Indonesian Language Education and Literature
e-ISSN: 2502-2261
https://journal1.uinssc.ac.id/index.php/jeill/index
Vol. 12, No. 1, Desember 2026, 79 – 95

Kalimantan Literacy Reading Materials: Exploration, Aesthetics, Conservation, and Locality-Based Learning

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A B S T R A C T

Kalimantan possesses rich cultural and ecological resources embodied in folklore, oral traditions, indigenous languages, ecological knowledge, and various forms of cultural expression. However, globalization and the expansion of digital culture have gradually reduced the use of local literacy resources among younger generations. This article explores the potential of Kalimantan-based literacy materials through the dimensions of exploration, aesthetics, conservation, and locality-based literacy. Employing a qualitative literature review, the study analyzes local literacy resources, including folklore, oral traditions, indigenous ecological knowledge, performing arts, and local history. The findings reveal that Kalimantan-based literacy materials contribute significantly to strengthening cultural identity, promoting environmental awareness, preserving indigenous knowledge systems, and supporting contextual learning. Moreover, the aesthetic values embedded in local narratives enhance readers' appreciation of cultural heritage. Integrating Kalimantan-based literacy materials into formal and informal education is therefore essential for fostering sustainable literacy and cultural conservation.
Keywords: cultural conservation; cultural identity; indigenous ecological knowledge; Kalimantan-based literacy materials; locality-based literacy

Materi Bacaan Literasi Kalimantan: Eksplorasi, Estetika, Konservasi, dan Pembelajaran Berbasis Lokalitas

Kalimantan memiliki kekayaan budaya dan ekologis yang tercermin dalam cerita rakyat, tradisi lisan, bahasa daerah, pengetahuan ekologis masyarakat adat, dan berbagai ekspresi budaya lainnya. Namun, globalisasi dan perkembangan budaya digital telah menyebabkan semakin berkurangnya penggunaan sumber daya literasi berbasis lokal di kalangan generasi muda. Artikel ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi potensi bahan bacaan literasi berbasis Kalimantan melalui perspektif eksplorasi, estetika, konservasi, dan literasi lokalitas. Penelitian menggunakan metode kajian pustaka kualitatif dengan menganalisis berbagai sumber literasi lokal, seperti cerita rakyat, tradisi lisan, pengetahuan ekologis masyarakat adat, seni pertunjukan, dan sejarah lokal. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa bahan literasi berbasis Kalimantan berperan penting dalam memperkuat identitas budaya, meningkatkan kesadaran lingkungan, melestarikan pengetahuan lokal, serta mendukung pembelajaran yang kontekstual. Selain itu, unsur estetika dalam narasi lokal mampu meningkatkan apresiasi pembaca terhadap warisan budaya. Oleh karena itu, integrasi bahan literasi berbasis Kalimantan dalam pendidikan formal dan nonformal diperlukan untuk mendukung keberlanjutan literasi dan konservasi budaya.
***Kata kunci**: bahan bacaan berbasis lokalitas; identitas budaya; kearifan ekologis masyarakat adat; literasi berbasis Kalimantan; konservasi budaya.*

Received: 16th June 2026; Revised: 21th May 2026; Accepted: 28th June 2026; Available online: 31th October 2026; Published regularly: December 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy is no longer understood merely as the ability to read and write. Contemporary perspectives recognize literacy as a multidimensional practice encompassing cultural literacy, environmental literacy, critical literacy, digital literacy, and community literacy (Yemini et al., 2025). Within this perspective, literacy materials serve as learning resources as well as media for transmitting cultural values, collective memory, indigenous knowledge systems, and environmental awareness. Culturally relevant and place-based literacy resources have become increasingly important for creating meaningful learning experiences and strengthening learners' identities.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of culturally sustaining pedagogy and place-based literacy approaches that connect educational practices with learners' sociocultural and ecological contexts (Häggström & Schmidt, 2020). Folklore-based literacy has been shown to enhance reading engagement and cultural appreciation (Monica & Soplantila, 2024), while studies on environmental literacy demonstrate that local ecological knowledge contributes to sustainability education and environmental awareness (Yadav & Singh, 2025). Community literacy research further emphasizes literacy as a social practice embedded within shared experiences and collective knowledge production (Kelly et al., 2021). These findings indicate that literacy development should be grounded in local realities and cultural diversity.

As the Indonesian part of Borneo Island, Kalimantan represents a particularly rich context for locality-based literacy development. The region is characterized by exceptional biodiversity and cultural diversity, encompassing numerous ethnic communities with extensive oral traditions, indigenous languages, ecological knowledge, traditional arts, and local histories. Despite this richness, literacy materials used in formal education remain largely dominated by national and global narratives, resulting in the underrepresentation of local cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems. This condition raises concerns regarding cultural sustainability, environmental awareness, and the continuity of local identities among younger generations.

Although previous studies have examined folklore documentation, indigenous language preservation, environmental education, and classroom-based literacy interventions, these studies remain fragmented and sectoral. Most focus on isolated dimensions of literacy without considering the interrelationships among cultural heritage, ecological knowledge, conservation values, and community literacy practices. Consequently, there is still no comprehensive framework that conceptualizes Kalimantan as an integrated literacy ecosystem. This absence constitutes the principal research gap addressed in the present study.

