

DESIGNING ENGLISH FOLKTALES COMIC STRIP AS AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING MEDIA IN SMPN 2 NEGARA

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Abstract. This study aims to develop an English folklore comic strip as an interactive learning medium for students of SMPN 2 Negara by utilizing Gemini and Canva in the development process. This study used the Research and Development (R&D) method which includes the stages of needs analysis, design, development, implementation, and product evaluation. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and questionnaires to obtain information on user needs and the quality of the developed media. Data were analyzed descriptively qualitatively and quantitatively to evaluate the feasibility and characteristics of the product. The results showed that Gemini helped generate story ideas, dialogue, and narratives, while Canva supported the systematic arrangement of comic panels, illustrations, captions, and speech bubbles. The resulting comic strip integrated local folklore, moral values, and environmental themes, making it more contextual and culturally relevant. Furthermore, the combination of visual and verbal elements can increase student motivation, engagement, understanding, and creativity. Thus, English-language folklore comic strips have the potential to be an effective interactive learning medium while also supporting the preservation of local culture.

Keywords: Comic Strip, Interactive Learning Media, English Folktales

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan *comic strip* cerita rakyat berbahasa Inggris sebagai media pembelajaran interaktif bagi siswa SMPN 2 Negara dengan memanfaatkan Gemini dan Canva dalam proses pengembangannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian dan Pengembangan (*Research and Development/R&D*) yang meliputi tahap analisis kebutuhan, perancangan, pengembangan, implementasi, dan evaluasi produk. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan angket untuk memperoleh informasi mengenai kebutuhan pengguna serta kualitas media yang dikembangkan. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif kualitatif dan kuantitatif untuk mengevaluasi kelayakan dan karakteristik produk. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Gemini membantu menghasilkan ide cerita, dialog, dan narasi, sedangkan Canva mendukung penyusunan panel komik, ilustrasi, *caption*, dan *speech bubbles* secara sistematis. *Comic strip* yang dihasilkan mengintegrasikan cerita rakyat lokal, nilai moral, dan tema lingkungan sehingga lebih kontekstual dan relevan secara budaya. Selain itu, kombinasi unsur visual dan verbal mampu meningkatkan motivasi, keterlibatan, pemahaman, dan kreativitas siswa. Dengan demikian, *comic strip* cerita rakyat berbahasa Inggris berpotensi menjadi media pembelajaran interaktif yang efektif sekaligus mendukung pelestarian budaya lokal.

Kata Kunci: *Comic Strip*, Media Pembelajaran Interaktif, Cerita Rakyat Berbahasa Inggris

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed educational practices and created new opportunities for the use of innovative learning media. Digital platforms enable students to access information quickly and support more flexible learning environments that accommodate diverse learning needs (Zhang, Burgos, & Dawson, 2019; Singh, Thakur, & Nagaraju, 2019). However, the availability of technology does not automatically improve learning outcomes. Many English language classrooms still face challenges related to students' limited vocabulary mastery, low reading comprehension, and insufficient engagement during learning activities (Baharudin, Saifullah, & Hasan, 2024; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023). These challenges highlight the need for instructional media that are both pedagogically effective and attractive to digital-native learners.

One potential resource for English language learning is folklore. As a form of traditional literature, folktales contain rich linguistic expressions, cultural values, and moral messages that can support language acquisition while fostering cultural awareness (Nhung, 2016; Safitri, 2023). Folktales also provide meaningful contexts that help students connect language learning with real-life experiences and local cultural heritage. Despite these advantages, folklore remains underutilized in English language classrooms, where learning materials are often dominated by generic texts with limited cultural relevance (Dikiltas, 2023). In addition to folklore, comic strips have gained increasing attention as effective learning media due to their ability to combine visual and verbal elements in a meaningful way. According to Kohnke (2019), comics support language learning by presenting information through multimodal formats that are easier for students to understand and remember. Previous studies have reported that comic strips can improve students' motivation, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, speaking ability, and writing skills (Juliana, 2021; Rumapea et al., 2025; Abdussafa et al., 2026). The combination of images, dialogues, and narratives makes learning more engaging and encourages students to participate actively in classroom activities.

