Students' Attitude Toward Digital Narrative Writing Project Based on Local Wisdom in EFL Classroom

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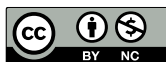Universitas Pamulang

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Abstrak:
Writing is one of the most complex skills in English. The skill in organizing ideas into a paragraph or essay, and the skill of arranging grammatical sentences are also required. Nowadays, many teachers have implemented some media, techniques, and approaches to increase students' motivation in writing classes. In the EFL classroom, teachers can also integrate writing with students' cultural identity. This study investigates students' perceptions of a digital narrative writing project based on local wisdom in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The writer applied a quantitative survey approach in this study, and the data were collected from participants who engaged in project-based digital narrative writing activities that combined local wisdom themes. The findings showed that students remarked on the digital narrative writing experience positively through four categories: affective (enjoyment and motivation), cognitive (learning benefits), cultural identity relevance, and technological usability. Students reported being more engaged, writing better stories, and feeling more connected to their culture. Even though some students had technical problems, most of them found the digital narrative writing project meaningful, creative, and useful for learning. The results show that the digital narrative writing project can improve students' use of different media and support learning that connects to their culture in EFL classes. This has important meaning for how teachers design lessons, build digital skills, and include local culture in the curriculum.

Keywords: Digital Narrative Writing; EFL Writing; Local Wisdom; Project-Based Learning; Student Perception

Introduction

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most difficult skills in English, especially for students who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This skill requires the integration of multiple linguistic, cognitive, and cultural competencies at once. In contrast to speaking, which allows for direct explaining and relying on contextual signs, writing requires accuracy, organization, and clarity without the presence of a speaker to provide feedback directly. In EFL countries, students often struggle with limited vocabulary, a lack of grammar mastery, and insufficient exposure to authentic writing examples. These facts hinder their ability to arrange coherent and meaningful texts. In addition, writing includes higher-order thinking skills such as planning, organizing arguments, and revising, which are particularly demanding for learners who are still struggling with the basic skill of English. Students' first language also leads to difficulties in adapting their ideas to suit academic expectations. Furthermore, the limited English environment in many EFL countries decreases learners' opportunities to practice writing outside of the classroom. Moreover, many learners face psychological blocks when they have to write an English composition, such as fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and lack of motivation. These difficulties make writing not only a linguistic challenge

but also an emotional one. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to find a motivational approach to encourage students to write English texts. Finding material or themes that are closely related to students' real lives can significantly increase their motivation since it creates a sense of relevance and personal relation to the tasks. Applying local wisdom as themes of students' material and tasks has been popular in educational institutions, and it can be proposed to be implemented in writing classes.

Every nation in the world has its own culture, which functions as its identity, and it has a role in social integration. Therefore, nowadays, in some communities, including educational institutions, the concept of local wisdom has been promoted massively. Local wisdom is a form of knowledge and practice resulting from experiences within a specific community environment, employed as answers to various challenges faced (Septarini, 2024). Also, in education, using local wisdom in learning materials has been shown to increase cultural awareness, student motivation, and classroom engagement (Paulina et al., 2022; Valentri, Rahayu, & Ariestika, 2023). Likewise, Valentri et al. (2023) designed narrative writing modules based on local wisdom that show the improvement of creativity and writing competence of the students. The integration of local wisdom into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has drawn attention from researchers in Indonesia. Local wisdom provides real-life content that links language learning to students' cultural backgrounds and helps them develop both language skills and cultural understanding (Prasetyo, 2016). Moreover, it has been proven that involvements that insert a local narrative story into EFL can enrich students' comprehension, character education, and engagement with English learning resources (Wulandari et al., 2020). Therefore, materials or tasks based on local wisdom should be proposed to be implemented in EFL classrooms.

