visual and narrative aspects in the animation, indicating that the integration of visual and auditory elements was able to attract their attention (Zhang & Ren, 2024).

Furthermore, the implementation of the animation in the classroom is done through a project-based learning approach, where students are given the opportunity to observe, discuss and reflect on the values contained in the folklore presented through the animation. The teacher guides the discussion by asking reflective questions that encourage students to relate the story to their life experiences. The results of interviews with students show that they find it easier to relate the values of folktales to real life situations after watching animations compared to reading conventional texts. This process shows that animation-based learning can be an effective tool in building students' critical and reflective thinking skills (Ma'wa et al., 2024).

However, this research also found some obstacles in the development and implementation of animation-based teaching materials. One of the main obstacles is the limited infrastructure in schools, such as the availability of adequate technology devices and stable internet access. Some schools in remote areas still face difficulties in using technology optimally in the learning process. In addition, the limited time teachers have to learn and use animation software is also a challenge. Therefore, training and mentoring for teachers in the use of educational technology are aspects that need to be considered in the implementation of this program (Daulay, F., Arif, S., & Adisaputera, 2024). Nevertheless, the results of the evaluation of the effectiveness of animation-based teaching materials showed a significant positive impact on students' learning motivation. Students who were previously less interested in folklore showed an increase in their interest and involvement in the learning process after the use of animation. In addition, mastery of the material measured through comprehension tests also showed a significant increase compared to conventional methods. This proves that the use of animation as learning media can create a more enjoyable and effective learning experience for students (Khairuna & Ismahani, 2024). Furthermore, this study also recommends some strategic steps to expand the use of animation-based teaching materials in other schools. One of the main recommendations is the integration of collaboration between schools, local government and local creative communities in the development of more diverse and quality animation content. With support from various parties, the development of local culture-based learning media can be optimized and sustainable. This collaboration can also open up opportunities for students to engage in the animation production process as part of project-based learning, which in turn can improve their creative and technological skills.

Finally, it is important to consider a long-term evaluation of the impact of using animation in folklore learning. This research suggests the need for a follow-up study that examines the impact of using animation on students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects over a longer period of time (Bahari, 2023). This follow-up study can provide deeper insights into how technology can be used to preserve local culture among the younger generation while improving the quality of learning in schools. Thus, the

development of animation-based teaching materials not only plays a role in improving learning, but also in sustainable cultural preservation.

In light of the findings, this study opens pathways for further exploration into discourse analysis as a framework for developing localized educational media, particularly within the realm of civic education. Discourse analysis allows researchers and educators to systematically examine the language, structure, and implicit values embedded within localized narratives such as Pak-Pak folktales. Future studies could utilize critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate how these folktales reflect social norms, power dynamics, and moral constructs, thereby offering deeper insights into how localized content shapes civic awareness and moral reasoning among students. By analyzing linguistic features such as modality, lexical choices, and speech acts within student responses before and after exposure to such media, researchers could measure subtle shifts in language use, critical thinking, and ethical reflection. Additionally, developmental indicators—such as students' ability to articulate fairness, empathy, or communal responsibility—may be tracked through longitudinal discourse samples, offering a reliable method to assess moral growth over time.

Conclusions

The development of animation-based teaching materials with a focus on Pak-Pak folklore for grade VIII students is an innovative step that not only enriches students' cultural insights but also increases the effectiveness of learning through an attractive visual approach. The results of this study show that the use of animation as a learning medium can strengthen students' attraction to the material, increase their understanding of local cultural values, and assist teachers in delivering material more interactively and contextually. Pak-Pak folklore, which is rich in moral messages and local wisdom, can be an effective tool in building student character, in line with national education goals. In addition, the application of animation technology in learning supports the concept of adaptive and collaborative learning in accordance with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum. Although there are challenges in development, such as the limited technical skills of teachers in making animations, the evaluation results show that with adequate training and the utilization of easy-to-use animation software, this media can be widely implemented in various schools. Therefore, in the future, it is hoped that there will be collaboration between teachers, media developers, and education policy makers to continue to encourage the integration of technology in local culture-based learning, so that cultural heritage such as Pak-Pak folklore can continue to be preserved and relevant to the younger generation.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this paper.

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