The emergence of artificial intelligence and digital design platforms also provides new opportunities for developing educational media. Tools such as Gemini can assist in generating story ideas, dialogues, and narratives, while Canva facilitates the design of visually appealing learning materials. The integration of these technologies allows educators to create instructional resources more efficiently while maintaining creativity and contextual relevance. Consequently, technology can be utilized not only as a medium for delivering instruction but also as a tool for designing innovative learning experiences that align with students' interests and learning preferences.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the educational value of comic strips, most have focused on their effectiveness in improving specific language skills, such as vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, speaking ability, or writing skills (Juliana, 2021; Rumapea et al., 2025; Abdussafa et al., 2026). Other studies have examined the use of folklore as a source of language learning materials to promote cultural awareness and contextual learning (Nhung, 2016; Safitri, 2023). However, these studies generally investigated comics and folklore separately. In addition, the majority of comic-based learning media employed commercially available or generic stories that were not closely connected to students' local cultural backgrounds. Research integrating local folklore into English comic strips remains limited, particularly in the context of junior high school students. Furthermore, studies involving artificial intelligence and digital design platforms have primarily focused on technology-assisted content creation, without specifically examining how these technologies can be utilized to develop culturally responsive comic-based learning media. Therefore, a gap remains in the development of English learning media that simultaneously integrate local cultural content, digital storytelling, and technology-assisted design within a single instructional product.

The novelty of this study lies not only in the utilization of artificial intelligence through Gemini and digital visual design through Canva, but also in the development of a digital English comic strip based on local folklore as a culturally responsive learning medium. Unlike previous studies that mainly evaluated the effectiveness of existing comics or folklore-based texts separately, this study integrates local folktales, English language learning activities, and AI-assisted digital design into a single instructional product. This integration enables students to learn vocabulary and reading comprehension through stories that are closely related to their cultural environment while benefiting from an engaging visual format. Therefore, this study aims to develop local folktale-based English comic strips for students at SMPN 2 Negara and to examine their potential contribution to enhancing vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, learning engagement, and cultural awareness.

METHOD

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) method aimed at developing and evaluating an instructional product in the form of English folktale-based digital comic strips as interactive learning media. R&D was selected because it provides a systematic process for designing, developing, validating, and refining educational products before implementation (Borg & Gall, 2003). The development procedure adopted the ADDIE model, consisting of

five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The Analysis stage was conducted to identify students' learning needs, existing instructional practices, and challenges in English language learning, particularly related to vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and learning engagement. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with English teachers, and document analysis of teaching materials used at SMPN 2 Negara. The findings revealed the need for interactive and culturally relevant learning media that could support students' language development while increasing their motivation to learn.

The Design stage focused on preparing the instructional framework and product blueprint. At this stage, learning objectives, content structure, comic layouts, vocabulary activities, reading comprehension tasks, and visual storytelling elements were designed. Four content categories were selected, namely Environmental Awareness, Indonesian Folklore, Animal Fables, and Comic Literacy. Storyboards and instructional scenarios were also developed to ensure alignment between learning objectives and comic content. During the Development stage, the comic strips were produced using Gemini and Canva. Gemini was utilized to generate story ideas, dialogues, narratives, and vocabulary contexts, while Canva was used to design illustrations, comic panels, captions, and speech bubbles. The prototype was subsequently reviewed and revised based on feedback from experts in English language education and instructional media. This stage ensured that the product met content, language, visual, and pedagogical requirements.

The Implementation stage involved limited product testing with target users. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and user feedback to examine the practicality and usability of the developed comic strips. The testing process focused on students' responses toward the attractiveness, readability, and usefulness of the learning media during English learning activities. Data analysis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and expert feedback were analyzed through data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Quantitative data obtained from validation sheets and user questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages to determine the level of product feasibility and user acceptance. The Evaluation stage was carried out continuously throughout the development process by incorporating feedback from experts and users to improve the final product. This iterative evaluation ensured that the developed comic strips were pedagogically appropriate, visually engaging, and relevant to students' learning needs.

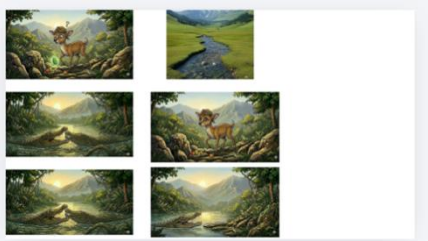
RESULTS

The results of the needs analysis revealed that students at SMPN 2 Negara experienced difficulties in understanding English reading texts and mastering vocabulary. Classroom observations and interviews with teachers indicated that the learning process was still dominated by conventional instructional methods, resulting in limited student engagement and motivation during English lessons. In addition, students expressed a preference for learning materials that combine visual elements, storytelling, and interactive activities. These findings indicate the need for learning media that are more engaging, contextual, and suitable for students’ characteristics. Based on these results, an English folktales comic strip was developed as an instructional medium integrating local cultural stories, visual narratives, and language-learning activities to support students’ reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

