

## Students' Proficiency Of Cultural Values In Literature-Based Reading Materials: An Experimental Study

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the impact of literature-based reading instruction on students' ability to identify cultural values in texts. Conducted with 17 second-semester students at Balitar Islamic University, it employed a one-group pre-test post-test design. Participants engaged in three learning sessions using varied literary genres (novels, comics, and storybooks). Statistical tests (Shapiro-Wilk, Levene's, and paired-sample t-test) indicated significant improvement in post-test scores ( $p < 0.05$ ). The instruction enhanced cultural literacy and reading skills, notably in vocabulary acquisition, identifying main ideas, and recognizing supporting details. However, students showed limited progress in inferring moral lessons or implied meanings. These findings highlight the pedagogical value of integrating literature into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs to promote intercultural awareness and responsive reading in higher education.*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak pembelajaran membaca berbasis sastra terhadap kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengenali nilai budaya dalam teks. Melibatkan 17 mahasiswa semester dua di Universitas Islam Balitar, studi ini menggunakan desain pre-test post-test satu kelompok. Mahasiswa mengikuti tiga sesi pembelajaran dengan berbagai genre sastra seperti novel, komik, dan cerita anak. Analisis data menggunakan uji statistik termasuk uji normalitas Shapiro-Wilk, uji homogenitas Levene, dan uji-t sampel berpasangan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan kemampuan membaca ( $p < 0,05$ ). Pembelajaran berbasis sastra terbukti meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata, identifikasi gagasan utama, dan detail pendukung. Namun, peningkatan dalam menyimpulkan nilai moral atau makna tersirat masih terbatas. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi sastra dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) untuk meningkatkan literasi budaya dan membaca responsif di pendidikan tinggi.

## 1. Introduction

Literature encompasses a distinctive range of discourses, including both fictional and factual works. Moreover, it has emerged as a powerful and evolving tool in language instruction, particularly as the Malaysian education system recognizes its value for student development. Numerous educators acknowledge that literary texts play a vital role in the English classroom by providing rich language exposure, encouraging personal expression, and

...serving as a meaningful source of student motivation (Nibras, 2024). Literary works motivate learners to develop their interpretative abilities by prompting them to consider deeper meanings. When these texts hold significant impact, they become integral elements of a culture's collective experience (Deane, 2020).

Menadue & Cheer (2017) describe culture as encompassing the symbolic, conceptual, and non-material elements of a society. Given that literature

and culture both reflect shared traits like values, behavioral norms, and linguistic structures (Ahtif & Gandhi, 2022), students can connect literary content to their own cultural experiences. Furthermore, developing cultural understanding is closely linked to language proficiency, as literature serves as an effective medium for building foundational language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Through engaging with various literary genres, learners are exposed to authentic language use and diverse cultural contexts, which deepen both their linguistic competence and cultural awareness (Mardiani & Baharuddin, 2023).

Based from the research of Smith et al. (2021) suggests that understanding a literary work from a different culture requires the ability to infer and interpret in order to grasp its deeper message and fully value the piece. Often, authors include words or expressions without directly explaining their meanings, making it necessary for readers to expand their understanding of the cultural background in which the text was created. Therefore, merely reading the content of a literary work is insufficient for fully understanding and appreciating it without considering the reader's personal experiences and cultural background, which are essential for interpreting the meanings and ideas within the text. Literary works have the potential to bridge cultural differences by presenting elements such as beliefs, values, customs, and environments from both the reader's culture and other cultural contexts (Hiidenmaa et al., 2024).

Considering the significant role of literature in enhancing both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness, it becomes essential to explore how students perceive the cultural values embedded in literature-based reading materials. Particularly in the context of English Language Education at Balitar Islamic University, such exploration can provide valuable insights into how students interpret and internalize cultural messages within literary texts. This study, therefore, aims to investigate students' perceptions of cultural values found in literature-based materials, using a pre-experimental one group pre-test post-test design. The findings are expected to inform educators on the effectiveness of literary texts in promoting cultural understanding and shaping culturally responsive language instruction.

