

Strengthening reading literacy through contextual teaching and learning with Dayak Belusu local wisdom

Syahrul Syahrul*, Shirly Rizki Kusumaningrum, Slamet Arifin, Adi Admoko, Siti Mas'ula

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to improve the reading literacy skills of elementary school students through the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) integrated with the local wisdom of the Dayak Belusu community. Reading literacy in this research is defined as the ability to understand, interpret, and reflect on written texts at literal, inferential, and summarizing levels. The study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the spiral model of Kemmis and McTaggart, consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The participants were fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 014 Tana Tidung, North Kalimantan. Data were collected through observation sheets, reading literacy tests, and teacher interviews, and analyzed using quantitative descriptive and qualitative techniques. The results of Cycle I showed that students' reading literacy was still dominated by literal comprehension and that their participation in discussions was relatively low. After revising the learning strategy in Cycle II, student participation exceeded 80% on most indicators, and the average literacy test score increased from 58 to 76. Teacher interviews confirmed positive changes in cognitive, affective, and attitudinal aspects, including confidence, discipline, and cooperation. These findings indicate that CTL integrated with Dayak Belusu local wisdom effectively enhances reading literacy while strengthening cultural identity and positive character.

Keywords: Contextual teaching and learning, Dayak Belusu, local wisdom, reading literacy

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan literasi membaca siswa sekolah dasar melalui penerapan *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) yang diintegrasikan dengan kearifan lokal Dayak Belusu. Literasi membaca dalam penelitian ini didefinisikan sebagai kemampuan memahami, menafsirkan, dan merefleksikan teks tertulis pada tingkat literal, inferensial, dan merangkum. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) model spiral Kemmis dan McTaggart yang meliputi tahap perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas V SD Negeri 014 Tana Tidung, Kalimantan Utara. Data dikumpulkan melalui lembar observasi, tes literasi membaca, dan wawancara guru, kemudian dianalisis dengan teknik deskriptif kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil siklus I menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan literasi membaca siswa masih didominasi pemahaman literal dan partisipasi dalam diskusi masih rendah. Setelah perbaikan strategi pada siklus II, partisipasi siswa melampaui 80% pada sebagian besar indikator, dan nilai rata-rata tes literasi meningkat dari 58 menjadi 76. Wawancara guru mengonfirmasi adanya perubahan positif pada aspek kognitif, afektif, dan sikap, termasuk meningkatnya rasa percaya diri, kedisiplinan, dan kerja sama. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa CTL yang terintegrasi kearifan lokal Dayak Belusu efektif meningkatkan literasi membaca sekaligus memperkuat identitas budaya dan karakter positif siswa.

Kata kunci: Contextual teaching and learning, Dayak Belusu, kearifan lokal, literasi membaca

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*Corresponding author: syahrul.2421038@student.um.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy is a fundamental skill that extends beyond simply decoding written text; it includes the ability to interpret, analyze, and critically engage with information. This skill serves as a crucial foundation for students' academic achievement and lifelong learning. In this study, reading literacy specifically refers to the students' capacity to comprehend

explicit meaning (literal), infer implicit meaning (inferential), and summarize or synthesize textual information (evaluative). Research has shown that active participation in structured reading activities significantly enhances comprehension and analytical thinking. Mukarromah et al. (2023) emphasize that regular literacy practices such as reading for 15 minutes before class and the utilization of reading corners and libraries can cultivate sustained reading habits. Similarly, the School Literacy Movement is essential for embedding reading culture within the learning process and promoting schools that value literacy (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

Developing a reading culture is therefore an indispensable strategy to maintain student motivation and engagement in literacy. A supportive school environment that provides diverse texts, discussion opportunities, and creative reading tasks helps foster students' critical and reflective thinking. Marmoah and Poerwanti (2022) highlight that storytelling and language-exchange activities enhance creativity and stimulate literacy interest, while Udal and Macalisang (2024) affirm that literacy-rich environments with varied materials and activities increase student participation. Programs such as reading corners, library visits, and the publication of students' writing have consistently proven effective in raising literacy involvement and nurturing intrinsic reading motivation (Mukarromah et al., 2023).

However, despite the introduction of various literacy programs, reading literacy among elementary school students remains low. One key problem lies in the misalignment between instructional materials and students' real-life experiences. While textbooks fulfill national standards, they often fail to reflect local cultural contexts, leading to decreased motivation and engagement. Vasquez-Salgado et al. (2022) and Silahooy et al. (2024) explain that when educational content does not align with students' cultural values, their academic performance and social adjustment may suffer. In contrast, integrating local narratives, folktales, and regional languages has been shown to improve text relevance and strengthen reading comprehension (Manurung et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2022).