Blueprint of the Comic Strip

Before designing the initial draft of the media, a blueprint was developed by integrating the problems identified during the preliminary observation, the results of the syllabus analysis, and relevant theories, including theories of good learning media, teaching strategies for young learners, and previous empirical studies on the use of comic strips in language learning. This blueprint serves as a guideline in designing the English folktales comic strip as an interactive learning media. Furthermore, the blueprint was continuously developed and revised through a comprehensive analysis of data and information obtained from needs analysis, curriculum analysis, and supporting theories. This process aligns with the Design stage of the ADDIE model, which aims to systematically plan and organize the components of the learning media before development.

Table 1. Blueprint of the comic strip

No.	Steps	Description
1.		Blue print of English Folktale Comic Strip being develop (1st topic)

2.		Blue print of English Folktale Comic Strip (2nd Topic)
3.		Blue print English Folktale Comic Strip (3rd topic)
4.		Blue print English Folktale Comic Strip (4th topic)
5.		Blue print English Folktale Comic Strip (5th topic)
6.		Blue print English Folktale Comic Strip (6th topic)

Table 1 shows that the development of the English Folktale Comic Strip successfully combines storytelling, visual illustration, cultural values, and educational purposes into an engaging learning medium. Each comic blueprint presents different folktales and themes, such as friendship, honesty, environmental awareness, bravery, and responsibility. The stories are arranged through sequential comic panels that help students understand the narrative more easily while also improving their reading interest and comprehension. Furthermore, the comic strips use attractive visual elements, including colorful illustrations, natural backgrounds, traditional cultural settings, and expressive characters to create interactive learning

experiences. Several topics, such as The Mouse Deer and The Crocodiles and Danau Toba, adapt well-known Indonesian folktales, while other topics integrate environmental and social education through stories about animals, forests, and community cleanliness. Overall, these blueprints demonstrate that English folktale comic strips can function not only as entertaining media but also as effective educational tools that support language learning, moral education, cultural preservation, and students' motivation in the learning process.

Blueprint of the Comic Strip

This part presents the complete blueprint of the supporting materials designed to accompany the English Folktale Comic Strip learning media. The supporting materials are organized into several thematic units that integrate vocabulary activities, filling-the-blank exercises, and reading comprehension tasks to support students' English learning process.

Table 2. The complete Blue Print of the Supporting Material

Unit/Theme	Materi
Environmental Awareness	1. Waste Management (Vocabulary) 2. Clean Environment (Vocabulary) 3. Cleaning the Market (Filling the Blank) 4. My Trash-Free Village (Filling the Blank) 5. Comprehension: Bali Bebas Sampah
Indonesian Folklore	1. Nautical & Maritime (Vocabulary) 2. Family Relationships (Vocabulary) 3. The Legend of Malin Kundang (Filling the Blank) 4. The Golden Fish Secret (Filling the Blank) 5. Comprehension: Moral Lessons from Legends
Animal Fables	1. Forest Wildlife (Vocabulary) 2. Traits & Characters (Vocabulary) 3. The Mouse and The Lion (Filling the Blank) 4. The Ant and The Grasshopper (Filling the Blank) 5. Comprehension: Hard Work vs Laziness
Comic Literacy	1. Comic Elements (Vocabulary) 2. Expressions & Emotions (Vocabulary) 3. Creating My First Panel (Filling the Blank) 4. Describing the Scene (Filling the Blank) 5. Comprehension: Visual Storytelling Tips

Table 2 presents the complete blueprint of the supporting materials developed to accompany the English Folktale Comic Strip learning media. The materials are organized into four thematic units: *Environmental Awareness*, *Indonesian Folklore*, *Animal Fables*, and *Comic Literacy*. Each unit is systematically structured into three learning components, namely vocabulary enrichment, language practice through filling-the-blank activities, and reading comprehension tasks. The *Environmental Awareness* unit introduces environmental vocabulary and contextual reading activities related to waste management and community

cleanliness, promoting both language development and environmental awareness. The *Indonesian Folklore* unit integrates local cultural content through stories such as *The Legend of Malin Kundang* and *The Golden Fish Secret*, enabling students to learn English while exploring Indonesian cultural heritage and moral values. The *Animal Fables* unit focuses on character traits, moral lessons, and narrative understanding through well-known fables, while the *Comic Literacy* unit introduces students to comic elements, visual storytelling, and emotional expressions that support their understanding of comic-based texts. This structure demonstrates that the supporting materials were not only designed to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension but also to strengthen cultural awareness, environmental literacy, and students' ability to interpret multimodal texts within the comic learning environment.