The main contribution and novelty of this study lie in the development of an integrated conceptual framework for Kalimantan-based literacy materials. Unlike previous studies that emphasize only one aspect of literacy resources, this framework synthesizes four interconnected dimensions: (1) exploration of local knowledge resources, (2) aesthetic values embedded in local narratives, (3) cultural and environmental conservation functions, and (4) place-based literacy practices. By integrating these dimensions within a single analytical model, the study advances current discussions on culturally sustaining pedagogy, indigenous literacy, and place-based education. The proposed framework represents a conceptual contribution rather than merely a descriptive inventory of local cultural resources.

The framework proposed in this study has broader implications for culturally diverse and ecologically rich regions worldwide. Similar approaches could be adapted in areas such as the Amazon Basin, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia, where indigenous communities possess extensive ecological knowledge and cultural traditions that remain underrepresented in formal education. The model provides a transferable reference for developing locality-based literacy programs in multicultural societies facing challenges related to globalization, cultural erosion, and environmental sustainability.

The study contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The development of culturally relevant literacy materials supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive and contextual learning. The incorporation of indigenous ecological knowledge and conservation values aligns with SDG 15 (Life on Land), particularly in fostering environmental awareness and biodiversity conservation. Strengthening local cultural identity and preserving intangible cultural heritage contribute to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), which emphasizes safeguarding cultural and natural heritage for future generations.

This article aims to analyze the potential of Kalimantan's cultural and ecological resources as the foundation for literacy reading materials and to formulate an integrated framework for place-based literacy development. The study is expected to provide theoretical and practical references for educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and literacy practitioners seeking to strengthen culturally sustaining literacy programs while simultaneously promoting cultural preservation, environmental conservation, and sustainable development.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with an interpretivist orientation (Mizikaci, 2025). The purpose of the study was to explore and interpret the educational, cultural, and ecological meanings embedded in Kalimantan-based literacy resources rather than to test causal relationships or measure variables quantitatively. The study was conducted through a literature-based inquiry focusing on documented cultural texts originating from different regions of Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Data collection and analysis were carried out between January and April 2026. The data corpus consisted of textual materials representing local cultural knowledge, including folklore collections, documented oral traditions, indigenous narratives, educational books containing local content, and scholarly publications related to Kalimantan culture and literacy (Syam et al., 2024). Sources were selected using purposive sampling based on four criteria: (1) the materials explicitly originated from communities in Kalimantan; (2) they contained cultural, ecological, linguistic, or historical knowledge relevant to literacy development; (3) they were available in published or documented forms to ensure accessibility and verifiability; and (4) they had been published or documented between 2010 and 2025 to reflect contemporary efforts in cultural preservation and literacy development. Sources that lacked clear provenance or contained insufficient information regarding cultural content were excluded from the analysis.

The primary instrument of the study was the researcher, supported by document analysis guidelines and thematic coding sheets. Data were collected through systematic literature review and document analysis, enabling the identification of cultural narratives, historical accounts, ecological knowledge, aesthetic expressions, and community values embedded in the texts. Initial coding focused on recurring themes associated with cultural identity, environmental stewardship, spirituality, social harmony, and community resilience.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study employed operational source triangulation by comparing information across multiple categories of sources, including folklore collections, educational materials, documented oral traditions, and peer-reviewed scholarly articles (Mutanana & Shoko, 2026). Themes identified in one type of source were verified against evidence from at least two other source categories to ensure consistency and reduce interpretive bias. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with colleagues familiar with literacy and cultural studies, while repeated reading and recoding procedures were applied to strengthen the reliability and consistency of thematic interpretations.

Data analysis followed an interactive thematic analysis procedure consisting of five stages. First, literacy resources contained in the collected texts were identified and organized. Second, recurring themes were categorized into broader domains such as cultural identity, environmental

awareness, spirituality, social cohesion, and community resilience. Third, the aesthetic dimensions of the texts—including symbolism, narrative structures, imagery, characterization, and moral messages—were interpreted. Fourth, the conservation functions of the literacy materials were analyzed in relation to the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and cultural heritage. The educational implications of these findings were interpreted with reference to cultural literacy, environmental literacy, character education, and place-based learning. Through these analytical stages, the study generated a comprehensive understanding of the potential of Kalimantan-based literacy materials as educational and cultural resources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Document analysis revealed that Kalimantan possesses extensive literacy resources that can be transformed into culturally responsive reading materials. Four major categories of literacy resources were identified: (1) folklore and oral traditions, (2) indigenous ecological knowledge, (3) historical narratives, and (4) traditional arts and performances. These resources contain educational, cultural, ecological, and aesthetic values that support cultural literacy, environmental literacy, character education, and place-based learning.

Table 1. Categories of Kalimantan-Based Literacy Resources and Their Educational Potentials

Literacy Resource Category	Examples of Sources	Dominant Values	Educational Potential
Folklore and Oral Traditions	Asal-usul Burung Hantu, Raja Sinadin, Putri Kumalasari	Honesty, courage, responsibility, social solidarity	Character education and cultural literacy
Indigenous Ecological Knowledge	Traditional forest management, medicinal plants, river conservation	Environmental stewardship, sustainability	Environmental literacy
Historical Narratives	Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah, local historical legends	Historical consciousness, identity formation	Historical literacy
Traditional Arts and Performances	Rituals, traditional dances, local culinary heritage	Cultural identity, cooperation, creativity	Arts literacy and cultural preservation