## 2. Literature Review

### Cultural Values

The concept of culture has been interpreted in various ways, with numerous scholars offering

definitions based on their individual viewpoints. For the purpose of this study, the understanding of culture will serve as a foundational framework (Samovar et al., 2013). Culture is a dynamic lifestyle shared by a community, consisting of common practices, products, and perspectives that are shaped and expressed within a particular social setting (Khan & Panarina, 2017). Meanwhile, Edward B. Tylor in Afifah (2022) defines culture as a broad term that includes the collective behaviors and norms of human societies, along with the knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, traditions, skills, and habits that characterize individuals within these groups.

Culture in language learning can be categorized into five dimensions: source culture, target culture, international culture, intercultural interaction, and cultural universality (Maulidya, 2022). First, source culture refers to students' native culture, such as Indonesian culture, which fosters identity and appreciation for local heritage through textbook integration. Second, target culture involves English-speaking countries like the US or UK, offering learners authentic exposure to native linguistic and cultural contexts. Third, international culture represents English use in global, non-native settings, broadening learners' global perspectives. Fourth, intercultural interaction emphasizes communication across diverse cultural backgrounds, shaped by differing values and norms. Lastly, cultural universality highlights common elements shared across all human societies, reflecting shared experiences and potential biological foundations.

### Literature Based Reading

Fathi et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of guiding EFL learners to adopt diverse independent learning strategies aimed at helping them understand new subject matter through reading. To address students' learning challenges, English instructors can implement Literature-Based Instruction as an effective method to enhance both reading comprehension and writing performance. Integrating literature into foreign language classrooms plays a vital role in achieving these educational goals.

According to Ghafar et al., (2025) literature in the target language can support language acquisition by utilizing narrative elements such as orientation, complication, and resolution. Additionally, works written in or translated into the target language offer learners' valuable insights into different cultures. Moreover, literary content often reflects real-life experiences more authentically and

may feel more meaningful to learners compared to conventional textbook materials. Luis (2020) states that Literature-Based Instruction in EFL settings can incorporate various forms of literature, such as novels, informational texts, short stories, poetry, and drama. Similarly, Novasyari (2019) explain that a Literature-Based classroom typically centers around the use of authentic fictional and nonfictional trade books as a core component of the teaching strategy.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### Methods

This study employs an experimental research approach categorized under Pre-Experimental Designs. Specifically, it utilizes the One Group Pretest-Posttest Design, in which a single group is assessed both before and after the treatment. The initial pretest serves to measure the participants' baseline abilities, while the posttest evaluates their performance following the intervention. This design allows for a more precise assessment of the treatment's effectiveness by enabling a direct comparison between the participants' conditions prior to and after the implementation of the experimental treatment (Sugiyono, 2019b).

This study targets second-semester students enrolled in the Reading class during the 2024/2025 academic year at Universitas Islam Balitar, involving a total of 17 participants. The researcher initially administered a multiple-choice test consist of cultural values in text to directly assess the students' reading proficiency. Following the pretest, the researcher conducted three treatment sessions using Literature-Based reading materials designed to enhance students' reading comprehension through exposure to authentic literary texts. After the treatment phase, a post-test was administered to determine whether there was a significant improvement in students' learning outcomes by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores. This procedure aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using Literature-Based instruction in fostering reading skills in an EFL context.

#### The Validity Test

Validity is defined as the extent to which an instrument accurately measures the subject it is intended to assess. A study's findings are considered valid when the researcher's conclusions align closely with the actual content of the instructional material (Sugiyono, 2019). The validity test was carried out using a tryout class that had no direct involvement with the experimental

class used for the pre-test and post-test. This approach aimed to maintain the integrity of the experimental group. Data for the validity test were obtained from a tryout conducted in a separate class consisting of 32 students.