In addition, the supporting materials combine language learning with moral values, cultural knowledge, and creative literacy. The Environmental Awareness unit promotes responsibility toward cleanliness and waste management, while the Indonesian Folklore unit introduces local legends and their moral lessons. The Animal Fables unit emphasizes character education through stories about hard work, cooperation, and behavior, whereas the Comic Literacy unit helps students understand comic elements, emotions, and visual storytelling techniques. Overall, the blueprint demonstrates that the supporting materials are designed not only to improve students' vocabulary, reading, and comprehension skills, but also to enhance creativity, cultural understanding, and critical thinking through comic-based learning activities.

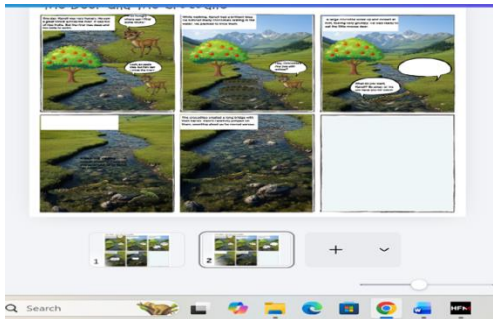
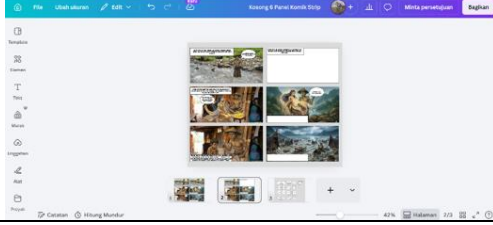
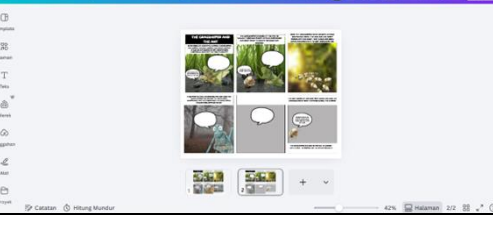
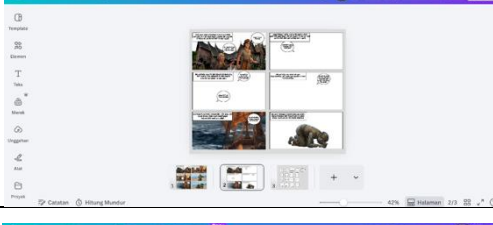
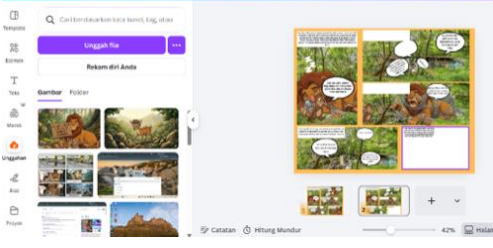
Design-making in Canva Project

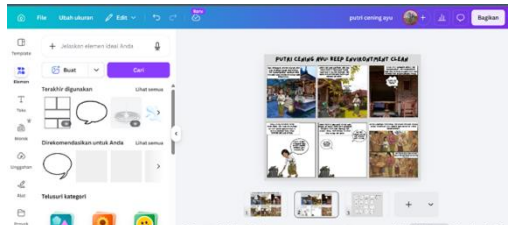
The product developed in this study was an English Folktale Comic Strip designed as an interactive learning medium for junior high school students. The comic integrates local Indonesian folktales into English language learning through visual storytelling, dialogues, vocabulary activities, reading comprehension tasks, and reflective exercises. The product consists of several thematic units, including Indonesian folklore, environmental awareness, animal fables, and comic literacy, which are presented in a colorful and visually engaging comic format. Each unit contains illustrated story panels, contextual vocabulary sections, fill-in-the-blank activities, and comprehension exercises that encourage students to interact actively with the learning materials.

In addition, the comic strip incorporates interactive elements such as simple questionnaires and follow-up activities that allow students to reflect on story content and moral values. The visual design was developed using Canva, resulting in a user-friendly layout with attractive illustrations, readable typography, and consistent color schemes suitable for junior high school

learners. The integration of local folklore narratives and multimodal learning components enables students not only to improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension but also to develop cultural awareness through exposure to Indonesian traditional stories. Therefore, the English Folktale Comic Strip represents a culturally relevant and visually rich learning product that supports meaningful and engaging English language learning.