Folklore emerged as the most dominant literacy resource. The analyzed narratives embed moral values within stories, making them effective educational media. In *Asal Usul Burung Hantu* (Duantika, 2016), the character of Dara Ranti demonstrates filial devotion and perseverance. One passage states, “Dara Ranti remained loyal to her mother despite the hardships she faced.” This narrative illustrates that moral values are transmitted through lived experiences rather than direct instruction. The story also introduces ecological knowledge regarding the role of owls in maintaining agricultural balance by controlling pests. These findings indicate that folklore simultaneously functions as a medium for character education and environmental learning. In *Legenda Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah*, Nuin is portrayed as a generous and socially responsible figure. The text states: “Nuin yang dikenal kaya raya selalu membantu penduduk dan bersikap dermawan kepada semua orang tanpa pilih kasih. Siapa pun yang datang ke rumah Nuin untuk meminta pertolongan, Nuin selalu membantu kesulitan penduduk kampung tersebut” (Hestiyana, 2016, p. 10). This excerpt demonstrates values of generosity, solidarity, and social responsibility, indicating that local narratives function as media for character education and cultural literacy.

Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Environmental Literacy

The analysis revealed the richness of indigenous ecological knowledge embedded in Kalimantan-based literacy resources. Themes related to forest conservation, medicinal plants, wildlife protection, and river management appeared consistently across the analyzed texts. These narratives provide authentic contexts for environmental literacy by linking ecological knowledge with community experiences and traditional practices. For example, several narratives emphasize the obligation to protect forests and rivers because they are considered sources of life for the community. Such perspectives reflect indigenous knowledge systems that promote harmonious relationships between humans and nature. Rather than presenting environmental concepts abstractly, local stories situate ecological values within everyday life and collective memory. In *Legenda Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah*, the ecological richness of the Meratus Mountains is described as follows: "Pegunungan Meratus dikelompokkan sebagai kawasan hutan pegunungan rendah. Kawasan hutan ini memiliki keanekaragaman hayati yang tinggi dengan beberapa vegetasi dominan, seperti meranti putih, meranti merah, agathis, kanari, medang, durian, gerunggang, kempas, dan belatung" (Hestiyana, 2016, p. 3). The passage indicates that local narratives preserve indigenous ecological knowledge and provide authentic contexts for environmental literacy and sustainability education.

Historical Narratives and Cultural Identity Formation

Historical narratives emerged as another important literacy resource. Stories such as *Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah* (Hestiyana, 2016) preserve local historical memory and strengthen cultural identity. These narratives document sacred places, community beliefs, and collective experiences that continue to shape contemporary social life. One passage describes the lake as "a blessed place inherited from the ancestors and respected by the surrounding community." Such expressions demonstrate how local history functions as records of the past and as living cultural heritage. Historical literacy materials therefore contribute to historical consciousness and foster a stronger sense of belonging among learners. In *Legenda Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah*, the text explains: "Mereka yang berdiam di Pegunungan Meratus lebih senang disebut suku Dayak Meratus daripada nama sebelumnya Dayak Bukit…" (Hestiyana, 2016, p. 2). The narrative further records that: "Suku Dayak Meratus merupakan nama kolektif untuk sekumpulan subsuku Dayak yang mendiami sepanjang kawasan Pegunungan Meratus di Kalimantan Selatan" (Hestiyana, 2016, p. 2). These excerpts show that literacy materials preserve historical memory and strengthen cultural identity through the documentation of collective origins and local histories.

Traditional Arts and Performances as Literacy Resources

Traditional arts and performances also emerged as significant literacy resources. Narratives such as *Raja Sinadin* (Harianto, 2016) document ritual ceremonies, communal traditions, and local leadership systems. These cultural elements function as repositories of collective memory and identity. One excerpt states that community members "gathered together to celebrate traditional ceremonies inherited from their ancestors." Such descriptions reveal values of cooperation, solidarity, and social cohesion embedded within artistic practices. Consequently, literacy materials based on traditional arts can support both cultural preservation and arts literacy development. In *Putri Kumalasari*, the author explicitly emphasizes mutual assistance and ethical leadership: "Pada prinsipnya, orang harus saling menolong. Sebagai pemimpin, kalau sudah berjanji harus ditepati agar orang lain tidak merasa dirugikan" (Djamari, 2016, p. vii). Similarly, *Legenda Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah* portrays friendship and cooperation through the relationship between Nuin and Pujung: "Mereka pun akhirnya menjadi akrab. Bahkan, mereka seperti saudara kandung sendiri" (Hestiyana, 2016, p. 9). These findings suggest that local narratives serve as repositories of social values and contribute to the development of community literacy.

Aesthetic Dimensions of Local Narratives

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Beyond thematic content, the analysis identified strong aesthetic dimensions in Kalimantan-based reading materials. Literary elements such as symbolism, imagery, characterization, conflict, and moral messages contribute significantly to the educational value of the texts. For example, *Putri Kumalasari* (Djamari, 2016) presents themes of perseverance, humility, spirituality, and harmony with nature through symbolic imagery and engaging narrative structures. One passage portrays the princess as "remaining humble despite her beauty and noble status." Such aesthetic qualities enhance reading engagement also stimulate imagination, empathy, and literary appreciation. These findings demonstrate that Kalimantan-based literacy materials possess both educational and artistic significance. The opening of *Putri Kumalasari* illustrates this aspect: "Langit di Kerajaan Antah Berantah siang itu cerah. Awan putih bagai sapuan lukisan menghiasi angkasa. Angin semilir menerpa dedaunan dan bunga-bunga di taman" (Djamari, 2016, p. 1). The imagery creates vivid sensory experiences and enhances readers' literary appreciation. Such aesthetic elements enrich learners' imagination and emotional engagement with local cultural heritage.