Another contextual challenge identified in this research is the socio-economic condition of students in rural areas. Low attendance rates—ranging from 60–80% daily—are influenced by participation in cultural ceremonies, agricultural work, and family responsibilities. These external factors create disparities between educational expectations and the social realities students face. Sari et al. (2022) emphasize that teacher awareness and motivation are essential to sustaining a literacy culture, yet these are often constrained by irregular attendance. Similarly, Fitri et al. (2023) highlight that students' involvement in economic activities at home reduces their engagement in literacy practices at school.

To overcome these limitations, this study adopts the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach as a pedagogical solution that connects lesson content with students' everyday experiences. CTL encourages learning through authentic contexts, problem-solving, and reflection, thereby making reading activities more meaningful and applicable to real life (Milanto et al., 2023). When integrated with local wisdom, CTL not only enhances reading comprehension but also reinforces students' cultural pride and moral identity. Research by Mahendra et al. (2024) and Nurdiana et al. (2023) demonstrates that culturally integrated instruction improves literacy outcomes while promoting cultural appreciation. Ramdhani et al. (2024) reveal that technology-based media containing local wisdom can increase students' interest and writing performance, whereas Farisi et al.

(2024) and Pamungkas et al. (2023) report that folktale-based instruction effectively strengthens language and cultural understanding.

The present study focuses on the Dayak Belusu community as the cultural context for contextualized literacy instruction. Dayak Belusu traditions and folktales convey values of cooperation, respect, and responsibility that align with the principles of character education in the Merdeka Curriculum. By embedding these cultural elements into CTL-based Indonesian language instruction, this research seeks to develop reading literacy while simultaneously preserving cultural identity.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) with local wisdom as the central instructional strategy to develop reading literacy in elementary students. This integration bridges the gap between the national curriculum and the actual needs of students living in a distinct socio-cultural environment. As emphasized by Adenan et al. (2022), Murti et al. (2024), and Sirait et al. (2024), the application of local cultural values in the curriculum and the involvement of the local community are crucial foundations for creating an education that is relevant, inclusive, and meaningful for students. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to apply the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach integrated with the Dayak Belusu local wisdom to improve elementary students' reading literacy skills and strengthen their cultural character.

METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design based on the spiral model of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). According to them, action research is a systematic, collaborative, and self-reflective process undertaken by practitioners to improve the rationality, equity, and effectiveness of their educational practices while deepening their understanding of those practices. CAR, therefore, not only aims to improve the learning process but also empowers teachers and researchers to engage in continuous reflection and professional growth through the actions implemented in the classroom. In their seminal work *The Action Research Planner*, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), describe four cyclical stages of CAR: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These stages form a continuous spiral cycle, where each reflection informs the planning of subsequent actions until meaningful learning improvement is achieved. In this study, the CAR approach was implemented in a fifth-grade class at SD Negeri 014 Tana Tidung, North Kalimantan, with the specific focus of improving students' reading literacy through Indonesian language learning integrated with local wisdom particularly the cultural context of the Dayak Belusu community. The participants were fifth-grade students directly involved in the classroom activities during two CAR cycles.

Planning

In this stage, the researcher and the classroom teacher collaborated to develop learning materials based on local wisdom, design a lesson plan, and prepare observation instruments, interview guides, and documentation formats. The teaching materials integrated the folktales, customs, and local language of the Dayak Belusu as the main content. The research instruments used included an observation sheet for student activities, a reading literacy test, a teacher interview guide, and a documentation format for student learning outcomes. Before being implemented in the action cycle, all instruments were

validated through an expert judgment process by two experts: a lecturer in Indonesian language education and an experienced elementary school teacher.

The validation ensured the construction, readability, indicator suitability, and content appropriateness of the instruments. The validation results showed that the instruments were generally fit for use, but several improvements were suggested, including:

1. The observation sheet was expanded to include indicators such as students' courage to ask questions and the quality of interaction in group discussions.
2. The reading literacy test was revised to add inferential and evaluative questions so it wouldn't just measure literal comprehension.
3. The interview guide was adjusted to allow for exploration of the affective dimension, such as student motivation and attitudes toward reading activities.
4. The documentation format was clarified for recording student work (reading summaries, new vocabulary notes) to facilitate data analysis.