Moreover, the use of a multimodal pedagogical tool that merges text, audio, images, and narration should be promoted. Digital storytelling has proven effective in increasing student motivation, critical thinking, technological literacy, and cognitive engagement in EFL classrooms (Agra, 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2024). Such technology-mediated writing tasks promote learner autonomy, rehearsal of oral skills, and reflective thinking through collaborative narrative construction (Agra, 2025). When digital storytelling is combined with local wisdom content—such as folktales, cultural practices, or environmental traditions—students may engage more deeply due to familiarity and cultural relevance. Moreover, previous research that integrated local wisdom in task-based writing found improved cognitive literacy, including planning, creativity, and metacognition (Azizah & Mustofa, 2021). This result shows that the use of local wisdom-based tasks, which are integrated with digital tools, can be counted in EFL classrooms.

Despite these promising findings, few studies have specifically explored students' attitudes toward digital narrative writing projects that focus on local wisdom in EFL settings. Research on traditional ELT materials supplemented with local content tends to report commonly positive student attitudes, including increased engagement, sense of belonging, and identification with learning materials (Wulandari et al., 2020). However, experimental studies on affective responses toward digital projects combining cultural content remain limited. The study held by Amelia et al (2023) investigated the implementation of digital storytelling in a speaking class. The findings of their study demonstrated that implementing digital storytelling permitted students to study in various ways while applying all of their creative abilities, which was engaging and advantageous. The hard and soft skills of the students are also obstructed by digital storytelling. Moreover, students were encouraged to increase their existing English-speaking abilities, including their vocabulary and pronunciation. The previous study mentioned is different from the current study since it concerns speaking skills and does not apply the local wisdom in the materials and tasks. Additionally, the study by Valentri et al (2024) aims to acquire innovation in teaching materials for writing narrative texts based on local wisdom for primary school students. The results of this study show that after being tested

with research samples, the creation of instructional materials for primary school students that teach them to write narrative texts based on local wisdom can be implemented to teach them how to produce narrative texts with enormously valid criteria. While, the current study focuses on writing a descriptive text, especially by using digital media.

Therefore, this study aims to examine students' attitudes toward a digital narrative writing project based on local wisdom in an EFL classroom. The goal of the study is to investigate students' attitudes toward a digital narrative writing project that integrates local wisdom within an EFL classroom Specifically, the study tries to find how students perceive the project in the categories of enjoyment and motivation (affective aspect), learning benefits (cognitive aspect), cultural identity relevance, and the usability of digital tools used in the project. By obtaining a complete understanding of those categories of students' perception, this study aims to offer valuable insights for teachers, curriculum designers, and officials in evolving more effective writing instructions. Moreover, the study tries to contribute to the growth of the implementation of literature on EFL writing pedagogy by proposing recommendations for innovative teaching strategies, learning materials, and classroom practices.

Literary Review

By combining traditional knowledge with digital media through project-based tasks, learners are more likely to value both their cultural identity and technological literacy. Thus, Project-Based Learning offers a flexible and cultural approach to implementing digital narrative writing projects. It not only improves writing skills but also encourages positive student attitudes and engagement through meaningful learning experiences. More studies have discussed digital storytelling rather than digital narrative writing projects. Digital storytelling has become as a convincing pedagogical tool in EFL classrooms, and it offers multimodal input such as text, imagery, audio, and video, which are beneficial in boosting students' narrative writing and language skills. Some studies indicate that EFL learners perceive digital storytelling tasks as engaging, motivating, and conducive to creativity and critical thinking (Laina & Marlina, 2018). Moreover, digital storytelling assignments in reading and writing classes have received positive responses, with students putting in effort and feeling proud of their work (Fakher Ajabshir, 2024; Marisatul & Nuroh, 2024). However, these studies tend to highlight universal narrative performance with fewer studies on how such tasks affect students' writing attitudes and skills in project-based contexts. Moreover, although implementing local wisdom in English learning has been related to stronger cultural awareness and identity affirmation. Limited research investigates how the combination of these elements into digital narrative writing projects specifically influences students' attitudes. This gap focuses on the need to move beyond storytelling practices and examines how PBL-based digital writing tasks grounded in cultural content form students' perceptions of relevance, motivation, and engagement in EFL classrooms.