Conservation Functions of Kalimantan-Based Literacy Materials

Another important finding concerns the conservation functions of literacy materials. The analyzed documents demonstrate that literacy resources contribute to preserving indigenous languages, oral traditions, traditional knowledge, and collective memory. For instance, *Datu Diyang* (Akbari, 2016) documents Banjar vocabulary, healing practices, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. For example, *Legenda Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah* documents the existence of the Dayak Meratus community and its ecological environment: "Pegunungan Meratus menjadi bagian dari delapan kabupaten di Provinsi Kalimantan Selatan…" (Hestiyana, 2016, p. 3). The author of *Putri Kumalasari* explicitly states that the story was developed from Tidung oral traditions: "Cerita ini saya tulis dan saya kembangkan dari cerita lisan Tidung, Kalimantan Utara" (Djamari, 2016, p. vi). These findings demonstrate that Kalimantan-based literacy materials preserve indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions, and local identities. They function as reading resources and as instruments of cultural conservation and culturally sustaining pedagogy. A passage in the story explains that traditional remedies were passed down "from elders to younger generations as valuable ancestral knowledge." This finding illustrates how literacy materials facilitate the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems that were previously transmitted orally.

Table 2. Conservation Functions of Kalimantan-Based Literacy Materials

Conservation Dimension	Evidence from Literacy Materials	Expected Impact
Language Preservation	Use of indigenous vocabulary and local expressions	Maintenance of linguistic diversity
Oral Tradition Preservation	Documentation of folklore and legends	Cultural continuity
Ecological Knowledge Preservation	Traditional environmental practices and beliefs	Environmental awareness
Cultural Heritage Preservation	Rituals, customs, traditional arts, local histories	Strengthening cultural identity

The findings suggest that Kalimantan-based literacy materials function beyond their role as reading resources. They serve as instruments for cultural conservation, environmental education, historical awareness, and identity formation. Through the integration of local narratives, indigenous ecological knowledge, historical experiences, and traditional arts, these materials create meaningful learning experiences that connect learners with their cultural and ecological environments. Kalimantan should be understood as a source of individual texts and as a comprehensive literacy ecosystem that supports culturally sustaining pedagogy and place-based education.

Discussion

Kalimantan-Based Literacy Materials as Instruments of Cultural Identity Construction

One of the most important findings of this study is that Kalimantan-based literacy materials function as reading resources and also as cultural instruments that facilitate the construction and maintenance of cultural identity. Folklore, oral traditions, historical narratives, and traditional arts embody collective memories, social values, and cultural meanings that shape how communities understand themselves and transmit their identities across generations. Stories such as *Putri Kumalasari*, *Raja Sinadin*, and *Telaga Alam Banyu Batuah* expose learners to cultural symbols, local leadership values, and community histories that constitute important elements of cultural identity.

This finding can be understood through the perspective of literacy as a social practice, which views literacy as a neutral set of technical skills and as a socially situated activity embedded within cultural norms, beliefs, and power relations (Shliakhovchuk, 2019; Provaznik & Wedin, 2026). Reading and writing activities involve engagement with socially constructed knowledge systems through which individuals negotiate meanings and develop a sense of belonging. Kalimantan-based literacy materials therefore function as cultural artifacts that mediate learners' relationships with their communities and provide symbolic resources for identity formation. In line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, literacy materials rooted in local culture act as mediational tools through which learners internalize historically accumulated values and perspectives (Moser et al., 2026).

The findings can also be interpreted through the framework of cultural memory, which emphasizes the role of narratives and texts in preserving and transmitting collective experiences (Gumartifa et al., 2025). Folklore and local historical narratives found in Kalimantan-based literacy resources serve as repositories of cultural memory, enabling younger generations to access knowledge that might otherwise disappear under the pressures of modernization and globalization. Through literacy activities, cultural memory is archived, continuously reproduced, and reinterpreted. Literacy becomes a mechanism for sustaining cultural continuity and maintaining social cohesion.

These findings further resonate with the principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which advocate educational practices that acknowledge learners' cultural backgrounds and actively sustain and revitalize them. Unlike culturally responsive approaches that often focus primarily on representation and inclusion, culturally sustaining pedagogy emphasizes the preservation and continuation of local languages, traditions, and knowledge systems (Manuhutu & Sakhiyya, 2026). Kalimantan-based literacy materials contribute to these goals by integrating indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions, and local histories into literacy learning, thereby supporting both academic development and cultural sustainability.

Comparison with previous international studies reveals both similarities and important differences. Kelly et al. (2021) demonstrated that culturally relevant literacy instruction enhances learner engagement and identity affirmation, while Monica and Soplantila (2024) reported positive effects of folklore-based materials on cultural awareness. These studies largely examined literacy interventions at the classroom level or focused on individual literary texts. Place-based education research by Smith and Sobel (2010) emphasized the importance of connecting learning with local environments and communities but paid limited attention to the interconnections among cultural memory, indigenous knowledge systems, and identity formation. The present study extends these perspectives by showing that Kalimantan-based literacy resources operate as isolated texts and as components of a broader cultural ecosystem in which folklore, oral traditions, local histories, traditional arts, and environmental narratives mutually reinforce one another. Cultural identity is constructed through the interaction of multiple forms of knowledge rather than through single literacy resources.