Instrument revisions were made based on this feedback, and the final results showed that the instruments had adequate content validity for data collection. This validation process ensured that the research findings were based not only on subjective observations but also on valid and scientifically justifiable instruments.

Acting

The teacher conducted the Indonesian language lesson according to the designed lesson plan, using a Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach. The learning material was connected to students' real-life experiences to make it more relevant and meaningful. During this stage, the learning process was designed based on the collaboratively developed lesson plan. The learning strategy used the CTL approach by integrating local Dayak Belusu wisdom, such as folktales, customs, and the local language. This process aimed to create a learning experience that was more contextual, meaningful, and closer to students' lives.

Throughout the activities, the teacher actively facilitated the lesson according to the planned scenario, while the researcher accompanied the process by conducting observations, documentation, and student engagement assessments using the validated instruments. Thus, each stage of learning focused not only on knowledge transfer but also on strengthening reading literacy skills, learning motivation, and the internalization of local cultural values. The operational flow of the learning activities can be seen in Table.

Table 1. Classroom Learning Process

Learning Stage	Teacher & Researcher Activities	Student Activities
Introduction (10 mins)	- The teacher greets students and provides learning motivation. - Connects the lesson to students' daily lives by discussing Dayak Belusu customs such as cooperation (<i>gotong royong</i>) and respect for nature.	- Greet, pray, and prepare for the lesson. - Listen to the introductory story or proverb from Dayak Belusu culture. - Share personal experiences related to Dayak Belusu values, such as helping others

	- Presents a short story or proverb from Dayak Belusu tradition to introduce the theme. - The researcher observes initial engagement indicators (enthusiasm, readiness, and prior knowledge).	or working together in community events.
Core Activity (60 mins)	- Exploration: The teacher introduces the reading text—a <i>Dayak Belusu folktale</i>—and explains key cultural elements (characters, moral values, and local terms). The researcher documents reactions and notes student engagement. - Elaboration: The teacher guides students to read in turns, explains new vocabulary derived from local language, and relates it to Dayak Belusu daily life contexts (e.g., farming, ceremonies, forest stewardship). The researcher uses observation instruments to assess literacy behaviors. - Confirmation: The teacher facilitates group discussions linking the folktale's moral to the Pancasila Student Profile values (mutual cooperation, independence, faith, and creativity). The researcher records interactions and participation.	- Read the Dayak Belusu folktale in turns. - Identify and discuss new vocabulary or expressions from the local language. - Work in small groups to summarize the story and extract moral values.d. Present discussion results, highlighting how the story reflects local values and Pancasila traits.
Closing (20 mins)	- The teacher leads reflection by asking students what lessons they learned from the story and how it relates to their lives as members of the Dayak Belusu community. - Provides feedback and appreciation for students' participation. - The researcher conducts a short interview with the teacher about class dynamics and local wisdom integration.	- Share reflections on moral values or lessons from the Dayak Belusu story. - Express feelings about the learning activity (e.g., enjoyment, challenges, and new understanding). - Receive feedback, motivation, and closing encouragement.

Table 1 operationally depicts the learning flow implemented in the classroom. From the introduction to the core activities and the closing, a strong integration between the reading material, the CTL strategy, and the local Dayak Belusu cultural context is evident. The teacher acts as the main facilitator, while the researcher supports the process by conducting observations and documentation using the validated instruments. The implementation of this model allows students to more easily connect the reading content with their real-life experiences, while also increasing active participation in discussions.

Thus, the table is not only a technical guide for implementation but also reflects a systematic effort to improve reading literacy and instill local cultural values.

Observing

During the learning process, the researcher observed students' engagement, participation in literacy activities, and their interaction with the local wisdom-based teaching materials. This observation was supplemented with documentation of student learning outcomes, notes on classroom activities, and recordings of teacher interviews.

Reflecting

At the end of each cycle, a reflection was conducted on the observation and documentation results. The teacher and researcher jointly analyzed the successes and challenges that arose, and then formulated improvements for the next cycle. This reflection also aimed to assess the effectiveness of integrating local wisdom in improving students' reading literacy. Data collection was carried out through observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation of student learning outcomes. The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method with stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This analysis aimed to describe the changes in students' motivation, engagement, and reading literacy skills after implementing local wisdom-based learning with a CTL approach.