Table 1. The Validity Test

Question Number	r <sub>count</sub>	r <sub>table</sub>	description
1	0,712	0,324	valid
2	0,485	0,324	valid
3	0,771	0,324	valid
4	0,406	0,324	valid
5	0,373	0,324	valid
6	0,525	0,324	valid
7	0,093	0,324	invalid
8	0,417	0,324	valid
9	0,729	0,324	valid
10	0,496	0,324	valid
11	0,485	0,324	valid
12	0,355	0,324	valid
13	0,616	0,324	valid
14	0,504	0,324	valid
15	0,549	0,324	valid
16	0,553	0,324	valid
17	0,273	0,324	invalid
18	0,487	0,324	valid
19	0,375	0,324	valid
20	0,367	0,324	valid
21	0,277	0,324	invalid
22	0,152	0,324	invalid
23	0,509	0,324	valid
24	0,367	0,324	invalid
25	0,606	0,324	valid

Based on the obtained data, it was found that the r<sub>count</sub> scores were higher than the r<sub>table</sub> scores, indicating that the test items can be considered valid. However, there were five items, namely items 7, 17, 21, 22, and 24 that had count scores lower than the r<sub>table</sub> scores, meaning they are not valid and should be eliminated.

#### The Reliability Test

An instrument's reliability refers to its capacity to produce consistent results over an extended period. This consistency is reflected in how accurately the same individuals with the same characteristics perform on the same test across multiple occasions. A test is considered reliable if its outcomes remain stable (Sugiyono, 2019). Repeatedly using the same instrument to assess the same variables should yield similar findings. The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha is considered reliable if the significance value is greater than 0.6. The following presents the results of the reliability test conducted on the test instrument.

Table 2. The Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.797	25

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that the test instrument is reliable, as the reliability test resulted in a score of 0.797, which exceeds the threshold of 0.6.

#### 4. Research Results And Discussion

##### The Pre-Test and Post Test Score

The pre-test scores were obtained from the test results of English class students at Balitar Islamic University. The researcher administered the test directly to the students without providing any prior treatment, and the results were as follows.

Table 3. The Score of Pre-Test

Students	Question Item Score																				Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	18
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	10
6	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	12
7	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	13
8	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	14
9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	17
10	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	16
11	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	11
12	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	9
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	18
14	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	15
15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	18
16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	18
17	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	15

Next, the researcher conducted a treatment for the students using literature-based reading materials over three sessions. The students were encouraged to study novels, comics, and storybooks to enhance their reading skills. Following this, the researcher administered a post-test using the same questions, and the results were as follows.

Table 4. The Score of Post-Test

Students	Question Item Score																				Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	18
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	19
4	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	16
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	17
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	19
7	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	18
9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	20
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	18
11	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	16
12	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	18
14	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18
15	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	17
16	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	18
17	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18

After conducting the pre-test and post-test, the researcher analyzed the data using normality test, homogeneity test, and paired-sample t-test with SPSS Version 27.

##### The Normality Test

Normality testing is a statistical method used to determine whether data follow a normal distribution. According to Sugiyono (2019) the Shapiro-Wilk test is applied to small samples, typically fewer than 50, for more accurate detection of distribution deviations. Data are considered normally distributed if the significance value exceeds 0.05; otherwise, they are not. The following presents the normality test results for the pre-test and post-test data.

Table 5. The Normality Test

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE_TEST	.178	17	.157	.932	17	.238
POST_TEST	.243	17	.009	.904	17	.079

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The calculation is based on the significance (Sig.) value shown in the Shapiro-Wilk test, which yielded 0.238 for the pre-test and 0.079 for the post-test. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it indicates that the pre-test and post-test data are normally distributed.

##### The Homogeneity Test

A homogeneity of variance test is conducted to determine whether the collected samples from the same population exhibit consistent or differing variance levels (Sugiyono, 2019). In this test, if the significance score is greater than 0.05, the data is considered homogeneous, indicating that the groups originate from a population with equal variances. The following presents the results of the homogeneity test for the pre-test and post-test classes in this study.

Table 5. The Homogeneity Test

	Tests of Homogeneity of Variances				
	Levene Statistic		df1	df2	Sig.
Hasil Belajar Reading	Based on Mean	21.133	1	32	.374
	Based on Median	18.254	1	32	.557
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	18.254	1	20.898	.342
	Based on trimmed mean	20.695	1	32	.333

Based on the results, the significance score based on the mean is 0.374, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data is homogeneous, indicating that the groups share equal variance.