This finding is particularly significant in the context of globalization, where digital media and global cultural flows increasingly expose young people to dominant external cultures that may

weaken connections to local traditions (Hossain, 2024). Kalimantan-based literacy materials function as cultural counterbalances by strengthening cultural pride, local knowledge, and community belonging. They contribute to the development of reflective cultural citizenship, whereby individuals maintain strong local identities while participating actively in national and global communities (Chia & Neoh, 2024). Thus, literacy development extends beyond functional reading competence to encompass cultural understanding, social participation, and identity construction.

This study contributes to the integration of three complementary frameworks, literacy as social practice, cultural memory, and culturally sustaining pedagogy within a single model of locality-based literacy development. Unlike previous studies that examined identity formation, cultural preservation, or literacy learning separately, the present study demonstrates that these dimensions are mutually reinforcing components of an integrated literacy ecosystem. This contribution expands current discussions on cultural literacy and place-based education by positioning literacy as a cognitive skill and as a cultural process through which identities are constructed, collective memories are preserved, and indigenous knowledge systems are sustained across generations.

Local Wisdom and Meaningful Literacy Learning

Another important finding of this study concerns the role of local wisdom as a foundation for meaningful literacy learning. The analysis demonstrates that local wisdom embedded in Kalimantan-based literacy materials represents more than cultural content incorporated into stories and narratives. It constitutes an indigenous knowledge system through which communities organize, preserve, and transmit ecological knowledge, ethical principles, social norms, healing practices, and collective experiences accumulated through long-term interactions with their environments. These forms of knowledge are evident in folklore, oral traditions, historical narratives, and community stories that portray environmental stewardship, communal cooperation, conflict resolution, and spiritual beliefs.

This finding supports the view that indigenous knowledge systems are dynamic and adaptive rather than static traditions inherited from the past (Pradhan et al., 2025). Local wisdom embodies accumulated experiences and collective problem-solving strategies that continue to guide contemporary community life. Literacy materials grounded in local wisdom function as mechanisms for transmitting culturally relevant knowledge while simultaneously supporting literacy development. They allow learners to access ways of knowing that have evolved within communities and that complement formal educational knowledge.

The findings can also be interpreted through the concept of funds of knowledge, which emphasizes that households and communities possess historically accumulated bodies of knowledge that constitute valuable educational resources (Menzies et al., 2024). Traditional agricultural practices, medicinal plant knowledge, river-based livelihoods, customary institutions, and indigenous environmental management found in Kalimantan communities represent intellectual resources that can enrich formal schooling. By incorporating these forms of community knowledge into literacy materials, educational institutions acknowledge learners' cultural backgrounds and establish stronger connections between home-based experiences and school-based learning. Literacy therefore becomes a bridge between community knowledge and academic knowledge rather than a process detached from learners' sociocultural realities.

Comparison with international studies reveals both similarities and differences. Previous research has shown that culturally relevant literacy materials enhance learner engagement and reading achievement across diverse contexts (Kianpour et al., 2026). Indigenous education studies conducted in Africa and Latin America likewise emphasize the importance of incorporating community knowledge into educational practices. Many of these studies focus primarily on specific domains such as environmental conservation, language revitalization, or cultural preservation. The

present findings suggest that local wisdom in Kalimantan possesses a multidimensional character in which ecological, historical, ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions are interconnected. Such a holistic perspective reflects indigenous worldviews that do not separate knowledge into isolated categories but understand human relationships with nature, society, and spirituality as mutually constitutive (Moges et al., 2024).

Another notable finding is that literacy materials based on local wisdom contribute to learners' cultural self-awareness and sense of belonging. Encountering familiar traditions, histories, and values within educational texts enables students to perceive their communities as legitimate sources of knowledge. In multicultural regions such as Kalimantan, this process strengthens cultural identity while fostering appreciation of diversity and intercultural understanding. Narratives containing indigenous ecological knowledge provide opportunities for learners to explore questions of environmental sustainability and community resilience, thereby linking literacy learning with broader social and ecological concerns.

These findings indicate that local wisdom should be viewed as supplementary cultural content and as a fundamental educational resource that supports meaningful literacy learning. The study extends contextual learning theory by demonstrating that meaningful learning emerges when literacy practices are connected with indigenous knowledge systems and community funds of knowledge. Thus, contextual literacy learning involves the adaptation of instructional materials to learners' experiences and also the recognition of communities as legitimate producers and transmitters of knowledge. This contribution broadens existing understandings of culturally grounded literacy by positioning local wisdom as a central component of holistic and meaningful learning.

Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Environmental Literacy

One of the most distinctive findings of this study concerns the integration of cultural values and ecological knowledge within Kalimantan-based literacy materials. The analysis demonstrates that folklore, oral traditions, and local narratives do not separate environmental knowledge from cultural beliefs and social practices. Relationships between humans, forests, rivers, animals, and spiritual values are represented as interconnected elements of everyday life. Indigenous ecological knowledge embedded in these narratives reflects community experiences accumulated through long-term interactions with local ecosystems (Xu et al., 2026). Environmental literacy in the Kalimantan context is inseparable from cultural identity and collective memory.

This finding supports the view that indigenous ecological knowledge constitutes a dynamic knowledge system encompassing beliefs, practices, and values that regulate human interactions with nature. Narratives concerning forest conservation, river management, medicinal plants, and wildlife protection demonstrate that ecological knowledge is transmitted through stories and cultural practices rather than through formal scientific discourse alone. Such integration enables learners to understand environmental issues within culturally meaningful contexts and encourages the development of ecological responsibility rooted in local traditions.

