Explorations in English Learning

The Existence of Lombok Folklore among EFL Learners: A Study of Junior High School Students

***Wirentake**
Universitas Teknologi Sumbawa, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, email: wirentake@uts.ac.id

Abstract Despite the growing emphasis on integrating local culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, limited empirical evidence exists regarding learners' familiarity with the local cultural resources intended to support culturally responsive pedagogy. This study investigates junior high school EFL learners' familiarity with Lombok folklore across three categories: verbal folklore (myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, and folk songs), partially verbal folklore (folk beliefs, traditional games, and ceremonial traditions), and non-verbal folklore (performing arts and material culture). Particular attention is given to traditional folk games as a culturally significant component of partially verbal folklore. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 100 students from three junior high schools in East Lombok. Descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed a moderate overall level of familiarity with Lombok folklore (M = 2.80). Verbal folklore received the highest familiarity scores, whereas traditional folk games and non-verbal folklore showed lower levels of familiarity. Significant differences were also identified across school locations. These findings provide an empirical basis for selecting appropriate folklore-based materials in culturally responsive EFL instruction and contribute to efforts to preserve Lombok's local cultural heritage through English language education.

Keywords culturally responsive pedagogy; EFL learners; folklore familiarity; Lombok folklore; traditional folk games

INTRODUCTION

Within the domain of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the integration of local cultural content has attracted increasing scholarly attention over the last decade. Researchers have increasingly argued that language learning should not be viewed merely as the acquisition of linguistic forms but also as a process through which learners engage with cultural meanings, identities, and intercultural competence (Anggraini & Derin, 2022; Henderson & Widodo, 2023; Herdi et al., 2023). Recent studies further demonstrate that culturally responsive EFL instruction strengthens learner motivation, language achievement, intercultural awareness, and cultural identity by connecting classroom learning with students' lived experiences and local cultural knowledge (Azhary & Fatimah, 2024; Agung et al., 2025). Consequently, incorporating local culture into EFL instruction has been shown to enhance learner motivation, improve

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comprehension, promote meaningful communication, and strengthen learners' sense of cultural belonging. Folklore occupies a particularly important position in this regard because it contains culturally embedded narratives, practices, symbols, and values that reflect the lived experiences of local communities. Through folklore, learners can simultaneously develop linguistic competence and cultural literacy while maintaining a connection to their cultural heritage (Ke Lomi et al., 2024; Mardhiah et al., 2024).

Traditional folk games, as a form of partially verbal folklore, possess additional pedagogical advantages. Beyond their cultural significance, they provide authentic opportunities for interaction, cooperation, negotiation, and problem-solving, all of which align closely with contemporary communicative approaches to language teaching. Recent research has shown that game-based and culturally contextualized learning environments create low-anxiety classrooms, increase learner engagement, and encourage meaningful language use through authentic social interaction (Septiyana et al., 2025; Agung et al., 2025). Furthermore, traditional games often incorporate culturally specific vocabulary, counting systems, chants, rules, and social practices that can serve as valuable resources for contextualized language learning. Studies on culturally responsive pedagogy consistently indicate that integrating local cultural practices into instructional activities promotes both language development and cultural preservation while fostering positive learner attitudes toward English learning (Azhary & Fatimah, 2024; Syam, 2025).

Despite these educational benefits, the successful integration of folklore into EFL instruction depends upon a fundamental prerequisite: learners must possess sufficient familiarity with the cultural resources being incorporated into the learning process. Familiarity in the present study refers to learners' recognition, knowledge, and prior exposure to folklore traditions within their local cultural environment. Students who have limited knowledge of local folklore may struggle to fully engage with culturally based learning materials, thereby reducing the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogical approaches. This issue is particularly significant in Lombok, where previous studies have documented declining engagement among younger generations with traditional games and other forms of local cultural heritage as a consequence of globalization, technological advancement, and changing patterns of recreation (Muliadi & Asyari, 2024). Similar concerns have also been reported in broader Indonesian contexts, where local cultural knowledge among young learners has gradually diminished because of reduced intergenerational transmission and increasing dependence on digital media (Rahmawati & Widodo, 2022; Widiastuti, 2022).