Thus, this research methodology serves not only as a means to improve teaching practices but also as a reflective tool to re-examine the relationship between teaching materials, students' cultural context, and the improvement of literacy skills. This aligns with the fundamental principle of CAR according to Kemmis & McTaggart (1988), that action research is a means to improve educational practice while deepening a critical understanding of the practice being undertaken.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cycle I: Student activity observation results

The actions in Cycle I implemented Indonesian language learning based on Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), integrating local Dayak Belusu wisdom through folktale reading and discussions about customs. The results were analyzed using three main instruments: student activity observation, a reading literacy test, and teacher interviews. The observation instrument was used to assess student engagement in the learning process. The observed indicators included: (1) participation in reading, (2) courage to ask/answer questions, (3) cooperation in group discussions, and (4) seriousness in following activities.

Table 2. Student Activity Observation Results in Cycle I

Student Activity Indicator	Number of Active Students	%	Category
Reading text clearly aloud	15 out of 25	60	Sufficient
Asking/answering teacher's questions	10 out of 25	40	Low
Discussion and cooperation in groups	13 out of 25	52	Sufficient
Completing tasks on time	18 out of 25	72	Good

The illustrates the percentage of student engagement across four observed indicators during Cycle I. The results show that 72% of students completed tasks on time, while 60% were active in reading texts. However, only 52% engaged in group discussions and a lower 40% participated in asking or answering questions. These findings indicate that while the integration of local wisdom through CTL has attracted student attention, further strategies are needed to enhance participation in questioning and discussion activities.

Reading literacy test results

Results indicate that students achieved the highest score in literal comprehension (68), showing that they were able to identify explicit information in the text. However, their scores in inferential comprehension (55) and summarizing skills (50) were considerably lower, suggesting difficulty in interpreting implicit meanings and synthesizing textual content. These results highlight the need for improved contextual learning strategies that connect reading materials with local Dayak Belusu culture to enhance inferential understanding and critical reflection.

Cycle I: Teacher interview results

Based on the interview with the fifth-grade teacher, several key pieces of information were gathered about the implementation of learning in Cycle I. The teacher shared that students showed greater interest when the reading material was connected to their familiar local culture, such as the Dayak Belusu folktales. This was evident from the enthusiasm of some students during reading and discussion activities. The teacher stated:

“The children seemed more excited to read because they felt the material was close to their lives. For example, when they read a story about Dayak Belusu customs, they immediately connected it to the experiences of their family or elders in the village.” (WGS102-38-01).

However, the teacher also highlighted a challenge with students' confidence in expressing their opinions. Many students were still reluctant to speak in front of the class or share ideas during group discussions. The teacher said:

“The problem is, the children are still shy to speak. When asked, they often look down, even though they actually understand. Maybe they're afraid of being wrong or lack confidence.” (WGS182-57-09).

Furthermore, the teacher noted that some students remained passive in literacy activities due to their limited vocabulary, making it difficult for them to comprehend the text in depth. The teacher explained:

“There are some children whose vocabulary is still very limited. They can read fluently, but when asked for the meaning or to summarize, they struggle.” (WGS122-01-44).

Another hindering factor was the limited time for learning. The teacher felt that the available class time was not enough to explore the local wisdom-based readings more broadly. The teacher said:

“Class time feels short. If we really want to delve into a folktale, there's not enough time. If there were more time, the children could be more actively involved.” (WGS101-29-00).

Analysis of cycle I interview

The teacher interview from Cycle I provides a layered picture of the dynamics of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) with local wisdom integration. On one hand, this approach successfully sparked students' initial interest in literacy activities. This was reflected in the increased enthusiasm when the reading material was directly related to their daily experiences. For example, while reading the Dayak Belusu folktale, students appeared excited because they felt that what they were reading was not something foreign but a part of their own cultural identity.

However, despite this positive potential, there were still serious challenges that needed attention. The teacher confirmed that students' confidence in expressing opinions was still low. Although they understood the reading material, many students chose to remain silent and were reluctant to share their thoughts due to shyness and a lack of self-confidence. This phenomenon indicates that local wisdom-based learning had not yet fully succeeded in building a safe space for students to express themselves.

Additionally, limited vocabulary was a major barrier for some students in understanding the reading material more deeply. They could read the text fluently but struggled when they had to interpret implied meanings or summarize the content. This is consistent with the results of the reading literacy test, where scores for literal comprehension were relatively higher than those for inferential comprehension and summarizing. Thus, the teacher interview reinforced the finding that students were still in the early stages of developing critical literacy. Another challenge was the limited learning time. The teacher felt that class time was insufficient for a deep exploration of the reading material. This limitation was not just a technical issue but also a pedagogical challenge: how to effectively implement a local wisdom-based CTL strategy within a limited time frame while still providing room for exploration, discussion, and reflection.