Digital storytelling is an educational approach that combines narratives with multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video to facilitate creative expression in EFL contexts. Studies by Xie (2016) and Zarei & Navidinia (2024) found that digital storytelling enhances students' motivation, engagement, and writing efficiency in content-based EFL instruction. The study also reported that learners have increased their enthusiasm and pride in their creative outputs. In Malaysia, Zakaria & Aziz (2019) confirmed that digital storytelling meaningfully improves narrative writing performance in not only content and organization but also the mechanism. Moreover, students also expressed positive perceptions of the method. Besides its meaningful benefits which have been proven by some scholars, students' perception on the use of the method should be confirmed. Many studies state that learner attitudes toward digital tasks make a significant contribution to the success of pedagogical involvement. Ahsanese et al. (2019) & Liu et al. (2018) describe that digital storytelling assignments are linked to high levels of intrinsic motivation,

satisfaction, and high perceived value among EFL students, especially when the project involves collaborative and creative elements. In term of speaking skills, digital storytelling also produces eagerness and engagement across student groups. Moreover, this method gives a positive affective value to multimedia-based assignments. These studies show the results of the pedagogical use of digital storytelling in speaking skills, which can foster eagerness and engagement. Most studies highlight general digital tasks or multimodal narratives; however, there is limited attention to digital narrative writing projects that specifically focus on writing development. Additionally, even though current educational resources increasingly incorporate cultural content and local wisdom, there are a few studies discussing about how their use in digital narrative writing forms students' attitudes.

Local wisdom is known as local knowledge, cultural stories, and community values, which have been beneficial for teaching English in Indonesia. Although there are few studies on digital storytelling projects with local wisdom, early research using folk stories and cultural values in language lessons has shown better cultural awareness, stronger identity, and higher student engagement (Kurniawati & Malasari, 2022; Ninawati & Wahyuni, 2020). Culturally-based digital storytelling has also been used in education, showing that it helps students feel more connected to their identity and more motivated to preserve their culture. Recent studies suggest that using digital storytelling with local folktales and heritage themes can increase student engagement and cultural connection, especially when the topics are familiar to them. Although there are not many detailed studies yet, early research from 2023 shows that students are more interested and motivated when digital storytelling includes local wisdom in Indonesian secondary schools. Student attitude shapes how learners perceive task value, relevance, and emotional engagement. In digital storytelling-based interventions, attitudes are predominantly positive, citing feelings of enjoyment, empowerment, and improved creativity (Apsari & Satriani, 2016; Bhakti, 2020). Yet there is a distinct gap regarding attitudes when cultural and local content is integrated into digital narrative tasks, which may tie motivation to both digital literacy and cultural identity affirmation.

Multimodal literacy and culturally responsive teaching are combined in digital narrative writing. Students have an opportunity to make meaning using text, sound, images, and design in digital formats when multimodal literacy is implemented. This supports EFL students in improving their language skills and expressing themselves through digital storytelling.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine student perceptions toward digital narrative writing projects based on local wisdom in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Quantitative methods were used to gather structured data from more participants, making it possible to analyze themes using statistics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design of the research aimed to explore the affective, cognitive, cultural, and technological areas of students' experiences with digital narrative writing through a structured survey instrument.

The participants were EFL students in the second semester who engaged in a digital narrative writing assignment as part of their narrative writing course. A total of 21 students (the number of class members) completed the questionnaire, which was managed at the end of the project. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they had direct experience with the instructional interference under the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Ethical approval was obtained from the university, and participants were told their involvement was voluntary and their identities would remain anonymous.

A Likert-scale questionnaire developed to measure students' responses was collected as the data for this study. It consists of four categories: Affective (Enjoyment and Motivation), Cognitive (Perceived Learning

Benefits), Cultural Identity Relevance, and Technological Usability. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The writer adapted previous validated instruments on digital learning perceptions and cultural pedagogy for the questionnaire items (Ajabshir, 2024; Liu et al., 2018).