Although the decline of folklore engagement has been discussed in previous studies, empirical evidence regarding learners' actual familiarity with local folklore remains limited. Existing research in Indonesian EFL contexts has largely concentrated on the representation of folklore in textbooks (Anggraini & Derin, 2022; Ririn et al., 2022), the use of folktales in language instruction (Ke Lomi et al., 2024), the integration of local wisdom into curriculum design (Henderson & Widodo, 2023), and the development of culturally responsive instructional materials (Faliyanti et al., 2025; Siahaan et al., 2025). While these studies have demonstrated the educational value of folklore, they provide little information regarding the extent to which learners themselves remain familiar with the cultural traditions that educators seek to integrate into classroom instruction.

METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate junior high school EFL learners' familiarity with Lombok folklore and to examine whether familiarity differed according to school location. Descriptive survey research is appropriate for obtaining systematic descriptions of existing phenomena without manipulating variables and is widely used in educational research to examine learners' perceptions, attitudes, and cultural familiarity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ary et al., 2021). Recent methodological literature also emphasizes that survey designs are particularly effective for collecting standardized data from large groups in educational settings (Taherdoost, 2022). Similar approaches have been applied in studies investigating culturally responsive English language teaching in Indonesian contexts (Herdi et al., 2023). In the present study, the phenomenon of interest was students' familiarity with folklore traditions representing the cultural heritage of the Sasak community in Lombok.

The target population comprised all students enrolled in state junior high schools (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri*) in East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province. Junior high school students were selected because adolescence is a critical developmental stage for the formation of cultural identity, intercultural awareness, and foreign language development (Ary et al., 2021; Henderson & Widodo, 2023). Therefore, this group was considered appropriate for generating baseline data for culturally responsive EFL instruction.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed. The population was first stratified into three categories based on school location: urban, semi-urban, and rural. This approach was used to capture possible variation in learners' exposure to local cultural practices across different sociocultural environments. Previous studies suggest that geographical context may influence access to cultural knowledge and participation in traditional activities (Muliadi & Asyari, 2024; Widiastuti, 2022). One school was randomly selected from each stratum, and intact classes within each school were included. A total of 100 students participated in the study.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to measure learners' familiarity with Lombok folklore. Familiarity was operationalized as students' self-reported recognition, knowledge, and prior exposure to folklore traditions. Questionnaire-based surveys are widely used in educational research due to their efficiency in collecting standardized data and their suitability for measuring perceptions and attitudes (Taherdoost, 2022). The questionnaire consisted of two sections.

The first section collected demographic information such as gender, grade level, school location, and exposure to folklore within the family environment. The second section measured familiarity with folklore using Brunvand's (1978) classification of folklore into verbal, partially verbal, and non-verbal categories. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not familiar at all) to 5 (very familiar). The use of Likert-scale instruments is widely recommended in educational measurement for assessing attitudes and perceptions in a structured manner (Ary et al., 2021). To improve measurement accuracy, each folklore item was accompanied by a brief explanation to reduce ambiguity and ensure understanding, as recommended in culturally based EFL studies (Ke Lomi et al., 2024).

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert judgment involving three specialists: a Sasak folklore scholar, an EFL education expert, and an experienced English teacher. The experts evaluated each item for clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness. To strengthen validity evidence, the Content Validity Index (CVI) approach was considered as recommended in recent validation studies (Yusoff, 2019). A pilot study was conducted with 30 junior high school students from a school not included in the main sample. Pilot testing is essential in survey research to ensure clarity, reduce ambiguity, and improve instrument quality before full-scale administration (Ary et al., 2021). Following pilot implementation, minor revisions were made to improve readability and cultural clarity. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was conducted to assess internal consistency, with values above .70 considered acceptable for educational research (Taber, 2018).