In conclusion, the Cycle I interview analysis presents a contradictory yet challenging picture. On one hand, integrating local wisdom proved to be an effective entry point for capturing students' attention and building a connection to the subject matter. On the other hand, confidence, vocabulary, and time management remained weak points that had to be addressed. This challenge also opened up an opportunity for innovation in Cycle II, especially in enriching scaffolding strategies, optimizing time, and building a more supportive classroom climate so students feel safe to express their thoughts.

Cycle II: Student activity observation results

Observations were conducted to assess student engagement across four key indicators. The results showed a significant improvement compared to Cycle I.

Table 3. Student Activity Observation Results in Cycle II

Student Activity Indicator	Number of Active Students	%	Category
Reading text clearly aloud	21 out of 25	84	Good
Asking/answering teacher's questions	18 out of 25	72	Good
Discussion and cooperation in groups	20 out of 25	80	Good
Completing tasks on time	23 out of 25	92	Very Good

The observation results in Cycle II indicate a marked improvement in student engagement compared to Cycle I. Students became more confident and active in various aspects of learning. As shown in Figure 3, 84% of students actively read texts aloud, 72% participated in asking or answering questions, 80% engaged in group discussions, and 92% completed their tasks on time. These findings suggest that the implementation of CTL integrated with local wisdom effectively enhanced students' participation across all indicators.

Reading literacy test results

The literacy test results in Cycle II demonstrate a significant improvement in students' reading abilities across all assessed aspects. The highest achievement was in literal comprehension with an average score of 82, followed by inferential comprehension with 75, and summarizing skills with 72. These results indicate that while students were already proficient in identifying explicit information, they also made substantial progress in interpreting implicit meanings and drawing conclusions from the text. Overall, the average score of 76 reflects a shift from the "low" category in Cycle I to the "good" category in Cycle II, highlighting the effectiveness of CTL integrated with local wisdom in enhancing reading literacy.

Cycle II: Teacher Interview Results

Interviews with the teacher in Cycle II provided a more comprehensive picture of the changes in the students. The teacher confirmed that the CTL-based learning strategy with local wisdom integration not only improved cognitive skills but also brought about developments in students' affective and attitudinal aspects. In terms of cognitive development, the teacher saw an improvement in students' ability to connect reading content with their daily experiences. While in Cycle I students tended to only repeat literal information, in Cycle II they began to bravely make simple inferences and summarize the texts. The teacher stated:

"I see that they are not just reading, but are starting to be able to interpret meaning. For example, when they read a folktale, they can connect the story's message with their life at home." (WGS241-01-09).

Beyond cognitive skills, the teacher also highlighted developments in affective aspects, especially motivation and interest. The children appeared more enthusiastic and actively engaged, even without being prompted. The teacher explained:

"Before, I had to call on the children multiple times. Now, they are willing to read and answer questions on their own. The energy is more palpable; the class is livelier with discussions." (WGS212-59-03).

In terms of attitude, students showed increased self-confidence and courage to speak in front of the class. Simple praise from the teacher had a positive impact on student behavior. They were more willing to speak, respected their friends' opinions, and learned to support each other. The teacher said:

"I noticed that the children are not only brave enough to speak now, but they also listen to their friends. Some even clap for their friends when they answer well. That's something I rarely saw before." (WGS237-29-45).

The teacher also noted an increase in discipline and responsibility. More students completed their assignments on time, brought reading materials, and actively participated in group work. This shows a change in attitude that impacted not only their literacy skills but also their character in general. Nevertheless, the teacher still emphasized that limited time remained a challenge that was not fully resolved. Some students still needed more intensive guidance to develop higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing or evaluating the text. However, the teacher concluded that the development in Cycle II was very significant compared to Cycle I.

Analysis of cycle II interview

The implementation of Cycle II showed significant improvements compared to Cycle I in students' cognitive, affective, and attitudinal aspects. Observation results showed more consistent student engagement, with activity percentages above 70% for all indicators, especially the ability to complete tasks on time (92%) and read texts clearly aloud (84%). The reading literacy test results also showed an increase in the average score from 58 in Cycle I to 76 in Cycle II, with more balanced achievement across literal, inferential, and summarizing comprehension.