**The Paired Sample T-Test**

This test is applied to determine the difference between the average scores before the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test) using literature-based reading materials. The proposed hypothesis for this research namely:

Ho = There is no significant difference between the average pre-test scores and the average post-test scores.

Ha = There is a significant difference between the average pre-test scores and the average post-test scores.

Table 5. The Paired Sample T-Test

		Paired Samples Test					
		Paired Differences					
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PRETEST - POSTTEST	2.588	3.554	.862	4.416	.761	3.0603

Based on the results of the test, it is evident that the significance value (sig. 2-tailed) is 0.008, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. This difference is attributed to the implementation of literature-based reading material for the English class students at the Balitar Islamic University.

**5. Discussion**

In this research, the researcher applied Literature-Based Instruction as a chosen method believed to enhance students' abilities in reading comprehension and writing performance. Following the application of this instructional approach, the results showed a notable improvement, as students' scores demonstrated a significant rise from the pre-test to the post-test. Based on the results obtained from the paired sample t-test, it can be concluded that the treatment given to English major students at Balitar Islamic University had a statistically significant effect. This is supported by the test outcome, which showed a significance value of 0.008, falling below the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, it indicates that the implementation of the literature-based reading material successfully contributed to improving students' learning outcomes.

The enhancement of reading comprehension among students in the experimental group was notably significant. In the post-test, they achieved

levels ranging from Average to Good and even Excellent. This progress is believed to result from the implementation of the strategy during the treatment phase. The use of Literature-Based Instruction contributed to the improvement, as it engaged students with a variety of reading materials including short stories, fables, and folktales. Novasyari (2019) explains that the Literature-Based classroom is a strategy where teachers typically incorporate genuine fiction and nonfiction trade books as the main component of reading instruction.

The paired sample t-test results for reading comprehension in the experimental group indicated a notable improvement. Initially, the pretest scores were mostly at a low level. However, after the treatment, the average scores increased significantly. This progress is attributed to the students' exposure to the instructional strategy applied during the intervention. Zur et al. (2025) emphasize that the quantity and diversity of reading materials students are exposed to plays a crucial role in shaping their reading comprehension. Through extensive reading activities supported by reading logs, students not only expand their vocabulary and critical thinking skills but also develop sustained reading habits and greater interest in a variety of genres.

The greatest gains in reading skills were observed in vocabulary development, identifying the main idea, and understanding supporting details. This significant improvement is likely attributed to the structured activities during the Literature-Based Instruction, where students actively engaged in selecting reading materials that were closely related to the topic of their study. Prior to reading, they carefully highlighted challenging or unfamiliar vocabulary within the texts to reduce potential comprehension barriers. Additionally, when students encountered difficult words, they were encouraged to use dictionaries or seek assistance from their peers who might understand the meanings better. This collaborative and proactive approach greatly supported and enhanced their overall reading comprehension and learning experience. Similarly, Roser et al. (1990) found that literature-based approaches can encourage students to respond positively, showing enthusiasm for books, sharing ideas, and improving their language and literacy skills. The reading skill that showed the significant improvement in the experimental group was inference. This may be because have understand the moral lessons or underlying messages within the stories.

## 6. Conclusion And Suggestion

### Conclusion

The implementation of literature-based reading instruction significantly improved students' ability to comprehend and interpret cultural values in literary texts. The post-test results, supported by statistical evidence, indicate substantial progress in reading comprehension, particularly in vocabulary recognition and identifying key ideas. The instructional approach not only enhanced language proficiency but also contributed to developing students' intercultural awareness. Despite this success, challenges remain in students' inferencing skills, suggesting the need for further pedagogical strategies focused on deeper textual analysis. Overall, the study confirms the effectiveness of literary texts as a tool for culturally responsive EFL teaching.

### Suggestion

Educators are encouraged to continue using literature-based reading materials in EFL classes to improve students' language and cultural understanding. Lecturers should guide students in interpreting deeper meanings and cultural messages to enhance inferencing skills. Pre-reading vocabulary activities and group discussions can support better comprehension. Future studies should involve larger samples, use control groups, and examine long-term effects. Exploring digital and multicultural texts is also recommended to broaden cultural exposure.

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