Data Collection Procedure

Permission was obtained from the East Lombok Education Office and participating schools before data collection. Ethical procedures followed standard educational research guidelines, including parental consent and student assent due to the involvement of minors. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was ensured throughout the study. Questionnaires were administered during school hours under standardized conditions with researcher supervision to ensure consistency across schools.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to determine students' levels of folklore familiarity. One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences based on school location. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were tested using the Shapiro–Wilk and Levene's tests. Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD was applied when significant differences were found. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, following APA 7th edition reporting standards.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings in relation to the three research questions. The discussion is organized according to folklore categories and traditional folk games, with interpretation grounded in the theoretical framework and relevant literature.

Familiarity with Lombok Folklore across Categories

The first research question examined junior high school EFL learners' familiarity with Lombok folklore across verbal, partially verbal, and non-verbal categories. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Mean Familiarity Scores of Junior High School EFL Learners with Lombok Folklore

Folklore Category	n Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Verbal Folklore	15	3.12	0.74	Moderate
Partially Verbal Folklore	20	2.68	0.81	Moderate
Traditional Folk Games	10	2.43	0.87	Low
Non-Verbal Folklore	10	2.31	0.79	Low
Overall	**45**	**2.80**	**0.77**	**Moderate**

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean familiarity score was 2.80 (SD = 0.77), indicating a moderate level of familiarity. However, notable variation appears across categories. Verbal folklore recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.12), followed by partially verbal folklore (M = 2.68), both within the moderate range. In contrast, non-verbal folklore showed the lowest familiarity (M = 2.31), categorized as low.

Within the partially verbal category, traditional folk games obtained a lower mean (M = 2.43) than the category average, indicating that learners were comparatively more familiar with other elements such as folk beliefs and ceremonial practices than with game-based traditions. The relatively higher familiarity with verbal folklore may be associated with its stronger representation in formal instructional materials, particularly English textbooks used in Indonesian secondary education, as reported by Anggraini and Derin (2022). This suggests that curricular exposure may contribute to learners' awareness of cultural content. Similar findings have been reported by Henderson and Widodo (2023), who found that local cultural narratives are more frequently incorporated into English learning materials than performative or practice-based cultural traditions. In contrast, lower familiarity with non-verbal and partially verbal folklore reflects the limited presence of these cultural forms in formal classroom materials and instruction, consistent with findings reported by Jayanti and Norahmi (2014). This pattern is also supported by Mardhiah et al. (2024), who argue that cultural practices requiring direct participation are less frequently integrated into classroom activities than text-based folklore, thereby limiting students' experiential knowledge of local traditions. These findings suggest that learners' familiarity is uneven across folklore categories, with stronger exposure to text-based cultural forms than to embodied or practice-based traditions.

Familiarity with Traditional Folk Games

The second research question focused on learners' familiarity with ten traditional Sasak folk games. Table 2 presents the results ranked from highest to lowest mean scores.

Table 2. Mean Familiarity of Junior High School EFL Learners with Traditional Sasak Folk Games

Rank	Traditional Folk Game	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	*Peresean*	3.56	0.71	High
2	*Gansing Telor*	3.21	0.83	Moderate
3	*Dende-dende*	2.87	0.91	Moderate
4	*Congklik*	2.54	0.88	Low
5	*Maen Selodor*	2.41	0.92	Low
6	*Maen Rempak*	2.38	0.89	Low
7	*Maen Geleng*	2.19	0.95	Low
8	*Keduk Keke*	2.08	0.97	Low
9	*Cipuci-puci*	1.97	0.93	Very Low
10	*Jumpring*	1.89	0.88	Very Low

Table 2 reveals a clear hierarchy of familiarity across traditional games. Peresean recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.56), indicating relatively strong familiarity compared to other games. Gansing Telor and Dende-dende followed with moderate familiarity levels. The remaining games ranged from low to very low familiarity.