Based on the teacher interviews, a deeper development in students' thinking processes was found. Students were not just able to repeat literal information but began to interpret the meaning of the text, connect it to daily life experiences, and draw simple conclusions. In the affective domain, learning motivation increased notably; students appeared more enthusiastic, actively engaged, and showed higher interest in reading activities. In the attitudinal domain, students' courage, self-confidence, and discipline showed positive development. They began to speak more, respect their friends' opinions, and demonstrate responsibility in completing group tasks. However, limited time remains a challenge in fully optimizing the exploration of local wisdom-based reading material. Some students also still need guidance to develop higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing or evaluating the text.

Overall, Cycle II proved the effectiveness of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) with local wisdom integration. This strategy not only succeeded in significantly improving reading literacy but also strengthened students' affective and attitudinal aspects, making it a relevant approach to bridging the gap between the national curriculum and students' socio-cultural realities. The findings of this study indicate a significant development in the

cognitive aspects of students. In Cycle I, most students were only able to comprehend literal information from reading texts, whereas in Cycle II, they began to demonstrate progress toward higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), such as making inferences and drawing simple conclusions. This aligns with the views of Mukarromah et al. (2023) and Nasir et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of structured literacy activities to enhance students' analytical thinking skills. The use of folklore and the socio-cultural experiences of the Dayak Belusu community proved effective in helping students better understand the context of the readings, as also highlighted by Milanto et al. (2023) and Lijun and Te (2024), who assert that contextual learning strengthens the connection between instructional content and students' real-life experiences.

In addition to cognitive development, the study also found significant changes in the affective domain. While in Cycle I students' motivation was relatively low and participation was limited, in Cycle II their learning motivation increased, as evidenced by greater courage to ask questions, provide answers, and even volunteer to retell the reading material. This improvement supports the findings of Pratiwi et al. (2022), who state that literacy movements actively involving students are effective in cultivating a sustainable reading culture. Furthermore, the use of local wisdom-based materials combined with simple rewards, such as praise, proved effective in fostering students' self-confidence. Srie et al. (2022), who highlight the importance of instilling literacy-oriented character through daily practices. From the perspective of attitudes, this research revealed positive behavioral and affective changes among students. They demonstrated greater courage, discipline, and cooperation in group activities, showing increased confidence in expressing opinions and respect for their peers' contributions. This aligns with the findings of Nurmiati et al. (2024) and Furbani (2024), who argue that a school literacy culture flourishes when supported by a conducive classroom atmosphere and teacher leadership that fosters active student participation.

In this research, the integration of Dayak Belusu local wisdom was implemented directly through reading materials and classroom discussions. Students engaged with folktales, traditional proverbs, and stories reflecting Dayak Belusu customs particularly those emphasizing values of cooperation, honesty, and respect for nature. These narratives served not merely as reading texts but as contextual media to connect learning content with students' lived experiences. This approach effectively enhanced students' reading literacy while simultaneously strengthening their sense of cultural identity (Purwati et al., 2019; Sher & Inamullah, 2025). These findings are consistent with the studies of Manurung et al. (2022) and Farisi et al. (2024), who emphasized that integrating local wisdom-based narratives can improve literacy and embed moral and cultural values. Furthermore, the results affirm the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy as described by Vasquez-Salgado et al. (2022), which enables inclusive and meaningful learning experiences that reflect the social and cultural realities of students' communities.

However, despite the significant improvements observed, several limitations must be acknowledged. Limited classroom time posed a major obstacle to exploring texts more thoroughly, while some students still required more intensive guidance to develop advanced critical thinking skills, such as analyzing and evaluating reading materials. These challenges highlight the need for further development of literacy strategies, including the creation of more varied and sustainable local wisdom-based teaching resources.

CONCLUSION

Based on the qualitative analysis from two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), this study concludes that the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) integrated with the local wisdom of the Dayak Belusu community effectively improved elementary students' reading literacy. The approach enhanced students' abilities not only in cognitive aspects—such as comprehension and interpretation—but also in affective and attitudinal domains, including confidence, cooperation, and motivation to read. The systematic and reflective CAR process enabled continuous identification and resolution of learning challenges in each cycle. Key supporting factors in this improvement were the use of contextual materials rooted in local culture, the CTL strategy that linked curriculum content with students' lived experiences, and active collaboration between the teacher and researcher. Despite several constraints such as limited learning time and students' restricted vocabulary, the findings affirm that meaningful, culturally grounded, and reflective Indonesian language learning can significantly enhance students' reading literacy while fostering appreciation of their cultural identity.

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