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to test the reliability of the instrument. A coefficient of 0.911 was produced by the 25-item students' attitude questionnaire, which shows outstanding internal consistency. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is acceptable for research purposes, while values above 0.90 reveal very high reliability. Therefore, this study used an instrument that can be considered highly reliable to measure students' attitudes toward digital narrative writing projects based on local wisdom in the EFL classroom. The survey was distributed online via Google Forms after the digital narrative writing project was completed. After the data were collected, the Google Form survey results were exported into spreadsheet format and analysed further with the help of AI-assisted tools to produce descriptive statistics and visualizations. The computation is supported by AI-based data processing (Python integrated with AI support) which enabled efficient and precise reliability coefficients calculation. However, it should be noted that although AI support analysis offers quick and accurate calculation, this analysis may also have potential limitations such as dependency on proper coding, the accuracy of data preprocessing, and reduced transparency compared to traditional software packages like SPSS. This may introduce bias in the data analysis, but it can be minimized by cleaning the dataset carefully before the analysis. Moreover, the result was cross-checked against established thresholds for Cronbach's alpha. This approach ensured both methodological efficiency and analytical stiffness in establishing the reliability of the instrument.

Results

This study used 21 students as samples in the second semester of the English Department, Pamulang University. The writer distributed the survey, which has 25 items. The findings from the student survey are organized into four principal categories: Affective (Enjoyment and Motivation), Cognitive (Perceived Learning Benefits), Cultural Identity Relevance, and Technological Usability. These categories provide a wide-ranging view of student perceptions concerning the digital storytelling project that was implemented in an EFL instructional context, which focuses on local wisdom. Multiple items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), were used to measure each category. Here's a picture that shows the mean scores of selected survey items. It highlights both the top 10 and the bottom 5 statements.

Table 1 Affective Domain (Enjoyment and Motivation)

Survey Item	Mean Score
Technology helped me be more creative in telling my story.	4.71
The project helped me improve my storytelling skills.	4.67
The project helped me organize my ideas more clearly.	4.62
I learned new things by writing a digital story.	4.57
The project helped me write more creatively.	4.57

The results indicate that students strongly agreed on the creative benefits of the project. They reported higher levels of creativity (M=4.71) and improvement in storytelling skills (M=4.67), suggesting that the digital narrative project successfully enhanced both imagination and writing competence. Moreover, the

affective category generated a mean score of 4.36, which indicates a high level of student enjoyment and motivation in participating in the narrative writing project. Based on this result, it can be seen that students reported increased interest and enthusiasm when compared to conventional writing tasks. Many responses indicated that students were more personally involved in the learning activity and emotionally engaged, attaching their motivation to the creativity and novelty inherent in the digital narrative writing project. The task appeared to support students' psychological needs for autonomy and self-expression, which are beneficial for nourishing motivation in the language learning classroom.

Table 2 Cognitive Domain (Perceived Learning Benefits)

Survey Item	Mean Score
Using digital media made the project more enjoyable.	4.57
This project was more interesting than regular writing tasks.	4.52

Based on the table above, it can be seen that students found the digital narrative project enjoyable and engaging. Scores show that the use of multimedia increased enjoyment (M=4.57) and made the task more interesting than traditional writing activities (M=4.52). The cognitive category documented the highest average score of 4.52, which proves that students significantly recognized the digital narrative writing project as a valuable learning experience. The participants of the study approved improvements in various aspects of their writing, including idea development, narrative structure, coherence, and vocabulary usage. It is also shown that several students feel that the task challenged them to think critically and organize their thoughts more coherently. These results show that the narrative writing assignment and the academic goals of EFL are highly aligned.

Table 3 Cultural Identity Relevance

Survey Item	Mean Score
This project helped me appreciate my own cultural traditions.	4.52
I enjoyed using elements of local culture in my story.	4.48
I learned more about local wisdom through this project.	4.43

The table shows that students appreciated their cultural traditions (M=4.52) and valued the inclusion of local cultural elements in their stories (M=4.48). The integration of local wisdom into the digital narrative writing task generated a mean score of 4.46, suggesting that the majority of students found the cultural content highly applicable and meaningful. Many responses showed that the combination of traditional narratives and local values not only excavated their understanding of their cultural heritage but also improved their emotional connection to the task. Several students said that the project sparked discussions with family members and community elders, thus growing its cultural impact outside of the classroom. Students seemed to be satisfied with take satisfaction in implementing the narrative writing task medium to portray their cultural identity.