The relatively high familiarity with *Peresean* may be associated with its strong public visibility as a cultural performance frequently featured in festivals, tourism promotion, and community events in Lombok (Fajri et al., 2024). Its symbolic association with courage and masculinity in Sasak culture may also contribute to its salience among adolescents. Moderate familiarity with *Gansing Telor* and *Dende-dende* may reflect their simpler formats and occasional presence in informal community contexts. However, the generally low familiarity with most traditional games suggests that many of these practices are no longer widely transmitted among younger generations. Similar trends have been documented across Indonesia, where traditional games are increasingly being replaced by digital forms of entertainment, reducing opportunities for intergenerational cultural transmission (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Nurhayati & Suryani, 2022).

This finding aligns with Muliadi and Asyari (2024), who reported declining participation in Sasak traditional games due to the increasing dominance of digital entertainment. The present study extends this observation by showing that reduced engagement is accompanied not only by lower participation but also by limited awareness. Importantly, this pattern suggests a distinction between passive familiarity (e.g., recognition through media or public performances) and active familiarity (e.g., knowledge gained through participation). Games such as *Peresean* appear to be maintained through mediated cultural visibility, whereas less publicly performed games rely on direct intergenerational transmission, which appears to be weakening. Similar findings have been reported by Henderson and Widodo (2023), who argue that local cultural knowledge among students is increasingly shaped by institutional and media exposure rather than everyday cultural practice. These findings imply that game-based EFL instruction cannot assume prior student familiarity and should incorporate preliminary cultural introduction before pedagogical use of such games. Integrating traditional games into language instruction through explicit cultural scaffolding may therefore enhance both learners' cultural understanding and communicative competence while simultaneously supporting local cultural preservation (Syam, 2025).

Differences in Familiarity by School Location

The third research question investigated whether familiarity with Lombok folklore differed by school location. Table 3 presents the descriptive and inferential statistics.

Table 3. Mean Familiarity by School Location and ANOVA Results

Folklore Category	Urban M (SD)	Semi-Urban M (SD)	Rural M (SD)	F / p
Verbal Folklore	3.34 (0.69)	3.10 (0.72)	2.91 (0.78)	F=4.21, p=.016*
Partially Verbal Folklore	2.89 (0.79)	2.71 (0.83)	2.44 (0.80)	F=5.63, p=.004*
Traditional Folk Games	2.61 (0.85)	2.45 (0.89)	2.24 (0.86)	F=3.98, p=.020*
Non-Verbal Folklore	2.49 (0.77)	2.33 (0.81)	2.11 (0.77)	F=4.77, p=.009*

**p < .05. Post-hoc Tukey HSD confirmed significant differences between urban and rural groups across all categories. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.*

Table 3 shows that urban students consistently reported higher familiarity scores across all folklore categories, while rural students reported the lowest scores. The differences were statistically significant in all comparisons. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated that significant differences were primarily between urban and rural groups, while semi-urban students generally occupied an

intermediate position. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution because each location category was represented by only one school. Consequently, the observed differences may reflect school-specific characteristics, such as extracurricular programs, teacher practices, school policies, and opportunities for participation in cultural activities, rather than geographic location alone. Similar observations have been reported in recent studies, which suggest that the successful integration of local culture into English language education depends not only on students' backgrounds but also on institutional support, teacher readiness, and the availability of culturally relevant learning resources (Herdi et al., 2023; Rustam et al., 2025).

One possible explanation for higher familiarity among urban students is their greater exposure to mediated cultural content through school programs, public cultural events, museums, tourism activities, and digital media that present Sasak folklore in structured and accessible forms (Suparlan, 2021). In contrast, rural students may encounter folklore primarily through informal community practices, which may not always be recognized or recalled in questionnaire-based measures. This finding is consistent with recent studies indicating that the visibility of local culture in educational materials and institutional activities significantly shapes learners' cultural awareness and engagement (Tantri, 2025; Henderson & Widodo, 2023).