Table 3. The design-making process in Canva Project

No.	Steps	Description
1.		Designing English Folktale Comic Strip (1 st Topic)
2.		Designing English Folktale Comic Strip (2 nd Topic)
3.		Designing English Folktale Comic Strip (3 rd Topic)
4.		Designing English Folktale Comic Strip (4 th Topic)
5.		Designing English Folktale Comic Strip (5 th Topic)

6.		Designing English Folktale Comic Strip (6 th Topic)
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DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the developed English Folktale Comic Strip possesses several distinctive characteristics that support English language learning. First, the product integrates local Indonesian folktales, visual storytelling, vocabulary activities, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and reading comprehension tasks into a single learning medium. This integration enables students not only to learn language components but also to engage with contextual cultural content. The analysis of the product design shows that each comic unit provides opportunities for students to develop vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension through narratives that are familiar to their cultural background. This finding suggests that the integration of local folklore can make English learning materials more meaningful and relevant for students.

Another important finding is that the use of Gemini and Canva facilitated the development of a visually rich and pedagogically structured learning product. Gemini supported the generation and adaptation of storylines, dialogues, and narrative content, while Canva enabled the organization of comic panels, illustrations, and learning activities into a coherent format. As a result, the product combines textual and visual elements that help students understand story content more easily. The presence of illustrations, speech bubbles, and contextual dialogues allows learners to infer meaning from both verbal and non-verbal information, creating a more accessible learning experience for junior high school students.

The study also found that the developed comic strip extends beyond language learning by incorporating cultural and character education elements. Folktales such as *Malin Kundang*, *Danau Toba*, and *Putri Cening Ayu* contain moral values and local wisdom that can support students' cultural awareness. In addition, several stories integrate environmental themes, demonstrating that comic-based learning media can simultaneously promote language development, character education, and social awareness. This finding highlights the potential of folklore-based comics to serve as multidisciplinary learning resources rather than merely reading materials.

Compared with previous studies, which primarily examined the effectiveness of existing comics in improving language skills, this study contributes a new perspective by developing a digital comic product that combines local folklore, artificial intelligence assistance, and digital visual design. The novelty lies not only in the use of Gemini and Canva but also in the integration of culturally relevant storytelling, language-learning activities, and interactive comic-based learning within a single instructional product. Therefore, the findings suggest that English Folktale Comic Strips can provide an innovative alternative for English language learning while simultaneously preserving local cultural heritage in the digital era.

These findings are consistent with Multimedia Learning Theory (Mayer, 2024), which emphasizes that learning becomes more effective when verbal and visual information are presented together. They also support Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 2006) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2015), which highlight the importance of multimodal representation and culturally relevant learning materials. However, the present study extends these perspectives by demonstrating how local folklore, artificial intelligence, and digital design platforms can be integrated into a single educational product that addresses both language learning and cultural preservation objectives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of English folktales into comic strip-based learning media represents a relevant and innovative response to the evolving demands of digital-era education. By combining cultural narratives with multimodal elements, this approach not only enhances the attractiveness of instructional materials but also supports students' engagement and comprehension. The use of comic strips facilitates the presentation of language in meaningful and contextualized ways, thereby contributing to the development of vocabulary mastery and reading skills. Moreover, the incorporation of folktales enriches the learning process by embedding cultural values and promoting cross-cultural awareness, which are essential components in language education.

Furthermore, the development of English folktale-based comic strips provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language teaching. It offers an alternative instructional medium that aligns with students' characteristics as digital natives while addressing common challenges such as limited vocabulary and low motivation in reading activities. From a pedagogical perspective, this study highlights the importance of integrating interactive and culturally relevant media to create more effective learning experiences. Therefore, the proposed learning media is expected to support teachers in delivering engaging

instruction and to encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, ultimately improving their overall English proficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that English teachers integrate English folktales comic strips as interactive learning media to improve students' motivation, creativity, and understanding in learning English, especially at the junior high school level. Furthermore, future researchers are suggested to conduct wider studies involving different educational levels, larger participants, and various English skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding the effectiveness of comic strip media. In addition, the integration of local folktales into English learning materials should continue to be developed in order to preserve local culture while enhancing students' language competence and cultural awareness.

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