Table 4 Technological Usability

Survey Item	Mean Score
I needed more help to understand how to complete the digital story.	4.05
The project took more time than I expected.	4.0

I experienced technical problems during the project.	3.9
I found combining pictures, text, and narration challenging.	3.9
I had difficulty using the digital tools required for the project.	3.24

Based on the results shown in the table, it can be seen that despite the positive outcomes, students also reported challenges. They indicated the need for more guidance (M=4.05), time investment (M=4.00), and technical difficulties (M=3.90). The lowest score (M=3.24) reflects difficulty in using digital tools, showing that technical support is crucial. The technological usability dimension received a slightly lower average score of 4.07. Although the general sentiment was positive, this category displayed more variability in student responses. While many students found the digital tools accessible and conducive to creativity, a noticeable subset reported technical difficulties such as editing multimedia elements, managing project timelines, and navigating software platforms. Nevertheless, students generally expressed confidence in their ability to complete the task and expressed willingness to use similar tools in future academic projects.

Discussion

Based on the data discussed above, it is found that the digital narrative writing project provided a multidimensional learning experience that positively influenced students' motivation, academic skill development, cultural engagement, and digital literacy. These findings are in line with the integration of literature and language teaching where digital narrative writing becomes a student's project. The high affective ratings are in line with the research held by Laina & Marlina (2018). Based on the results of their research, it is found that digital story fosters student enjoyment and intrinsic motivation. The students in this study experienced sharp engagement and showed a strong eagerness to participate in similar tasks in the future. This recommends that digital story is not only an effective tool for promoting active participation but also serves as an emotional catalyst in EFL learning environments. However, not all previous studies have gained similar positive conclusions. For example, Wu and Chen (2020) warned that some students regard digital projects as time-consuming and stressful, especially when they have lack of technological skills. This echoes with the current findings because students in this study also express technical difficulties and higher time demands. Consequently, while digital storytelling is beneficial and motivational, the challenges of these tasks should be solved for all learners.

Besides, in the Cognitive aspect, high ratings of perceived learning benefits showed by respondents support Wu and Chen's (2020) claim that digital story contributes positively to language development across several categories. By requiring students to conceptualize, draft, revise, and publish their narrative texts within multimedia frameworks, the digital story project promoted higher-order thinking. Moreover, the students' recognition of improved writing abilities supports earlier findings by Zakaria and Aziz (2019), who documented gains in grammar, vocabulary, and content development following digital story project implementation. However, other researchers argue that the cognitive advantages of digital projects are often inadequate, benefiting more experienced learners over beginners (e.g., Hung et al., 2022). This ability gap emphasizes the necessity of providing various scaffolds for digital writing assignments so that both capable and struggling students can reach equal advantages. A careful task design that balances between linguistic requirements and technical creativity is important in this context.

In the category of cultural identity, the results highlight the significance of integrating culturally related content into academic tasks. The integration of local wisdom themes provided students with an authentic

platform to discover and affirm their cultural identities. This is in line with findings from Kurniawati and Malasari (2022), who noted increased cultural awareness and engagement among students when local narratives were used in EFL instruction. Moreover, the project's cultural element appears to have fostered intergenerational conversation. This is because the data show that some students sought input from older family members while crafting their narratives. This kind of interactions illustrate how digital narrative writing projects can bridge classroom learning with community-based knowledge systems. Interestingly, this finding contrasts with some studies in global urban settings (e.g., Lee & Chen, 2021), where students expressed ambivalence toward local cultural content, preferring international themes. This difference shows that the effectiveness of local wisdom in motivating students may depend on the students' sociocultural background. In rural or semi-urban Indonesian contexts, cultural content may echo more strongly, while in cosmopolitan contexts, a balance between local and global themes may be necessary.