From a sociocultural perspective, folklore functions as a cultural tool through which knowledge, beliefs, and community values are transmitted across generations (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Pellegrini & Smith, 2021). The present findings suggest that such transmission increasingly occurs through both direct community participation and mediated educational contexts. As opportunities for intergenerational interaction decline, schools play an increasingly important role in sustaining learners' familiarity with local cultural heritage. This interpretation is supported by recent reviews emphasizing that culturally responsive pedagogy strengthens both language learning and cultural continuity when local cultural knowledge is intentionally integrated into classroom practices (Agung et al., 2025).

Implications for EFL Pedagogy and Research

The findings indicate that junior high school EFL learners in Lombok possess uneven familiarity with local folklore. Verbal folklore appears to be the most familiar category, likely because it is more frequently represented in formal educational materials, whereas traditional folk games and non-verbal folklore receive comparatively less attention. This uneven familiarity suggests that culturally responsive EFL instruction cannot assume shared cultural knowledge among learners. Instead, teachers should implement scaffolding strategies that gradually build students' cultural understanding before introducing folklore-based language learning activities (McDougall, 2019; Ke Lomi et al., 2024). Recent research likewise emphasizes that integrating local cultural content into English teaching enhances learner engagement, intercultural competence, and contextualized language learning when accompanied by appropriate pedagogical support (Azhary & Fatimah, 2024).

The findings also highlight the importance of distinguishing between passive familiarity (recognition through media or observation) and active familiarity (knowledge acquired through direct participation). This distinction is particularly relevant for traditional folk games, which depend largely on embodied practice and intergenerational transmission. Consequently, future EFL instructional materials should not only introduce folklore as reading content but also

encourage experiential learning through storytelling, role-play, traditional games, and project-based cultural activities. Such approaches have been shown to strengthen students' cultural identity while promoting authentic English communication (Setiawan, 2025). Future research should also examine the relative contributions of family, school, community, and digital media to learners' familiarity with local folklore and investigate how these factors influence the effectiveness of culturally responsive EFL instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated junior high school EFL learners' familiarity with Lombok folklore across verbal, partially verbal, and non-verbal categories, with particular attention to traditional folk games. The findings revealed an overall moderate level of familiarity with Lombok folklore, although familiarity varied considerably across categories. Verbal folklore emerged as the most familiar category, while non-verbal folklore and traditional folk games were less familiar to learners. Within the traditional folk games category, only Peresean achieved a high familiarity rating, whereas most games were rated in the low to very low range, suggesting uneven familiarity with different forms of local cultural heritage among contemporary learners. The study also identified significant differences in familiarity across the participating schools representing urban, semi-urban, and rural locations, with students from the urban school reporting higher familiarity levels than those from the rural school. However, these differences should be interpreted cautiously because each location category was represented by only one school. Overall, the findings indicate that familiarity with Lombok folklore cannot be assumed to be uniform among EFL learners and that different folklore forms are transmitted and maintained to varying degrees.

The findings have important implications for culturally responsive EFL instruction in Lombok. They suggest that educators should explicitly build learners' cultural knowledge before incorporating folklore-based activities into language learning, particularly when using traditional folk games that are no longer widely familiar among students. The familiarity patterns identified in this study may assist teachers and curriculum developers in selecting and sequencing folklore content that aligns with learners' existing cultural knowledge. More broadly, the study contributes empirical evidence to the growing literature on local culture integration in EFL education by demonstrating the value of examining specific folklore forms rather than treating folklore as a single homogeneous category. Future research should develop and evaluate folklore-based EFL instructional materials, investigate changes in cultural familiarity over time, and explore the family, community, school, and media factors that influence learners' knowledge of local cultural heritage. Despite its limitations, this study provides a useful foundation for future efforts to strengthen both cultural preservation and culturally relevant English language learning in Lombok.

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