Comparison with international studies reveals both commonalities and distinctive characteristics. Research on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in the Amazon Basin has shown that indigenous communities preserve biodiversity and environmental sustainability through oral traditions and intergenerational knowledge transmission (Berkes et al., 2020). Studies among First Nations communities in Canada emphasize that environmental knowledge is closely connected with language, spirituality, and cultural identity, making ecological learning inseparable from cultural revitalization (Bhandari, 2026). Research in Sub-Saharan Africa likewise shows that indigenous knowledge supports sustainable agriculture, water management, and biodiversity conservation (Ayeni et al., 2026). Many of these studies focus primarily on specific ecological practices or conservation strategies. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that Kalimantan-based literacy materials integrate ecological knowledge with folklore, historical narratives, aesthetic

values, and cultural identity within a single literacy ecosystem (Chackal, 2026). Environmental knowledge is therefore not presented as an isolated domain but as part of a broader cultural framework through which communities understand and maintain relationships with nature.

Another important finding concerns the role of narratives in making environmental literacy more accessible and meaningful. Unlike conventional environmental education, which often relies on abstract scientific concepts, Kalimantan-based literacy materials contextualize ecological issues through stories, moral messages, and community experiences. Learners encounter environmental values through culturally familiar narratives that emphasize reciprocity, harmony, and collective responsibility (Menzies et.al., 2024). Such narrative-based approaches facilitate emotional engagement and promote environmental awareness beyond cognitive understanding alone.

These findings also suggest that indigenous ecological knowledge can serve as a bridge between local wisdom and contemporary sustainability challenges. As global concerns regarding biodiversity loss, deforestation, and climate change intensify, local narratives provide alternative perspectives on human–nature relationships that complement scientific approaches (Seddon et.al., 2021). In this regard, Kalimantan-based literacy materials contribute not only to cultural preservation but also to sustainability education by promoting values of environmental stewardship and ecological resilience.

Aesthetic Dimensions and Literary Engagement

Another important finding of this study concerns the aesthetic richness of Kalimantan-based literacy materials and its contribution to reader engagement. The analysis revealed that local narratives contain sophisticated literary elements, including symbolism, imagery, characterization, narrative conflict, and moral resolution. Stories such as *Putri Kumalasari* demonstrate that cultural values are communicated through artistic forms and emotionally engaging narratives rather than through explicit moral instruction. Readers are encouraged to experience values and meanings through imagination, empathy, and reflection.

These findings support the view of Mahaswa and Hardiyanti (2025) that local wisdom embodies is practical knowledge and aesthetic traditions, as well as culturally specific ways of representing reality. Symbolic depictions of forests, rivers, ancestral heroes, and sacred landscapes found in Kalimantan folklore create emotionally meaningful reading experiences. Such aesthetic dimensions enable readers to actively construct meanings and establish affective connections with cultural narratives. Literary engagement involves cognitive understanding, as well as emotional participation and imaginative interpretation.

Comparison with previous studies reveals that culturally rich literary texts can enhance creativity, empathy, and literary appreciation (Pal, 2025). Earlier research has generally treated aesthetic qualities as complementary features of literacy materials. The present study suggests that aesthetics should be viewed as a central mechanism through which educational values become memorable and meaningful. The emotional and imaginative appeal of local narratives strengthens readers' motivation to engage with texts and facilitates deeper understanding of cultural meanings embedded in stories.

These findings imply that aesthetic dimensions constitute an essential component of literacy development. Literary literacy involves decoding texts also interpreting symbols, appreciating narrative structures, and responding emotionally and critically to literary experiences. Integrating aesthetically rich local narratives into literacy programs can enhance readers' literary competence while simultaneously cultivating imagination, empathy, and appreciation of cultural heritage.

Literacy as a Strategy for Cultural and Environmental Conservation

One of the most significant findings of this study is that Kalimantan-based literacy materials function as instruments for cultural and environmental conservation. The analysis demonstrates that local narratives contribute simultaneously to the preservation of indigenous languages, oral traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, ecological wisdom, and collective memory. Through

documentation and dissemination, knowledge that was traditionally transmitted orally becomes accessible to younger generations and more resilient to the pressures of globalization and social transformation. Literacy thus serves as a means of acquiring reading skills also as a mechanism for sustaining cultural continuity and environmental awareness.

These findings support the perspective proposed by Xiong et al. (2025), who conceptualize literacy as a strategic mechanism for cultural and environmental conservation. Stories such as *Datu Diyang* preserve Banjar vocabulary, traditional medicinal knowledge, and social practices that constitute important components of indigenous knowledge systems. Historical narratives and folklore function as repositories of collective memory by documenting community origins, sacred places, local heroes, and shared experiences. The preservation of these symbolic and linguistic resources contributes to the maintenance of cultural identity and intergenerational continuity.

Comparison with previous studies reveals that most research on literacy and conservation has focused on specific domains, such as language revitalization, folklore documentation, or environmental education. While these studies have provided valuable insights, they often treat linguistic, cultural, and ecological dimensions separately (Heinz et.al., 2025). In contrast, the present study demonstrates that Kalimantan-based literacy materials support multiple forms of conservation simultaneously (Wica et.al., 2026). Indigenous languages preserve cultural meanings, oral traditions transmit collective memory, and ecological narratives sustain environmental knowledge and stewardship practices (Pourbahador & Kermani, 2026). These interconnected functions suggest that literacy should be understood as an integrated conservation strategy rather than a collection of isolated preservation efforts.