Although it is overall successful, the project presents challenges in the category of technological usability. While students valued the creative potential of digital tools, technical difficulties were a frequent issue. This result reflects concerns explained by Liu et al. (2018), who stated that students frequently require a structured framework to direct multimedia platforms effectively. To develop the implementation of digital narrative writing, it may be essential to integrate technical training sessions and provide access to user-friendly editing tools. In contrast to previous studies that emphasized such difficulties without proposing clear solutions, this study underlining the need for practical instructional design. Before the project begins, a preliminary workshop that focuses on digital tool usage can be provided. Additionally, user-friendly platforms that have low technical barriers can be used. Besides, to reduce students' anxiety, teachers can offer peer mentoring and step-by-step guidance. Moreover, providing discussion on technical and creative challenges for students is crucial. These techniques can reduce technical frustration and guarantee that digital projects continue to facilitate learning rather than hinder it.

Furthermore, the findings of this study provide the collaboration of culturally sensitive pedagogy and multimodal literacy. Through the use of narrative expression, a digital narrative writing project allowed students to affirm their cultural identity. Therefore, in EFL courses, digital narrative writing project can be implemented to build linguistic and intercultural competences. The student survey's findings offer insightful information about the experiences and opinions of students related to the digital narrative writing project. According to the results, most students gave respectable answers, especially when it came to creativity, the story creation, and the use of multimedia elements.

To summarize, the digital narrative writing project was well-received, with students reporting increased creativity, improved storytelling skills, and positive emotional engagement, especially when cultural content was involved. The findings affirm that the digital narrative writing project is a pedagogical strategy that incorporates multimodal literacy, project-based learning, and culturally responsive education to support narrative writing in EFL contexts. However, to maximize the outcomes, educators must provide clear instructions, technical support, and culturally relevant frameworks that connect traditional knowledge with digital media.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that students show highly positive attitudes toward the implementation of a digital narrative writing project based on local wisdom within the EFL classroom. Based on the data from the survey responses of 21 second-semester English Department students at Pamulang University, the research exposed steadily high mean scores across four categories: affective (enjoyment and motivation), cognitive (perceived learning benefits), cultural identity relevance, and technological usability. Based on

the results of the study, it can be revealed that there is a clear contrast between the strongest and weakest categories of students' experiences with the digital storytelling project. The highest mean score was found for the statement *"Technology helped me be more creative in telling my story"* (M = 4.71) in the Affective category. The result indicates that students perceived the project as highly effective in encouraging creativity and self-expression. This is in line with their positive responses in related items such as improved storytelling skills (M = 4.67) and clearer idea organization (M = 4.62). This suggests that the integration of digital media successfully increased both imagination and narrative competence. Conversely, the lowest mean score appeared in the item *"I had difficulty using the digital tools required for the project"* (M = 3.24) in the technological usability category. It emphasizes that while students appreciated the creative potential of the project, many resisted the technical difficulties of combining multimedia elements. This contrast shows that the project reached its goal of motivating students and strengthening their cultural and cognitive engagement, but it also underlines the importance of providing stronger technical support. Generally, the data of this study recommends that digital storytelling with local wisdom is an influential pedagogical approach for EFL classrooms practice; however, its effectiveness can be maximized only when creativity and cultural content are well-adjusted with manageable and user-friendly technological guidance.

These findings recommend a number of recommendations for educators and policymakers. For educators, it is important to offer training sessions that focus on how to improve students' skills on digital tools before assigning narrative projects. Therefore, students can focus on creativity rather than struggling with technical barriers. Additionally, teachers should also integrate guidance and peer-support strategies to reduce technological anxiety while encouraging collaborative learning. Moreover, embedding local wisdom in digital narratives should be thoroughly planned by curating culturally relevant stories and supporting students to attach personal experiences with traditional values, promising both cultural preservation and meaningful engagement. For policymakers, supporting digital narrative writing projects demands investment in user-friendly educational technologies and teacher professional development programs. Policies should also encourage curriculum frameworks that integrate cultural literacy with digital literacy, enabling students not only to strengthen their English writing skills but also to reinforce cultural identity in global contexts. Additionally, providing accessible platforms, technical support units, and sustainable infrastructure in schools and universities will be critical for ensuring the long-term effectiveness of digital storytelling initiatives.

Acknowledgement

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