The findings also have broader implications for sustainable development. First, the integration of local knowledge into literacy resources contributes to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education by promoting inclusive, culturally relevant, and contextualized learning experiences. Second, the preservation of oral traditions, indigenous languages, and cultural memory supports SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, particularly the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and the strengthening of community resilience. Third, the transmission of indigenous ecological knowledge through narratives and literacy practices contributes to SDG 15: Life on Land by fostering environmental awareness, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable relationships between communities and ecosystems. Literacy materials function as educational resources also as instruments that support sustainable development.

The Novelty of Kalimantan as an Integrated Literacy Ecosystem

The principal contribution and novelty of this study lie in its conceptualization of Kalimantan as an integrated literacy ecosystem. Existing scholarship has generally examined folklore, environmental literacy, indigenous knowledge systems, language preservation, and cultural literacy as separate domains. Studies on folklore primarily emphasize moral values and reading engagement, while research on environmental literacy focuses on ecological awareness and sustainability (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). Investigations into indigenous knowledge and language revitalization tend to address specific cultural or linguistic aspects in isolation. The interrelationships among these dimensions remain insufficiently explored. The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that cultural, ecological, aesthetic, and social dimensions of literacy are interconnected and mutually reinforcing rather than independent components.

Based on the findings, this study proposes an integrated literacy ecosystem consisting of four interconnected dimensions: (1) local knowledge resources, encompassing folklore, oral traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, historical narratives, and traditional arts; (2) aesthetic values embedded in literary forms, symbolism, and narrative structures that foster reader engagement and literary appreciation; (3) cultural and environmental conservation functions that support the preservation of languages, collective memory, ecological knowledge, and cultural heritage; and (4) community-based and place-based literacy practices that connect literacy learning

with local experiences, social participation, and community knowledge. These dimensions interact dynamically and collectively shape literacy development as a multidimensional sociocultural process and a cognitive activity.

Compared with previous studies, the proposed framework provides a broader understanding of literacy development. Whereas earlier research often focused on individual texts, classroom interventions, or specific conservation efforts, the present study conceptualizes literacy as an ecosystem in which knowledge transmission, identity formation, environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, and community participation are inseparable. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding literacy through the relationships among cultural resources, ecological contexts, and social practices rather than through isolated educational outcomes. Kalimantan should be understood as a repository of literacy materials and as a living literacy ecosystem sustained by interactions among communities, traditions, and environments.

The proposed framework expands contemporary discussions on culturally sustaining pedagogy by demonstrating that literacy education should actively sustain and revitalize local cultures rather than merely acknowledge cultural diversity. The study also contributes to the growing field of indigenous literacy by positioning indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate sources of literacy learning and cultural transmission. The framework extends place-based education by emphasizing that local environments and cultural landscapes constitute interconnected literacy spaces rather than simply contextual backgrounds for learning. The integration of ecological knowledge, conservation values, and cultural continuity broadens current understandings of sustainability education, highlighting the role of literacy in fostering environmental stewardship and community resilience.

The novelty of this study lies not simply in identifying various forms of Kalimantan-based literacy resources, but in proposing a comprehensive and transferable model of an integrated literacy ecosystem. This model demonstrates that literacy development involves the interaction of local knowledge resources, aesthetic values, conservation functions, and community-based practices. By bringing these dimensions together within a single framework, the study advances current debates on culturally sustaining pedagogy, indigenous literacy, place-based education, and sustainability education, while offering a conceptual foundation for developing culturally relevant literacy programs in diverse sociocultural and ecological contexts.

Global Relevance and Transferability of the Framework

Although developed within the context of Kalimantan, the integrated literacy ecosystem proposed in this study has broader applicability to culturally diverse and ecologically rich regions worldwide. Similar contexts can be found in the Amazon Basin, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia, where indigenous communities possess extensive ecological knowledge, oral traditions, and cultural heritage that remain underrepresented in formal education (Keong & Onuma, 2021). Challenges associated with globalization, biodiversity loss, language shift, and cultural erosion are not unique to Kalimantan but are shared by many multicultural societies. Consequently, there is a growing need for literacy frameworks that integrate local knowledge with contemporary educational goals.

The findings suggest that the four-dimensional framework identified in this study: (1) local knowledge resources, (2) aesthetic values, (3) cultural and environmental conservation functions, and (4) community-based and place-based literacy practices can serve as a transferable model for locality-based literacy development. Unlike approaches that emphasize isolated aspects of cultural preservation or environmental education, the proposed framework offers a holistic perspective in which literacy simultaneously supports identity formation, knowledge transmission, ecological stewardship, and community participation. This multidimensional perspective enables the framework to be adapted to diverse sociocultural and ecological settings while maintaining sensitivity to local contexts.

Comparison with international experiences further highlights the broader relevance of the framework. Indigenous education initiatives in the Amazon Basin have incorporated oral traditions and ecological knowledge into school curricula to support cultural continuity and biodiversity conservation (Moghadam, 2025). Similarly, literacy programs in Sub-Saharan Africa have emphasized local languages and community knowledge as foundations for meaningful learning, while educational initiatives in Southeast Asia have increasingly promoted culturally responsive approaches to strengthen local identities (Sedawi et al., 2025). However, many of these initiatives focus on particular dimensions of literacy. The present study contributes a more integrated model by demonstrating how cultural resources, aesthetic engagement, conservation functions, and community practices can operate collectively within a single literacy ecosystem.

The significance of this study extends beyond Indonesia. The Kalimantan-based literacy ecosystem provides a conceptual reference for developing culturally sustaining literacy programs in multicultural societies facing rapid social and ecological change. Its transferability reinforces the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and locality-based learning as foundations for literacy development in global contexts.

Contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The findings of this study also contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First, the integration of local knowledge resources into literacy materials supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive, culturally relevant, and contextualized learning. Kalimantan-based literacy materials enable learners to engage with knowledge that reflects their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences, thereby enhancing the meaningfulness and accessibility of education. Second, the incorporation of indigenous ecological knowledge contributes directly to SDG 15 (Life on Land)**.** Narratives concerning forest conservation, river management, medicinal plants, and harmonious relationships between humans and nature foster environmental awareness and encourage biodiversity conservation. By transmitting ecological values through culturally meaningful stories, literacy materials complement scientific approaches to sustainability and promote environmental stewardship among younger generations.

Third, the preservation of indigenous languages, oral traditions, local histories, and cultural identities aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**,** particularly the protection of intangible cultural heritage and the strengthening of community resilience. Literacy activities facilitate the transmission of collective memory across generations and contribute to maintaining cultural diversity in the face of globalization and social transformation. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Kalimantan-based literacy materials function as educational resources also as instruments for sustainable development. By integrating cultural preservation, environmental awareness, and contextual learning, the proposed literacy ecosystem illustrates how literacy can contribute simultaneously to educational quality, cultural sustainability, and ecological resilience. This perspective expands the role of literacy beyond reading competence and positions it as a strategic component in achieving the broader goals of sustainable and inclusive development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Kalimantan's cultural and ecological resources constitute an integrated literacy ecosystem that can support culturally grounded literacy development. Folklore, oral traditions, indigenous ecological knowledge, historical narratives, and traditional arts provide valuable foundations for literacy materials that promote cultural identity, environmental awareness, and knowledge transmission. The study contributes to the literature by proposing a four-dimensional framework consisting of local knowledge resources, aesthetic values, conservation functions, and locality-based literacy practices, thereby extending current discussions on culturally sustaining pedagogy, indigenous literacy, and place-based education. The findings suggest several

policy implications. Educational institutions and curriculum developers should integrate locality-based literacy materials into formal and non-formal education to promote culturally relevant learning. Collaboration among schools, indigenous communities, cultural institutions, and local governments is essential for documenting, preserving, and disseminating indigenous knowledge systems. Digital technologies should be utilized to support the preservation and accessibility of local cultural resources while maintaining their authenticity. This study has several limitations. The analysis relies primarily on literature review and document analysis and therefore does not examine the implementation of Kalimantan-based literacy materials in classroom settings or assess their effects on learners' literacy achievement, cultural awareness, and environmental attitudes. Future studies are recommended to conduct empirical investigations involving teachers, students, and local communities to evaluate the effectiveness and adaptability of the proposed framework across different educational contexts. Such studies would provide stronger evidence for the practical application of locality-based literacy models and their contribution to culturally sustaining and sustainable education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
This article is part of the research results and discussion of the final dissertation assignment in the doctoral program of Language Education, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Semarang State University. The article was written independently without funding sponsorship as part of the scientific assignment for the publication of the work and academic social responsibility in the form of disseminating the ideas that have been created to obtain a proper response from the public.

Author Contribution Statement
Muhammad Thobroni is a researcher focusing on studies of culture and literacy, particularly literacy reading materials set against the backdrop of Kalimantan's culture. **Ida Zulaeha** has made significant contributions to strengthening perspectives on literacy and literacy reading materials as creative texts. **Hari Bakti Mardikantoro** offers insights into the importance of exploring Kalimantan's socio-cultural context within literacy reading materials. **Tommi Yuniawan** plays a role in refining the study of conservation themes within creative texts used as literacy teaching resources.

Funding Statement
This study was made possible through an affirmative scholarship from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia; appreciation is also extended to Universitas Borneo Tarakan (the sending institution) and the State University (the host institution) for their support in ensuring the smooth execution of this undertaking.

Conflict of Interest Statement
1. I acknowledge that I have an emotional connection and regional affiliation with the subject matter; however, I was not directly involved in the creation or curation of the local texts or literacy materials being studied. There is a potential risk that I might assign excessive aesthetic value or overlook structural and content weaknesses in these creative works due to regional pride or personal relationships with the authors or local figures. To mitigate this, I have ensured that aesthetic assessments are conducted using measurable and transparent literary analysis criteria and involve independent peer reviewers or validators to prevent subjectivity.
2. I recognize a potential conflict of interest regarding the development of teaching materials, given that I am both a researcher and a literacy practitioner who utilizes these materials in my own teaching and at the community reading centers I oversee. I am aware of the risk that research

outcomes could be reported as "highly successful" due to this dual role; however, I have implemented safeguards by formulating analysis instruments that are theoretically rigorous.
3. I have no institutional or financial ties to the authors, editors, or publishers of the literacy materials, thereby fully preserving my independence and autonomy as a researcher and scholar.

Data Availability Statement

Research data is abundantly available at many community reading centers, easily accessible to anyone—including myself as a researcher. The availability of these literacy materials regarding Kalimantan facilitates my work in reading, observing, analyzing, and reporting on the study, even amidst the resource constraints characteristic of the island—particularly in its frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped regions.

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